

FAMILY AND CHILD CARE INFLUENCES ON  
PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND CHILD  
LITERACY OUTCOMES

By

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FAMILY AND CHILD CARE INFLUENCES ON  
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OUTCOMES

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

The parent role and associated responsibilities begin the moment a child is born. This role is multidimensional in that parents must become teachers in addition to caregivers in various settings. Therefore, parents are considered to be children's first teachers and socializing agents (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006a). They must meet their children's basic needs, offer nurturance and support, as well as provide a safe and stimulating environment that promotes healthy development and learning. With this in mind, the importance of parent involvement emerges.

Parent involvement has been viewed as an influential process that occurs over time and across settings (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parent, child, and school factors contribute to the development and continuance of this involvement process. The benefits of parent involvement for children's social and cognitive development have been well established throughout existing literature focusing on elementary and middle school settings; however it is somewhat limited within childcare settings. Increased levels of parent involvement have been positively associated with children's academic performance and motivations along with school competence and readiness within these available studies (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Parker et al., 1997). By becoming involved in their children's education, within the home or school setting, parents not only make themselves available for help, they also model behaviors and attitudes that emphasize the importance of learning.



The influence of parent involvement also benefits children's literacy and language development, including reading interest and motivation. Given that parents are children's first teachers, the home environment serves as a setting in which children first encounter literacy and language opportunities (Weigel et al., 2006a). When parents participate in joint reading activities, have books available to the child and possess a positive attitude toward reading they create a literacy enriched environment that encourages literacy and language development. Baker and Scher (2002) found that children whose parents expressed positive views toward reading displayed higher levels of motivations to read. In addition to interest in reading, children who consistently participated in literacy activities with their parents demonstrated higher print knowledge and vocabulary development (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006b).

An area of growing interest within the parent involvement literature pertains to parent factors, beliefs and motivations for initial involvement. With the well-documented understanding of the positive association between parent involvement and child outcomes, focus has shifted towards determining how and why parents choose to become involved. The vast majority of studies have looked at particular family status variables and how they have the potential to act as barriers to parent involvement including, parent education, employment, marital status. For example, it has been found that single parents and parents who work full time are less apt to become involved in the school setting due to overriding demands on time and energy (Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997).

The influence of parent perceptions of the school and classroom environments as well as perceptions of teacher attitude toward parents has also been well-documented throughout literature. Parent involvement is complicated when parents perceive the classroom and school to be uninviting through lack of available opportunities and poor teacher attitude (Grolnick et al.; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

In recent years, studies and theories have begun to develop around the notion that parents are more likely to become involved in their children's education when they interpret the parent role as including involvement and when they perceive themselves as having the ability, skills and knowledge to influence their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2005). These studies also indicate that if parents believe it is their job to take an active role in their child's education they will do so regardless of present barriers. Research is limited however, in studies that examine the combined influence of family status variables as barriers to parent involvement, parent beliefs (i.e. role construction), and parent perceptions of opportunities and invitations for involvement and parent involvement activities on child outcomes. In addition, studies are relatively nonexistent when looking at the influence of these factors on child literacy-specific outcomes during early childhood and in childcare settings.

In an effort to integrate and strengthen parent involvement literature pertaining to parent beliefs and perceptions and barriers to involvement, the purpose of this paper is to collectively look at parent role construction and sense of efficacy, parent perceptions of opportunities to participate in classroom and school activities, demands on the parents'

time and energy, parents' perceived skills and knowledge and general and literacy-specific parent involvement as they relate to the child literacy outcomes of disposition for learning, interest in reading and print concept knowledge. For the purposes of this study, parent involvement is defined through general and literacy-promoting activities, such as reading stories or playing sports, which a parent participates in with their children in the home or in a childcare setting. Parents' perceived skills and knowledge refers to how confident they are about their understanding of a particular topic or issue and is evident through materials in the home, attitudes toward certain topics and activities they engage in. Child disposition for learning consists of a child's desire to learn and curiosity in new experiences. Lastly, child's print concept knowledge pertains to children's understanding of letters, meaning of words, and sentence structure, etc.

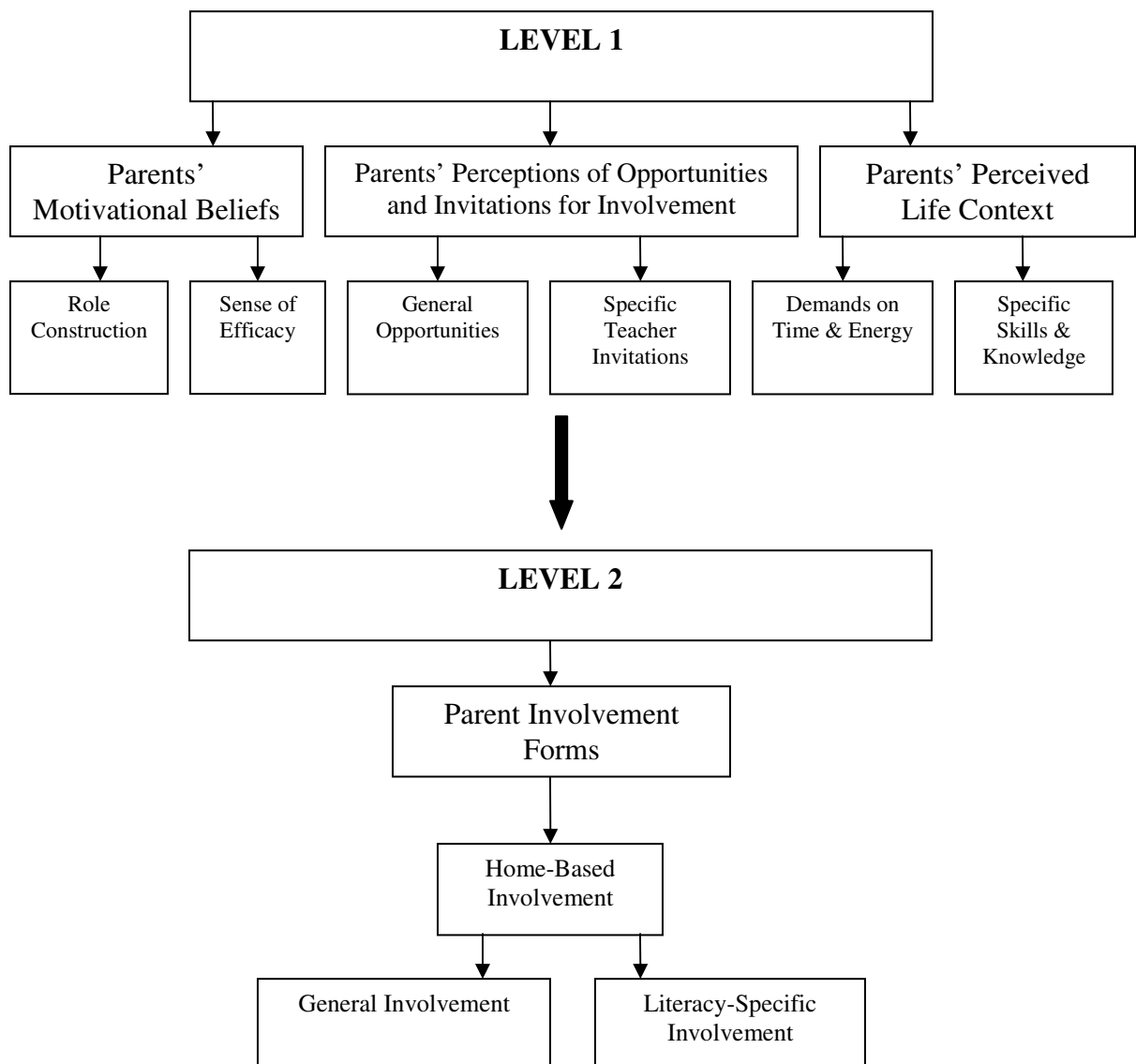
The paper begins with an overview of a theoretical framework composed of Walker et al.'s (2005) model of parent beliefs and involvement. Next, several research questions based on the components of the conceptual model will be provided. A review of literature concerning parent involvement and its influence on child literacy development will then follow.

### Theoretical Framework

Walker et al. (2005) have developed and refined a two-level theoretical model of parent involvement (shown below). This model has a strong theoretical foundation and builds on a variety of empirical studies with elementary age children that have examined components of the model (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The model also refers to some studies with preschool age children (i.e. Reed, Jones, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, 2000); however these studies are limited. All variables within the model are included based upon

empirical support of their importance and influence on parent involvement and child outcomes as noted throughout relating literature and research studies. To date, no published articles have been found that examine all components of the model in the same study. The purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of this model for explaining literacy outcomes for preschoolers by including variables that represent all components of this model.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Influences and Forms of Parent Involvement



The first level of Walker et al.'s (2005) model incorporates parents' motivational beliefs, including parent role construction and parent sense of efficacy, as well as parents' perceptions of involvement opportunities including general school opportunities and specific teacher invitations which influence a parent's decision to become involved. An assumption of the model is that parents are more likely to become involved if they interpret the parent role as including personal involvement in their children's education, they believe they can make a difference, and they perceive the school and classroom environments to be open and welcoming (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al.; Reed et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2005). Parent role construction is stated to be the most important contributor to the parent involvement decision in that if parents do not believe it is part of their job as a parent to become involved, they will not seek out involvement activities even if their efficacy is high or if opportunities and invitations for involvement are available and received (Walker et al.).

The additional constructs presented in Level 1 of Walker et al.'s (2005) model, demands on time and energy and parents' perceived skills and knowledge may hinder parent involvement from occurring. Parents' demands on time and energy are directly attributed to employment hours in addition to routine family responsibilities such as caring for other children in the home. In addition, marital status could add to or lessen the influence of these demands. The presence of a spouse would allow for the balance of responsibilities which could potentially increase parent involvement or the absence of a spouse could create additional stress. The primary influence of demands on time and energy is the lack of availability of the parent for involvement activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Walker et al.).

The construct of parents' perceived skills and knowledge also has the potential to encourage or deter parent involvement. If parents believe they have the ability to teach and help their children succeed then they are more likely to become involved. If parents do not feel confident in their specific skills in promoting healthy development they may be less inclined to do so (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Reed et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2005). This construct is closely related to parent efficacy as they both deal with parent beliefs of their own abilities to play a role to their children's successful development and understanding.

The second level of Walker et al.'s (2005) model is comprised of the parent involvement forms that take place once the decision to become involved is made. This study concentrated on home-based involvement, looking specifically at general parent involvement activities and literacy-specific parent involvement activities. General involvement activities include playing games or building things together while literacy specific involvement activities include singing songs or reading books (Evans, et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Walker et al.). In addition, this study examined the effects of the two levels of the model on the child literacy outcomes of disposition for learning, interest in reading and print concept knowledge.

A set of three research questions were developed based upon the influence of the components of the model to the three child literacy outcomes. The questions were as follows:

## Research Questions

1. Do the constructs in Level 1 (Parents' Motivational Beliefs, Parents' Perceptions of Opportunities and Invitations for Involvement, Parents' Perceived Life Context) and Level 2 (Parent Involvement Forms) of the theoretical model explain children's disposition for learning?
2. Do the constructs in Level 1 (Parents' Motivational Beliefs, Parents' Perceptions of Opportunities and Invitations for Involvement, Parents' Perceived Life Context) and Level 2 (Parent Involvement Forms) of the theoretical model explain children's interest for reading?
3. Do the constructs in Level 1 (Parents' Motivational Beliefs, Parents' Perceptions of Opportunities and Invitations for Involvement, Parents' Perceived Life Context) and Level 2 (Parent Involvement Forms) of the theoretical model explain children's print concept knowledge?

## Chapter II

### A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following section will be devoted to a review of the parent involvement literature as it pertains to the components of the aforementioned theoretical model. Topics will be discussed in order beginning with the Level 1 constructs: parents' motivational beliefs including role construction and sense of efficacy, parents' perceptions of opportunities and invitations for involvement, including general school opportunities and specific teacher invitations, and lastly, parents' perceived life context including demands on time and energy and skills and knowledge. The Level 2 construct, home-based parent involvement, broken down into general parent involvement and literacy-specific parent involvement will then be described. The literature review will conclude with an overview of child literacy outcomes, specifically focusing on disposition for learning, interest in reading and print concept knowledge.

#### Parent Involvement Literature

##### *Parents' Motivational Beliefs*

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggested that parents become involved for three reasons. First, they perceived the parent role as including involvement. Second, they possessed a personal sense of efficacy for helping their children succeed in school, and lastly, they accepted the opportunities and invitations presented to them from the school, the teacher, and their children. This section will focus on parent beliefs in regards to role construction and sense of efficacy.



*Role construction.* Parents are more likely to become involved when they construe the parent role as including involvement. Therefore, parents who strongly believe that they have a role in the teaching and learning process are more likely to be involved in their children's education at home and at school (Grolnick et al., 1997; Reed et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2005). Weigel et al. (2006b) extended this idea to encompass literacy beliefs. Their study showed parents who believed in and enacted a joint caregiver and teacher role and who placed extreme importance on their children's literacy and language development tended to engage more frequently in literacy-based activities with their children. Parent role construction also influences how parents motivate and interact with their children. Thus, it makes sense that parents who place value on literacy and reading would participate more in activities that emphasize those skills. This also gives evidence for the conclusion presented by DeBaryshe, Binder, and Buell (2000) in which it was stated that parent beliefs influence the types of home experiences and interactions that parents provide.

Weigel et al. (2006b) identified mothers who took an active role in teaching and who believed that reading books to children presented opportunities for vocabulary development as facilitative mothers. Mothers who believed that preschoolers were too young to read and that teaching was the job the school and teachers were labeled as conventional mothers. It was shown that facilitative mothers read to their children, sang songs, told stories and played games more than conventional mothers. As a result, children of facilitative mothers scored higher in print knowledge, reading interest and emergent writing skills than children of conventional mothers. Also, facilitative mothers were more likely to provide a stimulating literacy environment that would foster

development (Weigel et al.). This recent study is an important addition to the growing area in literature concerning role construction and sense of efficacy as they relate to parent involvement.

*Sense of efficacy.* As with role construction, parents' sense of efficacy is influential in their decision to become involved in their children's education. Efficacy refers to whether or not parents believe that they can make a difference in their children's academic success (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). It is influenced by observed and direct experiences, expected outcomes and appraisal of personal capabilities. Efficacy itself influences parental goals and persistency in involvement and shapes parents' beliefs about what they should do (Walker et al., 2005). Parents tend to reflect on their abilities and adequacy as parents based on their perceptions of the effectiveness of their involvement. In support of this notion, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) reported that mothers tended to derive information about their own success as parents from their involvement efforts with their children.

Parents are more likely to become involved when they believe they have the ability to be influential in their children's learning process and achievement (Grolnick et al., 1997; Reed et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2005). For example, in their study of parents of students ranging in age from pre-k to sixth grade, Reed et al. (2000) found that sense of efficacy was positively related to parents' involvement and children's grades and achievement. Few studies were found that focused on efficacy as it relates to parent involvement; however what was found indicated that when parent efficacy is high, parent involvement and positive child outcomes increase.

### *Parents' Perceptions of Opportunities and Invitations for Involvement*

*General school opportunities.* As mentioned above, the third proposed reason parents become involved is attributed to the general opportunities and specific invitations for parent involvement presented by the school, teacher and child (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Reed et al., 2000; Walker et al., 2005). Parents tended to become more involved when they perceived the school and classroom as welcoming through teacher invitations and affirming attitudes (Baker et al., 1996; Griffith, 1996; Grolnick et al., 1997). In addition, when presenting opportunities and invitations for involvement to parents, schools and teachers convey that they do appreciate and value parent involvement and participation. General school opportunities convey to parents that their involvement is welcome and appreciated in supporting student success in learning (Walker et al., 2005). These general school opportunities for involvement include but are not limited to, allowing parents to participate in school board meetings and decision making-processes, offering school-wide family events such as carnivals or open houses, sending home a weekly newsletter notifying parents of ongoing volunteer opportunities, etc. In their study of elementary and middle school students and parents, Dauber and Epstein (1993) reported that teacher invitations and school programs that promoted parent involvement were the strongest predictors of home-based and school-based involvement. With support from the school, parents encouraged children to spend more time on homework with their help and made themselves more available when possible for classroom involvement which led to improved school performance for the students.

*Specific teacher invitations.* Teacher invitations contribute to parent beliefs regarding involvement and confirm that they do have a role and are needed in their

children's education. Teachers can encourage parent involvement in numerous ways including sending home parent-child interactive homework, sending newsletters home that outline class events, planning parent-centered activities in the classroom such as holiday meals, or simply calling to invite the parent to call or visit anytime with questions or concerns (Epstein, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1995). Parent perceptions of the classroom environment and the teacher will increase when a teacher adopts these practices and attitudes, thus increasing parent involvement and child outcomes (Baker et al., 1996; Griffith, 1996). Griffith found that increased communication between teachers and parents was related to increased parent involvement and satisfaction with the school. Keeping parents informed as to what is occurring in the classroom allows parents to feel included and gives them opportunities to discuss the classroom activities at home, which strengthens the home-school connection.

Parent inclusion in the classroom also provides parents and teachers with the opportunity to learn from each other and incorporate activities from each setting into a cohesive literacy environment for the child. Parent involvement in the classroom allows the teacher to model certain literacy-based activities and give ideas and suggestions for home-based involvement (Baker et al., 1996). Teachers are also able to accommodate the individual needs of the child as understood through communication with the parent and observations of parent-child interactions.

#### *Parents' Perceived Life Context*

*Demands on time and energy.* Demands on parents' time and energy, such as employment hours and multiple children in the family may decrease parents' availability and the possibility for parent involvement activities to occur. This section will look at

such demands, including siblings and stepsiblings in the home, marital status and employment hours as they create or break down barriers to parent involvement.

As mentioned, the presence of siblings or stepsiblings in the home can also affect parent involvement practices. Parents are forced to divide their time between children and demands on their time and energy are increased. Parents may not be available to help with homework if they are helping another child or may not be able to attend all school events if they occur at the same time for different children. These family responsibilities create constraints on the range of involvement for a parent (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The effects of multiple children in the home could also be accentuated based on whether or not there are two parents in the home.

The positive influence that marital status has been shown to have on parent involvement can be attributed to the resources that are available in a two-parent household. According to Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000) and Grolnick et al. (1997), married parents were more involved in home-based and school-based involvement than single parents as reported by teachers and parents. Walker et al. (2005) reported that parent involvement was significantly related to having two parents in the home. Those in two parent households would be able to share responsibilities, such as taking care of younger children, in order to become more involved in numerous aspects of the child's education. Single parents may have to work more hours to compensate for a loss of a second income and therefore may be unavailable for involvement due to extended work hours. Also, single parents may be at increased risk for stress and unlike, married parents, do not have a spouse to help buffer the stress and its effects (Grolnick et al.). In addition, single parents may be unable to provide the child with a stimulating home literacy

environment due to the extended work hours, increased family responsibilities, decreased income and potential for increased stress. Given the understanding of the positive influence of parent involvement to child literacy outcomes, if parents are unavailable for involvement, it can be assumed that child's literacy development will also suffer.

Literature findings pertaining to the influence of marital status are, however, varied. Dauber and Epstein (1993) reported that marital status was not related to home-based and school-based parent involvement activities while Grolnick et al. (1997) reported that marital status was indeed related to parent involvement activities.

The demands of employment have the potential to offer possibilities for and restrictions on the range of parent involvement activities feasible for the parent (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Some studies have reported that employment is in fact a barrier to parent involvement (i.e. Walker et al., 2005) while others have not (i.e. Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Number of hours worked and during what time of day, how close the place of employment is to the school and flexibility of the work schedule all contribute to how employment effects parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler; Baker & Scher, 2002). If the parent works long hours during the day and are unable to take time off for school events, parent involvement will most likely suffer. This also has the potential to negatively affect children due to decreased involvement and availability. Children may interpret the parent's lack of involvement as demonstrating that school or the children themselves are unimportant and they may also lose motivation to do well in school. However, parent involvement may increase if the parent works for the school or works where the schedule is flexible and they are able to take time off for school events.

*Specific skills and knowledge.* Parents' perceived skills and knowledge also affect their decision to become involved and the type of involvement they choose. This variable is tied closely with sense of efficacy in that it pertains to the beliefs the parent possess regarding their own abilities. A parent's perceived skills and knowledge can be evident through the types of activities they participate in with their children, materials in the home or even attitudes toward particular topics or attitudes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). As stated earlier, parent beliefs and perceptions influence how they interact with their children. A parent who cannot read well may not have a lot of reading materials in the home, they may not read with their children often and they may have a negative attitude toward literacy-related activities, possibly due to a feeling of inferiority. In addition, Weigel et al. (2006b) reported that when parents place value and importance on reading in the home, they engaged more frequently in related activities.

When looking at parent education and skills and knowledge, several studies conclude that parents with low education are less involved than those with higher education (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Grolnick et al., 1997; Walker et al., 2005). Others have reported no differences between low and high education parents in relation to level of involvement (Epstein, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Education has also been suggested as influencing the type of involvement that a parent chooses. Parents with low education participated in more home-based than school-based involvement activities (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Walker et al.). Parents with low education may feel uncomfortable and less self-assured in the school setting possibly due to fewer positive educational experiences, inability to effectively communicate with teacher and complete certain

activities or decreased confidence when surrounded by parents with more education this could also potentially influence their sense of efficacy.

### *Parent Involvement Forms*

*General parent involvement.* Within the existing literature, parent involvement is broad in nature and has taken several forms, primarily consisting of home-based and school-based practices. Home-based practices include, but have not been limited to helping with homework, cooking with the child or talking about what happened that day. School-based practices would include chaperoning a field trip, going to a school sports event or volunteering in the classroom (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that parent involvement is multidimensional and should be studied with the same perspective. For the purposes of this paper, home-based practices will be examined further focusing on general involvement activities and literacy-specific involvement activities.

As noted throughout, parent involvement has been linked with increased academic motivation and success as well as with enhanced social skills in children (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Reed et al., 2000; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Walker et al., 2005). Parent involvement activities do not necessarily need to have an educational purpose related to a particular issue, such as literacy, to be influential. Activities as simple as talking, eating dinner, or even watching television together have the potential to have an effect on children's development. When parents take the time to encourage communication with their children, they become aware of their children's needs and they express to the children that they are important, thus increasing children's motivation. In addition, because a parent is a child's first



teacher, parent-child communication will also build the child's social skills which will transfer to experiences and relationships outside of the home (Weigel et al., 2006a). Not only are general parent involvement activities critical to child development, activities that emphasize or promote a specific skill are also beneficial.

*Literacy-specific parent involvement.* Another important form of parent involvement that occurs in the home is the literacy-specific parent involvement which specifically emphasizes the promotion of literacy development. The form of involvement produces the home literacy environment which is composed of the literacy-based experiences, attitudes, and resources the child comes in contact with in the home (DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Weigel et al., 2006a). Early views of the home literacy environment focused specifically on the frequency of storybook reading interactions between parent and child. Recently, it has been shown to be multifaceted, consisting of magazine and newspaper subscriptions, library use, drawing and writing activities and book reading as opposed to just looking at the frequency of joint book reading activities (Weigel et al.). Stimulating literacy environments that enhance children's enthusiasm for learning are created when parents express positive attitudes in regards to reading and literacy.

The literacy environment is believed to play a crucial role in the child's development of reading, language and cognitive skills. Within the home environment, the role of the parent is to create an interactional context in which children's interest and motivation in reading is encouraged (Roberts, Jurgens, & Burchinal, 2005). The importance placed upon the contributions of the home environment is primarily due to the fact that the home setting is typically where language and literacy activities are first

encountered (Evans, et al., 2000; Wiegel et al., 2006a). Furthermore, the home environment is essential for children's literacy development because it provides them with opportunities to observe the literacy activities of others, engage in joint reading with parents and others, and independently explore literacy materials and behaviors (DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Weigel et al., 2006a).

Increased child literacy skills are achieved more often when parents provide a positive home literacy environment. Wiegel et al. (2006a) conducted a study with preschool children and found that their literacy and language outcomes were improved when parents engaged with them in literacy enhancing activities in the home such as singing songs, playing games, reciting rhymes, and drawing pictures. The same study also found that the frequency of joint book reading was positively related to literacy and language outcomes including children's interest for reading. However, a number of studies (i.e. Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Weigel, 2006a) have also shown that simply looking at frequency of book reading or exposure to books is not a good predictor of literacy outcomes, suggesting that the effect of such activities could be in the quality of the interactions. Because the home literacy environment is extremely important to child literacy development, a continued understanding of its influence, contributions and components is much needed and can be obtained through further research focusing on a variety of age groups and families.

### *Child Literacy Outcomes*

The effects of parent involvement have been just as consistent and favorable when looking specifically at child literacy outcomes. Literature pertaining to disposition for learning, interest in reading, and print concept knowledge will be discussed further.

*Disposition for learning.* Parent involvement activities and behaviors during these activities influence a child's disposition for learning. Children will have an increased desire to learn and explore new things when parents encourage such behavior. In their study pertaining to involvement and literacy, Roberts et al. (2005) focused on the quality of parent child interactions as opposed to simply looking at frequency of joint book reading. They established that responsive and supportive behaviors by the mother during shared book reading experiences and other literacy-based activities supported language and cognitive development as well as motivation to read, to learn and to participate in other literacy activities.

*Interest in reading.* Children's interest in reading is primarily influenced by behaviors and attitudes modeled by parents. Baker and Scher (2002) found that parents who viewed reading as pleasurable were more likely to have children who reported reading as enjoyable, understood the value in reading, and felt capable in their reading abilities. Children's interest in reading was also increased as more print materials were available in the home suggesting a link between parent attitude toward reading, available materials in the home and children's interest in reading.

Weigel et al. (2006a) discovered that preschool children possessed an increased interest for reading and books when their parents read aloud to them, provided picture books in the home, took them to the library on a regular basis, recited rhymes and drew pictures with them. As suggested by this study and others (e.g. Evans et al., 2000; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002) children have benefited greatly from the literacy and language activities they performed with their parents. These benefits range from

recognizing letters and sounds to gaining an appreciation and interest in books and reading.

*Print concept knowledge.* Another literacy outcome that is influenced by parent child engagement in language and literacy activities is print concept knowledge. The aforesaid study conducted by Weigel (2006a) also demonstrated that children whose parents participated in more literacy activities such as reading aloud to them, drawing pictures with them, and taking them to the library obtained greater print knowledge than children whose parents did not. Parent-child interaction during joint storybook reading also influences print concept knowledge. Specifically, Roberts et al. (2005) reported that parent behaviors of asking open-ended questions, focusing on print concepts and adding information were related to children's language skills, vocabulary development and print concept understanding. Children were able to understand sentence and word meaning and recognize letter and sounds better when parents actively involved in reading activities.

### Conclusion

The positive effects of parent involvement on child outcomes and specifically child literacy outcomes have been well established throughout parent involvement literature. As mentioned, focus has recently shifted to examine how and why parents make the initial decision to become involved in their children's education. With this current trend, particular parent factors, such as role construction, sense of efficacy and skills and knowledge are growing in interest within the literature. Therefore, continued research is needed to understand the influence of these factors along with the additional components of the utilized theoretical model, such as parent perceptions of involvement opportunities and invitations and demands on time and energy.

Given the noted importance of parent involvement, home-based general and literacy-specific parent involvement activities including, but not limited to: reading stories aloud, singing songs together, building things together or playing games together will also be examined as they relate to child literacy outcomes in conjunction with the above listed parent factors.

### Chapter III

## METHODOLOGY

#### *Sample Context*

The sample for this study was part of a larger research project that examined the quality of child care in Oklahoma. In 2001-2002 a stratified random sample of 365 child care centers was randomly recruited to represent the four quality star levels of child care in the state in order to conduct a validation study of the quality rating criteria. In 2003 a random sample of 76 centers representing the original four quality levels was recruited from the original sample of 365 centers to participate in a three year follow-up study of child outcomes. Families were randomly recruited from one or two preschool classrooms in each of the 76 centers. A sample of 455 families agreed to participate with 1 to 12 children per classroom in the 76 centers.

#### *Study Sample*

A subset of the original 455 children and families were selected to answer the questions posed in this study. Only children living in a single parent (n=105, 28.1%) or two-parent (n=262, 71.4%) household were included in these analyses in order to exclude families with more than two adults in the household that could contribute to increased opportunities for literacy experiences because of more adults in the home. The sample for this study included 367 preschool children with 186 females and 181 males. The children's average age in months was 50.66 months (SD=7.39) and ranged from 31 to 70 months as reported in parent questionnaires. Sample information presented in Table 1.

Demographic information was also obtained for the mothers/stepmothers and fathers/stepfathers of the 367 preschool children (Table 1). The average age for mothers/stepmothers was 30.99 years while the average age for fathers/stepfathers was 33.56 years. Education for mothers/stepmothers ranged from less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade (n=1, .3%) to post-master's work (n=7, 2%). For fathers/stepfathers, education ranged from less than 6<sup>th</sup> grade (n=1, .4%) to post-master's work (n=8, 3.1%). Most families (n=41, 11.7%) reported incomes between \$60,000 and \$74,999 while only .6% (n=2) of families reported incomes of over \$250,000. Lastly, 78.3% (n=285) of respondents reported working full time while 21.7% (n=29) reported working part time or not at all.

### *Procedures*

Center directors were first contacted by letter and then by a phone call from the project director. Each center director was given a detailed description of the study and his or her responsibilities and asked about potential teachers to participate, and verbal consent to proceed with the study within the childcare center. Once consent was obtained from participating facilities and classrooms, center directors, classroom teachers, and parents were all asked to complete various questionnaires providing information concerning center and family demographics, parent involvement and classroom practices.

One or two preschool teachers were randomly selected in each center if possible. Many centers, however, just had one or two preschool classrooms. Each teacher was asked for a class roster and up to 12 names were randomly selected from the list. Each teacher was given packets of questionnaires to send home with each randomly selected child for the parents to complete. Parent questionnaires consisted of questions related to family demographics, home literacy practices, general parent involvement practices, child

characteristics and perceptions of the child care program and teacher efforts regarding parent involvement and communication. Parents returned the surveys to the classroom teacher who then handed them over to the data collector. All information and data gathered were stored in locked cabinets for confidentiality purposes. Only project staff members were granted access to the data and questionnaire files

Children in the target classrooms were also assessed by a trained adult during the third visit to the facility. Assessments were conducted in a one-on-one fashion and were broken down into two 30 minute sessions. Only the assessments regarding concepts about print were examined in this study.

### *Measures*

The majority of the study's data were obtained via self-report instruments and child assessments. For the purpose of this study, data were selected from items and questions within the following previously completed questionnaires: The Family Questionnaire which was compiled from the larger study, the Family Demographic Questionnaire, and the Home Experience with Print Survey. The questionnaires were previously selected for the larger study and items from these instruments were selected post hoc to represent the variables of interest for this study. In addition, one assessment form, Early Steps to Literacy Concepts (ESTL) Child Assessment, was also used. Variables in the study were operationalized as follows.

*Parents' motivational beliefs.* The first variable within Level 1 of the theoretical framework is parents' motivational beliefs. This variable was broken down into two specific constructs, role construction and sense of efficacy. Eight items were selected from the Family Questionnaire in order to define *role construction*. These criteria for role



construction can be found in Table 2. Respondents were asked to determine if the given statements described their views or experiences on a 1-7 point scale with 1 signifying “not at all descriptive of me” and 7 signifying “highly descriptive of me”. The possible range for this score was 1-56.

To define *sense of efficacy*, two alternative items were chosen from the Family Questionnaire. The first question asked parents to rate themselves as parents using a 5 point Likert scale. Response values were as follows: 1-“not good at all,” 2 -“not too good,” 3 -“ok,” 4 -“pretty good,” and lastly, 5 -“very good.” The second question asked parents to compare what they had imagined parenthood to be like with what they actually experienced. Response values for this question were as follows: 0- “didn’t think about it before I had children,” 1-“much less rewarding,” 2- “less rewarding,” 3- “about as rewarding,” 4-“ more rewarding,” and 5- “much more rewarding.” The possible range for this score was 0-10.

*Parents’ perceptions of involvement opportunities and invitations.* Next, parents’ perceptions for involvement was also broken down into two specific constructs, general opportunities for involvement and specific teacher invitations for involvement. Both constructs were defined by items from the Family Questionnaire. A total of three items were selected to define *general opportunities for involvement* (Table 3). The questions asked parents whether or not they agreed with the given statement using a 5 point scale. Values were as follows: 1-“strongly disagree,” 2- “somewhat disagree,” 3- “no opinion,” 4- “somewhat agree” and 5- “strongly agree.” The overall scoring range for this construct was 1-15.

*Specific teacher invitations for involvement* were defined by six items within the same questionnaire (Table 4). These six items asked parents to report how often their child's classroom teacher does the specified activities. These items were scored on a 1 to 5 scale with 1 signifying "less than once a year," 2 signifying "once a year," 3 signifying "four times a year," 4 signifying "once a month," and 5 signifying "once a week." The scoring range for this construct was 1-30.

*Parents' perceived life context.* The final variable within Level 1 of the framework is that of parents' perceived life context including demands on time and energy and specific skills and knowledge. *Demands on time and energy* include the constructs of marital status, employment, and the presence of more than one child in the home. The constructs were all defined by items in the Family Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix A). Values for all three constructs were changed to 0/1 in order to correspond with one another and to determine a sum score. Marital status values included 0 for separated/never married/divorced/widowed and 1 for married/single with partner. Employment values included 0 for full-time and 1 for part-time/seasonal/no. Lastly, the presence of other children in the home was defined by 0 for yes and 1 for no. The scoring range for the sum of all items would be 0-3. A score of three signifies that all three values placing demand on a parent's time and energy are not present.

*Specific skills and knowledge* was defined by separate constructs of parent attitude toward reading and available print materials in the home. Parent attitude toward reading was defined by four items from the Home Experience with Print Survey. Please see Appendix B for entire questionnaire. The first item asked respondents to check all types of reading materials that they read on a regular basis from a list of 18 choices. The second

item asked how often they read for pleasure or information with the following choices: 0-“hardly ever,” 1-“once a month,” 2-“three to four times a month,” 3-“weekly,” 4-“twice a week,” and 5-“daily.” The final two questions asked how much time respondents spend reading for pleasure and information separately with the following values: 1-“don’t have time,” 2-“about ten to fifteen minutes,” 3-“about half an hour,” 4-“about an hour and lastly, 5-“more than 90 minutes”. The construct of available print materials in the home was also taken from the Home Experience with Print Survey and defined by one item. Respondents were asked to fill in a bubble next to all of the print material in the home out of 19 possible choices. Scores for this construct were converted to z-scores in order to compute a total score.

*Parent involvement forms.* Level 2 of the framework is comprised of parent involvement forms which consists of general and literacy specific home-based parent involvement. To operationally define *general parent involvement*, six items from the Family Questionnaire were also used (Table 5). These items asked parents to report how often in a typical week the activities listed occur. Responses for this item were as follows: 1-“never,” 2-“one to three times per week,” 3-“four to six weeks per week,” and lastly, 4-“everyday.” The scoring range for this construct was 1-24

To operationally define *literacy-specific parent involvement*, four items from the Family Questionnaire and three items from the Home Experience with Print Survey were used. Please see Table 6 for items from the Family Questionnaire and Appendix B for the complete Home Experience with Print questionnaire. From the Family Questionnaire, parents were asked to report how often in a typical week a list of activities occur with scores valued as follows: 0-“never,” 1-“one to three times per week,” 2-“four to six

weeks per week,” and lastly, 3-“everyday.” A separate item from the same questionnaire asked parents to report whether or not they agreed with the listed statement on a scale with possible responses as follows: 1-“strongly disagree,” 2-“somewhat disagree,” 3-“no opinion,” 4-“somewhat agree and 5-“strongly agree.”

From the Home Experience with Print Survey, parents were asked to mark all literacy activities they participate in with their children from a list of 12 activities. Second, parents were asked how often they read aloud to their children with 0 signifying “not at all,” 1 signifying “about once a month,” 2 signifying “about once a week,” and 3 signifying “daily.” Lastly, parents were asked how often they go to the library with their children with response values as follows: 0-“rarely or never,” 1-“once a year,” 2-“three to six times a year,” 3-“once a month,” 4-“every two weeks,” 5-“weekly or more often.”

*Child outcomes.* To measure disposition for learning, two items from the Family Questionnaire were used. Parents were asked to report “*how often their children showed curiosity or interest*” and “*how often they explored or tried new things.*” The scale for these items is as follows: 1-“not yet or almost never,” 2-“sometimes/occasionally,” and 3-“almost always.” The scoring range for this outcome was 1-6.

Interest in reading was defined by four items from the Home Experience with Print questionnaire (Appendix B). Items asked if the children like to listen to stories, if they ask questions about letters or words, if they have a favorite book and if they pretend to read to others. The scale for these items is as follows: 0 for “no,” 1 for “sometimes,” and 2 for “yes.” The scoring range for this outcome was 0-8.

Lastly, to measure print concept knowledge, eight items from the ETSL Child Assessment were selected. Please see Table 7 for a complete list of selected print concept

knowledge items. To determine whether or not the children could recognize the listed concept, items were scored with 1=yes and 0=no. The scoring range for this outcome was 0-8.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

This study aimed to examine the efficacy of a two level theoretical model developed and refined by Walker et al. (2005) in explaining the child literacy outcomes of disposition for learning, interest in reading and print concept knowledge. The model included the variables of parent role construction, parent sense of efficacy, parent perceptions of general school opportunities, parent perceptions of specific teacher invitations, demands on time and energy, parent perceived skills and knowledge and lastly, general and literacy-specific parent involvement. Descriptives, correlations and a hierarchical regression were used to obtain the current findings. This chapter details the findings related to the model components and each child outcome.

#### *Descriptives*

The descriptive results, including means and standard deviations, for each model component are presented in Table 8. As described in the methods section, each model variable was defined by items extracted from a set of 3 questionnaires: the Family Questionnaire, Family Demographic Questionnaire, and Home Experience with Print Survey. Parent role construction ( $M=51.96$ ,  $SD=4.05$ ) and sense of efficacy ( $M=8.16$ ,  $SD=1.95$ ) were among the highest scoring constructs within their respective scoring ranges.

Descriptive results for each child outcome, also including means and standard deviations are presented in Table 9. Disposition for learning and interest in reading were

also defined by items from the above listed questionnaires. Print concept knowledge scores were taken from the total scores of 8 items from the Early Steps to Literacy Concepts (ESTL) Child Assessment. Disposition for learning was found to have a mean score of 5.76 with a total possible score of 6. Conversely, the mean score for print concept knowledge was 1.69 with a total possible score of 8. As illustrated, scores for print concept knowledge were not very high among participants, while disposition for learning scores were much higher in comparison. Scores for interest in reading fell in between the two extremes with a mean score of 5.63 and a total possible score of 8.

### *Correlations*

After the descriptive statistics were gathered for each model variable as well as for each child literacy outcome, correlations amongst variables were analyzed. First, Table 10 outlines the intercorrelations between the model components. As shown, these intercorrelations did not exceed .70; therefore multicollinearity does not appear to be an issue (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). Next, correlations between model variables and outcome variables are presented in Table 11. The construct of demands on time and energy was the only variable that did not correlate with any other variable while skills and knowledge was correlated with the most variables (role construction, sense of efficacy, general involvement, and literacy-specific involvement). Correlations between each outcome variable and control variables are also listed in the same table. Variables were only included in the following regressions if they were correlated with the outcome variable of interest in order to examine the most parsimonious model for each regression.

### *Regression Results*

A hierarchical regression with the following constructs from Level 1 of the conceptual model, parent role construction, parent sense of efficacy, general school opportunities, specific teacher invitations, demands on time and energy, specific skills and knowledge and the following constructs from Level 2 of the conceptual model, general parent involvement and literacy-specific involvement was used. As mentioned, constructs were only included in the regression if correlations with the outcome variable of interest were significant. Yearly household income and number of months in current childcare were controlled for at Step 1 of the regression if correlations were significant. Step 2 of the regression included the significant Level 1 model constructs and Step 3 of the regression included the significant Level 2 model constructs. In addition, if the control variables were not found to be significant, then Step 1 included the Level 1 model constructs and Step 2 included the Level 2 model constructs.

*Disposition for learning.* The regression results for child disposition for learning are presented in Table 12. The model for disposition for learning was statistically significant [ $f(5, 267) = 4.97, p < .000, R^2 = .068$ ]. Specifically, parents' perceived skills and knowledge ( $b = .05, p = .004$ ) was significant. Level 1 of the model explained approximately 6 % of the variance in child disposition for learning. This variance remained the same when Level 2 variables, general and literacy-specific parent involvement were entered in the regression.

*Interest in reading.* The regression results for children's interest in reading are presented in Table 13. The model for interest in reading was statistically significant [ $f(5, 216) = 10.26, p < .000, R^2 = .173$ ]. Specifically, the Level 1 construct of teacher



invitations ( $b = .12$ ,  $p = .05$ ) and the Level 2 construct of literacy-specific involvement activities ( $b = .31$ ,  $p = .00$ ) were significant. The model explained 17% of the variance in children's interest in reading.

*Print concept knowledge.* The regression results for children's print concept knowledge are presented in Table 14. The model for print concept knowledge was statistically significant [ $f(4, 292) = 3.66$ ,  $p < .006$ ,  $R^2 = .035$ ]. Specifically, one control variable, yearly household income, ( $b = .16$ ,  $p = .01$ ) and one Level 1 construct, sense of efficacy, ( $b = -.13$ ,  $p = .04$ ) were significant. The model explained close to 4% of the variance in print concept knowledge after controlling for yearly household income and number of months in childcare.

## Chapter V

### DISCUSSION

In an effort to expand the current parent involvement research and literature, this study aimed to strengthen the foundation of and build support for Walker et al.'s (2005) theoretical model. Lack of prior research in the early childhood field regarding the influence of all components in the model on parent involvement and child outcomes reinforced the need for the development of this study. This study sought to explain specific child literacy outcomes, disposition for learning, interest in reading, and print concept knowledge, through the components of the model. This chapter will first discuss the findings related to each outcome and research question and then will address limitations of the study and conclude with implications for future research.

#### *Disposition for Learning*

Findings related to the study's first research question pertaining to the efficacy of the model and its components in explaining children's disposition for learning were significant and supported throughout the investigated literature. In particular, parents' perceived skills and knowledge was found to be a significant contributor within the model to the variance in child disposition for learning after the second level of the model was entered into the regression. This construct was defined through parent attitude toward reading, whether or not they read for pleasure or information, and the number of print materials available in the home. The fact that this particular variable was shown to influence children's disposition for learning is consistent with the study findings

presented by Weigel et al. (2006b) in which it was reported that when parents placed importance on reading in the home, they engaged more frequently in related activities and children's outcomes increased. In addition, it has been reported throughout literature that stimulating home literacy environments are created when parents express positive attitudes toward reading and literacy and such environments enhance children's enthusiasm for learning (DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Weigel et al., 2006a). Therefore, the current findings are consistent with and supported by existing related research and literature.

Initial correlations depicted significant relationships between child disposition and the following model components, role construction, sense of efficacy, perceived skills and knowledge, and general and literacy-specific involvement, however, as mentioned, when entered into the hierarchical regression, only parent's specific skills and knowledge emerged as significant. Due to the close similarities between skills and knowledge and sense of efficacy, it is somewhat surprising that sense of efficacy was not significant. These findings could be a result of the influence of involvement forms due to the fact that when they were entered into the regression the significance level of sense of efficacy changed from  $p = .11$  to  $p = .17$ . These findings illustrate the importance of parent perceptions and involvement on children's motivation and desire to learn. When parents possess a positive opinion towards and place importance on knowledge and literacy, they model that behavior for their children and provide the necessary resources to enhance their children's academic achievement. In support of this notion, Keyser (2006) stated that children learn how to communicate, express caring, solve problems and work collaboratively with others through observations of significant adult figures in their lives.

To reiterate, it may not be the direct involvement that is influential when parents possess high self efficacy or their perceptions of their own skills and abilities, it may be the attitudes and behaviors they portray for which they children observe and model.

### *Interest in Reading*

Findings for the study's second research question in regards to the efficacy of the model in explaining children's interest in reading were also significant and empirically supported. Initial correlations showed role construction, teacher invitations, perceived skills and knowledge and general and literacy-specific involvement to be significantly correlated with interest in reading; however only teacher invitations and literacy-specific involvement proved to be significant contributors to the variance in children's interest in reading after regressions were run. Baker and Scher (2002) reported that children interest in reading was increased when more print materials were available in the home, providing support for the initial correlation between children's interest in reading and parents' perceived skills and knowledge. Interestingly, general parent involvement was approaching significance with a value of  $p=.08$  in the regression.

The construct of specific teacher invitations for involvement was defined by six items from the Family Questionnaire Educare Colorado. Parents were asked to report how often their child's teacher did the specified activities from a given list. Activities ranged from sending home notes to talking with parents at drop off and pick up times. Baker et al. (1996) and Griffith (1996) reported that parent perceptions of the classroom, parent involvement, and child outcomes will increase as teachers adopt an open and willing attitude toward involvement characterized by increased invitations for involvement and teacher parent communication. The findings presented here support this

notion in that increased teacher invitations contributed to children's increased interest in reading possibly through parent involvement. Teachers may have presented ideas for implementing literacy activities in the home or suggested ways to encourage reading in the home. As mentioned, the invitations from the teachers may increase parent perceptions of the classroom and teacher which would increase parent involvement and the home to school connection. Activities and lessons learned in the classroom could be reinforced in the home due to increased parent teacher communication.

In addition, another potential explanation for the interest in reading results pertains to the link between children's development and learning and parent-teacher communication. As previously mentioned, children learn through observations and it has been suggested by Ordoñez-Jasis & Ortiz (2007) that when children observe their parents and teachers cooperatively interacting, they view this as permission to develop a trusting relationship with the teacher. This trusting relationship, along with a safe and nurturing environment, is conducive and essential for the children's learning and development (Ordoñez-Jasis & Ortiz; Keyser, 2006). Therefore, if children have a positive relationship with the teacher, the desire to learn or read as well as print concept knowledge may still develop even if parents are not as involved. Children are active members of two worlds, the home environment and the school environment. When these two environments do not interact or work together, children are put in a compromising situation in which they miss out on consistency in care and education and minimal learning takes place (Ordoñez-Jasis & Ortiz).

It was no surprise that literacy-specific involvement was significant within the model. It has been established through literature that literacy-based activities increase

children's language and literacy skills (DeBaryshe et al., 2000; Evans et al.; 2000; Roberts et al., 2005; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; Weigel et al. 2006a, 2006b). Specifically, Weigel et al. (2006a) found that children's motivation to read and other literacy outcomes were improved when parents participated in literacy-based activities such as singing songs, reading stories, and drawing pictures. Encouragement of literacy in the home provides children with opportunities to enhance literacy development through observations, engagements and explorations of available materials and behaviors. The findings presented here do in fact support this notion with increased literacy-specific involvement playing a role in children's increased interest in reading.

#### *Print Concept Knowledge*

The study's final research question pertaining to children's print concept knowledge and the model components produced some interesting results. Within initial correlations and the final hierarchical regression, only sense of efficacy and the control variable, household income proved to be significant. Results pertaining to sense of efficacy are supported by the few existing empirical studies examining efficacy and involvement which state that if sense of efficacy in the parent is high, then parent involvement and positive child outcomes will increase (i.e. Reed et al., 2000). When parents possess a high sense of efficacy and feel confident in their abilities as a parent, they may also simply model positive behaviors that encourage and enhance learning and motivation as children consistently learn through observations of their surroundings.

When discussing the influence of income, results from this study and others can be interpreted in more than one way. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) reported that lower socioeconomic status (SES) families work inflexible and unpredictable hours, have less

schooling and have lower access to resources. Therefore, low SES families are thought to be less involved and their children typically do not have as many opportunities for learning as a result. Grolnick et al. (1997) supported this finding stating that the higher the SES of the mother, the more likely she was to be involved. It would then stand to reason then that children of low SES families would have lower print concept knowledge than children of high SES families. Additionally, low income families are more likely to live in poor neighborhoods with few resources. Schools in these neighborhoods also typically lack in resources. Children growing up in these environments are not presented with learning opportunities that would potentially increase their knowledge and development.

Print concept knowledge has been frequently tied to literacy-specific involvement activities such as joint reading and going to the library (Roberts et al., 2005; Weigel et al. 2006a). Specifically, Roberts et al. found that interaction during joint reading, including asking questions and focusing on letter and word meanings were related to children's print concept understanding as evident through letter, word, and sentence recognition. Therefore, it is surprising that literacy-specific involvement was not significant within the study results regarding print concept knowledge. This may be attributed to the outcome data analyzed. As previously mentioned, data for this study were taken from the first year outcomes of a three year study. The print concept assessment tool lacked variability in that many of the children assessed were young in age and did not answer many of the questions correctly.

### *Limitations of the Study*

The primary limitation of the study was the lack of school-based involvement data available in a pre-collected data set. Walker et al.'s (2005) model originally included school and home-based involvement in the second level, however given the lack of data the model was revised for the purposes and resources of this study to focus on home-based, general and literacy-specific involvement practices.

This also was a limitation in the variables that were chosen for analysis. Parent education was also omitted from the study as research is now moving in the direction of discerning whether or not education is related to the type of involvement chosen as opposed to simply the decision to become involved. With only home-based involvement to examine, the study would not have been able to make the comparison between school and home-based involvement related to education level.

Also, this study looked just at one year outcome data from a three year longitudinal study. Results may have differed if the data from all three years had been analyzed, especially when looking specifically at the results obtained from children's print concept.

A final limitation of the study could be found in the method of data collection. All data were obtained from self-report questionnaires. The possibility for bias in response does exist and this should be cited as a potential reason for acquired results. For example, Baker and Scher (2002) and Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) discussed a social desirability bias that may arise within parental reports of literacy activities in the home and found that because storybook reading is considered a highly valued activity, parents may report participating in the activity more than they actually do. For this study, only 6 families



reported never reading to their children, so the potential for a social desirability bias is likely.

### *Implications for Future Research*

This study carries implications for future research in the parent involvement and early childhood fields. Continued research is needed to enhance support for the efficacy and utilization of Walker et al.'s (2005) parent involvement model. This study underscores the importance of examining multiple influences of parent involvement, particularly looking at parent beliefs and perceptions as they relate to how and why parents make the decision to become involved. The impact of parent beliefs and perceptions is growing in interest and further research is needed to increase verification of their importance.

Another implication is for the expansion of research pertaining to the model to include early childhood ages and childcare settings. Research focusing on this age group and setting is somewhat limited. As stated by Weigel et al. (2006a), parents are a child's first teachers and more research focusing on this age range would be beneficial in understanding and influencing children's future academic achievement. This study is also an important resource tool for school professionals and other individuals looking to increase parent involvement.

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## APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Family Demographic Questionnaire

*All Parents*

**A. Please complete these questions about your child**

**1. Child's birthday:**        
**Month Day Year**

**2. Child's gender:**  Boy  Girl

**3. Your child's racial/ethnic status:**

- American Indian
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other

**4. What language is most often spoken in your home?**

- English
- Spanish
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Equal English and other language

**5. In your home, who does your child currently live with? (Check all that apply)**

- Mother
- Father
- Brothers and sisters (stepbrothers/sisters)
- Grandmother
- Grandfather
- Live in help
- Stepmother or father's partners
- Stepfather or mother's partner
- Other co-parent
- Other relatives
- Boarders

**B. The next questions are about your child's experiences in child care**

**1. How many hours during a typical week does your child attend the child care program in which he/she is currently enrolled and from which you received this survey form?**   Hours per week

**2. How long has your child been enrolled in the program?**   Months in program

**3. Why did you select this location? (Check all that apply)**

- Cost
- Location
- Quality
- Special programs offered
- Hours
- Philosophy of provider
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Does your child currently receive care for at least 10 hours a week in another child care setting in addition to the program above? (Check one)**

- Yes
- No

**5. Which of these arrangements did your child attend in the last year while you were at work or school? (Check all that apply)**

- Care by relative
- Babysitter or nanny
- Head Start
- Preschool at a public school
- Child care center other than this one
- Family child care home (not in child's home)

**6. Has your child attended any other formal child or preschool program before the one in which he/she is currently enrolled? DO NOT INCLUDE INFORMAL CHILD CARE OR BABYSITTING ARRANGEMENTS**

- Yes
- No

**7. Has your child ever been cared for in an informal child care or babysitting arrangement for at least 10 hours a week? (Check one)**

- Yes
- No

**8. At what age did your child first receive regular child care (at least 10 hours a week) from someone other than a parent?**   Months

**9. Thinking back to your child's first child care setting, how many hours a week was your child care for?**   Hours per week

**10. In how many different child care settings has your child received care for at least 10 hours a week since he or she first received regular care from someone other than a parent?**   Settings

**11. Thinking about those settings, were most in: (Check one)**

- A child care center
- A family child care home
- Someone else's home
- Your child's own home

**12. When you have changed your child care arrangement in the past, what were the reasons you did so? (Check all that apply)**

- Cost
- Location
- Quality
- Special programs offered
- Hours
- Philosophy of provider
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_



**C. The following questions are about you**

**1. Relationship to child:**

- Mother/Stepmother
- Grandparent
- Father/Stepfather
- Other

**2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- Less than 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- Associate's Degree
- Less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- Bachelor's Degree
- Less than High School
- Some graduate coursework
- High School/GED
- Master's Degree
- Vocational School
- Post-Master's work
- Some college

**3. My age is:**

**4. My gender is:**

- Female
- Male

**5. My racial/ethnic status is: (Check all that apply)**

- American Indian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Asian
- White
- Black or African American
- Other
- Hispanic

**6. My marital status is:**

- Single/Never Married
- Separated/Divorced/Widow
- Married/Single with partner

**7. Do you work outside the home?**

- No
- Yes, part-time
- Yes, full-time
- Yes, seasonal/variable

**8. Do you receive DHS subsidy for child care?**

- Yes
- No

**9. Do you receive any assistance for child care from your employer or your spouse/partner's employer?**

- Yes
- No

**10. Do you receive TANF assistance?**

- Yes
- No

**11. Who is the head of your household? (Check one)**

- I am the head of the household
- My spouse/partner is the head of household
- Another adult is the head of the household

**12. What is the occupation of the head of household?** \_\_\_\_\_

**13. What is your yearly household income?**

- Less than \$5,000
- \$5,000 - \$10,999
- \$11,000 - \$15,999
- \$16,000 - \$20,999
- \$21,000 - \$25,999
- \$ 26,000 - \$30,999
- \$31,000 - \$35,999
- \$36,000 - \$40,999
- \$ 41,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$ 60,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$ 100,000 - \$250,000
- \$ Over \$250,000

*In the last 12 months...*

**14. How often did your family have to borrow money from friends or family to help pay bills?**

- |                       |                       |                       |  |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Not at all            |                       |                       |  | A lot                 |
| 1                     | 2                     | 3                     |  | 4                     |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |  | <input type="radio"/> |

**15. How often did you decide not to buy something that was really needed to make ends meet?**

- |                       |                       |                       |  |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Not at all            |                       |                       |  | A lot                 |
| 1                     | 2                     | 3                     |  | 4                     |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |  | <input type="radio"/> |

*In the past 12 months, did your family experience any of the following because of money problems?*

- 16. No telephone service**  Yes  No
- 17. Were unable to pay the full amount of rent or mortgage**  Yes  No
- 18. Were evicted from our home for not paying rent or mortgage**  Yes  No
- 19. Had service turned off by the gas or electric company**  Yes  No
- 20. Someone in the family needed to see the doctor or go to the hospital but did not go**  Yes  No
- 21. Someone in the family needed to see the dentist but did not go**  Yes  No

*In the past 12 months...*

**22. Has your family eaten less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?**

- Never                      Sometimes                      Often

**23. Has your family been unable to afford to eat balanced meals?**

- Never                      Sometimes                      Often

**24. Have you or adults in the household ever cut the size of their meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?**

- Never                      Sometimes                      Often

**D. If you have a spouse or partner, please answer the following questions about them. If you do not have a spouse or partner, this is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you**

**1. Relationship of spouse/partner to child:**

- Mother/Stepmother                       Grandparent  
 Father/Stepfather                       Other

**2. What is the highest level of education spouse/partner has completed?**

- Less than 6<sup>th</sup> grade                       Associate's Degree  
 Less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade                       Bachelor's Degree  
 Less than High School                       Some graduate coursework  
 High School/GED                       Master's Degree  
 Vocational School                       Post-Master's work  
 Some college

**3. Spouse/partner age is:**

**4. Spouse/partner gender is:**

- Female                       Male

**5. Spouse/partner racial/ethnic status is: (Check all that apply)**

- American Indian                       Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  
 Asian                       White  
 Black or African American                       Other  
 Hispanic

**6. Does your spouse/partner work outside the home?**

- No                       Yes, part-time                       Yes, full-time                       Yes, seasonal/variable

## Appendix B

### Home Experience with Print

*To be completed by a parent or guardian. Please fill in the circle to indicate your answer.*

**1. How often do you read aloud to your child?**

- Not at all    Daily    About once a week    About once a month

**2. How often do older brothers or sisters read aloud to your child?**

- Not at all    Daily    About once a week    About once a month

**3. What is usually read aloud?** *(Mark each one that is done)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> picture books               | <input type="radio"/> brochures                      |
| <input type="radio"/> letters or cards            | <input type="radio"/> comic books                    |
| <input type="radio"/> information books           | <input type="radio"/> religious books & materials    |
| <input type="radio"/> lists                       | <input type="radio"/> TV guide                       |
| <input type="radio"/> magazine articles & stories | <input type="radio"/> novels (more than one chapter) |

**4. About how long does each read-aloud session last?**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than 5 minutes | <input type="radio"/> 5-15 minutes        | <input type="radio"/> 15-30 minutes    |
| <input type="radio"/> 30-45 minutes       | <input type="radio"/> 45 minutes - 1 hour | <input type="radio"/> More than 1 hour |

**5. Who chooses the material for read-aloud sessions?** *(Mark each one who often chooses)*

- Mother    This child    Older brothers or sisters    Father    Younger brothers or sisters

**6. Who else, besides parents or older brothers/sisters read to this child?**

*(Mark each one that is true)*

- |  |                                      |                                     |                                    |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> grandparents               | <input type="radio"/> babysitter     | <input type="radio"/> older cousins | <input type="radio"/> aunts/uncles |
| <input type="radio"/> teacher (preschool/school) | <input type="radio"/> family friends |                                     |                                    |

**7. What other literacy activities do you do with your child?** *(Mark each one that is true)*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> writing notes to teacher                   | <input type="radio"/> ordering from a catalog         |
| <input type="radio"/> writing stories with your child            | <input type="radio"/> writing letters/cards           |
| <input type="radio"/> helping with homework                      | <input type="radio"/> reading silently as a family    |
| <input type="radio"/> going to the library                       | <input type="radio"/> making signs and labels         |
| <input type="radio"/> teaching your child letters/words          | <input type="radio"/> reading menus at restaurants    |
| <input type="radio"/> reading directions for cooking or projects | <input type="radio"/> reading labels at grocery store |

**8. Does your child like to listen to stories?**

- Yes                       No                       Sometimes

**9. Do you ever discuss stories as you read them with your child?**

- Yes                       No                       Sometimes

**10. Does your child answer simple questions about stories?**

- Yes                       No                       Sometimes

**11. Does (or did) your child ever ask questions about letters or words?**

- Yes                       No                       Sometimes

**If so, how do (did) your respond?**

- tell them the letter or word     give them the sound of the letter  
 help them sound out the word

**12. Please indicate each person in your household who has a library card?**

- Mother    This child    Other adult in family    Father    Older brothers or sisters

**13. How often do you visit the library with your child/children?**

- Weekly or more often     Once a month     Three to six times a year  
 Every two weeks         Once or a year     Rarely or never

**14. Please fill in each one of these print materials that is available in your home?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Books written for adults              | <input type="radio"/> Children's magazines              |
| <input type="radio"/> Newspapers                            | <input type="radio"/> Brochures or pamphlets            |
| <input type="radio"/> Letters & other mail                  | <input type="radio"/> Professional journals             |
| <input type="radio"/> Telephone & address books             | <input type="radio"/> Labels (food cans & boxes)        |
| <input type="radio"/> Comic books                           | <input type="radio"/> Children's books                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Catalogs                              | <input type="radio"/> Cookbooks/recipes                 |
| <input type="radio"/> Directions for crafts                 | <input type="radio"/> TV guides                         |
| <input type="radio"/> Magazines written for adults          | <input type="radio"/> Owner's manual (TV, Stereo, etc.) |
| <input type="radio"/> Lists                                 | <input type="radio"/> Educational materials & workbooks |
| <input type="radio"/> Writing materials (pens, paper, etc.) |   |

**15. About how many books of his/her OWN does your child have?**

- None
- 1 to 5 books
- 6 to 10 books
- 11 to 15 books
- 16 to 24 books
- 25 to 50 books
- More than 50 books

**16. Does your child have a favorite book?**

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

**17. Does your child pretend to read books to others?**

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

**18. How many magazines does your family (children & adults) read regularly or have subscriptions to?**

- None
- 1 to 3 magazines
- 4 to 6 magazines
- 7 to 10 magazines
- More than 10

**19. Do you receive the newspaper?**

- No
- Daily
- Weekly

**20. What reading materials do you and your spouse regularly read for pleasure or information?**

- Books written for adults
- Newspaper
- Letters & other mail
- Telephone & address books
- Comic books
- Catalogs
- Directions for crafts
- Magazines written for adults
- Lists
- Children's magazines
- Brochures or pamphlets
- Professional journals
- Labels (food cans & boxes)
- Children's books
- Cookbooks/recipes
- TV guides
- Owner's manual (TV, Stereo, etc.)
- Educational materials & workbooks

**21. How often do you regularly read for pleasure or information?**

- Daily
- 3 to 4 times a month
- Twice a week
- Once a month
- Weekly
- Hardly ever

**22. How much time do you spend reading for pleasure each day?**

- Don't have time
- About 10-15 minutes
- About half an hour
- About an hour
- More than 90 minutes

**23. How much time do you spend reading for information each day?**

- Don't have time
- About 10-15 minutes
- About half an hour
- About an hour
- More than 90 minutes

## TABLES



Table 1

Sample Demographics

Variable	N	%
Children		
Female	186	50.7
Male	181	49.3
Family Structure		
Single Parent	105	28.1
Two Parent	262	71.4
Mother's Education		
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	1	.3
Less than high school	7	2
High school/GED	48	13.6
Vocational school	22	6.3
Some college	105	29.8
Associate's degree	47	13.4
Bachelor's degree	80	22.7
Some graduate work	17	4.8
Master's degree	18	5.1
Post-master's work	7	2
Father's Education		
Less than 6 <sup>th</sup> grade	1	.4
Less than 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	1	.4
Less than high school	16	6.3
High school/GED	59	23
Vocational school	26	10.2
Some college	61	23.8
Associate's degree	16	6.3
Bachelor's degree	48	18.8
Some graduate work	2	.8
Master's degree	18	7
Post-master's work	8	3.1
Family Income		
Less than \$5,000	14	4
\$5,000-\$10,999	16	4.6
\$11,000-\$15,999	30	8.5
\$16,000-\$20,999	28	8
\$21,000-\$25,999	29	8.3
\$26,000-\$30,999	22	6.3
\$31,000-\$35,999	20	5.7
\$36,000-\$40,999	21	6
\$41,000-\$49,999	33	9.4
\$50,000-\$59,999	37	10.5
\$60,000-\$74,999	41	11.7

Table 1 Continued

\$75,000-\$99,999	36	10.3
\$100,000-\$250,000	22	6.3
Over \$250,000	2	.6
Employment		
Full Time	285	78.3
Part Time/Not at all	79	21.7

Table 2

Criteria for Parent Role Construction

---

I respect my child's opinion and encourage him/her to express it

I feel that a child should be given comfort and understanding when he/she is scared or upset

I express my affection by hugging, kissing, and holding my child

I find some of my greatest satisfactions in my child

I joke and play with my child

My child and I have warm intimate moments together

I encourage my child to be curious, to explore and question things

I find it interesting and educational to be with my child for long periods of time

---

Table 3

Criteria for General School Opportunities for Involvement

---

Gives helpful ideas and information for working with my child at home

Variety of opportunities available to take part in my child's program

Opportunities available to be included in planning and decision-making about my child's program

---

Table 4

Criteria for Specific Teacher Invitations for Involvement

---

Sends home notes

Makes phone calls to parents

Contacts parents about children's problems

Informs parents when children do well

Suggests activities for parents to do at home with their children

Talks to parents at drop off and pick-up times

---

Table 5

Criteria for General Parent Involvement

---

Help your child do chores

Play board or card games with your child

Talk about nature with your child

Build things with your child

Play sports with your child

Watch TV, videos or DVD's with your child

---

Table 6

Criteria for Literacy Specific Parent Involvement

---

Tell stories to your child

Sing with your child

Do art activities with your child

Spend more time playing, talking or reading with your child

---

Table 7

Criteria for Print Concept Knowledge

---

Cover/Front of Book

Print contains message

Word by word pointing

Word sequence

Meaning of question mark

Meaning of period

First and last letter

Capitol letter

---



Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Model Components

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Level 1			
Parent Role Construction	51.96	4.05	28.00
Sense of Efficacy	8.16	1.95	7.00
Perceptions of General School Opportunities	12.19	2.42	11.00
Perceptions of Specific Teacher Invitations	22.28	5.19	24.00
Demands on Time and Energy	1.17	0.72	3.00
Perceived Skills and Knowledge	.082	3.34	17.15
Level 2			
General Parent Involvement	15.06	2.92	16.00
Literacy-Specific Parent Involvement	23.48	5.31	23.00

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Child Literacy Outcomes

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Range</i>
Disposition for Learning	5.76	0.57	3.00
Interest in Reading	5.63	1.16	6.00
Print Concept Knowledge	1.69	1.16	7.00

Table 10

Correlations Between Model Components

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Skills and Knowledge	1.00	.37**	.25**	.21**	-.07	.15**	-.04	.00
2. Literacy Specific Involvement	--	1.00	.51**	.24**	-.09	.24**	.18**	.10
3. General Involvement	--	--	1.00	.16**	-.05	.19**	.06	.10
4. Sense of Efficacy	--	--	--	1.00	-.09	.31**	.01	-.07
5. Demand on Time and Energy	--	--	--	--	1.00	-.11	.02	.10
6. Role Construction	--	--	--	--	--	1.00	.18**	.00
7. General Opportunities	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.00	.49**
8. Teacher Invitations	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1.00

Table 11

Correlations Between Child Outcomes and Model and Control Variables

	Disposition for Learning	Interest in Reading	Print Concept Knowledge
Level 1:			
Role Construction	.189**	.182**	.070
Sense of Efficacy	.172**	.026	-.143**
General School Opportunities	.036	.064	-.057
Specific Teacher Invitations	.071	.116*	-.056
Demands on Time and Energy	.049	-.077	-.005
Perceived Skills and Knowledge	.258**	.201**	.036
Level 2:			
General Parent Involvement	.145**	.286**	-.106**
Literacy-Specific Parent Involvement	.180**	.395**	.046
Control Variables:			
Yearly Household Income	.078	-.025	.109*
Number of Months in Childcare	-.006	-.054	.104*

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$  (two-tailed)

Table 12

Hierarchical Regression for Disposition for Learning

	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>ΔR<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1	.066	.077		
Role Construction			.08	.20
Sense of Efficacy			.10	.11
Skills and Knowledge			.21	.20
Step 2	.068	.008		
Role Construction			.06	.32
Sense of Efficacy			.09	.17
Skills and Knowledge			.18	.00
General Parent Involvement			.05	.46
Literacy-Specific Parent Involvement			.07	.35

Table 13

Hierarchical Regression for Interest in Reading

	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>ΔR<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1	.062	.075		
Role Construction			.15	.02
Specific Teacher Invitations			.17	.01
Skills and Knowledge			.15	.03
Step 2	.173	.117		
Role Construction			.07	.30
Specific Teacher Invitations			.12	.05
Skills and Knowledge			.13	.85
General Parent Involvement			.12	.08
Literacy-Specific Parent Involvement			.31	.00

Table 14

Hierarchical Regression for Print Concept Knowledge

	<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>ΔR<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1	.016	.022		
Yearly Household Income			.12	.04
Number of Months in Childcare			.07	.23
Step 2	.030	.017		
Yearly Household Income			.16	.01
Number of Months in Childcare			.06	.30
Sense of Efficacy			-.14	.02
Step 3	.035	.008		
Yearly Household Income			.16	.01
Number of Months in Childcare			.06	.30
Sense of Efficacy			-.13	.04
General Parent Involvement			-.09	.12

VITA

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Candidate for the Degree of

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Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of Walker et al.'s (2005) parent involvement model for explaining literacy outcomes for preschoolers by including variables that represent all components of this model. Components include parent role construction, sense of efficacy, parent perceptions of general school opportunities and specific teacher invitations for involvement, demands on time and energy, perceived skills and knowledge, and general and literacy-specific parent involvement activities. Data was used from the first year of a three year longitudinal study involving 76 childcare facilities across Oklahoma. Parents and teachers were given a set of self-report questionnaires while children were given the Early Steps to Literacy Concepts (ESTL) Child Assessment. Hierarchical regressions were used to examine three research questions pertaining to the model and child disposition for learning, interest in reading and print concept knowledge.

Findings and Conclusion: The model was found to be significant for all three child literacy outcomes. The model explained 6% of the variance in children's disposition for learning, 17% of the variance in children's interest in reading and close to 4% of the variance in children's print concept knowledge. Specifically, parents' perceived skills and knowledge was found to be a significant contributor to disposition for learning, teacher's specific invitations and literacy-specific involvement were found to be significant contributors to interest in reading, and lastly, parents' sense of efficacy was significant in the model for print concept knowledge.

ADVISOR'S APPROVAL: Deborah J. Norris

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