PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT:

A CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE

MANIFESTATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN

A PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Aside from giving birth to my nine pound son, this has been my most difficult accomplishment to date. I often compared it to laundry. It was always there. I could wait and work on it tomorrow, but it was always there. I am so thankful to have completed this project – its folded and put away! There are several people whose names might as easily go on the title page alongside my own.

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Title of Study: PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT: A CASE STUDY
EXPLORING THE MANIFESTATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION
IN A PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Major Field: SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Abstract: The purpose of this research was to explore the manifestations of parent engagement in a school system with a formal parent program through parents who have participated in the program and parents who have not participated in the program. Using purposeful sampling, based upon the recommendations of program and school administrators, nine parents were selected as study participants. Five of the participants were parents who were either recently or currently enrolled in the Early Birds program in one participating school district. The other four participants were parents of school-age children, living in the boundaries of the same school district, but did not participate in the Early Birds program or any additional parent education program. Interviews were conducted with each of the participants and additional data was gathered through observations of Early Birds courses as well as documents, artifacts, and resources from the Early Birds program. The data collected was viewed and analyzed through the lens of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) model of parental involvement. Through the data collection and analysis, the themes of parent networks and parent interactions emerged. Parent participants of the Early Birds program were able to connect with other like-minded parents in the classes and share ideas, all while learning from an educated class instructor. Parents that participated in the Early Birds program believed that their interactions with their own children improved and they became more aware of purposeful play with their children. These parents were found to have a more established parental role construction. Parent past influences was another theme that emerged through research. The past experiences – both positive and negative – of all of the parents interviewed impacted their decision to be involved in their child's education.

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CHAPTER I

"Parents can be the teacher's greatest allies, and when invited to become involved, they tend to become allies" (Rotter, Robinson, & Fey, 1987, p. 7). Teachers, as well as members of the community, have historically cited the lack of parental involvement as a top issue of concern in education (Langdon & Vesper, 2000; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; Rose, Gallup, & Elam, 1997). Before formal schooling was established, Plato believed that parents should be educated so they can effectively teach their children (Berger & Riojas-Cortez, 2011). Since that time, it seems education reforms and educational leaders have been working to increase the amount of effective parental involvement in schools, in programs such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which first provided funds to engage parents in increasing the education of low-income children in 1965 (The Elementary and Secondary School Act, 1965).

Research indicates that most teachers want parents to be involved in their students' education; most teachers want parent volunteers to come into their classroom and volunteer; and most parents are concerned about their children's education and have a desire to be involved (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). Still, McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) noted that many teachers reported a lack of parental involvement. One key to active parent involvement is early, specific parent engagement. This is developed through an understanding of families, relationship-building, and improved communication (Halsey, 2005; Keyes, 2002).

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Halsey (2005) reported one parent of a junior high parent saying

> If you met a friend and said to them, 'Let's have lunch sometime,' they would not
> be sitting down at a restaurant at noon on Friday. A lunch invitation would be
> specific; you would say when and where. Just saying, 'This event is happening,'
> doesn't tell parents that teachers want them to be involved. (p. 61)

The partnership between home and school is a "two-way street," with the blame for lack of parent involvement to not be placed solely on one group.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) noted that children with involved parents do better in school, and also that schools that engage parents have students who perform better academically. The overall structure of the family system has changed, while more demands and stressors are put upon the family systems of today (Knopf & Swick, 2008). Knopf and Swick (2008) encouraged early childhood professionals to be aware of these issues and "respond with empowering perspectives and strategies to support a more viable and enhancing family–school relationship system" (p. 420).

One program that seeks to be that response is the Early Birds program. Early Birds is a program of Smart Start Central Oklahoma operated through four school districts in Oklahoma County. Early Birds is a family-focused school readiness program for families with children birth to age five. Three free 90-minute classes are offered over in the course of one year, in addition to one prenatal class, resulting in a total of 16 classes over five consecutive years. Early Birds courses are offered in both English and Spanish at local elementary schools on evenings and on Saturdays, and provide free childcare to parent and caregiver participants. Instructors are trained professionals in the field of early childhood education. Topics covered in the courses include "child

development, everyday learning opportunities, activities that promote school readiness, purposeful parenting techniques, and health and safety" (Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2010a). The Early Bird curriculum is research-based with a focus on child development across multiple domains. The developers also embedded the child abuse prevention protective factors and Oklahoma School Readiness Indicators, which include approaches to learning, creative skills, listening skills, speaking skills, literacy, math, physical development, science, and social and personal skills within the curriculum (L. Monroe, personal communication, July 3, 2014). Each activity within the Early Birds curriculum was created to align to the Kindergarten Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS). The program also provides networking opportunities, as well as a collection of free resources, books, and educational toys for the participants.

Statement of Problem

Parental involvement is encouraged because of the possible positive effects on a child's education, including improved grades and test performance (Desimone, 1999; Epstein 2001; Sheldon, 2003). Henderson and Mapp (2002) noted that children with parents who are involved in their education perform better academically. Yet, the positive impact parent involvement generates is not limited to academics. Anderson and Minke (2007) referred to additional studies that have shown that high levels of parental involvement are also associated with high school completion, self-regulation of behavior, and more advanced social skills in all children.

However, while this is commonly known, the quality of parental engagement is high in some cases, and in other cases, it is low (Rutherford, Anderson, & Bilig, 1997). Henderson and Mapp (2002) found that white, middle-class families are more likely to be

involved in their child's education than other ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Parental involvement decreases as children promote through school into larger schools (Walsh, 2010). Participation is also lower for disadvantaged families, including single parents, parents who are immigrants, and parents whose first language is not English (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009).

Wanat (1992) hypothesized that this conflict exists because parents often do not have the time, resources, or knowledge of how to be more involved in their child's education (Wanat, 1992). Parents will not engage as frequently in their child's education when there is a feeling of disconnect between the parent and the school or a feeling of inadequacy or being unwanted by the school and their children (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; Walsh, 2010). Research has linked a strong self-efficacy, or the belief that a parent has "the skills and knowledge to help" his or her child academically, to increased parental involvement (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005, p. 165; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001, as cited in Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005, p. 165).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore the manifestations of parent engagement in a school system with a formal parent program through parents who have participated in the program and parents who have not participated in the program.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. How does participation in a parent education program influence parent perceptions of his or her role in the educational process?

2. How does participation in a parent education program influence parental perception of his/her efficacy for involvement in the educational process?

3. How is parental involvement manifested in parents who have participated in a parent education program?

4. How is parental involvement manifested in parents who have not participated in a parent education program?

Theoretical Framework

The manifestation of parental involvement is explained through the theoretical model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). In the framework, the process of parental involvement is explored through a leveled model to address why parents are motivated to become actively involved in their child's education. The current model, updated in 2005 (Walker et al., 2005), is a five-level process, beginning with the first level of lower level parental involvement ideals. This includes items such as personal reasoning for involvement and the school's responsiveness to the family life context factors, such as socioeconomic status and family culture. Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (2005b) listed initial decisions for parents to participate in their child's education as the parent's view on their usefulness, the school's status and influence, and the parent's take on of the invitations for involvement by a school staff member or the student. The hierarchy moves up with additional parental involvement forms such as home-based and school-based involvement and lines of communication between home and school. Level two of the model includes the methods of learning parents gain through their involvement activities, such as encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction; which leads to level three's encompassing of these four methods through

the students' consideration (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b). As the first two levels of

the model relate to parental involvement, levels three through five focus on the behavior

of the student. Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, and Sandler (2007) found

relationships, over other factors like socioeconomic status, were to be the main factor in

motivating parents to become involved in their child's education.

Level 5

Student Achievement (Varied Summary Measures)

Level 4

Student Proximal Attributes Conductive to Achievement, e.g.:			
Academic Self-Efficacy	Intrinsic Motivation to Learn	Self-Regulatory Strategy Knowledge & Use	Social Self-Efficacy for Relating to Teachers

Level 3

(Mediated by) Student Perception of Learning Mechanisms Engaged by Parents			
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction

Level 2

Learning Mechanisms Engaged by Parents during Involvement Activities, e.g.:			
Encouragement	Modeling	Reinforcement	Instruction

Parent Involvement Forms, e.g.:			
Values, Goals, Expectations, Aspirations	Involvement Activities at Home	Parent/Teacher/School Communications	Involvement Activities at School

Level 1

Personal Motivators		Parents' Perception of Contextual Invitations to Involvement			School/Program Responsiveness to Family Life Context Variables		
Parental Role Construction for Involvement	Parental Efficacy for Helping the Student Succeed	General Invitations from School/Program	Specific Invitations from Teacher	Specific Invitations from Student	Parental Knowledge & Skills	Parental Time & Energy	Family Culture

Figure 1.1. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of Parent Involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b)

This study will explore the manifestation of parental involvement through the lens of a portion of the model's level one, which focuses on parents' motivational beliefs, defined as parental role construction, and parental self-efficacy (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

Research Method

A qualitative research design was used for the development of this study. A case study design was further selected to gain a deeper insight and understanding to the common phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Using purposeful sampling, based upon the recommendations of program and school administrators, nine parents were selected as study participants. Five of the participants were parents who were either recently or currently enrolled in the Early Birds program in one participating school district. The other four participants were parents of school-age children, living in the boundaries of the same school district, but did not participate in the Early Birds program or any additional parent education program. Interviews were conducted with each of the participants and additional data was gathered through observations of Early Birds courses as well as documents, artifacts, and resources from the Early Birds program. Each interview and data obtained was coded and analyzed for commonalities and trends (Creswell, 2009).

Significance of the Study

The current research on parental engagement and involvement is vast as evidenced by the review of literature in Chapter II. There are numerous amounts of literature supporting and affirming its benefits and the need for better practices (Alameda-Lawson, Lawson, & Lawson, 2010; Bruckman & Blanton, 2003; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2005; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; Walsh, 2010). This research is significant as it explores the manifestation of engagement and involvement though parent participation in a parent education program with a focus on school readiness.

The results of this study directly relate to practice as more validation is given to parent education programs as well as to the theories that are grounded in these ideals. There is little research on the lasting impacts of parent education as it relates to parental engagement and involvement. This study will add to the existing body of research on parental engagement by exploring the manifestation of parental engagement and involvement through participation in a parental education program. The expansion of this study could potentially demonstrate a positive relationship between the two ideals. In addition, appropriate methods of parental engagement and involvement can be better understood and implemented. The results from this study will better inform researchers, practitioners, and families on the best practices in parental engagement and involvement. Most significantly, the results of the study have the potential to positively impact the lives and education of children.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study was not intended to generalize the manifestation of parental engagement and involvement, but rather explore the phenomenon within one school

district that has implemented a parent education program and talking to parents that have

and have not participated in the program. Participation in the Early Birds program is

voluntary. Parents are recruited from a variety of different entities and methods, but it is

ultimately the parents' choice to participate in the program. It can be assumed that

parents who participate in the Early Birds program are likely to be parents that hold

strong opinions on "parent engagement" and "parental involvement."

Definition of Terms

The term "parents" for the purpose of this study and the literature reviewed

includes biological mothers and fathers as well as grandparents, guardians, and foster and

adoptive parents. "Parents" as they are referenced in this paper are limited to caregivers

that reside in the home. "Families" in this study refer to parents, siblings, grandparents,

caregivers, and extended family members, both biological and non-traditional that reside

in the family home. The terms "parents" and "families" are used interchangeably

throughout the research proposal and literature reviewed, as each family structure is

defined differently to each family. "Family system" is a group of individuals operating

as a family unit, bound by relation or intention.

"Parent involvement" is an important term for this study, yet more difficult to

define, as it can take on so many different meanings. As a whole, "parent involvement"

is the engagement and participation of a parent or family in their child's education or

activities that relate to their child's education. Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (2005b)

broadly defined parental involvement into two categories, home-based parent

involvement and school-based parent involvement. Home-based involvement includes

assisting a child with a Science Fair project, while school-based parent involvement

might be volunteering at the Science Fair. "Parent engagement" is the contact and invitation of parents for involvement by school personnel. This can include a variety of modes of communication, but not limited to, phone, email, and written communication.

"School readiness" is the preparedness of a child to enter into the formal school setting ready to learn. This involves the readiness of the child, the school's readiness, and family and community supports for the efforts. The child's readiness can include, but is not limited to, the well-being of the child's emotional, cognitive, physical, and medical health.

"Parent education" is the training of parents or caregivers by trained professionals in the fields of early childhood education on parenting skills including those that correlate to school readiness. The focus of parent education is to strengthen and support families. Some parent education programs have a purpose to prevent child abuse or neglect, but the parent education programs referenced in this study have an emphasis on school preparedness and readiness.

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this study includes Chapters II through VI. Chapter II is a concise review of the existing literature on parental engagement and parental involvement. Chapter III is an overview of the methodology that was used in this study. Chapter IV is an overview of the data, while Chapter V is a data analysis. Chapter VI concludes the study by outlining the findings and providing conclusions based upon research, practice, and theory.

CHAPTER II

In the literature, both parents and teachers have indicated a desire for an increase in effective parental involvement within school systems (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). Still, a conflict remains. Psychological, educational, and social factors play a role in both the parent's motivation to be actively engaged in their child's education and in the teachers' preparedness and presumptions about parental involvement. This literature review will explore the importance of parental engagement and involvement, examples of successful and unsuccessful strategies found in previous literature, and the existing literature on the specific reasoning behind the lack of parental involvement in education today, as well as some suggestions for implementation.

Importance of Parental Involvement

Children with parents who are involved in their education are more likely to have higher grades and higher standardized test scores (Desimone, 1999; Epstein 2001; Sheldon, 2003). This is especially true for children from low-income or disadvantaged homes. Sheldon (2003) found that the establishment of a strong partnership between school, families, and the community in a large low-income, urban area had a significant impact on student achievement. However, the positive impact of parental involvement does not stop at student achievement. Anderson and Minke (2007) referred to additional studies (Brody, Flor, & Gibson, 1999; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Rumberger, 1995) that have shown that high levels of

parental involvement are also associated with high school completion, self-regulation of behavior, and more advanced social skills in all children.

Parent involvement within a child's education can be defined by home-based involvement, school-based involvement, or parent-teacher communication (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b; Walsh, 2010). An example of home-based parent involvement is reading to one's child or helping with an algebra homework assignment, while school-based parent involvement involves an activity such as volunteering at the school or in the classroom. Communication between parents and teachers might be a parent contacting a teacher by telephone with a specific question about a homework assignment. Each method, when implemented appropriately, can have substantial impacts on student achievement and student behavior.

Hoover-Dempsey and associates (2005b) discussed the importance of specific invitations, either by a school staff member or the student, for parents to engage in involvement in their child's education. Regarding parental involvement during middle school, Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) found that parents were more likely to be engaged in a home-based parental involvement practice if their seventh grader requested assistance or gave an invitation for the parents to become engaged. Green and colleagues (2007) noted that invitations from a teacher are especially motivating for parents to become involved in their child's education as after this invitation, parents feel respected, appreciated, and valued. However, the different approaches to parental involvement can yield different student outcomes. Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, and Childs found (as cited in Powell, Son, File, and San Juan, 2010) children's classroom behavior to be impacted only through home-based parental involvement; while, Powell and associates (2010)

found children's problem behaviors to be reduced based upon school-based involvement and a controlled home-based involvement.

Positive effects of parental involvement are found across demographics and family backgrounds. For instance, Harper and Pelletier (2010) found that while teachers reported that English Language Learner families had less communication with the teacher, these families were rated as being just as involved in their child's education as families whose first language was English. A study by Lahaie (2008) looked at immigrant families and their impact on their children's school readiness. Math scores were highly correlated with number of children's books in the family home, the frequency these books were read, and meeting with the child's teacher on at least one occasion.

The predictors of successful school achievement with relation to a high level of parent involvement can be measured as early as the preschool level. While the importance and value of high-quality early childhood education experiences has already been previously established (Barnett & Ackerman, 2006; Gormley & Phillips, 2005), the positive effects continue to develop when combined with parental involvement. For example, Arnold and associates (2008) found that parent involvement in the preschool years has a direct effect upon the development of a child's pre-literacy skills. Other studies (Bruckman & Blanton, 2003; Kreider, 2002) have shown participation in early childhood education programs encourages parents to become involved. Kreider (2002) studied the relationship between participation in an early childhood education program and family involvement. Children who attended an early childhood program had parents that read to them more, visited their classroom more often, and connected and associated

with other parents more frequently (Kreider, 2002). Kreider (2002) also found that

participation in these programs was also correlated to the ease of transition into

Kindergarten for children and their families, as in this study Kindergarten was the

children's first school experience.

McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro, and Wildenger (2007) found that many

families do not understand the expectations on a child when he or she enters school. This

study looked at the parental involvement through the transition activities from preschool

to Kindergarten. It was reported that lower socioeconomic families were less involved in

their children's transition activities into Kindergarten. Still, the researchers also reported

that families want "to know what they can do to help prepare" their child for transition

into Kindergarten (McIntyre et al., 2007, p. 86).

Some early childhood education programs require a parental involvement or

family engagement participation component to be enrolled and to continue in the

program. Head Start, an early childhood education program targeted to low-income

families, mandates that all parents participate in all aspects of the program, including

program governance (Duch, 2005). Head Start encourages parents to participate in goal-

setting and gives parents the tools to improve their family life through both formal and

informal supports (Bruckman & Blanton, 2003). Many early childhood home visitation

models, like Parents as Teachers, have a philosophy that parents are a child's first and

most important teacher (Parents as Teachers National Center, 2011). This philosophy

lays a foundation for mutual respect and empowers parents to be active participants early

on in their child's education. Home visits allow for the educators to see the family

structure and system first-hand in its natural environment, yet while still being a visitor in

one's home and respecting the setting and authority (Knopf & Swick, 2008). Knopf and Swick (2008) are also careful to note that home visits will not be successful without a positive relationship between the home visiting educator and the parents.

It has been previously discovered that starting common education for children yields the best results (Gormley & Phillips, 2005). It can only be assumed that establishing a foundation for parental involvement as early as possible will too yield the best results. While Ashley (2007) noted the importance of engaging families early to promote successful parental involvement, little research has been completed on the lasting positive impacts of early childhood parent education programs and parental involvement in later school years.

Successful and Unsuccessful Approaches to Parental Involvement

While not all parents need incentives or encouragement to become engaged in their child's education, within the existing literature on parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey, 2005 as cited in Green et al., 2007; Epstein, 2001 as cited in Staples & Diliberto, 2010; Staples & Diliberto, 2010), many incentive models and foundations of successful implementation are identified. These models and foundational ideas are available to guide parents, teachers, administrators, and educational leaders in creating positive and effective home and school relationships. The literature also emphasizes significant obstacles some families experience when becoming or not becoming involved in their child's education (Arnold et al., 2008; Desimone, 1999; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Walsh, 2010).

Epstein's model of parental involvement is grounded in what the researcher has named the Overlapping Spheres of Influence – school, family, and community. In the

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center of the three spheres is the child (see Figure 2.1 for a graphic illustration). The

child is in the center as Epstein (2010) noted, "the inarguable fact is that students are the

main actors in their education, development, and success in school" (p. 82). These three

spheres have both external and internal influences. Epstein stated that some actions and

events within the three major contexts of the spheres occur separately, or externally,

while some actions and events within the three major contexts occur internally, or

"jointly to influence children's learning and development" (Epstein, 2010, p. 82). The

goal of a successful partnership is to "engage, guide, energize, and motivate" students to

be active members in their own educational success (Epstein, 2010, p. 82).
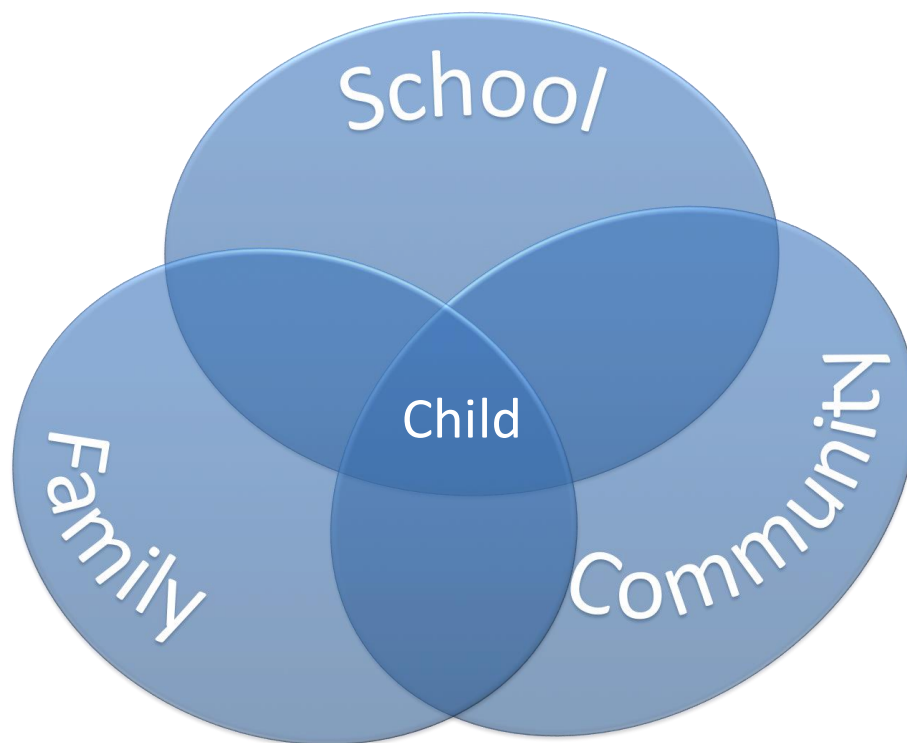
Figure 2.1. Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein, 2010)

Interaction and connections within the three spheres occurs at both institutional

and individual levels. Epstein (2010) listed institutional occurrences as communication

that every member of the sphere receives and is aware of such as a monthly newsletter

that every elementary parent receives. Individual occurrences within the spheres of influence would be those that only a few members of the sphere experience such as a parent-teacher conference about one student.

Epstein's (2010) framework lists six types of parental involvement as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. "Parenting" is described as offering parent education and other enrichment courses for parents such as college credit or tax assistance. "Communicating" is the development and implementation of school-to-home and home-to-school lines of effective communication. The organization and determination of volunteer needs and abilities is through "volunteering." "Learning at home" includes providing specific examples of activities families can participate in at home to encourage and expand upon the learning in the classroom. Involving parents in the school's community through networking, policy decisions, and advocacy is achieved through "decision making." Finally, "collaborating with the community" is bringing the community into the school through resources as well as giving back to the community through service projects.

Staples and Diliberto (2010) noted three essential guidelines to successful parental involvement including "building parent rapport, developing a communication system with a maintenance system, and creating additional special event opportunities for parent involvement" (p. 60). With regard to building a rapport with parents, Staples and Diliberto (2010) encouraged educators to start early and lay a foundation of open communication. The authors specifically mention using an "open door policy" and inviting parents to specific activities within the classroom (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). A

system of communication between the school and parents should be one that meets the needs of parents, and keeps them notified in the best means possible. Staples and Diliberto (2010) encouraged school staff to implement "daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly" systems of communication (p. 60). The authors noted that parental involvement extends beyond volunteering in the classroom, and that it is more about a partnership to best serve the needs of the students. A study by Keyes (2002) supported this notion as the research focused on relationships and communication with families using a theoretical framework that included Bronfenbrenner's ecological model.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) identified five environment systems that an individual is influenced by: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, as displayed in Figure 2.2 below. The microsystem includes an individual's family, neighborhood, and colleagues, while the mesosystem is the relations and connections between the microsystems. For example, children from neglected or abused homes may have difficultly developing relationships with adults within their school. The exosystem is the impact of a system that the individual does not have direct contact with, but it influences the individual. An example of an exosystem would be a mother's workplace, which has an impact on the child. Macrosystem is the culture in which the individual lives. Finally, chronosystem is the patterning of environmental events and transitions over one's life course. Keyes (2002) suggested that teacher preparation programs should include instruction on the ecological model.
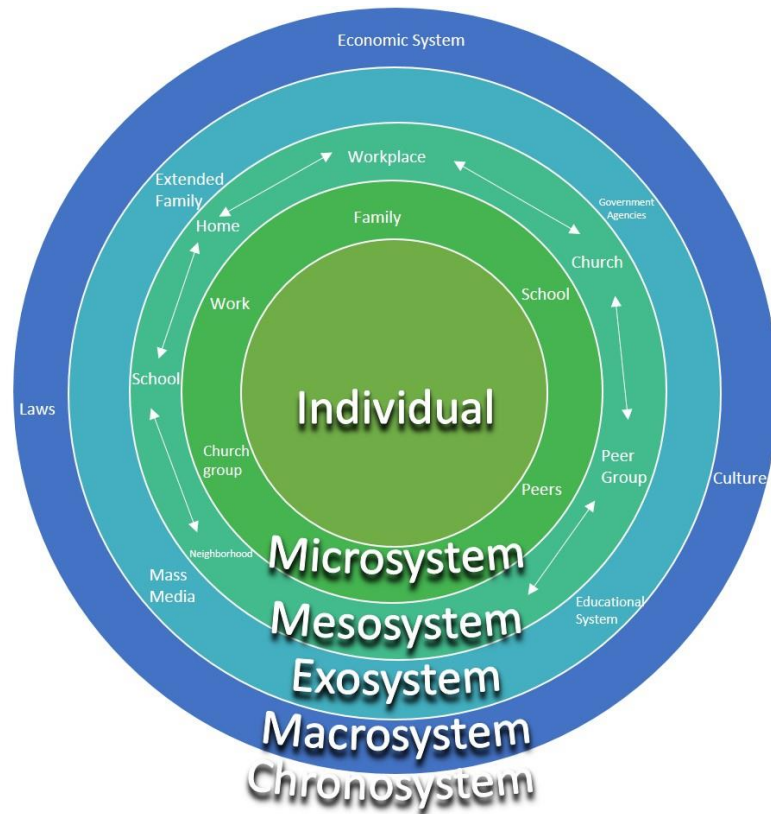
Figure 2.2. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model (1979).

Still, despite all of the current models and foundational ideas for parental

involvement, as well as the knowledge on unsuccessful attempts, there continues to be

discrepancies and obstacles that parents face when attempting to become engaged in their

child's education. McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) researched an urban school district

with a low amount of parental involvement. Through a series of focus groups with staff

and parents, the authors discovered that parents had an overwhelming negative feeling

regarding the school climate and teachers often felt that parents were too "busy" to be

active participants in their child's education (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000, p. 9). It

was assumed that a "we-them" mentality was present within the urban district studied.

With this mentality, it can be interpreted that both parties feel a disconnect and the

attempts to increase parental involvement both by the school and the parents will

continue to be unsuccessful. Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2009) emphasized the collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers. The researchers note that both parties need to take an active role, learning from each other and the knowledge each party brings to the relationship.

Desimone (1999) found differences in the levels of parental involvement across all races, ethnicities, and family income levels. Immigrant minority parents have also been found to have significant obstacles to parental involvement in their child's elementary school as opposed to those who are not immigrants (Turney & Kao, 2009). McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) echoed this sentiment, as they found teachers in urban settings had the same communication expectations for their low-income families as they did the middle-class families who had better access to telephones for asking questions and transportation for visiting the school. Turney and Kao (2009) also noted that it was Asian parents that experienced the most obstacles with regard to parental involvement. Immigrant minority parents were also less likely to attend activities and functions at the school. McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) conversed with parents who chose not to attend school events due to their feelings of a lack of value and respect on a part of the school. Participation was also notably lower for those parents in which English was not their first language (Turney & Kao, 2009). McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) also noted a lack of written communication with the urban parents in their study, based on these parents' insecurities about their own written communication skills. Yet it is not solely race or ethnicity that plays a part in the obstacles parents face. Family structure also plays a role, as Arnold and associates (2008) found that single parents were less likely to be involved in their child's education; more so, single parents who had

levels of depression.

The existing literature (Green et al., 2007; Walsh, 2010) shows it is not just low-income or disadvantaged parents who experience obstacles in the levels of involvement in their child's education. These studies have noted that parental involvement decreases as children are promoted through grade school, as most middle schools house more children than elementary schools and the high school buildings house more students than the middle schools. Walsh (2010) found that schools with larger populations have lower levels of parental involvement. As school enrollment doubled, the volunteer rates among parents decreased by up to five percent (Hayden, 2010). In Hayden (2010), it is noted that Walsh (2010) discovered that parental involvement is lower at larger schools in part due to the ability to be "anonymous" and the lack of peer pressure often found at smaller schools, encouraging parents to become involved. As echoed in McDermott and Rothenberg (2000), when parents have feelings of inadequacy or feel unneeded, they will "back off" or chose not to be an active participant in their child's education (Walsh, 2010).

As many researchers have noted (Halsey, 2005; Keyes, 2002; Staples & Diliberto, 2010), relationships are key to the collaborative partnership between parents and teachers. Several studies (Ashley, 2007; Bruckman & Blanton, 2003; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006) have noted that a strong relationship between families and schools is the best method for successful collaboration between families and schools. Knopf and Swick (2008) explored the changing family unit with the context of better understanding families and making parental involvement more family-centered.

Reasoning behind a Lack of Involvement and Suggestions for Implementation

The family structure is continuing to change and evolve, as parents remain to be underutilized partners in their child's education. As stated earlier, parents often do not have the time, resources, or knowledge of how to be more involved in their child's education (Wanat, 1992). Both the parents and the school need to be active, collaborating partners for relationships to be effective. The existing literature (Alameda-Lawson, et al., 2010; Bruckman & Blanton, 2003; Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2005; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; Walsh, 2010) on parental involvement examines and provides for many suggestions and examples for explaining this issue of underutilization and lack of participation.

Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2005) provided specific reasons for the conflict and the underutilization of parental involvement. These reasons include parents lacking the confidence to become involved, teachers not valuing a parent's involvement, teachers' presumptions about the ability and skill levels of parents, time restraints, opposing viewpoints regarding parent involvement methods, the confusion of the role of parents in their child's education during adolescence, and the need for preparation and administrative support for the teacher (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2005). Strong relationships and mutual respect remained central points in parental motivation in becoming involved in their child's education. McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) discovered that parents were more willing to participate in activities that support their child's education when the parents felt that their child was respected and their community and culture were valued. With regards to cultural differences in parental involvement, Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) noted that some Latino cultures believe it to be

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disrespectful to the educator if too much involvement occurs at home. This culture's perception of a parent's role is to be one of support, rather than of an educator within the home. The researchers also reference research that discussed the difference in role construction between socioeconomic groups. Parents in higher socioeconomic groups have been found to be more likely to be in a collaborative relationship with educators, while lower income families tend to provide more emotional support than academic reinforcement at home (Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey, 2013).

As Dodd and Konzal (2000) noted in Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2005), parental involvement is limited in schools, as many parents are invited to participate in parent-teacher conferences, yet few are asked to partake in any "extended and engaging activities" (p. 89). Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2005) suggested for the idea of engaging parents in their child's education to be incorporated into teacher preparation programs as well as on-going professional development opportunities for current educators. Staples and Diliberto (2010) noted that current teacher preparation programs instruct pre-service teachers on working with parents when trouble arises, but does not address working with parents to form initial relationships.

Staples and Diliberto (2010) defined a parent's self-efficacy as a parent who believes that the knowledge and skills he or she possesses will help and make a positive, significant difference in his or her child's life (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). Green and colleagues (2007) stated that when "applied to parental involvement, self-efficacy theory suggests that parents make involvement decisions based in part on their thinking about the outcomes likely to follow their involvement activities" (p. 533). Self-efficacy is not necessarily something that a parent is born with. Green and associates (2007) noted:

Like role construction, self-efficacy is socially constructed: It is influenced by personal experiences of success in parental involvement, vicarious experience of similar others' successful involvement experiences, and verbal persuasion by others (Bandura, 1997). Positive personal beliefs about efficacy for helping one's children succeed in school are associated with increased parental involvement among elementary, middle, and high school students [e.g., Bandura et al., 1996; Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Seefeldt, Denton, Galper, & Younoszai, 1998; Shumow & Lomax, 2002]. (p. 533)

Another suggestion in the existing literature is the use of early intervention, specifically through parent education to engage families early and effectively (Knopf & Swick, 2008). As discussed earlier, early childhood home visitation models like Parents as Teachers set the stage for positive parent and school relationships (Parents as Teachers, 2011). Additional home visitation models like the Home-based Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) have outcomes of increased parental involvement (FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, 2007). However, while often low in cost, home visitation programs require significant travel by providers. The Early Birds program provides similar educational resources and materials as early childhood home visitation programs, yet meets with larger groups of families at their neighborhood schools. The Early Birds program has yielded positive results connected to parental efficacy, much like the home visitation programs. Monroe (2010) found that in the pilot year of the Early Birds program in one school district, "parents reported a positive change in attitudes and behaviors" after completing the program (p. 12). Further research on the program conducted in 2013

found that attending just one session of the Early Birds program resulted in higher parental confidence levels (Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2013). These findings are supported by the research conducted by Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2011), which found a strong connection between social support and social networks and role activity beliefs of home school and public school parents (p. 362). However, additional research is still needed to explore the lasting effects of the program on parental motivation for involvement.

As noted within the theoretical framework of this document, the guiding theory for this study is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model of the parental involvement process (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b). Green and colleagues (2007) noted the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (2005) for the parental involvement process, used to better understand why, and the effects when, parents become engaged in their child's education. This study specifically explored Level One of the scale (see Figure 1), which relates to personal motivators of parental role construction for involvement and parental efficacy for helping the student succeed (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b). Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) noted:

> Research to date on the sets of variables hypothesized to motivate parents' involvement has suggested that parental role construction—parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their student's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005)—is predictive of parents' involvement at home and school (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostolaris, 1997; Sheldon, 2002). [p. 74]

Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) also noted the importance of previous experiences in a parent's motivation to become involved in their child's education. This can include the parent's educational experiences or previous interactions with the school system.

> In sum, parents' experiences related to engagement with schools engender an overall attitude about, or valence toward, schooling and their own roles in the educational process as related to their children. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) suggested that parents' childhood experiences with schools are likely joined with current experiences with schools to influence the development of personal role construction for involvement in their children's schooling. In particular, parents' assessment of their own school experiences may predispose them to feel competent—or conversely, disempowered and incompetent—when interacting with school personnel (Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004; Raty, 2002).
>
> [p. 76]

Through the lens of this model, the impact of early engagement on parental involvement through a parent education program will be explored.

Several studies (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; Walsh, 2010) reviewed for the purpose of this document noted specific strategies or suggestions to improve or increase parental involvement in schools. Walsh (2010) suggested taking larger schools, that are more likely to have lower levels of parental involvement, and separating the school in smaller divisions, using more assistant principals to gain more parental involvement. "Looping" children in elementary classrooms so that they spend two or more years with the same teacher was also a method suggested to encourage stronger parent-teacher relationships (McDermott & Rothenberg,

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2000). Specifically in working with urban families, McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) suggested hosting parent events at a community center within a neighborhood so that parents with limited transportation could be accommodated and attend the school-sponsored event. Another suggestion by Alameda-Lawson and associates (2010) was to involve social workers as a bridge to the school and home environments. Finally, Ashley (2007) suggested something as simple as providing meals for parents while attending specific events at the school to encourage participation.

Despite any suggestion used to implement strategies to increase or improve parental involvement, Bruckman and Blanton (2003) noted the importance of being sensitive to each family's situation and experiences. Souto-Manning and Swick (2006) encouraged educators to learn from their families and students as much as the families and students will learn from the educators. As stated in Ashley (2007), it is critical to put the needs of the family as the main focus in any practice implemented. When families are put first, positive outcomes result. Bruckman and Blanton (2003) found that mothers of Head Start children "who felt respected and valued were contributing positively to their child's preschool education" (p. 150).

Summary of the Review

Despite any psychological, educational, or social conflicts that may exist between home and school, research (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; Walsh, 2010) supports parental involvement through home-based and school-based engagement as well as parent-teacher communication. It is the responsibility of the school to engage parents in the most effective ways that meet the needs of each family; but it is the responsibility of the parents to accept that invitation and be active,

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communicable participants in the education of their children. Parental efficacy has been shown to increase through early invitations by school personnel (Monroe, 2010). The literature reviewed for the purposes of this study show support for, as well as a need for, additional research in the area of motivation in parental involvement.

CHAPTER III

This study employed a case study design, which Creswell (2009) defined as a "strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, of one or more individuals" (p. 13). Stake (1995) noted the need for selecting case studies as a research design,

> we are interested in them [case studies] for both their uniqueness and commonality. We would like to hear their stories. We may have reservations about some things the people tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn. (p. 1)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore the manifestations of parent engagement in a school system with a formal parent program through parents who have participated in the program and parents who have not participated in the program.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. How does participation in a parent education program influence parent perceptions of his or her role in the educational process?

2. How does participation in a parent education program influence parental perception of his or her role in parent efficacy?

3. How is parental involvement manifested in parents who have participated in a parent education program?

4. How is parental involvement manifested in parents who have not participated in a parent education program?

Research Design

I selected a case study approach for the design of this qualitative study. Yin (2014) stated that, "As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena" (p. 4). Case studies allow for the data to emerge and evolve while the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the central phenomenon and the individual participants. Patton (2002) noted, "If individuals or groups are the primary unit of analysis, then case studies of people or groups may be the focus for case studies" (p. 439). "A case study allows investigators to focus on a 'case' and retain a holistic and real-world perspective" (Yin, 2014, p. 4). Real people and real experiences were explored and observed for this study, and no variables were manipulated.

The epistemological perspective taken for this study is constructionism. Patton

(2002) listed the central questions of this perspective:

1. How have the people in this setting constructed reality?

2. What are their reported perceptions, "truths," explanations, beliefs, and worldview?

3. What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact? (p. 132)

Open-ended questions were asked of the participants during the interviews. This style allowed for a more personal interaction, while allowing the data that emerged to be more descriptive. It also allowed for the researcher to ask probing questions to gain more information on specific topics. During the Early Birds course observations, the researcher took on the role of an observer, as to not disrupt the environment or process.

The interviews took place at the school site or a location that was convenient and familiar to the participants, such as a participant's home or a nearby public library. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Following each interview, the researcher drafted a narrative to send to the participant for accuracy and approval. All data collected was stored on a personal computer that required a password to access the data.

Methodological Procedures

Multiple qualitative strategies were implemented to collect data. The main data sources were the transcribed interviews of parents, yet additional methods such as observation and artifact collect contributed to the research. The researcher attended and documented several Early Birds courses in the case study district and artifacts from the program were gathered and used as data sources.

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District approval was gained from the participating school district. Written approval was also obtained from the Early Birds program administrators and organizations that fund the program. Copies of these documents can be found in the appendices of this document. The researcher gained approval from her committee as well as from the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The participants were provided a preview copy of the interview questions prior to each interview. Additionally, the narratives that were written following each interview were provided to the participants to gain approval for accuracy. Each participant was given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without any undue consequence.

Participants

Nine parents from one school district were recruited to participate in this study. All nine participants have school-aged children. Five parents in the first sample have either participated in or are currently enrolled in the Early Birds program. The remaining four parent participants have not participated in the Early Birds program, yet reside in a school district that implements a specific parent education program. Nine participants were decided upon to give the researcher a breadth of knowledge on the central phenomenon, while also allowing for in-depth interviews.

Participant Selection. As mentioned above, purposeful sampling was used to select the nine parent participants. Patton (2002) notes, "purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (p. 230). A list of parents was recommended to the researcher.

Data Collection

A qualitative research method was used in the interviews of both data sources. Two separate sets of interview questions were used with participants, and the prompts differed as the interviews progressed. The questions were used as a guide to the interview process and are included in the appendices. Each interview was digitally recorded, transcribed, and a narrative was written immediately following each interview. Additional data was collected through the observation of several Early Birds courses and a collection of artifacts and resources from the program administrators.

Observations. As mentioned above, observations were a part of the data collection process in this study. The researcher observed the Early Birds program. The program classes typically take place on evenings and weekends and parents are put into classes or groups by the age of their child. The researcher observed several different classes and groups to gain a broader perspective of the program.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with nine parents. Of those parents, five have been participants in the Early Birds program while four were parents that have not participated in the program. The data collected through these interviews provided the greatest amount of parent perspective on parental involvement as it is manifested through early parent participation.

Documentation. Artifacts from the Early Birds program were collected to gain a better understanding of the program. These documents included:

- Early Birds Parent Handbook
- Everyday Learning Reference Cards
- Early Birds Instructor Framework

Data Analysis

  Organize data. First, each of the interviews was transcribed in exact detail, including every "um," "uh," and sounds of laughter. Detailed notes from the observations of the Early Birds classes were also recorded and typed, as Creswell (2009) recommends using a protocol when recording observational data. Documents and artifacts obtained from the Early Birds program were scanned and stored into the data collection site.

  Code data. Next, these transcriptions as well as the notes from the Early Birds course observations were used to code the data. To code the data, Creswell (2009) recommends reading over the data frequently and often. Note cards were used to record key points within each interview and the observations as well as the artifacts gathered.

  Generate themes. The results from the coded note cards were sorted and main themes were established. This data is demonstrated through the use of narratives as well as charts and tables as applicable. Three main themes of parent interactions, parent networks, and parent past influences were discovered through the analysis of the range of data collected. These three themes and their discovery will be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

  Use of theory. The use of a theoretical framework provided me with "order, clarification, and direction" to the study (Harris, 2006, p. 145). As Harris (2006) noted, the use of a theoretical framework also helped the design of my research questions. Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, and colleagues have done extensive research and study on the topic of parental involvement and engagement. The theory helped guide my study as well as provided specific language to explain a broad topic.

Researcher Role

Researcher Bias

As a former Kindergarten teacher, I have seen first-hand the positive impact of active parental involvement, so it will be essential that I guard my biases. I have been in education for nine years and have spent the majority of my career focusing on strengthening families through early childhood programming. During my employment at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, I oversaw a statewide parent education program that was home-based. The Early Birds program is not implemented at the school district where I am employed, and the success or failure of the program will have no financial or emotional impact on me or any members of my immediate family. I believe early parental engagement and active parental involvement is the best result for parents, teachers, and students, but this research will assist me in gaining the impact from another perspective.

Ethical Considerations

All participants of this study and the data collected were treated with the utmost of professional and ethical consideration as outlined by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). While there are no identifiable risks to participation in this study, as mentioned above, participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without any undue consequence.

I understood that the topic of the study, "parent involvement," could be a sensitive issue to some of the study participants. This was taken into consideration when drafting the interview questions to ensure no question made any of the participants to reflect negatively on their parenting decisions. Using all of the theoretical perspectives as a

framework, I was first to respect each family system.

      Data collection ethics. During the qualitative interviews, I followed strict qualitative research protocols to ensure that these biases may be in check to ensure an accurate response. I asked questions from a neutral perspective, careful not to guide or lead the interviewees. Taking all of these precautions into consideration, I believe my biases were able to remain guarded.

      Data analysis & interpretation ethics. The names of the participating school districts and participants were changed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of individuals and incidents (Creswell, 2009). Data will be kept for five years on a personal, locked computer and then destroyed. Personal agreements were signed by all research participants to identify the researcher as the owner of the data collected. Creswell (2009) recommends providing an accurate account of the information through potential debriefing between the researcher and participants.

Trustworthiness of Findings

Triangulation of Data

      The validity of the data was ensured through the use of data triangulation. Harris (2005) noted, "Triangulation may establish that the information gathered is generally supported or disconfirmed" (p. 79). Multiple parents were interviewed, but also multiple data sources were gathered for the purposes of this study.

      Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that credibility is "a major trustworthiness criterion… for without such credibility, the findings and conclusions as a whole cannot be found credible by the consumer of the inquiry report" (p. 213). Credibility was ensured in this study by using the following techniques: prolonged engagement,

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persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and purposeful sampling. Relationships were established with the research participants through a prolonged engagement that included email and phone calls. These relationships were further strengthened by the purposeful sampling, as each participant was recommended to me through an Early Birds program administrator.

Persistent observation of Early Bird participants in multiple settings and triangulation through the collection of multiple sources of data also ensured credibility of the research. As a member of a doctoral program cohort, I was able to often participate in peer debriefing with my classmates. Transferability was achieved through the thick, rich description of the study's components, design, and results.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained thick description to be essential to the judgments of transferability (p. 359). The use of this technique allows for the study to transfer to another setting. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted the use of auditing to establish dependability and confirmability (p. 219). Dependability and confirmability requirements were met through detailed notes and transcriptions of the interviews and observations as well as program documents that are ready for an audit.

Table 3.1

Trustworthiness Table

Technique	Results	Examples
	Credibility	
Prolonged engagement	- Trust built - Rapport developed - Relationships built	- Connected to interviewees by their program administrator - Had sent several emails/phone calls to interviewees prior to interview
Persistent observation	- Obtained in-depth data - Obtained accurate data - Sorted relevancies from irrelevancies - Recognize deceits	- Observation of interviewees during interview - Writing interview reflections - Observation of classes - Writing observation reflection - Personal communication (email)
Triangulation	Data verified	Multiple sources of data: interviews, observations, reflections, documented artifacts
Peer debriefing	- Tested working hypotheses - Found alternative explanations - Explored emerging design and hypotheses	Informal discussions with peers
Purposive sampling	Data generated for emergent design and emerging hypotheses	Maximum variation in sampling (some parents currently enrolled in program; some parents who had completed and exited the program)
	Transferability	
Thick description	- Provided data base for transfer ability judgment - Provided a vicarious experience for the reader	Descriptive, relevant data of interviewees and observation of course
	Dependability and Confirmability	
Access to audit trail	Allowed auditor to determine trustworthiness of study	Following documents ready: transcripts of the interviews, interview notes, data note cards, observation notes

Limitations of Study

This study was not intended to generalize the manifestation of parental engagement and involvement, but rather to explore the central phenomenon within two categories of families within one school district – one group of families that participated in the Early Birds program and one group of families that did not. As was participation in this study, participation in the Early Birds program is voluntary. Parents are recruited from a variety of different entities and methods, but it is ultimately the parents' choice to participate in the Early Birds program. It can be assumed that parents who participate in the Early Birds program are likely to be parents that hold strong opinions on "parent engagement" and "parental involvement."

Summary

Chapter III outlined the research design, methods, and procedures used for this study. A case study design was used to gain multiple perspectives on one central phenomenon, through nine parents who live within the Bayside Public Schools district boundaries. Data was also collected through observations and documentation of the Early Birds courses. Chapter IV will give an overview of the data, while Chapter V will analyze the data collected. Chapter VI provides a conclusion on the findings, and provide implications for research, theory, and practice as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV

The purpose of this research is to explore the manifestations of parent engagement in a school with a parent education program through parents who have participated in the program and parents who have not participated in the program through the lens of the theoretical model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). The data presented was collected from one large, urban school district that implements an Early Birds program across their school district. For the purpose of this study and to protect the identity of the research participants, I will refer to this school district as Bayside Public Schools. Participation in the Early Birds program is voluntary, as was the information gathered from parents who had participated in the program and parents who had initially signed up to participate in the program, but did not attend any of the parent education classes. This chapter explores the data I collected from a variety of sources, including interviews with nine parents, artifacts from the Early Birds program, and on-site observations of several Early Bird parent education classes.

Early Childhood at the State Level

Pre-Kindergarten

Oklahoma has been the birth place for many great things including the parking meter, the bread twist tie, the shopping cart, Brad Pitt, and even early childhood education. Due to our high-quality early education programs, Oklahoma has made a name for itself and national organizations and leaders have taken note.

In his State of the Union address on February 12, 2013, President Obama remarked,

> In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children, like Georgia or Oklahoma, studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, form more stable families of their own. We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. (Obama, 2013, p. 7).

In 2014, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) recognized Oklahoma for having one of the top early childhood programs in the United States. Over 75 percent of Oklahoma's four-year-old children attended a public school Pre-Kindergarten program (NIEER, 2014). Families can voluntarily participate in the program. School districts can voluntarily provide a program; however, only six of 529 Oklahoma school districts do not provide or offer a Pre-Kindergarten program (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015). Pre-Kindergarten in Oklahoma is just like another grade level and is a part of the school funding formula. Of the 40,085 Oklahoma four-year-olds that attend a state Pre-Kindergarten program, 80 percent of them are participating in a full-day program (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015). Oklahoma's program has a history of high standards for our state's youngest learners. In addition to a bachelor-degreed, early childhood-certified teacher instructing all children, the students also experience small student to teacher ratios and are taught the state's early learning standards. Each year, largely due to parent support, the program continues to grow.

Figure 4.1 displays the enrollment growth trends of the Oklahoma Pre-

Kindergarten program.
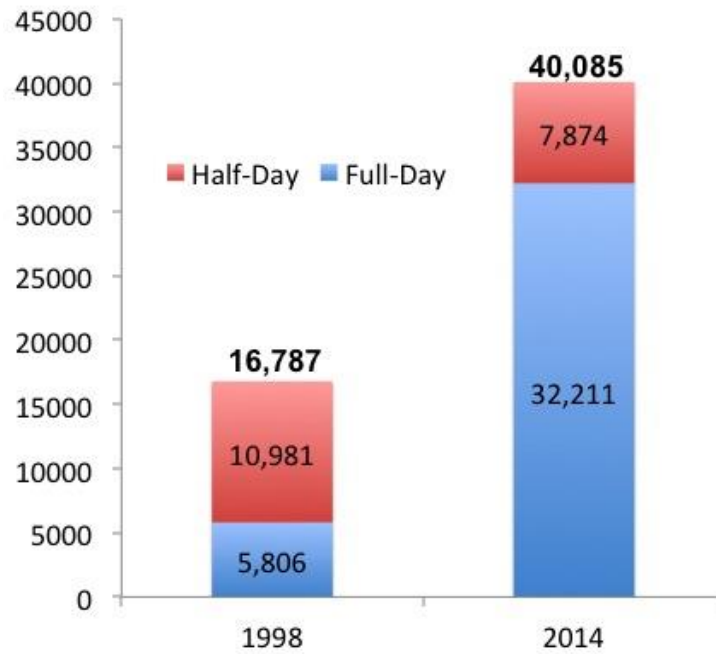
Figure 4.1. Oklahoma Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment Trends (Oklahoma State Department

of Education, 2010; Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015).

Kindergarten

Additionally, the state's Kindergarten program has shown significant growth in

regards to full-day programs. Oklahoma state law required that in the 2013-2014 school

year, all school districts must provide a full-day Kindergarten program; however, only

half-day Kindergarten attendance is mandated (Oklahoma State Department of

Education, 2014). This law gives families the option to choose to send their child to a

half-day or a full-day Kindergarten program. As enrollment is driven by parent choice,

97 percent of all Oklahoma Kindergarteners attend a full-day program.

Table 4.1 shows the Oklahoma Kindergarten enrollment data for the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 4.1

2014-2015 Kindergarten Enrollment Data

	Half-Day Kindergarten	Full-Day Kindergarten	Total Enrollment
Oklahoma	1,250	53,877	55,127
Oklahoma County	5	11,214	11,219

Note. Adapted from "October 1, 2014 student enrollment" from the Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015.

Early Childhood Programs for Children Birth to Age Three

Although public school in Oklahoma begins when a child is four years old, there are additional programs and services to promote early learning and development for younger children in our state. The state operates Oklahoma Parents as Teachers (OPAT), which is a home visitation program for families with children from birth to three years. Parent educators, employed by the school district, make monthly, hour-long home visits to families of young children. Visits include discussions over developmental milestones and a demonstration of and introduction to activities to promote healthy development. Parents are able to ask questions, get professional advice, and learn about their child's growth in the comfort of their own home. Despite high enrollment, a low operating cost, and positive parent feedback, OPAT relies entirely on state funding, which continues to decrease every year, serving fewer districts, and ultimately, less families.

Additional early childhood programs across the state are funded through joint public and private dollars. Many Oklahoma districts collaborate with outside organizations, ranging from child care centers to nursing homes, to provide space for the

Pre-Kindergarten program. There is no place in Oklahoma law that states school must occur in a school house, so district leaders have become creative when needing to create classrooms for the growing Pre-Kindergarten program. When a public school collaborates with a child care center, it provides families with an easier transition and a continuum of care. The state's Early Childhood Program (ECP) is an initiative for children birth through age three established in 2006 with public and private funds. These children attend a year-round, high-quality, low ratio early childhood education program with a certified early childhood lead teacher. Educated teachers attend continuing education courses on leadership and specific training on the development of infants and toddlers. However, high-quality programs with low ratios such as the ECP are very costly, and would not be able to operate without the addition of private funds. In its eighth year, 2,566 children attended the program in 180 classrooms on an estimated operating budget of $28,255,057 or $11,011 per child (Community Action Project of Tulsa County, 2014).

Early Childhood at the Local Level: Bayside Public Schools

District Description

In the center of the county, you will find Bayside Public Schools. Bayside isn't a city itself, but say the name to any resident, and they will have a clear location in mind. Just over 100 years ago, a group of parents met in what is now Bayside Public Schools district, to determine how their children could best be educated. Four one-room schools were consolidated to form Bayside Public Schools. The first schoolhouse, pictured in Figure 4.2, had six classrooms, an auditorium, a superintendent's office, and a "commodious basement." The school had no cafeteria, so students at all levels – primary

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through secondary, brought their lunches to school. Students that lived within two miles

of the schoolhouse walked or rode horses (there was a shed for horses ridden by

students). Students who lived further away could be transported to and from school in a

horse-drawn enclosed wagon. Since its initial founding, Bayside has grown to a large,

urban school district with 18 elementary schools, five middle schools, an alternative

middle school, three traditional high schools, and one alternative high school.

Additionally, seven off-site locations house Pre-Kindergarten classrooms. Today, nearly

20,000 students are enrolled within Bayside Public Schools, with 10,095 of those

students at the elementary level. Figure 4.3 shows Bayside Central High School in the

1970s.

Figure 4.2. Photograph of the exterior of Bayside Public Schools in 1920.

Figure 4.3. An aerial photo of Bayside Central High School in the 1970s.

Elementary schools. There are just over 10,000 students that attend the 18

elementary school sites and seven off-site Pre-Kindergarten centers within Bayside

Public Schools. Bayside Public Schools reports that 92 percent of its four-year-old

students are attending a full-day Pre-Kindergarten program. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 give the

breakdown of the early childhood students within the district, as compared to those

students in the state.

Table 4.2

2014-2015 Oklahoma Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment Data

	Half-Day Pre-Kindergarten	Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten	Total Enrollment
Oklahoma	7,874	32,211	40,085
Oklahoma County	2,101	5,664	7,765
Bayside Public Schools	86	1,078	1,164

Note. Adapted from "October 1, 2014 student enrollment" from the Oklahoma State
Department of Education, 2015.

Table 4.3

2014-2015 Oklahoma Kindergarten enrollment data

	Half-Day Kindergarten	Full-Day Kindergarten	Total Enrollment
Oklahoma	1,250	53,877	55,127
Oklahoma County	5	11,214	11,219
Bayside Public Schools	0	1,539	1,539

Note. Adapted from "October 1, 2014 student enrollment" from the Oklahoma State
Department of Education, 2015.

Each of the 18 elementary school sites serves students in Pre-Kindergarten through the

Fifth Grade. The elementary sites within Bayside Public Schools have a long-standing

history of excellence, both locally and nationally. Four of these elementary sites were

named Blue Ribbon Schools by the United States Department of Education in the 1980s and 1990s.

   District demographics. While Oklahoma continues to grow in size, the demographics of our state continue to change. Figure 4.4 shows the state student demographics in 1990 compared to those in 2014.
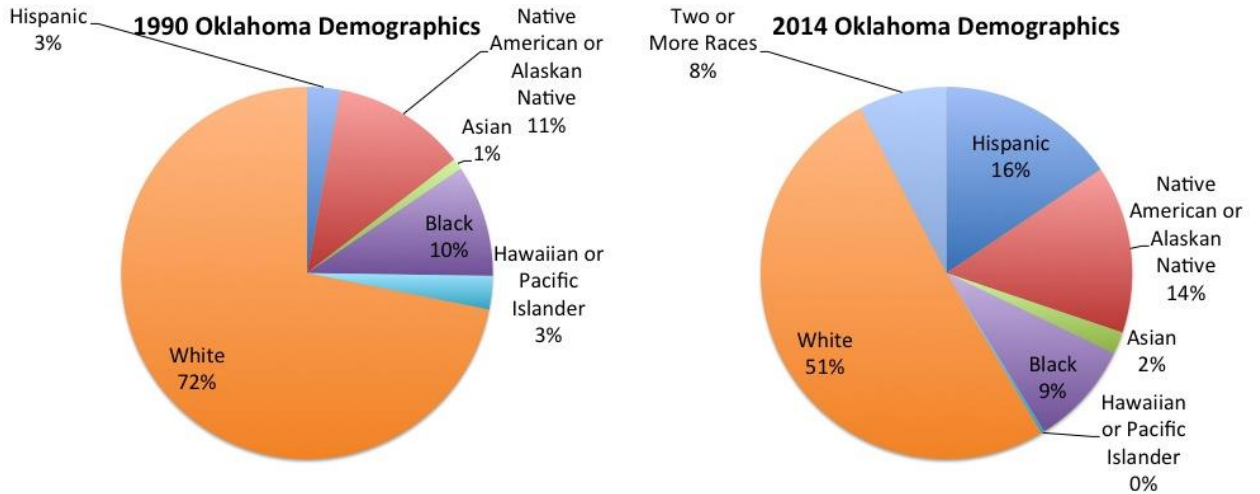
Figure 4.4. Comparison of 1990 and 2014 Oklahoma student demographics (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2010; Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015). Bayside Public Schools is also growing in size, experiencing a 0.36 percent growth in enrollment from the 2013-2014 to the 2014-2015 school years; still, the demographics continue to change and reflect the changes within the state (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015). In 2010, the district was serving double the number of Hispanic students as it was in 1990 (The Oklahoman Editorial Board, 2010). Figure 4.5 shows the most recent student demographics for Bayside Public Schools next to the state data. While one Bayside teacher interviewed by the Daily Oklahoman noted that the increase in Hispanic families has not impacted her teaching practices, it has changed the way she interacts with families. "Interpreters are often needed at parent-teacher conferences and

newsletters and report cards are sent home in English and Spanish" (The Oklahoman

Editorial Board, 2010, pg. 2).

2014 Oklahoma Demographics

- Two or More Races 8%
- Hispanic 16%
- Native American or Alaskan Native 14%
- Asian 2%
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0%
- Black 9%
- White 51%

2014 Bayside Demographics

- White 44%
- Hispanic 24%
- Native American or Alaskan Native 3%
- Asian 4%
- Black 25%
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0%
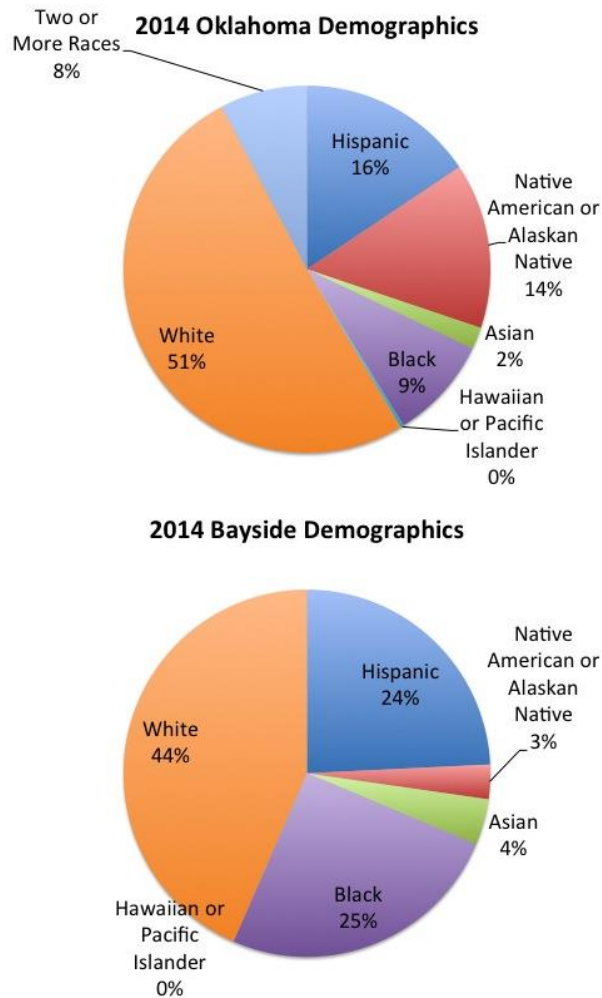
Figure 4.5. Comparison of 2014 Oklahoma and Bayside Public Schools student

demographics (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2015; Office of Educational

Quality and Accountability, 2014).

In addition to the changing ethnic demographics, the number of Bayside students

qualifying for free or reduced lunches has also increased. Ten years ago in 2004, 48.3

percent of students in the district were eligible for free or reduced lunches; today, 76.4

percent qualify, with the state average at 62 percent (Office of Educational Quality and

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Accountability, 2014). Bayside schools have changed. The buildings and the students do not look the same as they did 100, 50, or even 10 years ago. Yet students and families still have the same needs.

Research Participants' Descriptions

As described in Chapter III, this study explored the phenomenon through nine parents who live within the Bayside Public Schools district boundaries. Out of these nine parents, five participated in an Early Birds program, while the other four have not attended any courses.

Early Bird parent participant profiles. The five parent participants have either participated in or are currently enrolled in the Early Birds program sponsored by Bayside Public Schools. These families have at least one child that is at least four years old and eligible to attend public school.

Parent one. Ms. Morris is a married mother of two children, a daughter in second grade and a son in fourth grade. She heard about the Early Birds program through a family member and then she "called Bayside schools and they told me about it and we just went to a class. I didn't really know what it was going to be but…"

Parent two. Ms. Slater is a married parent of a second grader, a Kindergartener, and a two-year-old girl. She had heard about the Early Birds program through her sister and her oldest child's teacher; she said, "my sister was going there, and she told me about the program."

Parent three. Ms. Powers is a married mother of two girls, a first grader and a two-year old. She states that she got involved in the program when "I was at the library

playgroup and they circulated a little flyer… and I signed up for that 'cause I thought it sounded cool… just you know to see your kid is on track with everything."

Parent four. Ms. Turtle is a married mother of two young children. She is a reading specialist within Bayside schools and was a bit hesitant about initially enrolling in the Early Birds program.

> I was thinking maybe [the program] was more geared, you know… I just didn't know that I could take advantage of it too and so [the program administrator] told me about it and I went and it was fantastic, and they had these great ideas, these great resources, great toys and you know, great way of engaging your child in engaging stuff and that's just how I got involved…

Parent five. Ms. Kapowski is a married mother of an eight-year-old son and a seven-year-old daughter. She first heard about the program through a family member who is a teacher's assistant at one of Bayside's off-site Pre-Kindergarten programs. She also spoke of recruiting friends to participate with her, "I think I was doing [it] for about a year, maybe not even a full year, and then, um, I found some of my friends. I had told them how great it was…"

Early Bird non--participant profiles. The remaining four parents in this study have not participated in the Early Birds program, yet reside in Bayside's district boundaries. One of their children is at least four years old. More specifically, these were families that had initially signed up to participate in the Early Birds program within Bayside Public Schools, but never attended a session.

Parent six. Mr. Belding is a single father with one child in Pre-Kindergarten. His daughter attends one of Bayside's off-site Pre-Kindergarten programs. He mentioned his

sister as a primary source of influence on his decisions as a parent, "my sister's daughter is the same age as my daughter, so we kind of bounce stuff off of each other and things like that."

Parent seven. Ms. Spano is a single mother of two young children. She mentioned getting a lot of her parental advice and guidance from the internet, specifically internet websites geared to moms that send monthly newsletters based on each child's individual age via email.

Parent eight. Ms. Carosi is a married mother of two girls, one in Kindergarten and the other in sixth grade. She discussed her faith and church family being a large influence on her decisions as a parent. "A lot of friends have children that… have already passed that phase that we're in, and you know we have friends we rely on and I read a lot of different books… on raising a powerful child."

Parent nine. Ms. Bickerstaff is a married mother of one young son. She spoke of a strong relationship between her own parents, and cited that as the guiding force in the decisions she makes as a parent. "My parents were always, we've always been very close. They've always been involved and really into our education and wanting us to succeed. So them being close to [my son], really helps out with his education too."

Early Birds Program

Smart Start Oklahoma is the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council, with the mission to "lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system focused on strengthening families and school readiness for all children" (Smart Start Oklahoma, 2015). The mission is carried out through the use of 19 communities across the state. Figure 4.6 shows a map of the Smart Start Oklahoma communities. The Smart Start

communities work with all of the early childhood entities in their local area to strengthen and support the resources for young children and their families. One such community is Smart Start Central Oklahoma, which operates the Early Birds program in coordination with four public school districts.
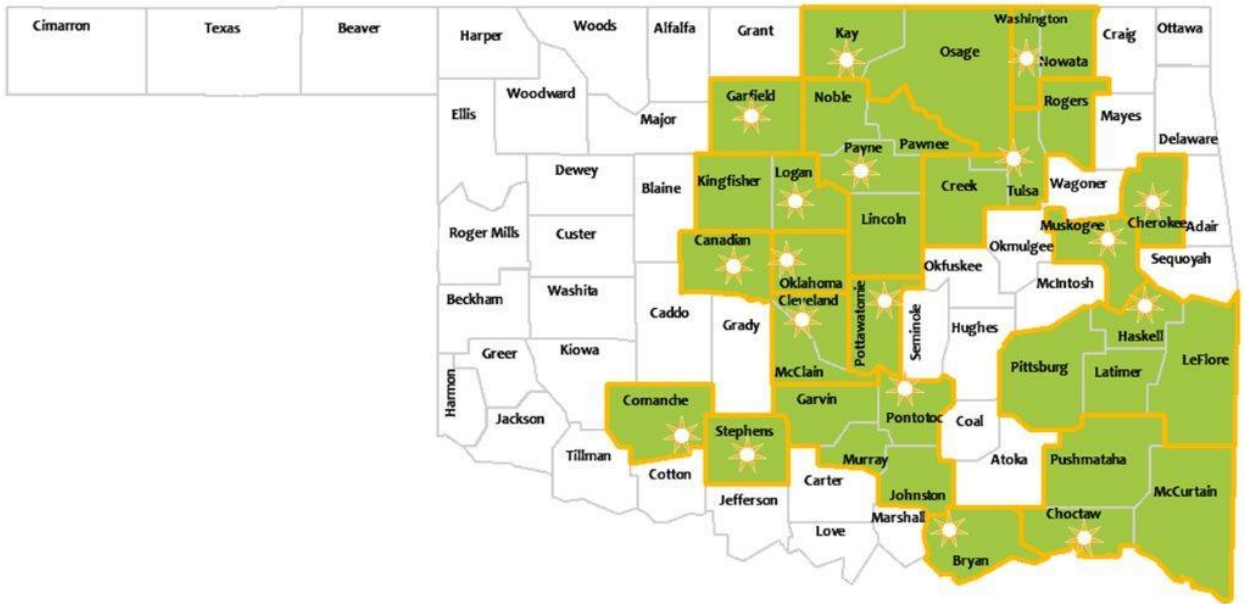
Figure 4.6. Smart Start Oklahoma communities (Smart Start Oklahoma, 2015).

The Early Birds program is a family-focused school readiness service for families with children birth to age five. Three free 90-minute classes are offered throughout one year in addition to one prenatal class, resulting in 16 classes over the course of five consecutive years. There is an overlap of services with the Early Birds program ending when a child is five-years-old and school beginning when a child is four-years-old; some children with parents participating in the Early Birds program may also be attending school. Early Birds courses are offered in both English and Spanish at local elementary schools in evenings and on Saturdays. Ms. Powers noted the casual nature of the classes, "it's really informal… 'cause I know, you think of 'meeting,' and they think, 'oh, we

know… it's all formal,' but we know it's not. It's informal, it's fun." The classes are for

parents, so the program provides free childcare to parent and caregiver participants.

Instructors are trained professionals in the field of early childhood education. Ms.

Powers said that most of her class instructors were also teachers within Bayside, and

"they had good input." Topics covered in the courses include "child development,

everyday learning opportunities, activities that promote school readiness, purposeful

parenting techniques, and health and safety" (Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2010a).

The Early Bird curriculum is research-based with a focus on child development across

multiple domains. Ms. Powers said she loved the program, and how it allowed her "to

see your kid is on-track with everything… that they need to be on." The developers also

embedded the child abuse prevention protective factors and Oklahoma School Readiness

Indicators, which include approaches to learning, creative skills, listening skills, speaking

skills, literacy, math, physical development, science, and social and personal skills within

the curriculum (L. Monroe, personal communication, July 3, 2014). Each activity within

the Early Birds curriculum was created to align to the Kindergarten Priority Academic

Student Skills (PASS). The program also provides networking opportunities as well as a

collection of free resources, books, and educational toys for the participants. Ms. Morris

commented on the books and educational toys received from attending the classes,

> I think somebody that has never gone to it, and I've always told people about it…
>
> you get so much more from the program in just sitting and listening, and stuff like
>
> that. But for somebody that is hesitant to go, I would tell them definitely about all
>
> the freebies that they get, because it may entice them in, and then they learn more
>
> there. And it's not just about the freebies, but I think the freebies were an

excellent way when I tell parents, 'you are going to get all these learning games and toys and puzzles and books,' and I think that is an extremely nice enticement to get people in there and they learn more when they get in…

Ms. Powers also commented on the high quality of the books and toys she received, "and it's not like they give you cheap toys… they give you really nice stuff and really cool books that I would never have even seen before." The Early Birds program is operated by four school districts, including Bayside Public Schools.

Program course and curriculum. When I walked into an Early Birds course on the campus of a Bayside elementary school, I was immediately greeted by a friendly, familiar face at registration. I learned that any first time attendee is directed to a room based upon his or her child's current age. After a few short introductions, a parent educator led the class session. The core of this session was on child development, and parents were given multiple opportunities to discuss, ask questions, and share ideas. At this particular class session observed, the group had one session prior and had been able to use the educational toys and books they had received at a previous class session at home. The discussion turned to some blocks each parent had received. These parents were able to share ideas on how they used the blocks, what types of questions they asked their children while playing, and ideas for future uses of the blocks as their children get older.

Parent Educator (class instructor): You've had a few months to play with the blocks at home. Have you found new uses for them?

Parent A: We've loved playing with the blocks at home. We've done so much more than just stacking.

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Parent B: I agree. That's really all we used to do too, and knock them over, but know I can ask my daughter to 'bring me the red block,' and I'm so surprised she knows which one.

Parent A: Yes, we've been working on colors and counting the blocks too.

Parent Educator: Incorporating some math skills! That's great! How do you think you can continue to use the blocks in the future, as your children get older?

Parent C: We've been trying to incorporate 'shapes,' but we're just not there yet. The parents attending this class session were of all different races, different ages, and lived within different socioeconomic areas of the Bayside district, but were all able to share and discuss strategies and learn from one another.

At the beginning of each class session the new educational toys and books are presented to the participants, along with the instructor giving ideas on how parents can purposefully use these items at home with their children. Figure 4.7 shows how classes are divided into sections.

Sample Class Overview
Introduction (10 minutes)
Your Child's Development (10 minutes)
Healthy and Strong (1 minutes)
Parent and Child Activities (40 minutes)
Everyday Learning (10 minutes)
Purposeful Parenting (10 minutes)
Healthy You! (1-3 minutes)
Class Evaluation (5 minutes)

Figure 4.7. A sample class overview of an Early Birds course (Smart Start Oklahoma,

2010b).

Each class ends with a class evaluation. When speaking to the program administrators,

the evaluation was cited as the most important aspect of the program. One program

administrator noted that the evaluation responses provided validation to the program,

indicated that participating parents were benefiting and enjoying the program, and

showed that the program was also making a significant impact. Program administrators

stated that the evaluations were also used to make improvements to the program, based

upon the participants' feedback.

　　　At the very first Early Birds class, parents are given an Early Birds parent

handbook. This white plastic three-ring binder is filled with 60 pages of information,

including school readiness indicators, activities indicators – each activity aligned to a

school readiness indicator, developmental milestones, and handouts on activities to

promote child development. The handbook also includes the words and motions to over

30 songs and fingerplays, which are songs with corresponding hand and finger

movements. Additional resources within the binder include ideas on incorporating

reading, math, and play in the home. The guides encourage parents to explore ways they

can incorporate learning into everyday activities, such as keeping books in every room in

the house and bringing them with you in your purse or diaper bag, how putting silverware

away can be a way to learn math concepts, and talking about the characters in books and

how they may be feeling to help your child recognize his own feelings and express them

with words. There are also multiple community resources and contact information in the

back of the binder.

Program participants. The mother's education level continues to be a predictor

in a child's later academic success (Tang, Davis-Kean, Chen, & Sexton, 2014). In the

2013-2014 program year, 16.8 percent of the mothers of Bayside Early Birds participants

did not receive a high school degree. Figure 4.8 shows the breakdown of mother's

education level of the Bayside Early Birds participants.
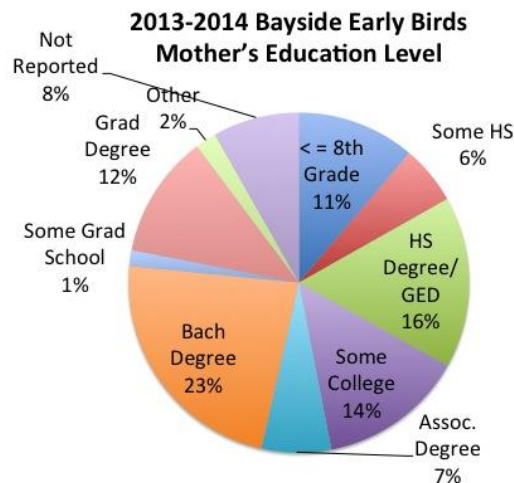
Figure 4.8. 2013-2014 Bayside Early Birds participants' mother's education level

(Monroe, 2014).

Still, the vast majority, 92.4 percent, of Bayside Early Birds participants is the child's

parent, with 75.8 percent of participants report being married. Aside from these facts and

living in the Bayside district boundaries, all other data on the participants show the varied

backgrounds and home lives of the participants. Figures 4.9 and 4.10 also give a better

understanding of the wide range of participants, as the charts display the participants'

home languages and annual income, respectively.
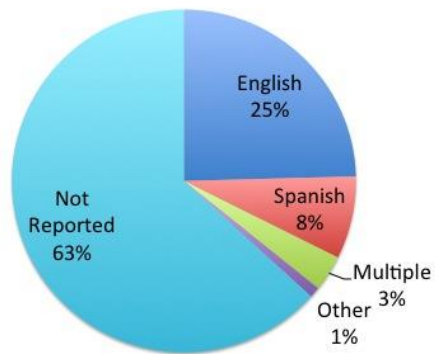
Figure 4.9. 2013-2014 Bayside Early Birds participants' home language (Monroe, 2014).

2013-2014 Bayside Early Birds Annual Income
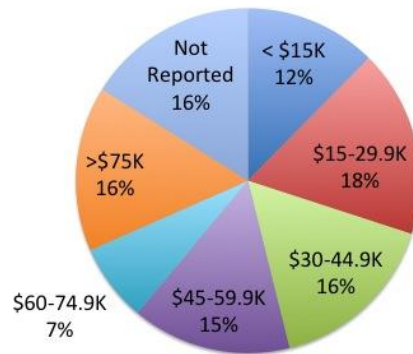
Figure 4.10. 2013-2014 Bayside Early Birds participants' annual income (Monroe, 2014).

Parent Networks

…and it's just me and the parents, trying to figure out how to be better parents for our kids… (Ms. Slater, interview, November 1, 2014)

Bayside Public Schools prides themselves on strong community involvement and support. The number of parents attending at least one parent-teacher conference is at 77.8 percent, which is higher than state average of 74.1 percent (Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, 2014). It is reported that parents and community members also volunteer within the schools, logging 2.3 volunteer hours per student (Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, 2014). This support and involvement comes from a strong volunteer program as well as the district's long-standing foundation. Programs like the Early Birds program receive financial support and aid from the district's foundation, which has invested over two million dollars in educational programs since its establishment in 1987. The mission of Bayside Public Schools is to "prepare our students to be responsible citizens and lifelong learners." If learning does begin at birth,

this mission is supported through the district's implementation of early education programs such as Parents as Teachers, Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and the Early Birds program.

The theme of parent networks emerged in the interviews conducted for this research. All of the participants interviewed spoke of the networks, interactions, and connections they made with other parents within the Early Birds program. While building parent networks is not an established goal of the Early Birds program, participants are given time and opportunities to build a rapport with the other parents during the classes. Ms. Morris spoke on this topic,

> …some of the parents when you're in there would say something that works for them, or some issue they they're having with their kids, them not listening to them, or something. It's nice to hear that you're not the only one. There's a whole bunch of other parents going through the some stuff as you, and that's nice to have that network

Within the fall class session for parents of children in their first year of life, time is set aside for parents to introduce themselves to the other parent participants, sharing something each parent and child enjoy doing together (Smart Start Oklahoma, 2010b). All of the 90-minute classes throughout the program are interactive, giving parents time to respond to questions, ask questions, and respond to prompts. Figure 4.11 shows a section of the fall class session of the first year from the Instructor's Framework.

Parent and Child Activities
40 minutes (20 minutes for each activity – 15 minutes to go through activities and 5 minutes to explore and discuss)
Materials Needed: Baby Blocks / Basket / Activity Handout / page 6, Handbook
Demonstrate naming game with the blocks.
Ask: "Tell me about your experience playing with the blocks." "Now just play with the blocks for a couple of minutes."
Ask: "What else can you do with the blocks?" As participants share ideas, acknowledge how important their experience as a parent is and how they are already doing great things with their child.
Share some Readiness Indicators from Handbook.
Ask: "Any questions about these blocks?"

Figure 4.11. A portion of the "Parent and Child Activities" section from the Instructor Framework, fall 0-1 Year (Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2010b).

As displayed in Figure 4.13 above, participants are given time to share and communicate with the other parent participants during the class sessions. Ms. Powers also talked about the ideas gained from talking with the others parents at the classes, specifically about ideas she gained while discussing the uses of the free materials distributed,

> like, here is a set of blocks, how else could you play with the blocks besides
>
> stacking them, then go around the room and everyone gives an idea they have
>
> some pretty innovative ideas… it's nice to get some [ideas from] other parents.

Figure 4.11 is an example of a class session that provided blocks for the participants to take home. Parents were able to play with the blocks themselves, were shown an

example of activities to do with the blocks, and given an opportunity to share and learn from fellow parent participants with additional ideas and thoughts on block activities.

The structure of the classes also gives parents time to develop networks with like-minded parents, as the classes are organized within each school district by the age of the child and offered in both English and Spanish. Table 4.4 shows the breakdown of the program courses offered.

Table 4.4

Early Birds Course Offerings

Fall	Winter	Spring
Prenatal	Prenatal	Prenatal
0-1 years	0-1 years	0-1 years
1-2 years	1-2 years	1-2 years
2-3 years	2-3 years	2-3 years
3-4 years	3-4 years	3-4 years
4-5 years	4-5 years	4-5 years

Note. Adapted from "Early Birds" from the Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2010a.

Ms. Slater spoke of the gains she received from networking with other parents while she was attending the classes. She made connections with, and learned from, parents that had children with similar temperaments as her children.

> When you go to the classes, you learn from other parents. [speaking about her children] The first one is quiet, the second one is more energetic, and the third one, she's a troublemaker. There [are] other parents that [have] an energetic kid and another one's a troublemaker…

Ms. Kapowski said she always enjoyed hearing from the other parents in the classes who gave their own input and ideas, and that it was "always nice to hear from other people

and try different things out." Ms. Powers mentioned that as a stay-at home mom, the Early Birds program was often her only time to connect and talk with other parents,

> I mean, just that one hour gives me… I don't want to sound mean, but away from the kids and with other parents. 'Cause it's usually just [me] with them 24/7 and even with my husband, it's just they're still here, so we go to that hour, and it's just me and the parents, trying to figure out how to be better parents for our kids.

Non-participants spoke of family members, rather than other parents in their community of similar-aged children, when speaking of their parent networks. Mr. Belding mentioned that he and his sister have daughters of similar ages and they often "bounce stuff off of each other and things like that." When asked what influences her decision as a parent, Ms. Spano replied that her "mom gives me advice sometimes… I ask her on certain things that I'm just not sure about… so that, and then just kind of the news, I guess." Later on in our interview, Ms. Spano noted that there was an area of particular concern with her son, and she wasn't sure how to handle the issue.

> *Researcher: …and so, when you're thinking about stuff like that* [information on being aware of strangers]*, where would you go for information to find out about that?*

> *Ms. Spano: I haven't yet, but I was going to check the Baby Center* [an online source for parenting and pregnancy]. *They have a little communication* [an online forum] *and just see what has been said and what, just internet, and how to talk to him about it without scaring him, pretty much.*

Like Ms. Spano, another non-participant, Ms. Bickerstaff spoke of the relationship with her own parents, but also mentioned going online and using Facebook as a source of parenting information. Ms. Carosi stated that she looks for parenting information from "a

lot of friends that have children that are, that have already passed that phase that we're in…" None of the non-participants interviewed spoke of having an established parent network.

Parent Interactions

…just the way I play with them, it's not like 'weew' cars, it's… 'look at the blue car…(Ms. Slater, interview, November 1, 2014)

Many of the program participants talked about the affirmation and confidence the Early Birds program gave them. Ms. Kapowski said, "I think I was already doing a lot of it, but it was nice to hear." Instructors are taught to encourage and support parents in the interactions they are already having with their children, as demonstrated by Figure 4.14 (Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2010b). The instructors reaffirm to the participants that parenting is the most important job, and parents are the most important part of a child's life. Parents are told at each class session that they are their child's first and most important teacher. "You are the one who will give your child a smart start!" (Smart Start Oklahoma, 2010b, p. 2). Ms. Morris noted that since exiting the program some of her parent involvement practices have changed for the better,

> We always did reading at bedtime, and we were doing that before Early Birds,
>
> and just to take additional time throughout the day or on the weekend… that you
>
> can play some of the games… to where it wasn't just 'reading books before bed.'

The Parent Handbook given to all program participants is aligned to the Oklahoma State standards and the state's school readiness indicators. Parent participants are instructed on the indicators for each activity during the course sessions, but the Parent Handbook provides an outline and a plan for each tangible material provided through the course,

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such as blocks and stacking rings. Figure 4.12 shows the school readiness indicators associated with the blocks provided during the fall course for parents with children up to one-year-old.

Baby Blocks (0-1 Year)
Approaches to learning: naturally curious
Oral language: understands and follows oral language
Vocabulary: expands knowledge of words and word means
Number sense: introduced to the relationship between numbers and quantities; observes counting objects
Geometry and spatial sense: develops understanding of directionality, order, and position of objects
Science process and inquiry: investigates and experiments with objects to discover information
Fine motor: increases control of hand and eye coordination and the control of small muscles in hands
Social and personal skills: plays and interacts easily with an adult

Figure 4.12. Activities indicators for baby blocks (Smart Start Oklahoma, 2010c). Developmental milestones and expectations from birth through age five, five pages of songs and fingerplays, additional resources for reading, play, math, friends and feelings, setting limits, healthy living, and pages for community resources from hotlines to health care to child care are also at the fingertips of every parent participant. This information provided is empowering to parents who have participated in the course. Ms. Morris spoke of the confidence she felt in her interactions based upon the information that was provided, "…then just to have somebody tell you 'this is how a child learns,' and then it's just a good way to remind yourself who you are talking to and who you are trying to help."

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Program instructors also teach participants about "Everyday Learning" and "Purposeful Parenting," which includes finding learning opportunities in daily interactions and helping provide parents with positive behavior strategies in interacting with their children. Included in the parent handbook is a stack of "Everyday Learning Reference Cards" on a silver ring that can easily fit inside a purse or pocket. These cards emphasize what is taught in the classes and give parents even more ideas for teachable moments at home, on a walk, on the road, at the store, when eating, when going to bed, and in the bath (Smart Start Oklahoma, 2010c). In our interview, Ms. Morris mentioned she enjoyed some of the games and activities provided through the course for car rides, something she would have not thought of or done, if she hadn't participated in the course. Ms. Turtle also spoke of the benefit of the "Everyday Learning Reference Cards,"

> …well, you know, they have those Everyday Learning [Reference] Cards, and that just brought it into a perspective of things we can do while driving down the street and going to the grocery store, and, umm, 'let's count the wheels on the shopping cart,' or 'see your name starts with an 'h,' let's find all the 'h's.' Just things you can do, not when you're sitting down, just everyday work. I think that has helped a lot.

Figure 4.13 shows a portion of sections of the fall class session of the first year from the Instructor's Framework.

Everyday Learning
Everyday Learning **10 minutes**
Materials Needed: Everyday Learning Cards / Resources section in Handbook
Ask: "What is a special game you play, song you sing, or book you read with your baby? Share with the person next to you." *Share a few favorites.*
Share Everyday Learning tips: •Around the house: keep books in every area of the house – so you can pick up one and read whenever you get the chance •In the tub: name your baby's body parts are you wash him •At the table: talk about the textures, temperature, or colors of the food he is eating •On the go: talk about where you are going, what you see along the way; listen to music •Off to bed: talk to her while you are putting on her pajamas: "We are taking off your dirty clothes and putting on your red pajamas!" •General tips: keep a routine for your child during the day and at night – this will help regulate her brain and body! (at night: eat, bath, stories & singing, bed)
If time, ask: "What routines do you have with your baby" *Look at the Resources section in your Handbook for more Everyday Learning tips around the house. Use your Everyday Learning cards for more ideas when you are on the go.*
Purposeful Parenting **10 minutes**
"Your child is learning all day – through play and everyday experiences – you are helping him make the most of each moment. You can help him grow as a person who cares for others, who respects and listens, and who is responsible, by teaching him about what he can do and by re-directing his misbehavior. It is important for children to have guidance from their parents – at every age- but babies require a more gentle approach."
Materials Needed: page 48, Handbook (Setting Limits with Preschoolers)
Talk about re-directing: "Use a gentle, but firm tone when re-directing your baby – problems at this age are typically a child who pulls your hair, swats at your, or puts things in his mouth."
"Tell your child what he can do – give him a toy that he can pull, grab, or swat. Say 'we only put food in our mouth.' 'You can throw this ball. Trucks are for rolling.' 'Bang on this drum. Mommy is for hugging.'
Ask: "How do you have to re-direct your child at this age?"

Figure 4.13. A portion of the "Everyday Learning" and "Purposeful Parenting" sections

from the Instructor Framework, fall 0-1 Year (Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2010b).

Ms. Slater spoke of the more purposeful interactions she now has with her children, and how she is able to incorporate learning colors, letters, and numbers into their play. "Just the way I play with them, it's not like 'weew' cars, it's… 'look at the blue car." She also mentioned how the program has influenced reading at home, that's she's able to do more than just "read the book,"

> I know I was into, like, reading, but now that they tell us exactly how to do it; how to at least 20 minutes at day, and I probably put importance to it, but not as much as I do now…

Non-participants did not speak on the purposeful parenting interactions as the participants explained in their interviews. Many of the non-participants spoke of reading nightly to their children, but did not elaborate on their interactions when providing examples of parental involvement. Ms. Powers, a participant in the program, and Ms. Bickerstaff, a non-participant both mentioned playing blocks with their children. However, Ms. Powers went into much greater detail about her interactions, stating that it is more than just "playing with blocks," it's an everyday learning opportunity to learn colors, math, and social skills. Ms. Bickerstaff may engage in a similar interaction with her son, but she did not mention it during our interview. The Early Birds program educates parents in finding learning opportunities in everyday interactions.

Parent Past Influences

…even conferences, my mom couldn't make it to conferences… (Ms. Slater, interview, November 1, 2014)

The past experiences of parent participants is not focused on nor is it a part of the Early Birds program curriculum. Throughout the pages of the Instructor's Framework and the Parent Handbook is the emphasis on the present and the future.

> Early Birds will arm you with information, activities, and materials to use with you play with your young child. Understanding how children develop will allow you to know what to expect and how to help your young child develop and be successful. Early Birds will support you as you give your child the smart start he needs and deserves. (Smart Start Oklahoma, 2010c, p. 1)

The Parent Handbook states, "when you complete each Early Birds class, you will know how to play so your child will learn and develop skills that will give him future success in school and life" (Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2010c). Parent participants are not asked their motivation or reasons for enrolling in or participating in the courses, nor are they surveyed on their past experiences related to their own parents' involvement, or lack of involvement. The program targets and recruits low-income families to participate, but any family living within the district boundaries is eligible to attend the courses. Still, parents that were participants and parents that were non-participants both spoke about their prior influences, specifically their parents, on their decision to be involved in their child's education – in many instances because they had parents that were involved, but in some cases because their parents were not involved in their education, and these parents wanted better for their own children. Ms. Slater elaborated,

> I just want to look back at my past, and my mom wasn't so involved in our
> activities, or basically none of our stuff. She had to work. So I get to stay at
> home, and I like to be more influence with all their school work, and their field
> trips, and just try to keep them on track…"

She said she makes it a point to be at her children's school every day because she never wants her children to feel the loss she felt with a parent that wasn't present. Ms. Spano, a non-participant parent, also had an uninvolved mother, which led her to want to be more involved in her son's education.

> My mom used to go out a lot… we were with my dad most of the time, so I try to
> keep [my family] all together. I try, I mean, when it came to holidays and
> birthdays, she was awesome, but just day-to-day stuff, like, I try to be more
> involved [than my mother was].

> Many of the program participants mentioned getting involved in the Early Birds

program because a friend or a relative recommended the program. Some participants mentioned not knowing what to expect from the course, but going on the pure recommendation of someone they trust. Ms. Turtle, a reading specialist within Bayside Public Schools, admitted being hesitant at first to enroll in the program, thinking it was only for low-income families.

> I was thinking maybe it was more geared, you know… I just didn't know that I
> could take advantage of it too, and so [the district program director] told me about
> it and I went and it was fantastic! They had these great ideas, these great
> resources, great toys… and a great way of engaging your child in engaging stuff
> and that's just how I got involved.

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Summary

Early childhood programs in our state are growing and expanding, along with families. Practitioners and decision-makers are working to meet the needs of these changing families. Parents who have participated in the Early Birds program have been given a wealth of knowledge through the class sessions and the parent handbook. Additional strengths of the program were identified though the research for this paper. The themes of parent networks and parent interactions emerged in the interviews and observations. Parents were able to connect with other like-minded parents in the classes and share ideas, all while learning from an educated class instructor. Parents that participated in the Early Birds program believed that their interactions with their own children improved and they became more aware of purposeful play with their children. Parent past influences was another theme that emerged through research. The past experiences – both good and bad – of all of the parents interviewed impacted their decision to be involved in their child's education. In Chapter V, I will explore how the data presented in Chapter IV is viewed through the lens of the theoretical model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005), as well as discuss my findings and conclusions.

CHAPTER V

As stated in Chapter I, this study explored the manifestation of parental

involvement through the lens of a portion of the theoretical model developed by Hoover-

Dempsey and Sandler (2005). More specifically, level one of this model, as shown in

Figure 5.1 below, which focuses on parents' motivational beliefs defined as parental role

construction and parental self-efficacy (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-

Dempsey, 2005).

Level 1

Personal Motivators		Parents' Perception of Contextual Invitations to Involvement			School/Program Responsiveness to Family Life Context Variables		
Parental Role Construction for Involvement	Parental Efficacy for Helping the Student Succeed	General Invitations from School/ Program	Specific Invitations from Teacher	Specific Invitations from Student	Parental Knowledge & Skills	Parental Time & Energy	Family Culture

Figure 5.1. Level One of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's Model of Parent Involvement

(Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b)

Chapter II of this paper delved into the model further, and sought definitions of

Level One of the scale (see Figure 1), which relates to personal motivators of parental

role construction for involvement and parental efficacy for helping the student succeed

(Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b). Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) noted,

Research to date on the sets of variables hypothesized to motivate parents'

involvement has suggested that parental role construction—parents' beliefs about

what they are supposed to do in relation to their student's education… —is

predictive of parents' involvement at home and school. (p. 74)

Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) also noted the importance of previous

experiences in a parent's motivation to become involved in their child's education. This

can include their own educational experiences or previous interactions with the school

system. Chapter IV presented the variety of data that was collected for this study. A

history and overview of Oklahoma's early childhood education programs, state and local

demographics, as well as demographic information on the Bayside Early Birds

participants were provided. I interviewed five participants of the Bayside Early Birds

program and four non-participants, I attended and observed Early Birds courses, and I

collected program artifacts. These multiple sources allowed for a clearer picture of the

data. Three main themes of parent networks, parent interactions, and parent past

influences emerged from the research conducted through the interviews and observations.

This chapter will analyze the data presented in Chapter IV through the lens of a portion of

the theoretical model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005).

Post Hoc Analysis

Following the analysis and coding of the data collected through the interviews,

observations, and artifacts collected, I conducted a set of follow-up surveys with the

research participants. As as researcher, I wanted to know more about the participant's

levels of involvement and attitudes towards the school, as it was related to the theoretical

model. The surveys I sent to the participants were replicate scales created by Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, and colleagues (2005a) and grounded in their research and theoretical model (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992, Walker, et al., 2005). Additionally, as these scales are grounded in research, the reliability and validity of each scale has been analyzed and evaluated. The surveys were sent to all nine participates via email.   The contents of Chapter V focus on my findings from the results of the participant's responses on these surveys.

Personal Motivators in Early Bird Parent Participants

The Parent Institute (2012) stated that a central notion to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model is the "idea that parents' motivations for involvement are a function of the social systems to which they belong" (p.2). The group noted that parents' role construction and sense of efficacy are influenced by

- their own family and academic experiences during their childhood,

- current family systems, and

- recent experiences in the school systems that their children attend.

(The Parent Institute, 2012, p. 2)

Most of the Early Bird parent participants interviewed had what they identified as involved parents growing up, and believed their upbringing influenced their decision to be involved in their own children's educations. Matriarchs had a particular influence on the parent participants. For example, Ms. Morris recalled her own mother seeking out free educational activities to do with her daughters, and now finds herself engaging in similar activities with her own children. Ms. Powers and Ms. Kapowski also cited their own mother's love of education as an influence in their current parental decisions. Ms.

Turtle spoke of finding a connection in the love of reading with a stern grandmother, which continues to influence her as a parent and as a reading specialist. However, Ms. Slater noted that it was her own uninvolved mother and seeing what she missed out on as a child, as her reasoning for being an involved parent in her children's education.

Parental Role Construction for Involvement

Parental role construction has been defined earlier as parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their student's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). The Parent Institute (2012) referred to this as a parent's "job description from their own viewpoint" (p. 2). Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, Whitaker, and Orlowski (2005) listed some of the role activity beliefs as

- Volunteering at the school

- Communicating with child's teacher regularly

- Helping child with homework

- Making sure the school has what it needs

- Supporting decisions made by the teacher

- Staying on top of things at school

- Explaining tough assignments to child

- Talking with other parents from child's school

- Making the school better

- Talking with child about the school day

(Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a)

The Early Bird parent participants identified these same behaviors in their interviews when asked to define parent involvement and their current involvement in her children's education. Figure 5.2 shows the results of the analysis of the interviews through this lens.

	Mrs. Morris	Mrs. Slater	Mrs. Powers	Mrs. Turtle	Mrs. Kapowski
Volunteering at the school	X	X	*	*	X
Communicating with child's teacher regularly		X	X	X	X
Helping child with homework	X	X	X	X	X
Making sure the school has what it needs	X	X			X
Supporting decisions made by the teacher		X	X		X
Staying on top of things at school	X	X	X	X	X
Explaining tough assignments to child	X	X	X		
Talking with other parents from child's school					
Making the school better	X	X			X
Talking with child about the school day	X	X	X	X	X

Figure 5.2. Role Activity Beliefs from interviews with Early Bird Parent Participants

While the participants were not prompted with this list of behaviors, many of the Early Bird parent participants used them to define parent involvement and to provide her opinion on her own level of parental involvement. For example, Ms. Powers and Ms. Turtle mentioned wanting to volunteer at their children's schools, but noted that an autoimmune disease and being a teacher at the school, respectively, kept them from volunteering regularly at the school.

The nine parents interviewed for this study were also sent a set of online surveys to complete regarding parent role construction and parental efficacy several weeks after

the interviews were conducted. These three surveys were developed by, and based upon the research by, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). Of the nine parents, three of the Early Birds participants completed the surveys and only one non-participant completed the surveys. Below is a summary of the surveys based upon the responses from the three Early Bird participants.

Role activity beliefs. A 10-item measure of role activity beliefs was used to assess the extent to which a parent believes that he or she should be actively involved in the child's education. This scale used a six-point Likert-type response format:

1. Disagree very strongly

2. Disagree just a little

3. Agree just a little

4. Agree

5. Agree more strongly

6. Agree very strongly

According to the researchers, "higher scores indicate beliefs supporting a more active parental role in the child's education; lower scores indicate beliefs supporting a less active or more passive role in the child's education" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a). The participants were asked to respond to the following prompt: "Parents have many different beliefs about their level of responsibility in their children's education. Please respond to the following statements by indicating the degree to which <u>you believe</u> you are responsible for the following:"

Table 5.1

Role Activity Beliefs Survey Results from Early Bird Parent Participants

	Average Response
…to volunteer at the school.	4.3
…to communicate with my child's teacher regularly.	4.7
…to help my child with homework.	5
…make sure the school has what it needs.	4
…support decisions made by the teacher.	5.3
…stay on top of things at school.	5.3
…explain tough assignments to my child.	4.7
…talk with other parents from my child's school.	3.7
…make the school better.	4
…talk with my child about the school day.	5.3

Note. Adapted from scales developed by Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, and associates (2005a) and Walker and associates (2005).

It is not surprising that the four highest rated behaviors – helping with homework, supporting decisions made by the teacher, staying on top of things at school, and talking with children about their school day – were also the behaviors that the participants used the most when defining parent involvement in the interviews. Additionally, while parent networks was a theme that emerged from the interviews and observations, "talking with other parents from my child's school" was rated very low by the participants in the survey and was not used by any participant during the interviews to define parental involvement.

Valence toward school. The scale of valence refers to "the parent's attraction to or general disposition toward schools, based on his or her prior personal experience with

schools" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a, "Role Construction: Valence Towards School,"

para. 9). Chapter II spoke of the importance of parents' past experiences in relation to

their current involvement in their children's education.

> The scale employs a 6-point Likert-type response format in which respondents are
> asked to rate their experience regarding selected elements of schooling. Each of
> the elements is on a continuum; one end is anchored by negative experience, the
> other by positive experience (e.g., My school: 1 = disliked, 6 = liked). Higher
> scores indicate a stronger attraction to school; lower scores indicate lower
> attraction toward school. Participants were asked to respond to the following
> prompt: "People have different feelings about school. Please mark the number on
> each line below that best describes your feeling about your school
> experiences when you were a student." (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a)

The red dots indicate the average response of the three participants.

Figure 5.3. Valence Towards School Survey Results from Early Bird Parent Participants.

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The researchers believe the scores from the role activity beliefs scale and the valence toward schools scale "may be used to identify categories of parental role construction," as shown in Figure 5.4 (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a).
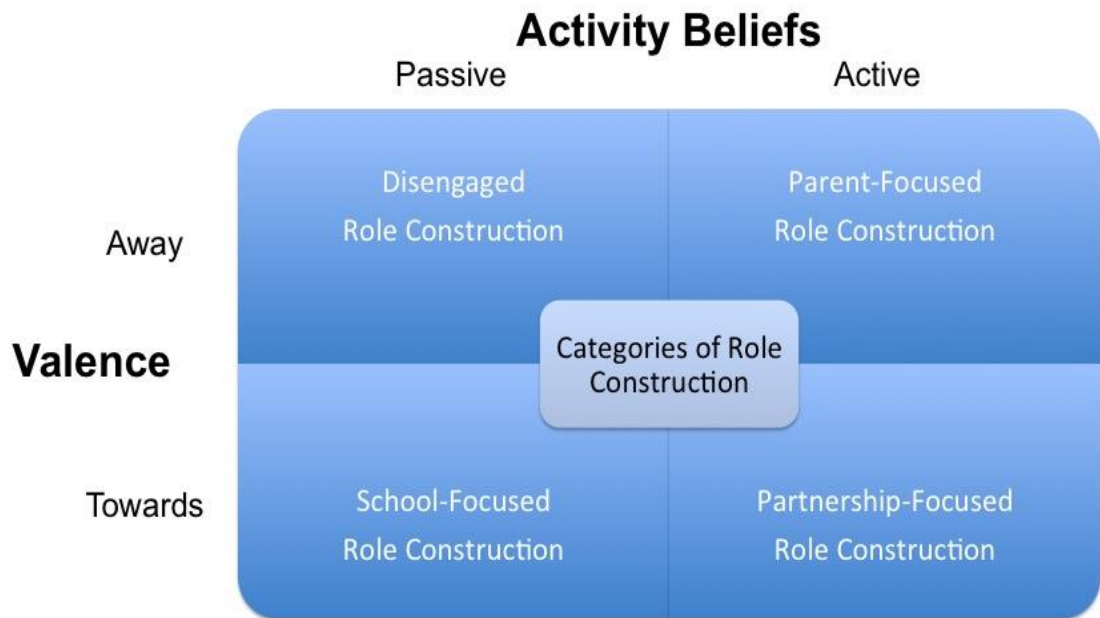
Figure 5.4. Role Activity Beliefs and Valence Towards School (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a).

The researchers further noted that "such categorization may be helpful diagnostically in identifying specific steps that parents and schools might take to increase the incidence and effectiveness of parent involvement in a child's education" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a). Looking at the results of the two scales conducted, parent participants fall into the partnership-focused role construction quadrant.

Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (2005a) stated, "Partnership-focused role construction includes beliefs and behaviors suggesting that a parent-school partnership is primarily responsible for the child's school success." The researchers give examples for these beliefs and behaviors:

Beliefs:

1. I like to spend time at my child's school when I can.

2. It's important that I let the teacher know about things that concern my child.

3. I find it helpful to talk with the teacher.

4. My child's teacher(s) know(s) me.

Behaviors:

1. I exchanged phone calls or notes with my child's teacher.

2. I got advice from the teacher.

3. I contacted the teacher with questions about schoolwork.

(Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a)

These examples of beliefs and behaviors support the findings from the interviews and the self-reported surveys. The parent participants talked of their presence at their children's schools, their relationships with their children's teachers, and the frequent, collaborative communication with their children's teachers.

Parental Efficacy for Helping the Student Succeed

The Parent Institute (2012) defined parental self-efficacy as "parents' beliefs about whether or not their involvement is likely to have a positive influence on their children's education" (p. 2). Hoover-Dempsey and associates (2005a) listed some examples as

- Knowing how to help my child do well in school

- Feeling successful about my efforts to help my child learn

- Feeling that one makes a significant different in my child's school performance. ("Parent Efficacy," para. 9)

This confidence of strong parental efficacy was observed during the interviews with the parent participants. Each parent participant was able to easily identify and define parent involvement and her specific roles and abilities. There was not a moment of hesitation from the parent participants when speaking upon their abilities and efforts to engage in their children's education.

The final scale "assesses parents' beliefs about their efficacy for helping their children succeed in school" (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a). It is a seven-item measure, using a six-point Likert-type format:

1. Disagree very strongly

2. Disagree just a little

3. Agree just a little

4. Agree

5. Agree more strongly

6. Agree very strongly

Participants were asked to respond to the following prompt: "Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement."

Table 5.2

Parental Efficacy Survey Results from Early Bird Parent Participants

	Average Response
I know how to help my child do well in school.	4.7
I don't know if I'm getting through to my child. *(reverse score)*	2.7
I don't know how to help my child make good grades in school. *(reverse score)*	2.7
I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn.	4.7
Other children have more influence on my child's grades than I do. *(reverse score)*	2.3
I don't know how to help my child learn. *(reverse score)*	1.3
I make a significant difference in my child's school performance.	4.7

Note. Adapted from scales developed by Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, and associates (2005a) and Walker and associates (2005).

Of the parents who participated in this study, those that participated in the Early Birds program reported to having a better foundation in their parental role as it is related to parental involvement. Ms. Kapowski questioned how successful her children would have been in school had she not participated in the program, "I don't know what it would have been like if I hadn't had the knowledge." She went on later to say, "it gives your kids such a great start, and it helps you to learn right along with them." Ms. Slater reported the single most important skill she learned from being in the program was how to better interact with her own children. The Early Birds program has helped parents lay the foundation for their role construction.

Personal Motivators in Non-Participants

All of the participants in this study – those that participated in the Early Birds program and those that did not participate – believed that they were doing the best they could for their children. Each parent interviewed indicated that he or she knew the

involvement he or she had in her child's education was important. However, it was clear from the results of the interviews shown in Figure 5.5, the non-participants did not have a clearly defined role construction.

	Mr. Belding	Ms. Spano	Mrs. Carosi	Mrs. Bickerstaff
Volunteering at the school				
Communicating with child's teacher regularly				
Helping child with homework	X	X	X	X
Making sure the school has what it needs				
Supporting decisions made by the teacher				X
Staying on top of things at school			X	X
Explaining tough assignments to child			X	
Talking with other parents from child's school				
Making the school better				
Talking with child about the school day		X		X

Figure 5.5. Role Activity Beliefs from interviews with non-participants.

While each non-participant parent used "helping child with homework," as a part of their definition of parental involvement and/or when describing their own involvement, there were few other consistencies. These non-participants fall into either the parent-focused, school-focused, or disengaged role construction quadrants as shown in Figure 5.4.

Hoover-Dempsey and associates (2005a) described the beliefs and behaviors of parent-focused and school-focused role construction:

Parent-Focused Role Construction

Belief items:

1. It's my job to explain tough assignments to my child.

2. It's my job to make sure my child understands his or her assignments.

3. I make it my business to stay on top of things at school.

Behavior items:

1. I kept an eye on my child's progress.

2. I made sure that my child's homework got done.

3. I helped my child study for tests or quizzes.

4. I talked to my child about what he or she is learning.

5. I took my child to the library, community events, or similar places.

(Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a)

Ms. Carosi fell into the parent-focused role construction quadrant. This was evidenced by her interview. In her description of her current involvement, she described "…just knowing where they are in their education… what it is that they need to do… to do better in certain areas, or you know, where they're lacking. We help them and we do everything we can."

School-Focused Role Construction

Belief items:

1. I assume my child is doing all right when I don't hear anything from the school.

2. The teacher has to let me know about a problem before I can do something about it.

3. I get most of my information about my child's progress from report cards.

4. My child's learning is mainly up to the teacher and my child.

Behavior items:

1. I expected the school to notify me if my child had a problem.

2. I expected my child to do his or her homework at school.

3. I relied on the teacher to make sure my child understands her or her assignments.

(Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005a)

Mr. Belding fell into this quadrant based upon his interview. He said doesn't "particularly" feel engaged by his child's school, and he has not had much contact with the school staff unless he called to report her being ill. He assumed he would hear from the teacher or the principal if "she got into trouble or things like that, we'd probably hear from the teacher more than we do…"

Ms. Bickerstaff was a combination of school-focused and parent-focused role construction. When it came to academics, she responded in a parent-focused manner, but when describing interactions with her son's school based upon his behavior, she explained more of a school-focused role construction. Ms. Spano wants to be involved in

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her child's education, and believes she is doing her best, but does not have a clear role construction foundation.

Parental Efficacy for Helping the Student Succeed

The assuredness in the parent participants' description of parental efficacy was lacking in that of the non-participants. As Ms. Carosi stated, "…just guiding them the best we know how." When talking about his current level of involvement and interaction with school staff, Mr. Belding commented, "they encourage nightly reading, but that's something we've always done anyways, so… Um, I feel like we're probably do[ing] more than what is asked of us."

<center>**Summary**</center>

Chapter V analyzed the data collected through interviews and observations through the lens of the theoretical model developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005). More specifically, level one of this model (see Figure 1 for a table of the model), which focuses on parents' motivational beliefs defined as parental role construction and parental self-efficacy (Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). While the two groups of parents (Early Bird participants and non-participants) had similarities in parental role construction and efficacy, there were also many differences.

The primary differences in parental participation between the two groups were their parental role construction for involvement and role activity beliefs. Without prompting, Early Bird parent participants were more likely to discuss roles associated with a more active parental role while speaking on their involvement during the interviews than non-participants. Of the parents who participated in this study, those that

participated in the Early Birds program reported to having a better foundation in their

parental role as it is related to parental involvement than non-participants.

In this study, both groups believed that they were doing the best they could for

their children. Each parent interviewed indicated that he or she knew the involvement he

or she had in her child's education was important. However, it was clear from the results

of the interviews shown in Figure 5.5 that the non-participants did not have a clearly

defined role construction. Chapter VI will examine the findings through the study's

research questions and provide implications for research, theory, and practice as well as

recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER VI

The current research on parental engagement and involvement is vast, as evidenced by the review of literature in Chapter II. The literature review explored the importance of parental engagement and involvement, examples of successful and unsuccessful strategies found in previous literature, and the existing literature on the specific reasoning behind the lack of parental involvement in education today as well as some suggestions for implementation. However, little research exists on the lasting impacts of a parent education program as it relates to parental engagement and involvement. The purpose of this research is to explore the manifestations of parent engagement in a school with a formal parent program through parents who have participated in the program and parents who have not participated in the program.

Chapter III outlined how and in what manner data would be collected, driven by the following research questions:

1.   How does participation in a parent education program influence parent perceptions of his or her role in the educational process?

2.   How does participation in a parent education program influence parental perception of his/her efficacy for involvement in the educational process?

3.   How is parental involvement manifested in parents who have participated in a parent education program?

4.   How is parental involvement manifested in parents who have not participated in a parent education program?

Chapter IV presented a narrative of the data collected through interviews, artifact collection, and observations of the Early Bird class. Chapter V provided an analysis of the collected data. Chapter VI will conclude the study by outlining the findings and providing conclusions based upon research, practice, and theory.

Findings

Research Question One

How does participation in a parent education program influence parent perceptions of his or her role in the educational process? Of the parents that participated in the Early Birds program, many spoke of their role in their child's education expanding after completing the program. For example, Ms. Morris spoke of how the program affected her parenting,

> I think the biggest thing I got from it, and I would speak for my husband too, is that reminding you of things to do with your kids. Not that you don't know that you should read to your kids. You know, we would read with our kids every night or read books to them until they started reading to us, but just [a] reminder of certain things, like color sorting, or anything that you don't really thing about, and then just to have somebody tell you this is how a child learns, and then it's a good way to remind yourself who you are talking to and who you are trying to help.

Ms. Turtle, already an educator when her children were young, said the program allowed her to further develop what she was already doing with her children,

> They have those everyday learning cards and that just brought it into perspective of things we can do while driving down the street and going to the grocery store

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and 'let's count the wheels on the shopping cart,' or 'see your name starts with an "h," let's find all the "h's." Just things you can do not where you're sitting down, just everyday work.

Tables 5.1 and 5.5 from Chapter V into Figure 6.1 demonstrate how the Early Bird parent participants have a more established role construction based upon their role activity beliefs from the interviews.

	Mrs. Morris	Mrs. Slater	Mrs. Powers	Mrs. Turtle	Mrs. Kapowski
Volunteering at the school	X	X	*	*	X
Communicating with child's teacher regularly		X	X	X	X
Helping child with homework	X	X	X	X	X
Making sure the school has what it needs	X	X			X
Supporting decisions made by the teacher		X	X		X
Staying on top of things at school	X	X	X	X	X
Explaining tough assignments to child	X	X	X		
Talking with other parents from child's school					
Making the school better	X	X			X
Talking with child about the school day	X	X	X	X	X

Table 5.1, Role Activity Beliefs from interviews with Early Bird parent participants

	Mr. Belding	Ms. Spano	Mrs. Carosi	Mrs. Bickerstaff
Volunteering at the school				
Communicating with child's teacher regularly				
Helping child with homework	X	X	X	X
Making sure the school has what it needs				
Supporting decisions made by the teacher				X
Staying on top of things at school			X	X
Explaining tough assignments to child			X	
Talking with other parents from child's school				
Making the school better				
Talking with child about the school day		X		X

Table 5.5, Role Activity Beliefs from interviews with non-participants

Figure 6.1. Comparing the Role Activity Beliefs from interviews with Early Bird parent participants and non-participants

While Early Birds parent participants and non-participants were not asked about these specific roles and responsibilities in the interview, they used the same terminology to describe and define parental involvement. Early Bird parent participants spoke in greater detail on roles that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) associated with strong parental role construction.

Research Question Two

How does participation in a parent education program influence parental perception of his/her efficacy for involvement in the educational process? Of the five parents that had participated in the Early Birds program, all mentioned the program reinforcing prior knowledge and improving on their interactions with their children. This sample of parents also found learning opportunities in everyday interactions after completing the Early Birds program, as Ms. Kapowski stated, "it really made me aware… that everything can be a teaching moment."

Ms. Turtle mentioned that at one of the Early Birds courses, it was discussed and she received a handout on the importance of vocabulary, which really brought things into perspective for her as a reading specialist. She said since then, she is always trying to expand on her children's vocabulary through pointing things out on the drive home or using Google to search images while reading books that have fewer pictures. She said the program has also helped her improve on her daily interactions with her children regarding math. "Just knowing to say to 'Pick up that red one over there. Hey! There's two reds ones. Count for me.' …I think it has just brought it up in what he is doing every day."

One of the benefits parents mentioned gaining from the program was the free books and educational materials. These materials added to the parents' efficacy as they were given opportunities to learn about the materials, how to use them in a variety of different ways, and from other parents in their classes. A few parents mentioned that it was one of their reasons for attending or a point they make to other parents when encouraging them to participate. Ms. Powers also spoke of the variety and quality of the

books and materials, "they give you really nice stuff and really cool books that I would have never have even seen before."

Research Question Three

  How is parental involvement manifested in parents who have participated in a parent education program? One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was "parent past influences." Parents that were participants and parents that were non-participants both spoke about their prior influences, specifically their parents, on their decision to be involved in their child's education – in many instances because they had parents that were involved, but in some cases because their parents were not involved in their education, and these parents wanted better for their own children. Ms. Slater elaborated on this,

> I just want to look back at my past, and my mom wasn't so involved in our activities, or basically none of our stuff. She had to work. So I get to stay at home, and I like to be more influence with all their school work, and their field trips, and just try to keep them on track…"

Ms. Slater said she makes it a point to be at her children's school every day because she never wants her children to feel the loss she felt with a parent that was not present. Ms. Spano, a non-participant parent, also had an uninvolved mother, which led her to want to be more involved in her son's education.

> My mom used to go out a lot… we were with my dad most of the time, so I try to keep us [her family now] all together. I try, I mean, when it came to holidays and birthdays, she was awesome, but just day-to-day stuff, like, I try to be more involved [than her mother was].

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Several parents that participated in the Early Birds program talked about being present in their child's life as an important aspect of their involvement. Ms. Kapowski defined parent involvement as "how much you are actually shaping your children's lives and it's you that's there for them." Other parents in this sample mentioned listening to their children and getting involved with school activities during and after school. Ms. Powers began her definition of parent involvement with examples of her interactions with her oldest child's teacher, "kinda seeing what their teacher wants and trying to stay as consistent with that as possible."

Ms. Powers noted that her confidence in her own abilities increased since exiting the program, now that her oldest daughter is in school, "I feel very confident in my ability to help her… if she needs any… I guess she's in first grade, so it's all pretty easy, but I feel really confident in our learning relationship." She said that this confidence has led her to feeling well-equipped in her interactions with her child's teacher, "nothing really freaks me out, where if the teacher brings something up that, 'oh, crap, I never thought of that,' I… like we feel really prepared." Parents that participated in the Early Birds program often noted in their interview of their comfort in their interactions with school personnel and spoke of these specific interactions when discussing their involvement in their children's educations.

When asked to define parent involvement and their current involvement in their child's education, parents who participated in the Early Birds program were able to easily define and explain what parent involvement meant to them and to give examples of parent involvement; while parents from the sample that did not receive training typically cited reading as their only means involvement. Though parents from the second sample

may be involved more in their children's education than they stated in their interview, they were not as expansive on the broad definition of parental involvement, based on their responses.

Research Question Four

How is parental involvement manifested in parents who have not participated in a parent education program? Like the parents who participated in the Early Birds program, parents who did not participate in the program had many of the same prior influences they cited as the reasons for their current level of involvement. These often involved parents who were either heavily involved or not involved at all in their education. Ms. Spano said her mom used to "go out a lot," and her and her siblings were often left with her father. She expanded, "when it came to holidays and birthdays, she was awesome, but just day-to-day stuff, I try to be more involved [than she was]." Each of the parents in the second sample, like those in the first sample, wanted the best for their children and believed to be doing all that they could to provide that for their children.

The biggest difference between these two groups of parents came to light when each was asked to define parent involvement and to give examples of their current level of involvement, which is also expressed in Figure 6.1. Parents in the second sample did not have as broad of a definition to parental involvement as parents who participated in the Early Birds program. These parents often only cited reading at home and completing the necessary homework as their current involvement practices. Mr. Belding said, "they [his child's teacher] encourage nightly reading, but that's something we've always done anyways, so, I feel like we've probably do more than what is asked of us." Parents in the

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second group also spoke of seeking out needed information on their own. The parents who did not participate in the Early Birds program did not speak of any parent networks or individuals they seek or have gained parenting advice from, aside from their own family members.

Another difference between the two sample groups of parents was the reporting on engagement from their children's schools. Parents in the first sample commented on the initiative they may have took to become engaged in their child's school life, while parents who did not participate in the Early Birds program often noted their feelings of disengagement from their child's school. Mr. Belding specifically noted that he does not feel engaged by his daughter's school or teacher. He has stated that the only phone call he's received from his child's school was when he was being informed that she was ill. Ms. Bickerstaff commented that her primary communication with her son's school has been during scheduled conferences. Parents in the first sample discussed the regular, on-going communication they have with their children's teachers.

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this research was to explore the manifestations of parent engagement in a school system with a formal parent program through parents who have participated in the program and parents who have not participated in the program. Through data collection and data analysis, many differences were found between the two sets of parents and their levels of parental involvement. Figure 6.1 displayed how the Early Bird parent participants have a more established role construction based upon their role activity beliefs from the information provided in the interviews. Based upon their survey responses, Early Bird parent participants also had a strong valence toward school.

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When an established role construction is combined with a strong valence towards the school system, a partnership-focused role construction is found. This type of partnership is ideal, in that

> Enhanced school, family and community understanding of the variables that
> enable productive parental involvement, especially in relation to the on-going
> construction of active parental roles and parent-school partnerships, promise
> increasingly effective interventions to enhance productive family-school
> relationships and, in turn, improved learning outcomes for students. (Hoover-
> Dempsey, Wilkins, O'Connor, & Sandler, 2004)

The Early Birds program engages families before formal schooling begins, forming an early relationship with the school system and the parents. Additionally, as discovered through the parent participant interviews, the program establishes parent networks for parents of same-aged children, living in the same school district. These early connections strengthen the parent and school partnerships, which research has shown to yield the best results and outcomes for students (Ashley, 2007).

Implications for Research

The results of this study directly relate to practice as more validation is given to parent education programs as well as to the theories that are grounded in these ideals. There is little research on the lasting impacts of parent education as it relates to parental engagement and involvement. This study adds to the existing body of research on parental engagement by exploring the manifestation of parental engagement and involvement through participation in a parental education program. However, more research on this topic would be beneficial to inform researchers and practitioners on the

best practices in the engagement processes of parental involvement.

Implications for Practice

The benefits of the Early Birds program have been mentioned throughout this study and by the parents who participated in the program, as Ms. Spano said, "it's a great program… we tell other parents about it." If a recommendation is the highest form of satisfaction, Ms. Kapowski has recommended the program to everyone she knows with small children. Ms. Turtle expanded on this by saying

> I can't imagine not taking advantage of it because it's free, it doesn't take very long, and I think that's the key, you know as a parent, you're so busy, and it's nice 'cause it's just an hour… and… it has very good examples of what you can take home and do that day, you don't have to buy anything, everything's provided for you… plus it's just given me ideas of just a variety of things that [my children] can do that… I haven't thought of, so that has to be the ease of it.

The Early Birds program has been proven to be successful, based upon this research, but also feedback from parents, teachers, and administrators (Smart Start Central Oklahoma, 2013). School districts, communities, and families and children would benefit if this program was expanded. While, I had initially only considered the expansion of the program to other school districts, Ms. Morris expressed a desire for the program to be extended to a school-age model. She explained,

> it would be nice to extend it out… you are learning in that program how to deal with kids [birth to age five], but it would be nice to have a parent program for other ages going forth… the teachers send home little notes now saying 'remember to have your kid work on multiplication and division'… It would be

nice to have little things that reminds parents of stuff they can do to help.

Implications for Theory

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (2005) was used to explore the

manifestations of parent engagement in Early Bird parent participants and non-

participants. This study contributed to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's theoretical model

of the parental involvement process (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b) by focusing on how

parental involvement and efficacy is supported by the participation in a parent education

program. This study showed how the theory can be used to compare the manifestations

of parental involvement in program participants and non-participants. Other theories

such as Bowen's Family Systems Theory (Bowen Center, 2013) and Grid and Group

(Harris, 2005), as well as those grounded in parent involvement such as the Epstein

model (2010) could potentially be used for the purposes of data analysis. The literature

on these theories was further discussed in Chapter II.

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Recommendations for Further Research

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Future research on this topic could expand on what was collected in this study or

explore other aspects of parental involvement. The data collected in this study was all

self-reported. One suggestion for future research would be to include an involvement

scale completed by the child's teacher. This scale would be used to assess a parent's

current level of involvement, as reported by her child's teacher, giving the researcher a

different perspective on that parent's involvement, rather than just what was reported by

the parent. This research could also include the level of communication between teacher

and parent as well as the teacher's expectations for parental involvement. Future research

could also include a self-reporting scale completed by the parents, as the information

<div align="center">

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gathered was just what they thought or felt to disclose at one moment in time regarding their involvement in their child's education. It would be interesting to gather information on the amount of reading that occurs in the home and specific participation questions, such as "How many hours did you volunteer in your child's classroom this year?" Demographics including education, background, or socioeconomic status were not collected for this study. However, it would be important to know how members in different socioeconomic groups or those with children who attended a formal child care program versus those that stayed at home participate in their child's education after completing a parent education program. Future studies could also have a larger sample size. This would give a broader perspective and more information to work with for the researchers. Future research could also be viewed through the lens of Epstein's study of parental involvement. Epstein (2010) noted "the way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families" (p. 81). The researcher states that educators should refer to students as children, as it gives validation to the partnership between home and school in that child's education. It's not "their" problem or "their" solution; they are "our" children.

Gormley and Phillips (2005) explored the benefits of universal Pre-Kindergarten by examining children's language and cognitive test scores. All children were shown to have benefited from the full-day program, but gains were especially high in Hispanic and black children. Similarly, the benefits of a parental education program could be explored through a quantitate study. This study could look at the academic gains of children by race, to also see if minority children have significant benefit from their parents participating in a parental education program.

Summary

This study explored the manifestations of parent engagement in a school with a formal parent program through parents who have participated in the program and parents who have not participated in the program. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) model was the lens used to explore parental motivators. Using the model as a guide, it can be concluded that the Early Birds participants had an active, partnership-focused role constration, were confident and affirmed academic interactions with children, and networked with other parents of children the same age. Parent participants were more likely to cite their specific academic interactions with their children and their children's schools and noted their confidence in their abilities. The overall understanding of parental involvement and parental efficacy was more established in the Early Bird parent participants than from those who did not receive training. These parents were able to easily identify their well-established roles, and speak upon them with assuredness that these behaviors were making a significant, positive impact on their children's education. The non-participants did not describe those same beliefs and behaviors in their interviews. There was more uncertainty and inconsistency in their interview responses on parental involvement and parental efficacy. There was not enough sufficient data to remark if the program had an impact on parental self-efficacy, as all of the participants made references to the belief that they were doing the best for their children.

Researcher's Comments

The data collected for this research gives validation to the Early Birds program and should encourage others to explore implementing such parent education programs in their own school district. However, as mentioned in Chapter I, there were limitations to

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this study. As was participation in this study, participation in the Early Birds program is voluntary. Parents are recruited from a variety of different entities and methods, but it is ultimately the parents' choice to participate in the program. Due to past and prior experiences, some adults avoid school-sponsored programs or events hosted at the schoolhouse. However, it can be assumed that parents who participate in the Early Birds program are likely to be parents that hold strong opinions on "parent engagement" and "parental involvement." After the initial names and contact information of parents that met the research criteria were provided to me by the Early Bird administrators, I worked to get interviews scheduled. The first sample of parents that participated in the program were scheduled within a month. However, the parents who had initially signed up to take the Early Birds classes, but did not attend were much more difficult to agree to participate in an interview. Many of those that I contacted from this list did not contact me back, several more did not want to participate, and then there were even a few that agreed to participate, but did not show up to our scheduled interview. I wonder if the results of this study would have differed if I had not recruited the second sample of parents from the group that signed up but did not attend any Early Birds classes. Additionally, while there was not enough sufficient data collected to remark if the program had an impact on parental self-efficacy, I wonder if the participants from the second sample had been given examples of parental involvement practices, if they would still have the same responses. Maybe with more research-based examples, they might believe they could do more or that they are doing those things, but didn't comment on them in the interview.

Through this experience, I learned much about the research process and about myself. This journey opened my eyes to a new theoretical framework that I was able to

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connect to my research and practice. As an elementary school counselor, working with

teachers and parents to strengthen the school-home connection, I see even more clearly

how important it is to grow and nurture these relationships early and efficiently. I also

have begun to look at my own practices as a parent in the process, and I believe this

experience will help make me more conscious and aware of my own level of involvement

in my children's educational careers.

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APPENDICES
Appendix A
Informed Consent

Project Title: PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT: A CASE STUDY
EXPLORING THE MANIFESTATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN A PARENT
EDUCATION PROGRAM

Investigator: Erin Nation

Bachelor of Science, Human Development and Family Sciences,
Oklahoma State University,
Stillwater, OK 2006

Master of Education in Guidance and Counseling,
University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK 2009

Doctoral Candidate, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explore the manifestations of parent
engagement in a school with a formal parent program and one without a
parent program. Interviews will last approximately one-hour and will
consist of pre-determined questions.

Procedures: You are invited to take part in this study by participating in at least one
interview lasting up to one hour.

As the researcher, I agree to meet the following conditions:
1. I will audiotape our interview with your permission and transcribe the
tape for the purpose of accuracy. I will give you a copy of the
transcript so that you may see that I have captured your words
correctly. At the end of the study, the tapes and transcripts will be
erased or destroyed.
2. I will assign a pseudonym on the transcript or you may choose one
yourself. Your real name will not be used at any point of information
collection or in my research.
3. Data collected for this project will be posted online and may be
published, but confidentiality is ensured because all person identifiers
will be removed.

Risks of Participation: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: The significance of this study cannot be underestimated. Research about the benefits of parental involvement is extensive, but there is limited research on the manifestation through a parental education program. This case study will add to the literature and, with further research, may provide a model for other districts to begin implementation of such programs.

Confidentiality: All data will be secured on my password protected personal laptop computer and backed up on a flash drive kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home. Upon transcription and coding of interview questions, I will erase the audio tapes. After the case study is completed (no later than December of 2014), all electronic data will be deleted and hard copies shredded to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Participants will be advised at the beginning of interviews that data is confidential, has no impact on employment or their child's education, and will be carefully secured. The record of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group finding and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and I will be the only one with access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and well-being of people who participate in research.

Compensation: None

Contacts: Erin Nation   Dr. Ed Harris (Diss. Advisor)
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                Your suggestions and concerns are important to us. Please contact me or my advisor with any questions. For information on subjects' rights, contact Dr. Sheila Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or send email to irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights: As a participant in this research, you are entitled to know the nature of my research. You are free to decline to participate, and you are free to

stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. No penalty exists for withdrawing your participation. Feel free to ask any questions at any time about the nature of the research and the methods I am using.

Signatures: I have read and fully understand the consent form and I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been to me.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the Participant sign it.

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix B

Recruitment Script

<u>Request for Participation</u>

Hello, my name is Erin Nation and I am currently working on a research project for my doctoral dissertation. My topic deals with parental involvement and the Early Birds program.

It is my understanding that you, in your role as program administrator, have access and the ability to share information regarding the Early Birds program.

Is this correct? (If answer is yes, continue. If answer is no, thank them for their time and end conversation)

I am requesting permission to study the program and interview three parents who have participated in the program.

(Pause for questions)

Please understand these results will be kept confidential and destroyed at the completion of the project. Consent forms will also be signed at the time the data is acquired.

(Pause for more questions)

Exchange information in order to schedule a time for picking up the requested data.

Thank you for your help.

Parent Interview Request Script

Hello, my name is Erin Nation. I am working on my doctoral dissertation, which examines parental involvement. I would like to interview nine parents and your name and information was provided to be by a school or program administrator.

Is this information correct? (If the answer is yes, proceed. If the answer is no, thank them for their time and move to the next name)

If you are interested in participating in the interview, I will be asking approximately eight/four main questions, with an opportunity for further follow-up questions. The interview will last between 45 minutes and 1 hour.

Any questions so far?

The interview can take place wherever you are most comfortable. I want to let you know that all information will be kept confidential. The interview will be recorded, but all recordings will be kept secure and erased after the research is complete. All names or identifying information will be changed to a pseudonym. There will be consent forms to sign at the time of the interview.

(Pause for more questions)

(Exchange information in order to schedule time and place of interview.)

Thank you for visiting with me and I look forward to working with you.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Questions for Parents that have participated in the Early Birds program

1. Tell me about your family.

2. What influences your decisions as a parent?

3. How do you define "parent involvement?"

4. Describe your current involvement in your child's education.

5. How did you get involved in the Early Birds program?

6. How has/did the program affect your parenting or specific interactions with
   your child?

   a. Can you give a specific example?

7. How has/did participating in the program affected your parenting since exiting
   the program?

   a. Can you give a specific example?

8. What is/was the single most important skill you learned – and have been able
   to use – through your participation in the program?

   a. How have you used it?

Questions for Parents that have not participated in the Early Birds program

1. Tell me about your family.

2. What influences your decisions as a parent?

3. How do you define "parent involvement?"

4. Describe your current involvement in your child's education.

VITA

Erin Gray Nation

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT: A CASE STUDY
EXPLORING THE MANIFESTATION THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN A
PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Completed the requirements for the Master of Education in Guidance and
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Experience:
School Counselor, Piedmont Public Schools, Piedmont, Oklahoma, 2015-
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Kindergarten Teacher, Piedmont Public Schools, Piedmont, Oklahoma, 2012-
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Director of Early Childhood Education, Oklahoma State Department of
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Professional Memberships:
American School Counselor Association
Early Childhood Association of Oklahoma
Kappa Kappa Gamma, Oklahoma City Alumni Chapter
National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of
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National Association of the Education of Young Children
Oklahoma Early Childhood Teachers Association