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A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF A PARENT ADVISORY BOARD DEVOTED TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION

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PURIN WILLIAMS

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BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

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In Memory Of

In Loving Memory

Grandmothers: “Bernice,” “Louise,” and “Susie”

Grandfathers: “Walter,” “John Willie,” and “Lewis”

Each of my grandparents shaped my understanding of wisdom, confidence, beauty, strength, and prosperity. Through their lives, love, and guidance, they helped me see myself through the strength they carried and reflected to me. I am deeply grateful for the ways they poured into my life. Their belief in me became a lasting gift one that gave me the confidence to move forward without fear. Their influence remains present in who I am, how I live, and what I have been able to accomplish. I love and miss them deeply.

Momma “Ida” and Daddy “Jeramiah”

Momma Ida and Daddy Jeramiah were my greatest teachers. They lived selflessly and embodied the truth that, one hundred years from now, the things we owned may not matter, but the world may be different because we were important in the life of a child.

Momma taught me a simple but enduring standard of excellence: if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well. Daddy taught me to steward people, relationships, and possessions with care. His wisdom that something can be learned from anyone and that a smile costs nothing shaped how I engage with others. Together, they taught me to honor my word, live with integrity, and remain accountable for the impact of my actions. Their greatest gift was a legacy of faith in God, which is now carried forward by my children and grandchildren. Their investment in my life helped make me who I am, and their influence is woven throughout this achievement.

Aunt "Martha"

Aunt Martha was a sophisticated, world-traveling woman whose life reflected grace, generosity, and unconditional love. She loved deeply and helped our family understand what it meant to accept and care for one another without condition. Her presence is profoundly missed, but the love she demonstrated remains with us.

Aunt "Ardenia"

As my father's older sister, Aunt Ardenia brought kindness, strength, confidence, and steadfast love into our family. She consistently cared for me and my children, and her example of stewardship helped shape the aunt I strive to be. Even in her passing, she made provisions to remember my children. That final expression of love has remained with me and created a legacy that will continue through future generations. Her life reminds me that meaningful achievements are rarely accomplished alone; they are built upon the love, sacrifice, guidance, and investment of those who came before us.

Aunt "Zonalla" and Uncle "Hamp"

Aunt Zonalla and Uncle Hamp faithfully remembered every Christmas and birthday while sharing a rich heritage of faith, family, and music. Their influence extended beyond our family and into the entertainment industry, where their contributions are honored in the Georgia Music Hall of Fame. Their lives remain a testament to the ways God can use individual gifts to influence families, communities, and generations. Through their example, they taught us to believe that, with the Lord, all things are possible.

Uncle "Lewis"

Uncle Lewis was a remarkable uncle whose love was unmistakable and could be felt whenever he entered a room. He and my other uncle shared such a close relationship with my father that it was impossible to determine which one was his best friend; in truth, they both were.

Uncle Lewis brought quiet ease, laughter, and reassurance to our family. His presence communicated that, regardless of the circumstances, everything would ultimately be all right. That sense of peace remains one of his lasting gifts.

My Brother, "Arthur"

Arthur was the first doctor I ever knew. I was approximately twelve years old when he passed, but I still remember the confidence and security I felt whenever he looked at me. In my eyes, he could accomplish anything, and I knew without question that he was my protector.

Although his life ended far too soon, the confidence, admiration, and sense of possibility he inspired in me have never disappeared.

My Cousins: Brian, Dejuan, Pam, Elmer "Bubba," Etta, and Tonya

The love of my cousins has remained a constant thread woven throughout our large family. That bond is rooted not only in shared experiences, but also in the Indigenous history and ancestral legacy that connect us. The land our family enjoys carries the blood, tears, sacrifices, and perseverance of those who came before us. Our continued love for one another honors that history and helps preserve it for the generations that follow.

George W. McLaurin and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher

This achievement also stands upon the extraordinary courage and perseverance of George W. McLaurin and Ada Lois Sipuel. Their pursuit of graduate education at the University of Oklahoma challenged exclusionary systems and expanded educational opportunities for those who followed. Their sacrifices made pathways possible that had previously been denied. Their names, courage, and contributions must never be forgotten.

In Remembrance of and Gratitude to "The Village"

There are many others whose names and contributions could never be fully captured on these pages. I remain especially grateful for Aunt Pearl, Aunt Zonobie, Aunt Rajaen, Aunt Cookie, Uncle Roscoe, Uncle Coot, Reverend and Mrs. Webb, Mr. and Mrs. McClenen, Mr. and Mrs. Nobles, and the many relatives, friends, mentors, teachers, and members of the community who poured their wisdom, encouragement, prayers, time, and love into my life.

Although I may not be able to name everyone individually, no contribution has been forgotten. This accomplishment reflects the collective investment of a village that helped me believe, persevere, and become the person I was called to be. I am sincerely grateful to every person who played a role in making this achievement possible.

Above all, I commit this work to the Lord. May it honor God, serve others, and reflect the purpose for which it was completed.

Dedication To

Dedication to the Lord

"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established."

Proverbs 16:3, KJV

I humbly commit this work to the Lord, whose grace, wisdom, strength, and faithfulness sustained me throughout this journey. Every lesson learned, obstacle overcame and milestone reached was made possible through His guidance. May this work honor God, serve His people, and fulfill the purpose for which He allowed it to be completed.

To God be the glory for all that has been accomplished and for all that may come from it.

My Children, Grandchildren, and Their Spouses

"Ashlee (Daughter), Londyn Grace (Granddaughter) and Tyson (Son)"

My children, grandchildren, and their spouses are among the greatest blessings of my life and the clearest expression of the legacy I hope to leave behind. Their love, patience, encouragement, and belief in me gave this journey a deeper purpose. My children witnessed the sacrifices, long hours, challenges, and perseverance required to reach this moment. Their support strengthened me when the path was difficult, and their lives continually reminded me why this work mattered.

Their spouses became part of that support system, extending love, understanding, encouragement, and grace throughout the journey. I am grateful for the ways each of them contributed to the strength and unity of our family. My grandchildren inspired me to think beyond this achievement and toward the generations that will follow. I hope this accomplishment reminds them that their dreams are worthy, their voices matter, and no goal is beyond their reach when they walk in faith, purpose, and perseverance.

This work is part of the inheritance I leave to them not simply as a degree or professional accomplishment, but as evidence that courage, discipline, education, faith, and family support can open doors for generations. May they carry forward the strength of those who came before us while creating meaningful paths of their own. To my children, grandchildren, and their spouses, thank you for being my joy, my motivation, and a constant reminder of God's faithfulness. I love and honor each of you, and I dedicate this achievement to our family and to the future we are building together.

My Parents

"Juanita and Anthony"

I am the product of your wisdom, resilience, and the lessons you taught me about life, people, identity, and humility. Your sound judgment, faith, and convictions have woven a cord within me that has guided this journey, often in ways others cannot see until they are put into practice.

I remember Dad telling me in junior college, *"If you don't finish what you start, you'll look up and realize you haven't completed anything in your life."* And Mom reminding me, when I was newly married and had not finished my bachelor's degree, *"You need to finish your education. If they take everything from you, they can't take your knowledge."*

Here we are together. Thank you both for the light you placed within me. I love you.

My Siblings

“Doug, Gary, Kathy, Sherry, Stacy, Lora, Scott, Lois and Donald & Their Spouses”

My siblings have been among the strongest and most enduring influences in my life. We share a history shaped by love, faith, sacrifice, laughter, loss, and the lessons of those who raised us. Through every season, our bond has remained rooted in the understanding that none of us walks through life alone. Their strength, encouragement, prayers, and belief in me helped sustain this journey. Each of them has contributed to the person I have become, and this accomplishment reflects the foundation we share as a family. I am grateful for the memories we carry, the challenges we have overcome, and the love that continues to connect us. This achievement belongs not only to me, but also to the family that shaped me and stood beside me. To my siblings, thank you for being part of my story, for carrying our family’s legacy forward, and for reminding me where I come from. I love and honor you all.

My Brother

“Scott”

My big brother an accomplished author, speaker, and business mogul has always been one of my greatest examples and supporters. As my brother, he has guided me, listened to me, opened doors for me, challenged me, and walked beside me through every season of my life. His wisdom and generosity have strengthened our family and touched countless lives throughout the community and beyond. This achievement is part of the fruit of the time, love, guidance, and dedication he has poured into me as his little sister. Because of his example, I am committed to carrying our family legacy forward by pouring into others and using what God has given me to make a difference. I am deeply grateful and honored to call him my big brother.

Acknowledgments

I begin by acknowledging my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

and committing this work to Him.

I honor every person who has experienced abuse or harm. It is my hope that, by this same purpose and power, this work continues to advance freedom. God is just, and His justice will not remain dormant forever. Those of us committed to prevention carry a responsibility to uphold the rights, dignity, and humanity of every person with integrity and care.

This work began with the courage of those who shared their stories. To the parents and participants who trusted me with their experiences, thank you. Your openness made this study possible and strengthened its purpose. I carry your stories with respect and a deep commitment to honoring what you shared. I am deeply grateful to my dissertation chair, Rick Munoz, Juris Doctor, and my committee members, Dr. Jody Worley, Dr. Chad Johnson and Dr. December Maxwell, for your guidance, thoughtful feedback, and unwavering support throughout this journey. Your wisdom and encouragement helped shape this work.

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To my children and grandchildren, thank you for your patience, your love, and for giving me countless reasons to keep going. Your presence has been one of my greatest sources of strength. I stand here today because of you and with you. To my friends, mentors, counselors,

advisors, partners, and pastors, thank you for standing with me in ways both seen and unseen. Your encouragement, guidance, and prayers sustained me throughout this process. To my colleagues and community partners, your commitment to children and families continues to inspire this work.

This acknowledgment honors those who have been harmed and recognizes those committed to protecting, supporting, and restoring them. May this work contribute to systems that listen with humility, learn with purpose, and respond with accountability.

Land Acknowledgment

The land on which we stand is the present-day home of the Muscogee, Cherokee, and Osage Nations. I honor and respect the tribes who stewarded this land before them. I also honor the thirty-nine sovereign nations that share geography with Oklahoma, as well as all Native people, including my own ancestors and community, who continue to call this land home.

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Abstract

In Federal Fiscal Year 2024, child protective services received approximately 4.3 million referrals involving an estimated 7.7 million children calling for more community centered prevention approaches (Administration for Children and Families et al., 2026). Parent Advisory Boards recognized as community-based prevention systems, existing scholarships underrepresentation of their perspectives in their own terms, leaves underexamined how these boards interpret their roles within prevention systems (Tomison & Wise, 1999, Butler et al., 2020; Hartling et al., 2021). In response, this qualitative case study sought to provide practitioners, policy makers, and community leaders an understanding of how a single parent advisory board informs child abuse and neglect prevention at relational, organizational, and community levels. Guided by Ecological Systems Theory, Coleman's Social Capital Theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework, three research aims guided the inquiry: (1) parents' lived experiences and contributions within prevention systems, (2) the operationalization of protective factors, and (3) the barriers and facilitators shaping meaningful participation. Data was generated through participant observation, document analysis, and six purposively sampled semi-structured interviews. ATLAS.ti-supported thematic content analysis using constructivist grounded-theory procedures produced five interconnected themes and an emergent explanation: relational engagement strengthens parent voice and supports meaningful shared decision-making. Sensitizing concepts provided initial direction while remaining provisional and responsive to the data (Charmaz, 2014; Zaidi, 2022). The emergent theory proposes that these processes strengthen protective practices, organizational learning, and community-informed child abuse and neglect prevention

Keywords: Child abuse prevention, Parent engagement, Parent Advisory Board, Shared decision making, Parent voice, Community-informed prevention, Qualitative case study

Chapter One

Introduction

About the author

In qualitative inquiry, **positionality** refers to the researcher's explicit acknowledgment of how their social identities, professional experiences, values, and relationships to the research context shape the study's design, data collection, interpretation, and representation of findings. It recognizes that researchers are not neutral observers but situated participants in the co-construction of meaning (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

As a professional working in child abuse and neglect prevention, I have witnessed the persistent and multifaceted conditions that place children and families at risk. These experiences have taught me that prevention is not simply the delivery of services nor the reinforcement of blame, but a collaborative process that requires engaging parents as **co-designers** of prevention efforts. My positionality is grounded in centering caregivers' lived expertise and in the belief that meaningful child maltreatment prevention emerges from authentic partnership with the communities we serve. This standpoint informs how I approached the research questions, interacted with participants, and interpreted the data, ensuring that the study reflects a relational, community-embedded understanding of parent leadership within prevention systems.

Introduction

Child abuse and neglect (CAN) remain enduring public health challenges in the United States, producing long-term consequences for children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and relational development and imposing substantial social and economic burdens on families, communities, and public systems (Fortson et al., 2016a; Merrick & Narayan, 2020; Peterson et

al., 2018). Maltreatment risk arises not only from individual behaviors but also from relational dynamics, structural inequities, and the organizational environments in which families interact.

These realities underscore the need for community-centered prevention approaches, defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as efforts that strengthen family protective factors through authentic parent engagement, shared decision-making, and collaborative partnerships that reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect (Klevens & Alexander, 2019).

Gap in the Literature

Within this landscape, Parent Advisory Boards have emerged as community-based structures designed to elevate family voice, strengthen protective factors, and inform prevention strategy across interconnected systems. This qualitative case study examines how a Parent Advisory Board in the Southwestern United States makes meaning[1] of its relationship to child maltreatment prevention. Although advisory boards have become increasingly visible in prevention environments, scholarship has not kept pace.

Existing research offers limited insight into how these boards function, how members interpret their roles, or how advisory structures contribute to prevention system learning. These gaps necessitate a systematic and critically engaged review of the literature to situate the present inquiry. For example, in a review of sixteen studies conducted across the United States, Canada, Ireland, Spain, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom found no qualitative research examining Parent Advisory Boards as collective entities, calling for the need for additional

[1] For this study participation, meaning-making, and lived experiences are used interchangeably operating as interconnected constructs. Parents engage in advisory work by bringing their lived experience, interpret that experience collectively through meaning-making, and transform it into meaningful participation that influences decisions and system learning (Charmaz, 2014; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Augsberger et al., 2023; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

evidence to clarify the effectiveness of culturally adapted family interventions and to identify the factors that contribute to successful implementation. (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003).

Most research focuses on families' perceptions of workers or services rather than on board-level meaning-making or the environments through which boards shape prevention strategy. Without this knowledge, prevention systems lack guidance on how boards develop, how they contribute to organizational learning, and how they elevate parent voice within prevention environments.

Statement of the Problem

The problem to be addressed in this qualitative case study is that child abuse and neglect prevention systems continue to struggle to learn from structured parent leadership mechanisms, including Parent Advisory Boards, even though family voice is increasingly recognized as essential to effective prevention practice. Child abuse and neglect produce long-term developmental, relational, and societal consequences for children, families, and communities (Fortson et al., 2016; Merrick & Narayan, 2020; Peterson et al., 2018). Prevention systems therefore require approaches that are responsive to family experience, culturally relevant, and grounded in protective factors.

Although Parent Advisory Boards are used to elevate family voice, research has not adequately examined how these boards function as collective, structured entities. Existing studies tend to focus on individual parent experiences, participation logistics, or membership rather than board-level meaning making, influence, shared decision making, or system learning (Appleton et al., 2015; Augsberger et al., 2023; Lalayants, 2012a). As a result, limited evidence explains how parents interpret their roles, contribute lived expertise, build collective voice, and influence prevention systems through advisory board participation.

This gap matters because when prevention systems fail to understand or incorporate structured family perspectives, they risk implementing practices that are misaligned with community needs, inconsistently applying protective factor principles, weakening cultural relevance, and diminishing relational trust between families and systems. These consequences limit prevention effectiveness and may reduce opportunities for meaningful parent leadership and system improvement.

Therefore, this qualitative case study investigates how members of one Parent Advisory Board experience and make meaning of participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work, with attention to belonging, parent voice and agency, shared decision making, board-level contribution, and system learning.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore and understand how a Parent Advisory Board interprets its roles, contributions, and functions within child abuse and neglect prevention systems. Guided by Ecological Systems Theory (EST), Social Capital Theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework (SFF), this study examines the board as a collective, structured entity to understand how members construct meaning around their participation, apply protective-factor principles, and contribute to system learning. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, document review, and participant observation. By addressing the documented gap in how advisory boards are studied, this research seeks to generate insights that can strengthen participatory structures, enhance protective-factor implementation, and support community-informed prevention.

Research Question

The research question is intentionally framed around the phenomenon of interest: how Parent Advisory Board members experience and make meaning of their lived experiences, roles, contributions, participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work. The three aims operationalize that broad question by organizing the inquiry into: (1) collective roles, experiences, and contributions; (2) interpretation and application of protective factor principles; and (3) ecological and relational conditions that support or constrain meaningful participation. This structure follows research-design guidance that a central research question should identify the phenomenon under study, while aims/objectives specify the focused dimensions through which the phenomenon will be examined(Almusaed et al., 2025).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its response to a documented gap in child maltreatment prevention research. Although Parent Advisory Boards are increasingly used to elevate family voice and inform prevention strategy, existing scholarship offers limited insight into how parents experience and interpret participation within these structures (Barth et al., 2005; Green et al., 2007; Lalayants, 2012a). This absence leaves uncertainty about how advisory boards function as prevention mechanisms and how members make meaning of their roles.

This study contributes context-specific evidence about how one Parent Advisory Board understands and enacts participation within a maltreatment prevention environment. By examining board-level meaning-making, the study clarifies how members interpret their roles, apply protective factors, and navigate organizational conditions that shape engagement. This contribution extends current prevention research by moving beyond one-time interviews or focus groups toward sustained, process-oriented inquiry, answering calls for more participatory

research that examines what makes prevention efforts meaningful and acceptable to families (Butler et al., 2020; Kane et al., 2007).

The findings may benefit practitioners, programme managers, policymakers, and community organizations seeking to design or strengthen advisory structures. These users can apply the study's insights to build trust, support shared decision-making, and align prevention strategies with lived experience. The implications are especially relevant in Oklahoma, where maltreatment patterns and caregiver conditions underscore the need for relational, community-based, and parent-informed prevention approaches(Administration for Children and Families et al., 2026).

Because the study focuses on a single board, its contribution is context-bound. The findings inform rather than generalize, offering grounded insight into one advisory structure while identifying questions for future research across additional settings.

Definitions

This definition of terms provides plain-language definitions for readers who may be unfamiliar with child abuse and neglect prevention or parent Advisory Boards.

- *A posteriori:* Knowledge, interpretations, or analytic understandings that arise after and from empirical observation, emerging through engagement with the data rather than through prior assumptions or pre-existing theory (Nguyen-Trung & Nguyen, 2026).
- *Belonging:* Belonging refers to parents' descriptions of feeling welcomed, connected, and emotionally safe within the Advisory Board (Walsh, 2016; Ishimaru, 2019).
- *Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention:* Policies, practices, and community-based efforts intended to reduce the likelihood of maltreatment before harm occurs by strengthening

families, reducing risk factors, and increasing protective conditions (Fortson et al., 2016a; Harper Browne, 2016).

- [2]*Child Abuse and Neglect:* A recent act or failure to act by a parent or caregiver that causes death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation, or creates an imminent risk of serious harm to a child (Administration for Children and Families et al., 2026).
- *Child Maltreatment[1]:* According to World Health Organization (2026) Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs under 18 years of age, including all types of (a) physical and/or emotional ill-treatment (b) sexual abuse (c) neglect (d) negligence and commercial or other exploitation which results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power(Administration for Children and Families et al., 2026).
- *Constructivist epistemology:* An interpretive view of knowledge that holds that meaning and understanding are constructed through human interaction, experience, and interpretation rather than discovered as objective facts. It emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participant s, the influence of context and standpoint, and the situated nature of all inquiry (Berger, 1966a; Charmaz, 2014).
- *Constructivist Grounded Theory:* An interpretive approach to qualitative inquiry in which data, meaning, and theoretical insights are co-constructed through the researcher's reflexive engagement with participants and context. CGT views analysis as an iterative and comparative process shaped by researcher positionality, emphasizing situated

[2] Child Abuse and Neglect and Child Maltreatment will be used interchangeably in the context of this study; however, their meaning will be the same.

meanings, social processes, and contextual conditions rather than assuming theory is objectively discovered (Berger, 1966a; Charmaz, 2014).

- *Context-sensitive:* An analytic stance that attends to the social, relational, cultural, and structural conditions shaping participants' experiences, recognizing that meaning and action are situated within specific contexts (Charmaz, 2014).
- *Ecological Systems Theory:* A theory of human development that explains how individuals are shaped by nested and interconnected systems, including family, school, community, and broader social and cultural environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).
- *Empowerment*: Empowerment refers to descriptions of growing confidence, voice, and agency (Zimmerman, 2000).
- *Epistemology:* The study of how knowledge is formed, justified, and understood, including the assumptions, processes, and criteria through which researchers determine what counts as credible knowledge within a given inquiry (Schwandt, 2015).
- *Family-Centered Practice:* An approach that emphasizes the strengths, needs, and goals of the family as the basis for planning and delivering support (Shapiro, 2016; Augsberger et al., 2023).
- *Grounded:* *A*nalytic concepts, categories, and theoretical insights that are developed directly from the data rather than imposed beforehand, reflecting participants' meanings, actions, and situated experiences (Charmaz, 2014).
- *Hermeneutic orientation:* An interpretive stance in qualitative research that emphasizes understanding how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and expressed within participants' lived experiences. It involves attending to language, context, and the

researcher's own interpretive role, recognizing that knowledge is produced through an ongoing dialogue between researcher and data. A hermeneutic orientation seeks to illuminate underlying meanings, assumptions, and social processes rather than merely describing surface-level content (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014).

- *Inductive:* A mode of qualitative reasoning in which analytic patterns, categories, and theoretical insights are developed from the data itself through iterative comparison and emergent interpretation, rather than derived from pre-existing hypotheses or predetermined frameworks (Charmaz, 2014; Tracy, 2020).
- *Inductive:* A mode of reasoning in which patterns, categories, and theoretical insights are built upward from the data through iterative comparison and analytic development, rather than deduced from pre-established hypotheses (Charmaz, 2014; Tracy, 2020).
- *Lived Experience:* Knowledge, understanding, and perspective gained through direct personal experience, treated in qualitative research as an important source of meaning and insight (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
- *Neglect:* Child Welfare Gateway provides the Oklahoma Citation: Ann. Stat. Tit. 10A, § 1-1-105 definition of neglect as the failure or omission to provide adequate nurturance and affection, food, clothing, shelter, sanitation, hygiene, or appropriate education; Medical, dental, or behavioral health care; Supervision or appropriate caregivers to protect the child from harm or threatened harm of which any reasonable and prudent person responsible for the child's health, safety or welfare would be aware; Special care made necessary by the physical or mental condition of the child; The failure or omission to protect a child from exposure to any of the following: The use, possession, sale, or

manufacture of illegal drugs; Illegal activities; Sexual acts or materials that are not age-appropriate; Abandonment (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2023).

- *Ontology:* Ontology refers to the assumptions a study makes about the nature of reality, what exists, what can be known to exist, and how phenomena come into being (Denzin & Lincoln, 2026). In this study, a relational-constructivist ontology assumes that reality is multiple, contextual, and co-constructed through relationships, interactions, and situated experiences (Charmaz, 2014).
- *Parent Advisory Board (PAB):* A structured group of parents who contribute guidance, feedback, and lived experience to improve programs, services, and policies affecting children and families (Hartling et al., 2021; Saint-Jacques et al., 2006).
- *Parent Engagement:* The meaningful involvement of parents in activities, relationships, and decision-making processes that shape services, programs, or systems affecting children and families (Augsberger et al., 2023; Hartling et al., 2021).
- *Parent Leadership:* Parents' active use of voice, experience, and influence to guide decisions, advocate for families, and contribute to organizational or systems-level change (Kane et al., 2007; Skelton-Wilson et al., 2021).
- *Participation:* Participation refers to the ways parents described acting through communication, collaboration, leadership, advocacy, and decision-making (Hartling et al., 2021;(Fung, 2006).
- *PCODES:* Portrait construction was guided by the five organizing elements identified by English (2000) people, time, space, key events, and phenomena of interest. In some qualitative methods training, these elements are remembered using the mnemonic PCODES, although the acronym itself does not originate with (English, 2000).

- *Portraiture:* A qualitative methodology that blends systematic inquiry with narrative, aesthetic, and interpretive expression to create rich, holistic portrayals of participants' experiences. Portraiture seeks to illuminate the complexity, context, and meaning of lived experience by integrating empirical evidence with the researcher's interpretive voice, producing a narrative "portrait" that captures both the particular and the universal (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).
- *Post-positivist:* A research paradigm that assumes an external reality exists but can only be imperfectly understood due to human limitations. It emphasizes objectivity, systematic procedures, and the use of predefined propositions or variables to approximate truth, often seeking patterns that can be generalized across contexts. Post-positivist approaches rely on structured designs, triangulation for verification, and analytic techniques aimed at reducing bias, reflecting a modified positivist commitment to objectivity and causal explanation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Yin, 2018).
- *Prevention Approach:* In this study prevention approach is defined by the Center of Disease Control and Prevention as, community-based efforts that strengthen family protective factors through authentic parent engagement, shared decision-making, and collaborative partnerships that reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect (Klevens & Alexander, 2019).
- *Protective Factors:* Conditions or attributes that support family well-being and reduce the likelihood of maltreatment, including parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children's social and emotional competence (Harper Browne, 2016) .

- *Reflexive:* The ongoing, intentional practice of critically examining how the researcher's assumptions, positionality, experiences, and interactions shape the research process, including data generation, analysis, and interpretation (Charmaz, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).
- *Risk Factors:* Conditions associated with a greater likelihood of child maltreatment, such as caregiver stress, substance misuse, domestic violence, mental health challenges, and limited social support (Administration for Children and Families et al., 2026; Fortson et al., 2016).
- *SafeCare:* An evidence-based home visiting program designed to support parents of young children who are experiencing stressors associated with increased risk for child maltreatment (Administration for Children and Families et al., 2026).
- *Shared Decision-Making:* A collaborative process in which parents and professionals contribute jointly to decisions that affect services, programs, or systems (Hartling et al., 2021; (Fung, 2006).
- *Social Capital:* As defined by James Coleman (1988), the use of the term social capital is the theory that resources are available to individuals and groups through their social networks and relationships these resources are embedded within their social structure such as their connections and interactions. Unlike physical or human capital, social capital is embedded in the social structure and is characterized by the connections and interactions among individuals(Wright, 2025).
- *Strengthening Families Framework:* A research-informed approach to increasing family strengths, supporting child development, and reducing the likelihood of abuse and

neglect by building key protective factors in families and communities (Harper Browne, 2016; Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2018).

- *Trauma-Informed Approach:* A way of working with children and families that recognizes the effects of trauma and emphasizes safety, trust, respect, and supportive relationships (Ferrara et al., 2016).

Organization of Study

There are six chapters in this dissertation. Chapter One introduces the study, establishes the problem, identifies gaps in the literature, and presents the purpose, significance, conceptual frameworks, and central research question. The chapter situates the inquiry within national and Oklahoma child maltreatment prevention contexts, establishing the need to examine Parent Advisory Boards as structured spaces for parent participation, shared meaning making, and prevention-oriented learning (Fortson et al., 2016; Hartling et al., 2021; Kane et al., 2007; Saint Jacques et al., 2006; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2024). This chapter establishes the conceptual and contextual scaffolding that the subsequent chapters deepen and operationalize.

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature across major areas: **(1)** national and Oklahoma-specific child maltreatment trends, **(2)** the evolution of child abuse and neglect prevention systems, **(3)** ecological systems theory, social capital theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework, **(4)** empirical research on parent leadership and advisory structures, and **(5)** gaps and limitations in parent-centered prevention scholarship. These strands collectively demonstrate the scholarly need for examining how parents make meaning of advisory participation, forming a coherent bridge between the problem space articulated in Chapter One and the methodological commitments developed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three outlines the methodological approach, including the constructivist qualitative case study design, grounded theory analytic procedures, thematic analysis as an integrative scaffold, and portraiture as an interpretive and representational orientation. The chapter also details the research site, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents the data analysis and findings of the study. This chapter provides the empirical foundation that the interpretive synthesis in Chapter Five extends. Chapter Five offers an interpretive discussion of the findings using Portraiture. This chapter highlights the narrative, relational, and aesthetic dimensions of parent participation, weaving grounded theory themes with Portraiture's emphasis on voice, context, goodness, and counter-storytelling (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). It interprets findings across themes, addresses race and class, and identifies implications for practice, policy, and system learning. In doing so, the chapter harmonizes empirical findings with conceptual frameworks, preparing the ground for the integrative synthesis presented in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six concludes the study by revisiting the research questions, summarizing key findings, and presenting the emergent theory. The chapter demonstrates identifies contributions to prevention systems research, offers practical and policy recommendations, outlines limitations, and proposes directions for future research. A final reflection closes the dissertation, bringing conceptual, methodological, and interpretive strands together in a unified and coherent conclusion.

Conclusion

Chapter One establishes the foundation for this study by presenting the persistent problem of child maltreatment, the limited scholarship on Parent Advisory Boards, and the need

to understand how these boards interpret their roles within prevention systems. The chapter articulates the study's purpose, significance, and research questions, and introduces the theoretical frameworks guiding the inquiry.

It also identifies a clear gap in the literature: the absence of qualitative research examining the lived experiences of Parent Advisory Board members in child maltreatment prevention (Kane et al., 2007; Fortson et al., 2016; Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003). By addressing this gap, the study contributes to a more relational and community-informed understanding of prevention systems. Together, these elements prepare the reader for Chapter Two, which provides the literature review that informs and contextualizes the present study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Child abuse and neglect prevention systems increasingly emphasize family voice, parent leadership, and community-informed prevention as essential to strengthening outcomes for children and families. Child maltreatment produces long-term developmental, relational, and societal consequences, making prevention a critical system-level concern (Fortson et al., 2016; (Merrick & Narayan, 2020; Peterson et al., 2018). Prevention systems are expected not only to reduce maltreatment risk but also to build protective conditions that support family resilience, relational trust, and system responsiveness (Harper Browne, 2016).

This literature review examines scholarship related to parent leadership, advisory participation, protective factor implementation, and system-level learning within child abuse and neglect prevention systems. The review draws from child maltreatment prevention, family engagement, participatory governance, ecological systems theory, social capital theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework. Prior literature shows that family engagement and parent voice are important to prevention and system improvement (Appleton et al., 2015; Augsberger et al., 2023), yet structured parent leadership mechanisms remain underexamined.

The guiding question for this review is: **What does existing scholarship reveal and fail to reveal about parent leadership, advisory participation, protective factor application, and system-level learning within child abuse and neglect prevention systems?**

The chapter first reviews child maltreatment prevention as a systems problem. It then examines Ecological Systems Theory, Social Capital Theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework as conceptual lenses. Next, it synthesizes literature on family voice, parent

engagement, parent leadership, advisory boards, participatory governance, power, trust, equity, and relational conditions (Andress et al., 2020). The chapter concludes by identifying the central gap: limited research examines Parent Advisory Boards as collective, structured, meaning-making entities that contribute to prevention system learning.

Search Strategy

Literature for this narrative/thematic dissertation review was identified through iterative keyword, subject, Boolean, phrase, truncation, known-item, exploration, comprehensive, full-text, semantic, and fuzzy searching. This approach was appropriate because narrative/thematic reviews require conceptual breadth, thematic synthesis, and attention to how bodies of literature build toward a research gap rather than only exhaustive retrieval (Georgiou, 2021; Kane et al., 2007). Searches focused on the intersection of parent leadership, advisory participation, protective factor application, and system learning within child abuse and neglect prevention systems and included approximately 614 sources (Figure 1).

Core concept blocks included parents/caregivers/families; advisory boards, councils, and participatory governance structures; child welfare and maltreatment prevention systems; the Strengthening Families Framework and protective factors; relational conditions such as trust, power, equity, and social capital; and system learning concepts such as feedback loops, meaning making, and system responsiveness. Prior reviews on child maltreatment prevention and parenting programs informed the use of broad parent-, prevention-, and maltreatment-related search terms (Altimier & Seiver, 2020; Butler et al., 2020; Knerr et al., 2013).

The review prioritized literature published from 2000 through 2025, while retaining earlier foundational works when theoretically necessary. Sources were managed in Zotero and exported to Excel for screening, classification, and thematic synthesis. Because this is a

narrative/thematic dissertation review rather than a systematic review, the search process emphasized conceptual relevance, theoretical fit, empirical contribution, and usefulness for identifying the research gap.

Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention as a Systems Problem (C1)

Child abuse and neglect prevention is best understood as a systems problem rather than a problem of isolated parent behavior. The literature in Construct (C1) supports a movement from documenting harm and responding after maltreatment occurs toward public-health, policy, community, and family-informed prevention systems. The literature first establishes why child abuse and neglect prevention must be treated as a systems-level concern. Studies and reviews on maltreatment, adverse childhood experiences, filicide, and the psycho-physical and social consequences of abuse show that maltreatment is not limited to an immediate child-protection event; it can produce enduring developmental, health, relational, and social harms across the life course (Ferrara et al., 2016; Legano et al., 2009; Resnick, 1969; West, 2007; Widom, 1989).

National surveillance and policy reports further position maltreatment as a persistent public problem rather than a rare or purely private family matter (Administration for Children and Families et al., 2026; Kelly et al., 2020). Taken together, this body of literature justifies a prevention orientation: if the consequences of maltreatment extend beyond the moment of investigation or substantiation, then prevention systems must also extend beyond crisis response.

A second pattern in the literature is the movement from individual-level intervention toward ecological, community-based, and public-health prevention. Community prevention scholarship emphasizes that child safety is shaped by neighborhood conditions, social relationships, service access, policy environments, and organizational capacity (Kimbrough-Melton & Melton, 2015; Tomison & Wise, 1999). Public health and health-equity literature

similarly argues that durable prevention requires attention to upstream conditions and social determinants, not only downstream services after harm has occurred). These systems framing align with ecological theory because families are embedded in interacting contexts: households, schools, service systems, communities, and policy structures. Therefore, prevention cannot be reduced to parent education alone; it requires coordinated structures that notice risk, strengthen protective conditions, and connect families to support before maltreatment occurs.

Program and intervention studies add an important complication to the systems claim. Evidence-based models such as SafeCare and Strengthening Families demonstrate that structured prevention programs can reduce risk and support families, especially when they are implemented with attention to context and fidelity (Abdala et al., 2020; Chaffin et al., 2012; Pinheiro-Carozzo et al., 2021). However, the literature also shows that effectiveness evidence is not the same as system learning. Systematic and scoping reviews point to variation in populations, implementation settings, reach, adoption, and sustainability (Levey et al., 2017; Pinheiro-Carozzo et al., 2021). These findings suggest that prevention systems need more than a menu of evidence-based interventions; they need mechanisms for adapting programs to local contexts, interpreting family experience, and learning from implementation barriers.

Policy-focused sources extend the prevention frame by locating child abuse and neglect within statutory, public-health, and governance contexts. CAPTA-related sources and national child maltreatment reports show that prevention is shaped by federal and state definitions, reporting structures, funding priorities, and accountability expectations (Fortson et al., 2016b). At the same time, public-health prevention strategies and ACEs prevention resources emphasize population-level approaches that address risk and protective factors before formal child welfare involvement(Sherin et al., 2022). This policy and public-health context matter because it

broadens responsibility for prevention beyond child protective services alone. Prevention becomes a shared system function involving families, communities, service providers, policymakers, and institutions that shape the conditions under which families raise children.

Across C1, the strongest contribution of the literature is conceptual convergence: child maltreatment prevention is repeatedly described as ecological, preventive, community-based, and policy-dependent. The evidence base includes surveillance reports, policy documents, reviews, randomized or intervention studies, implementation studies, and conceptual/public-health scholarship. This breadth is useful for a doctoral narrative review because it shows that the systems framing is supported across multiple kinds of evidence.

However, the same breadth also creates limitations. Much of the literature documents harms, evaluates programs, or describes prevention policy, but fewer studies examine how prevention systems learn from families as collective knowledge holders. In particular, the literature more often names family engagement, parent leadership, or lived expertise as important than it explains how structured parent groups generate meaning, influence decisions, or feed learning back into prevention systems.

This gap creates the need for the next thematic section. If child abuse and neglect prevention is a systems problem, then the review must next explain the conceptual lenses that make system context, relational networks, and protective factors visible. Ecological Systems Theory, Social Capital Theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework provide that bridge by explaining how parent advisory participation can be understood not merely as engagement, but as structured participation within prevention systems.

The literature supports a systems approach to child abuse and neglect prevention, but it leaves underdeveloped how Parent Advisory Boards function as collective, structured, meaning-making mechanisms that translate parent knowledge into prevention system learning.

Conceptual Frameworks for Understanding Parent Advisory Boards (C2)

The conceptual lenses selected for this study provide complementary perspectives for understanding why prevention systems may have difficulty learning from structured parent leadership mechanisms. Examining this problem requires attention to systems, relationships, and prevention practice. As Merriam (2009) explains, a theoretical framework provides a lens through which a research problem is viewed, informs the development of research questions, and supports interpretation of the findings.

In this study, Ecological Systems Theory, Social Capital Theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework informed the literature review, research question, and broad domains explored through the semi structured interview guide. They functioned as sensitizing concepts that provided an initial direction for inquiry while remaining provisional and responsive to the empirical data (Charmaz, 2014; Zaidi, 2022). The frameworks were not converted into predetermined coding categories or used to prescribe the findings. Instead, they were revisited during interpretation to examine how the findings aligned with, extended, or complicated existing conceptual understandings.

Together, these lenses oriented the inquiry toward parent participation as a relational, contextual, and prevention-focused process. They informed, but did not determine, the study's research aims:

1. Aim 1 focuses on parents' roles, lived experiences, and contributions.
2. Aim 2 focuses on protective-factor principles in prevention practice.

3. Aim 3 focuses on the ecological and relational conditions that support or constrain participation.

Although each framework has particular relevance to an individual aim, the three lenses operate across the study rather than being assigned exclusively to separate aims.

Ecological Systems Theory provides a broad contextual lens for understanding child abuse and neglect prevention. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model emphasizes that human development is shaped by interacting systems, including families, organizations, communities, culture, and time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Applied to prevention, this perspective demonstrates why maltreatment risks and protective factors cannot be understood solely at the individual parent or child level. Prevention is shaped by nested and interconnected conditions, including service access, organizational practices, community norms, policy requirements, and historical inequities (Martinello, 2020; Neal & Neal, 2013). This lens is particularly relevant to Aim 3 because it directs attention to the multilevel conditions that may support or constrain meaningful Parent Advisory Board participation.

Social Capital Theory complements the ecological lens by focusing on resources embedded in social relationships and networks. Coleman (1988) defined social capital as resources available through social relationships that facilitate action. Within prevention systems, social capital helps explain why trust, reciprocity, information exchange, shared norms, and network connections matter for family participation and system responsiveness. Bisung and Elliott (2014) demonstrate the usefulness of social capital for understanding how relationships influence access, participation, and collective capacity in health and community settings. Social Capital Theory is particularly relevant to Aim 1 because Parent Advisory Boards depend on whether parent knowledge is trusted, circulated, and treated as credible within formal systems. It

also helps explain how members experience belonging, develop advisory roles, and contribute within a relational setting.

The Strengthening Families Framework provides the prevention-specific lens. Harper Browne (2016) identifies five protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and children's social and emotional competence. These protective factors connect systems-oriented theory to prevention practice by identifying conditions that child- and family-serving systems seek to strengthen. The framework also connects to parent leadership because families are not only recipients of services; they are knowledge holders who can assess whether protective factors are meaningful, accessible, and culturally responsive in practice (Harper Browne, 2016; Kiplinger & Browne, 2014). This framework is particularly relevant to Aim 2 because it directs attention to how board members understand and experience protective-factor principles in advisory and prevention work.

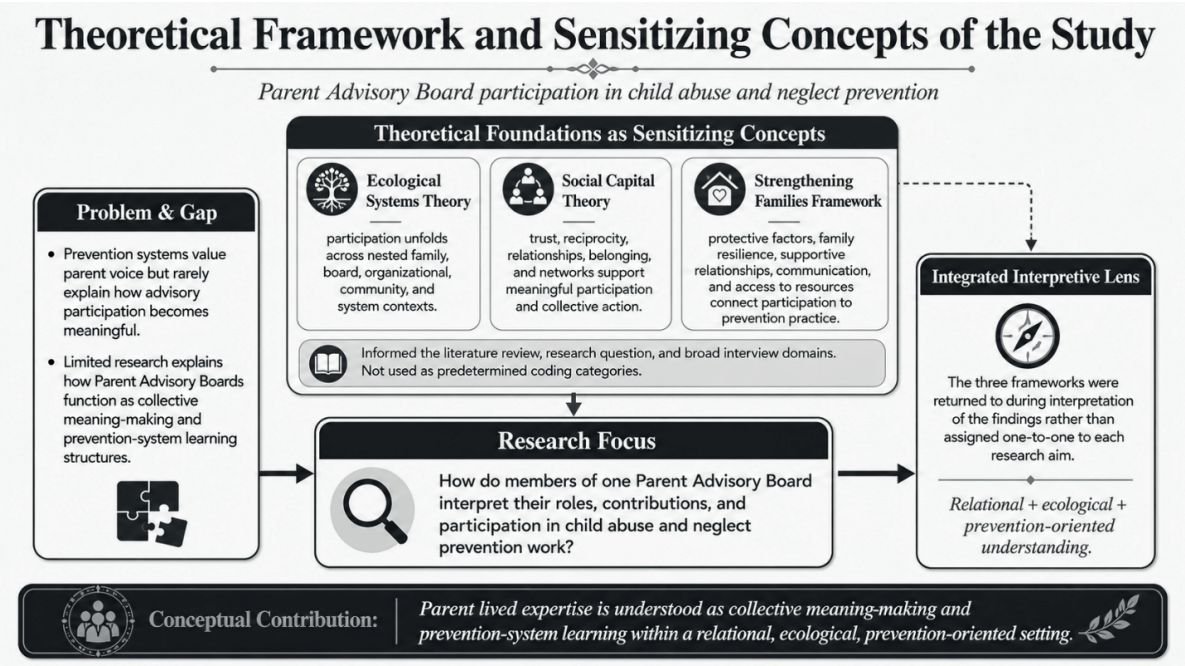
Together, the three lenses create a layered conceptual structure. Ecological Systems Theory explains where prevention and participation occur, Social Capital Theory explains how relationships and trust shape parent voice and participation, and the Strengthening Families Framework explains what prevention systems seek to strengthen (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Coleman, 1988; Harper Browne, 2016). These distinctions provide conceptual orientation rather than fixed analytic categories.

The literature provides a strong conceptual basis for examining prevention as ecological, relational, and protective-factor oriented. However, it remains underdeveloped in explaining how these perspectives operate together within structured parent advisory settings. Existing scholarship frequently discusses ecological context, social relationships, and protective factors

separately and does not fully explain how they converge through collective parent meaning-making and participation. This gap creates an analytic opening for examining Parent Advisory Boards as settings where context, relationships, lived experience, parent roles, contributions, and prevention knowledge intersect.

These conceptual lenses support the study's purpose of understanding how Parent Advisory Board members experience and make meaning of their lived experiences, roles, contributions, and participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work. They oriented the inquiry toward exploring whether and how parent knowledge moves through relationships, board processes, and prevention-system structures to support or constrain system learning. The findings themselves were developed through thematic content analysis incorporating constructivist grounded-theory procedures and were subsequently interpreted in relation to the three conceptual lenses presented in Figure 2. (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Theoretical Framework and Sensitizing Concepts of the Study



Note. This conceptual framework served as sensitizing concepts.

Family Voice, Parent Engagement, and Parent Leadership (C3)

The literature moves from basic family engagement toward stronger claims about parent voice and leadership, but it does not always distinguish clearly between being invited to participate and having influence over prevention system decisions (Kemp, 2009; Lalayants, 2012; Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Augsberger, 2023).

The literature on family engagement generally defines engagement as more than service attendance or compliance. Engagement includes the ways families are invited into relationships with programs, providers, schools, agencies, and community systems (Kemp, 2009; Saint-Jacques et al., 2006; Ishimaru, 2019). Across the matrix, engagement is treated as a continuum: families may receive information, provide feedback, participate in services, collaborate with professionals, or take on leadership roles (Lalayants, 2012; Augsberger, 2023). This distinction matters because child abuse and neglect prevention systems often describe families as partners, but partnership can mean vastly different things depending on whether parents are consulted, included, or positioned as co-creators of prevention knowledge.

Parent voice literature shifts the focus from participation as presence to participation as knowledge. Parents contribute lived expertise about service barriers, cultural relevance, trust, family stressors, protective factors, and how prevention policies are experienced in everyday life (McKenna, 2013; Merritt, 2020; Bekaert, 2021). In prevention systems, this knowledge is especially important because families can identify whether programs are accessible, whether protective-factor language matches lived experience, and whether system practices build or undermine trust (Appleton, 2015; Harper Browne, 2016). Parent voice therefore functions as a source of interpretive knowledge, not simply as feedback after decisions have already been made.

A key synthesis point is that parent leadership should not collapse into parent participation. Participation may involve attending meetings, completing surveys, or offering testimony, while leadership implies some degree of agenda-setting, interpretation, representation, shared decision-making, or influence over system priorities (Zimmerman, 2000; Lalayants, 2012; (WARREN et al., 2009). Parent leadership also requires relational and organizational conditions: parents must have access to information, clarity about roles, support to participate meaningfully, and evidence that their contributions affect decisions (Alameda-Lawson, 2013; Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Augsberger, 2023). Without these conditions, leadership language can mask low-influence participation.

The literature supports the importance of family voice and parent leadership, but it also reveals conceptual and methodological limitations. Terms such as engagement, voice, strengthening, participation, partnership, and leadership are sometimes used interchangeably (Kim, 2017; Kuckertz et al., 2025). This makes it difficult to compare findings across studies or determine what level of parent influence was actually present. Much of the literature documents the value of parent involvement, but fewer studies examine the internal processes through which groups of parents interpret information together, negotiate shared meaning, or convert lived expertise into system recommendations (Lawson, 2012; Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Hartling, 2021).

Because the literature distinguishes participation from leadership only unevenly, the next theme turns to Parent Advisory Boards as a structured mechanism where parent voice may be organized, formalized, and connected to governance (Hartling, 2021; Popper, 1987). The literature values parent voice and leadership, but it leaves underdeveloped how parent leadership operates collectively inside structured advisory bodies (Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023).

Parent Advisory Boards as Structured Participation Mechanisms (C4)

Parent Advisory Boards and councils offer a formal structure for family participation, but the literature points to a description of their purpose and roles more clearly than it examines how boards produce influence, shared meaning, or system learning (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2019); Hartling, 2021; Popper et al., 1987).

Parent Advisory Boards, family councils, and related advisory groups are commonly presented as mechanisms for bringing family perspectives into organizations and systems (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2019). Unlike informal feedback, advisory boards create a recurring structure through which parents can meet, identify concerns, review practices, and communicate recommendations. This structure matters for child abuse and neglect prevention because prevention systems require ongoing feedback from families, not only episodic consultation after problems occur (Augsberger, 2023; Hartling, 2021). Advisory boards can therefore serve as a bridge between lived experience and organizational decision-making.

The participatory governance literature helps clarify why advisory boards matter. Governance-oriented participation is not simply about inviting parents into a room; it is about creating channels through which parent knowledge can shape priorities, policies, programs, and accountability (Andress, 2020; Collins, 2018). In this sense, advisory boards are potentially more than engagement activities. They can function as governance-adjacent spaces where parents interpret system conditions, identify gaps, and influence prevention strategies (Hartling, 2021; Popper, 1987). However, the strength of this role depends on how the board is designed, what authority it has, and whether decision-makers respond to its recommendations.

The literature identifies several possible board functions: advising programs, reviewing materials, identifying barriers, supporting outreach, interpreting family experience, strengthening

cultural responsiveness, improving communication, and informing policy or practice change (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2019; Hartling, 2021). These roles show that advisory boards can operate at multiple levels of the prevention system. Some functions are informational, while others are relational, interpretive, or strategic. The variation is important because a board that only receives updates is different from a board that shapes decisions or helps the system learn from parent experience (Augsberger, 2023).

The main limitation in this theme is that advisory boards are often described normatively rather than studied empirically as collective actors. Guidance documents may explain how to form a board, recruit members, or structure meetings, but fewer sources examine what happens inside board deliberations, how members make sense of their experiences together, or how recommendations travel through the system (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2019). Existing empirical examples show the promise of advisory participation, but the literature remains thin on board-level mechanisms of influence and collective meaning-making (Popper, 1987; Hartling, 2021). This leaves a gap between the assumed value of advisory boards and evidence about their actual mechanisms of influence.

Because advisory boards can either deepen parent influence or reproduce symbolic participation, the next theme examines the relational conditions that determine whether participation becomes meaningful: power, trust, equity, reciprocity, and cultural relevance (Andress, 2020; Augsberger, 2023).

The literature describes Parent Advisory Boards as participation structures, but it rarely studies boards as collective meaning-making bodies with identifiable mechanisms of system influence (Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023).

Power, Trust, Equity, and Relational Conditions (C5)

Meaning parent participation depends on relational and structural conditions. Without attention to power, trust, equity, reciprocity, and cultural relevance, advisory participation can become tokenistic rather than transformative (Andress, 2020; Collins, 2018; Augsberger, 2023).

A review of the literature on participation and community engagement suggests warnings on inviting parents into advisory spaces does not automatically produce shared power. Tokenism occurs when families are visible in a process but have little influence over agenda-setting, interpretation, decisions, or follow-through (Andress, 2020; Collins, 2018; Augsberger, 2023). In child abuse and neglect prevention, this risk is especially important because systems may publicly value parent voice while retaining professional control over what counts as valid knowledge (Merritt, 2020; Bekaert, 2021). Tokenistic participation can undermine trust and reproduce the very power imbalances that parent leadership efforts are intended to address.

Shared decision-making is a stronger form of participation because it requires systems to clarify what decisions parents can influence and how their input will be used. The literature suggests that meaningful collaboration depends on transparent roles, accessible information, facilitation support, and visible response loops (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001); Andress, 2020; Hartling, 2021). Parents are more likely to experience participation as meaningful when they can see how their recommendations affect policies, services, communication, or prevention priorities. Thus, shared decision-making is not only a value; it is an organizational practice that must be designed and sustained.

Cultural relevance is another condition for meaningful participation. Prevention systems serve families whose experiences are shaped by race, culture, language, socioeconomic status, disability, immigration history, geography, and prior system involvement (Falicov, 2007; Lareau,

2011; Merritt, 2020). Parent voice is most useful when systems treat these differences as sources of knowledge rather than barriers to be managed. Culturally relevant advisory participation asks whether prevention language, protective-factor strategies, meeting structures, and recommendations reflect the realities of the families most affected by system decisions (Harper Browne, 2016; Kumpfer et al., 2012; Merritt, 2020).

Trust and reciprocity are recurring relational conditions through the literature. Trust develops when professionals listen, share information honestly, acknowledge harm, and follow through (Saint-Jacques et al., 2006; Andress, 2020; Bekaert, 2021). Reciprocity develops when parents are not only asked to give information but also receive respect, resources, relationships, and influence in return (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Perugini et al., 2003). These conditions align with Social Capital Theory because participation depends on relational networks, mutual obligations, and credible exchange. For Parent Advisory Boards, trust, and reciprocity shape whether parents speak openly, whether professionals take their insights seriously, and whether the board can become a learning structure rather than a symbolic forum.

Although the literature identifies power, equity, and trust as central to participation, these conditions are difficult to measure and are often discussed abstractly (Andress, 2020; Ide, 2024). Many sources recommend equitable engagement but provide less evidence about how power is negotiated during meetings, how conflict is managed, or how culturally diverse parent perspectives are synthesized into collective recommendations (Augsberger, 2023; Collins, 2018). This limitation points toward the need for research that examines board processes, not only board membership or stated purpose.

If meaningful participation depends on power-sharing, trust, and reciprocity, then the final body theme must examine how parent input moves through the system: how boards make

meaning, generate feedback, and contribute to system learning (Hartling, 2021; Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). The literature names relational conditions for meaningful participation, but it gives less attention to how those conditions shape board-level meaning-making and system learning over time (Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023).

System Learning, Meaning-Making, and Feedback Loops (C6)

The final theme brings the review to its research gap: prevention systems need feedback loops that translate parent input into learning, adaptation, and improved practice, yet Parent Advisory Boards are rarely studied as collective actors that produce meaning together (Hartling, 2021; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Wallis, 2020).

The literature suggests that parent input has the greatest value when it is connected to feedback loops. A feedback loop means that information moves from families to boards, from boards to decision-makers, from decisions back to families, and then into revised practice (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001; Hartling, 2021). Without such loops, parent input may be collected but not used. In child abuse and neglect prevention, feedback loops are especially important because systems must adapt to changing family needs, implementation barriers, community conditions, and trust concerns (Abdala et al., 2020; Pinheiro-Carozzo et al., 2021).

Parent Advisory Boards create the possibility of collective meaning-making. Individual parents may bring distinct experiences, but board discussion can transform those experiences into shared interpretations, priorities, questions, and recommendations. This process matters because prevention systems do not only need isolated stories; they need organized knowledge about patterns, barriers, strengths, and solutions (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Hartling, 2021). Board-level meaning-making is therefore an analytic bridge between parent voice and system learning.

For parent advisory work to influence systems, lived experience must be translated into actionable knowledge. This translation can include identifying recurring service barriers, interpreting why families distrust programs, assessing whether protective-factor strategies are culturally meaningful, or recommending changes to outreach, communication, policy, and practice (Appleton, 2015; Harper Browne, 2016; Merritt, 2020). System learning occurs when organizations use this knowledge to adjust assumptions, redesign processes, improve relationships, or strengthen prevention supports (Grigoletto & Alves, 2019); Wallis, 2020).

The major gap across the review is that Parent Advisory Boards are often treated as engagement structures, but not as collective actors with internal processes of interpretation and influence. Existing literature supports prevention systems, parent voice, advisory participation, equity, and feedback, yet fewer studies examine how boards actually deliberate, make meaning, develop recommendations, or affect organizational learning (Hartling, 2021; Popper, 1987; Augsberger, 2023). This gap is central to the proposed study because it shifts attention from whether parents are included to how parent advisory groups function as structured meaning-making bodies within prevention systems.

This gap supports a qualitative case study or related qualitative design because the phenomenon involves process, interpretation, context, and meaning. Qualitative research is appropriate when the purpose of the research is to understand how participants interpret experience within real-world settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Aspers & Corte, 2019). A qualitative approach can examine how board members describe their roles, how they interpret prevention issues together, how trust and power shape discussion, and how recommendations move through the system. This methodological bridge follows directly from the thematic review: the literature establishes the importance of systems prevention, conceptual frameworks, parent

leadership, advisory structures, and relational conditions, but leaves the collective learning function of boards insufficiently examined.

The conclusion should synthesize the full argument: child abuse and neglect prevention is a systems problem; parent voice and leadership are necessary for responsive systems; advisory boards are promising structures; meaningful participation depends on power, trust, equity, and reciprocity; and the remaining gap concerns how boards operate as collective meaning-making and system-learning mechanisms (Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023; Wallis, 2020).

The specific research gap is the limited empirical attention to Parent Advisory Boards as collective, structured, meaning-making entities that translate parent knowledge into prevention system learning (Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023; Wallis, 2020).

Conclusion

Child abuse and neglect prevention consistently emerges as a systems problem requiring coordinated attention to family conditions, community support, organizational practices, and policy environments (Administration for Children and Families et al., 2026; Ferrara et al., 2016; Kimbrough-Melton & Melton, 2015; Widom, 1989). Conceptual frameworks reinforce this systems orientation: Ecological Systems Theory situates prevention within nested contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007); Social Capital Theory highlights relational resources that make participation meaningful (Coleman, 1988); and the Strengthening Families Framework anchors prevention practice in protective factors (Harper Browne, 2016).

Across this scholarship, family voice and parent leadership are recognized as essential to responsive prevention systems (Augsberger et al., 2023; Kemp et al., 2009; Lalayants, 2012). Parents contribute lived expertise regarding access, cultural relevance, trust, barriers, and protective factors (Bekaert et al., 2021; McKenna & Millen, 2013; Merritt, 2020). Yet

meaningful leadership requires structures that support interpretation, influence, shared decision making, and visible impact on system practice (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Hartling et al., 2021).

Although Parent Advisory Boards are frequently described as promising mechanisms for organizing parent participation, empirical research on their internal processes, authority, and influence remains limited (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2019; Hartling, 2021). Existing literature outlines why boards matter and what roles they may play yet rarely examines how deliberation unfolds within boards or how conditions such as power, trust, equity, reciprocity, and cultural relevance shape collective interpretation and system influence (Andress et al., 2020; Augsberger et al., 2023; Collins et al., 2018).

The central gap concerns how Parent Advisory Boards function as collective meaning-making entities within prevention systems. Although scholarship affirms the importance of parent voice, advisory participation, relational trust, and feedback loops, it does not explain how parents working together construct shared understandings, develop recommendations, or translate lived expertise into system learning (Augsberger et al., 2023; Hartling et al., 2021; Wallis & Wright, 2020). This gap is consequential because advisory boards are often the primary structures through which systems claim to include parent voice, yet the mechanisms through which boards generate knowledge and influence decisions remain insufficiently understood.

A qualitative case study is therefore warranted. The phenomenon is contextual, relational, and process-oriented, requiring close examination of how board members describe their roles, interpret prevention issues, navigate power, and trust, and observe whether board-generated insights move through prevention systems. Case study methodology is well suited to studying

advisory boards as collective actors rather than isolated individuals (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2019).

This conclusion establishes the bridge to Chapter Three by demonstrating why a qualitative case study is appropriate for examining Parent Advisory Boards as structured, collective, meaning-making mechanisms within child abuse and neglect prevention systems (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

Child abuse and neglect prevention is increasingly understood as a **systems-level concern** rather than solely a matter of individual parent behavior, and the literature supports ecological, public-health, community-based, and protective-factor approaches to prevention (Fortson et al., 2016; Hartling et al., 2021; Kane et al., 2007; Saint-Jacques et al., 2006). Parent advisory insights can strengthen responsive, holistic child and family prevention strategies.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how members of the Advisory Board experienced and made meaning of their participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work. The central research question guided three aims: (a) to explore parents' experiences of participation; (b) to examine how the board functioned as a participatory structure within the broader prevention system; and (c) to identify contextual, relational, and organizational factors shaping parent participation. These aims align with prevention-system models reviewed in the literature, including the main theoretical lens: **ecological systems theory**, **social capital theory**, the **Strengthening Families Framework**, along with related literature on parent leadership, participatory governance, and system learning to further inform how the study understood advisory-board participation and meaning-making.

This chapter describes the methodological approach used to conduct the study, including the social constructivist/interpretivist orientation, thematic content analysis, qualitative case study design, bounded case, research setting, participant selection, data collection procedures, analytic approach, trustworthiness strategies, and ethical commitments. Grounded in a constructivist epistemology, the study assumes that meaning is produced through interaction,

context, and shared interpretation (Berger, 1966a). Qualitative case study provided the overall design for examining one bounded Advisory Board in its real-life prevention-system context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2018).

Constructivist grounded theory supported coding, comparison, memo writing, and category development (Charmaz, 2014), while portraiture informed the interpretive representation of findings by attending to voice, context, relationship, and narrative coherence (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). Together, these methodological commitments supported an inquiry into how parent knowledge and advisory-board participation may inform more responsive and holistic prevention strategies.

Case Study Design

A qualitative case study design was selected for this project because the phenomenon under investigation how parents experience and make meaning of participation in child abuse and neglect prevention is deeply contextual, relational, and embedded within a broader prevention system. Case study methodology is uniquely suited for inquiries that require close attention to real-life settings, multiple sources of evidence, and phenomena whose boundaries are intertwined with their context (Yin, 2018). In this study, parent advisory work cannot be separated from the organizational, relational, and system-level conditions in which it occurs, making case study design an appropriate and necessary methodological choice.

To clarify the orientation of this study, it is helpful to situate it within the three major case study traditions described by Yazan (2015): Yin, Stake, and Merriam. Yin's post-positivist tradition emphasizes systematic procedures, propositions, pattern matching, and analytic generalization (Yazan, 2015). Stake's tradition is interpretive and experiential, centering on the researcher's interaction with the case and the development of naturalistic understanding.

Merriam's constructivist tradition focuses on meaning making, experience, and context, emphasizing how individuals interpret their participation within a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Although this study incorporates elements of Yin's systematic data collection and Stake's attention to experiential understanding, its core orientation aligns most closely with Merriam's constructivist case study approach. The study's focus on meaning making, relational processes, and the co-construction of social reality reflects Merriam's emphasis on understanding how people interpret their experiences within a defined social unit. This alignment is especially relevant for examining how parents construct and sustain participation within a prevention-oriented advisory structure.

Merriam defines a case as "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" and describes qualitative case study as an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, pp. xiii, 27). In this study, the case is bounded to one Parent Advisory Board in the southwestern United States. The board represents a prevention-system structure through which parents engage in leadership, shared decision making, and community-focused prevention activities. This boundedness is essential because it allows the study to examine the Advisory Board as a single, coherent entity while attending to the contextual, relational, and organizational conditions that shape parent participation.

Throughout the research process, the case study design served as the structural roadmap guiding each stage of the inquiry from framing the research question to selecting participants, collecting data, and conducting analysis. In qualitative research, design is not merely a procedural plan; it is the organizing structure that ensures coherence between the study's

purpose, methods, and interpretive decisions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For this project, the design ensured that interviews, observations, and document analysis remained connected to the central aim of understanding how parents experienced and sustained participation within a prevention-system context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Taking these considerations confirmed that a qualitative case study was the strongest methodological fit for this project. It allowed the study to examine one Parent Advisory Board as a bounded case while remaining attentive to the contextual, relational, and prevention-focused processes that shape parent participation (Yin, 2018). This design also aligns with prevention-system literature emphasizing ecological, relational, and community-based approaches to child abuse and neglect prevention, reinforcing the relevance of parent advisory structures for practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders seeking to strengthen child and family well-being.

Methodological Orientation

The methodological orientation for this study reflects the philosophical assumptions and analytic commitments that guided how the inquiry was conceptualized, conducted, and interpreted. The study is grounded in a **social constructivist epistemology**, which holds that knowledge is created through interaction, context, and shared interpretation (Berger, 1966b). This orientation aligns with the study's focus on how parents made meaning of their participation within the Advisory Board and how relational, organizational, and contextual conditions shaped those interpretations. Constructivism also supports attention to the ecological and prevention-system environments in which advisory work occurs, recognizing that parent participation is situated within broader social and organizational contexts.

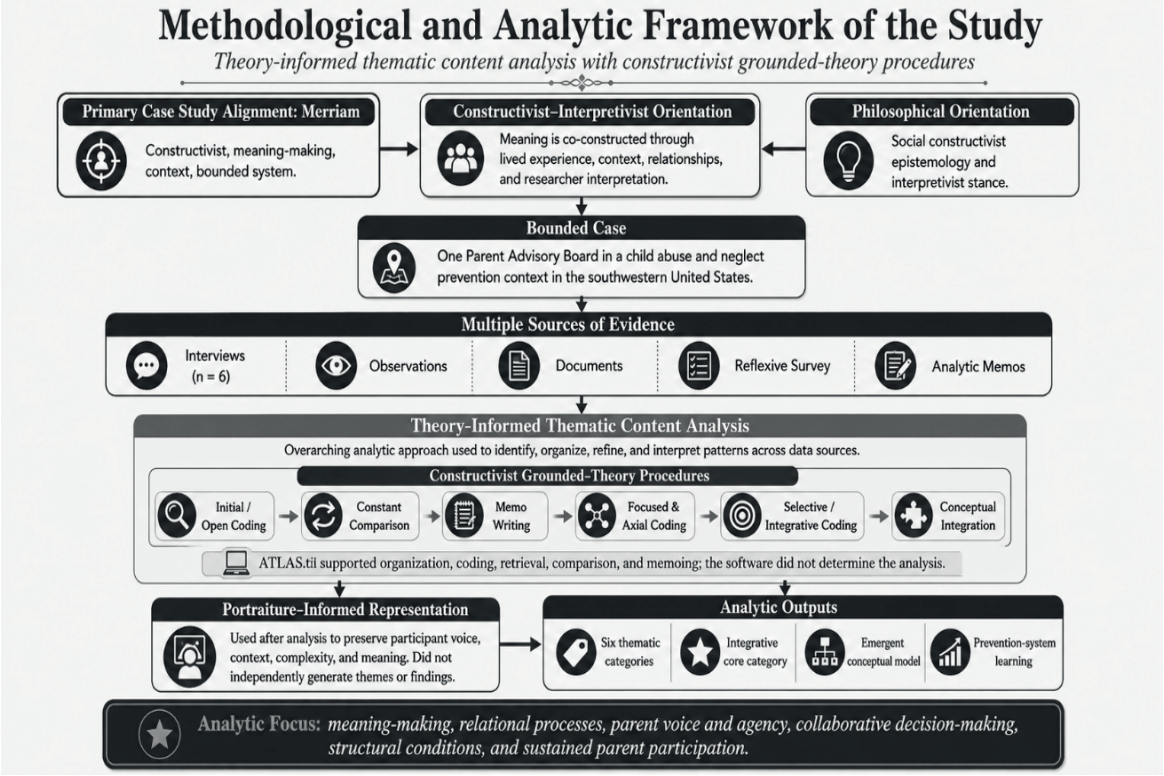
The study also reflects an **interpretivist stance**, emphasizing the importance of understanding lived experience, subjective meaning, and the relational dynamics embedded in prevention-system work. Meaning is treated as co-constructed between researcher and participants, shaped by dialogue, context, and the shared exploration of experience. This stance guided the study's attention to how parents described belonging, strengthening, leadership, barriers, facilitators, and shared decision making within the Advisory Board.

Four methodological commitments shaped the study's design and analytic approach. **Qualitative case study** provided the overall structure for examining one bounded Advisory Board in its real-life prevention-system context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Case study supported attention to the contextual, relational, and system-embedded nature of parent participation. **Thematic content analysis** using **constructivist grounded-theory procedures guided the study.** The distinction is important because the **thematic content analysis** informed the literature review, research question, and interview guide before data collection. Following Zaidi's discussion of sensitizing concepts, thematic analysis treated the frameworks as provisional guides rather than predetermined coding categories(Zaidi, 2022). Thematic content analysis is therefore included in the analytic approach, while grounded-theory procedures describe the c**onstructivist grounded theory** procedures that guided the iterative coding, constant comparison, memo writing, and category development (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory supported movement from descriptive accounts toward conceptual patterns that illuminate how parents experienced participation and leadership. **Portraiture** informed the interpretive representation of findings by attending to voice, relationship, context, and narrative coherence (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Portraiture complemented grounded theory by

providing a narrative form through which the lived realities behind analytic categories could be understood.

Together, these philosophical and methodological commitments provided a coherent orientation for the study. They supported an inquiry attentive to meaning making, relational processes, and contextual influences, while remaining grounded in the lived experiences of parents participating in prevention-system *work (Figure 3)*

Figure 3. Methodological Framework



Note: Qualitative Case Study Orientation: Integrating Constructivist, Interpretivist, and Relational Commitments (Yin, Stake, Merriam).

Portraiture

Portraiture, as developed by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997), provided the interpretive orientation for representing participant experiences in this study. While constructivist

grounded theory procedures (Charmaz, 2014; (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) guided the analytic development of codes, categories, and conceptual patterns, portraiture offered a complementary framework for attending to the relational, contextual, and experiential dimensions of parent participation on the Advisory Board. Portraiture blends empirical rigor with narrative expression, enabling the researcher to illuminate complexity, voice, and meaning while resisting reductive or deficit-based portrayals (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983). This interpretive stance aligned naturally with the study's focus on relational conditions, meaning making, and the lived realities of parents engaged in prevention-system work.

Central to portraiture are four interrelated dimensions **conception**, **structure**, **form**, and **coherence** which guide how participant experiences are framed, organized, narrated, and interpreted. These dimensions shaped the construction of participant portraits by ensuring that each narrative remained grounded in data while attending to the broader social, organizational, and relational contexts that influenced parents' engagement. Portraiture's emphasis on voice and relational nuance supported the study's attention to how parents described belonging, strengthening, leadership, barriers, facilitators, and shared decision making within the Advisory Board.

The portraiture orientation also reflects the study's commitment to reflexivity and ethical representation. The researcher's positionality as an evaluator and prevention-systems scholar was addressed through ongoing reflexive memoing (Finlay, 2002), which documented interpretive decisions, relational dynamics, and assumptions that emerged during data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations included the use of pseudonyms, protection of participant identity, and a commitment to representing participants' voices with accuracy, respect, and contextual sensitivity (Tracy, 2013). Portraiture's relational ethic supported these commitments

by foregrounding attentiveness to participants' lived experiences and the contexts in which those experiences unfolded.

Portraiture was not used as an analytic method; rather, it served as a representational strategy that complemented the latent, interpretive analysis. Grounded theory–aligned coding identified processes, conditions, and patterned meanings across interviews, observations, and documents, while portraiture provided a narrative form that humanized these analytic insights(Lalayants, 2012b). Portraits were constructed after initial and focused coding, drawing on interview excerpts, observational notes, and contextual materials to create coherent, richly textured narratives that illustrate how parents experienced participation, navigated organizational expectations, and enacted prevention principles.

In this way, portraiture functioned as the interpretive orientation for presenting findings. It offered a narrative lens through which to understand the lived realities behind the analytic categories, deepening insight into the relational and contextual processes that shaped parent engagement in the Advisory Board setting.

Site, Participants, and recruitment strategy

This section describes the research setting and context for the Parent Advisory Board, focusing on the Parent Advisory Board, the prevention system, and the organizational context.

The Purpose and Structure

The Advisory Board is a volunteer-based Advisory Board that empowers parents, caregivers, and community members to advocate for children's well-being and influence policy and practice. Membership includes leadership roles Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, general members, and emeritus members, with clear responsibilities and expectations for participation, advocacy, and leadership. Meetings are held monthly, both in-person and virtually,

with a focus on positive parenting, advocacy, child safety, and leadership development. Members are expected to attend meetings, participate in advocacy events, and contribute to community improvement efforts. The environment emphasizes equity, respect, cultural affirmation, and confidentiality, fostering a safe and welcoming space for diverse voices.

***Co*mmunity and Clinical Integration:**

The Advisory Board collaborates with local agencies, service providers, and community organizations to address family needs and reduce barriers to accessing resources. Members provide feedback to improve early childhood intervention and shape clinical practice.

Organizational Context

- **Professional Partnerships:** The Advisory Board is supported by organizations such as the Family Foundation, State Organizations, Child Advocacy Organizations, Universities, and others. These partnerships enhance the committee's ability to mobilize resources, provide training, and advocate for systemic change.
- **Research and Applied Practice:** Families and caregivers contribute to applied research by discussing relevant questions, ensuring cultural sensitivity in data collection, reviewing results, and suggesting ways to share findings with the community. The Advisory Board's feedback loop ensures that research is grounded in real family experiences and needs.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through direct invitation during regularly scheduled Advisory Board meetings and follow-up email communication. All approximately 15 board members were initially invited to participate. Recruitment emphasized voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the opportunity to contribute to a deeper understanding of parent leadership within

prevention systems. Six members (n = 6) consented to participate, which is appropriate for a qualitative case study prioritizing depth over breadth (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2018).

Participants, Recruitment and Sampling

Participant Characteristics

The final sample included mothers and fathers with diverse backgrounds, educational histories, cultural identities, and family structures. Participants varied in their length of involvement with the Advisory Board, ranging from newer members to those with multiple years of experience. These characteristics were treated not merely as demographic descriptors but as contextual factors shaping how individuals experienced belonging, empowerment, and participation within the board (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Tabel 1. Participant Demographics (N = 6)

Participant	***Race***	***Gender***	***Age***	***Marital Status***	***Education***	***Employed***	***No. of Children***
Jennifer	African American	Female	65 or over	Widowed	Graduate Degree	Yes	1
Becky	African American	Female	25-34	Married	Some Colleges	Yes	5
Rebecca	Hispanic	Female	25-34	Married	Graduate Degree	Yes	2
Jarome	Hispanic	Male	35-44	Married	Some Colleges	Yes	2
Tamika	African American	Female	35-45	Single	Some Colleges	Yes	5
Jackson	Caucasian	Male	35-46	Domestic Partnership	Some Colleges	Yes	1

Note: All names are pseudonyms used to protect participant identity and support confidentiality. All participants were active members of the Parent Advisory Board at the time of the study.

Sampling Strategy

At the time of recruitment, the Parent Advisory Board included approximately 15 members. All eligible members were provided with an opportunity to participate, and six members voluntarily consented to individual interviews. Participation was therefore shaped by both purposive eligibility criteria and voluntary self-selection. The six participants were selected because they had direct experience with the board and could provide information relevant to the research aims.

The study did not systematically collect reasons why eligible members chose not to participate. Therefore, no conclusions can be drawn about whether nonparticipation reflected scheduling demands, availability, level of engagement, comfort with the interview process, relationships with the researcher or organization, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the board, or other personal considerations. These possibilities are acknowledged as potential influences but are not presented as findings.

This study employed a purposeful criterion sampling strategy to identify participants who could directly speak to the experience of serving on a Parent Advisory Board engaged in prevention-oriented advisory work. Purposeful sampling ensured depth and relevance, while criterion sampling required that all participants had active or recent involvement on the board, aligning the sample with the bounded case under investigation (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) (Table 1).

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Jackson	Caucasian	Male	35-46	Domestic Partnership	Some Colleges	Yes	1

Note: All names are pseudonyms used to protect participant identity and support confidentiality. All participants were active members of the Parent Advisory Board at the time of the study.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participants were eligible for inclusion if they were current or recent members of the Parent Advisory Board, had attended at least one board meeting or activity, were able to reflect on prevention-oriented advisory work, and were willing to participate in an interview and allow observation of board activities.

Individuals were excluded if they had not attended a board meeting, were involved only in an administrative or staff capacity rather than as parent participants or were unable to provide informed consent. These criteria aligned participant selection with the study's purpose of understanding how parents experience and make meaning of prevention-oriented advisory work.

Data Collection Procedures

Overview

Data collection included semi-structured interviews, observations, document analysis, and reflexive materials. Interviews elicited experience-near accounts of parent participation. Observations documented interactional and relational processes within board meetings. Document analysis examined the board's mission, values, expectations, and prevention-oriented framework. Reflexive memos supported ongoing attention to positionality, analytic decisions, and ethical representation.

Participant observation occurred across monthly pre-study, Parent Advisory Board meetings or activities held prior to the interviews. Observations focused on patterns of interaction, communication, participation, leadership, decision-making, expressions of agreement or disagreement, and the ways parent perspectives were acknowledged or incorporated into board discussions. Field notes documented both verbal interactions and observable relational or organizational conditions.

Observations included the broader board setting rather than only the six interviewed members, as permitted by the approved research protocol. This allowed the researcher to contextualize interview accounts within naturally occurring board interactions. However, observation did not provide access to the private motivations, unexpressed experiences, or personal interpretations of members who did not complete interviews.

During observed meetings, both interviewed and non-interviewed members participated in group discussions, although the frequency, form, and visibility of participation varied by meeting and topic. Some members contributed through extended discussion, while others participated through brief comments, agreement, questions, or attentive listening.

Recording/Transcription Process

Interviews were conducted via Zoom videoconferencing, a mode increasingly recognized as appropriate for qualitative inquiry and capable of supporting rapport, depth, and co-constructed meaning (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020). Literature on virtual interviewing notes that remote platforms can reduce participation barriers, increase comfort, and allow individuals to engage from familiar environments conditions that align with the relational commitments of portraiture and the interpretive stance of constructivist grounded theory. Each interview followed the semi-structured protocol while allowing space for emergent dialogue, participant-led elaboration, and iterative probing. All sessions were conducted in private settings, recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim to support rigorous qualitative analysis.

Non-Participant Observations

Participant observation was used to examine how the Advisory Board functioned in practice. Observations focused on meeting structure, communication, interaction patterns, decision-making exchanges, leadership opportunities, and participation processes. Field notes were recorded and later compared with interview and document data. Observations strengthened the study by showing how parent participation was enacted in meetings and prevention activities, not only how it was described in interviews (Jamshed, 2014; Stake, 2005) (Table 2).

Table 2: Data Collection Matrix

Alignment of Research Aims, Data Sources, and Analysis

Research Aim	Data Source	Collection Method	Purpose	Analytic Contribution	Triangulation
Aim 1: Understand lived experiences	Interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Parent experiences	Initial coding → Categories → Themes	Documents, observations, survey
	Reflexive Survey	Written reflections	Researcher reflexivity and participant interpretation	Memo development	Interviews
	Documents	Minutes, agendas, reports	Organizational context	Constant comparison	Interviews
	Observations	PPAC meetings	Interaction and behaviors	Analytic memos	Interviews
Aim 2: Examine Strengthening Families in practice	Interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Protective factors	Axial coding	Documents
	Documents	Prevention framework materials	Organizational implementation	Pattern comparison	Observations
Aim 3: Identify barriers and facilitators	Interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Experiences of barriers/facilitators	Selective coding	Observations, documents

Note: The alignment between the research aims, data sources, and analytic procedures used in this study. The matrix was developed based on recommendations for establishing methodological coherence in qualitative case study research and grounded theory analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018; Charmaz, 2014).

Semi-Structured Interviews

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted through Zoom videoconferencing. The interview protocol used open-ended questions, flexible probes, and prompts designed to elicit experience-near accounts of Advisory Board participation, leadership, belonging, barriers, facilitators, and prevention work. Interviews were conducted in private settings, recorded with participant consent, and transcribed verbatim. Semi-structured interviewing supported participant-led elaboration while maintaining alignment with the study

aims (Charmaz, 2014; (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Seidman, 2019) (Appendix B).

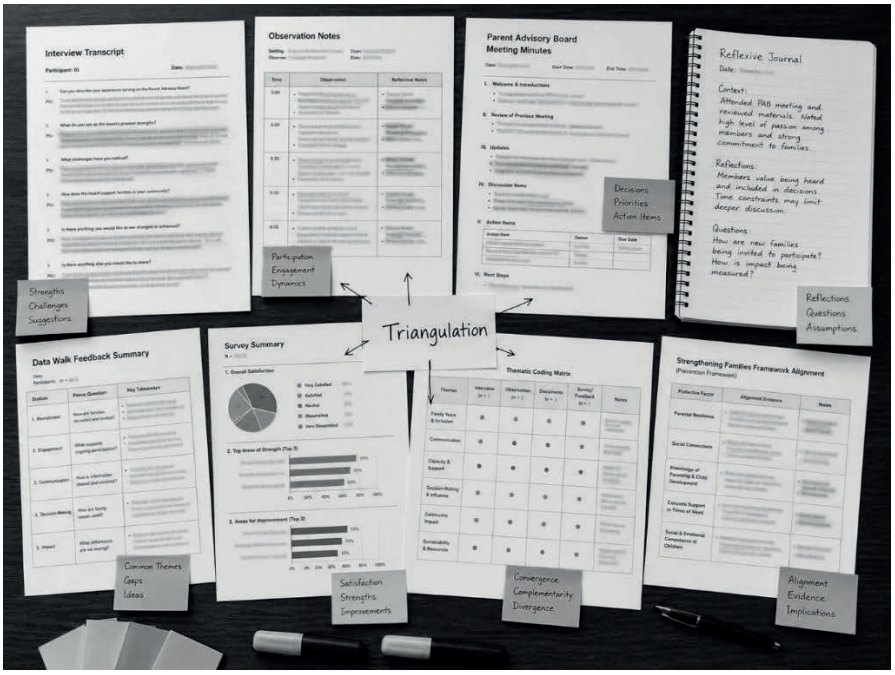
Document Analysis

Document analysis centered on the Advisory Board Handbook and related organizational materials. The Handbook provided formal evidence of the board's mission, values, roles, membership expectations, meeting structures, confidentiality expectations, and alignment with the Strengthening Families Framework. Documents were reviewed for recurring descriptions of parent roles, prevention goals, leadership expectations, and organizational structures, then compared with interview and observation data. Document analysis provided historical and organizational context and strengthened triangulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2018).

Reflexive Survey and Memos

A 10-question reflexive survey and ongoing researcher memos were used to support systematic reflexivity. The survey prompted examination of the researcher's interpretive community, assumptions, positionality, ethical commitments, relationship to the topic, and potential power dynamics. Reflexive memos documented analytic decisions, emerging interpretations, methodological questions, and possible researcher bias during data collection and analysis. These practices enhanced transparency and supported the constructivist premise that meaning is co-constructed rather than discovered from a detached position (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)(Figure 4).

Figure 4. Cross-Triangulation of Parent Advisory Board Data Sources



Notes: This *figure provides a visual representation of the types of anonymized documents used to support cross-triangulation in the Parent Advisory Board study. Data sources included interview transcripts, observation notes, meeting minutes, reflexive journal entries, data walk feedback, survey summaries, thematic coding matrices, and framework alignment notes. Together, these materials supported comparison across participant perspectives, researcher observations, meeting records, and analytic reflections. The image is illustrative only and does not include actual study documents or identifiable participant information.*

Trustworthiness and Validity

Trustworthiness was established through iterative data collection and analysis, triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, an audit trail, reflexivity, and thick description. Collectively, these strategies supported the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and

transferability of the study findings (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2018).

Data Adequacy and Saturation

Recruitment, data collection, and preliminary analysis occurred iteratively. Consistent with theory-informed thematic content analysis supported by constructivist grounded-theory procedures, data collection continued until the developing categories were sufficiently rich, conceptually detailed, and supported by recurring patterns across the data (Charmaz, 2014). Saturation was assessed through constant comparative analysis rather than through the number of participants alone.

Later interviews and supplementary data sources reinforced the developing categories without producing substantively new properties, dimensions, or relationships. Analytic memo writing, repeated review of coded quotations, and comparisons across participants and data sources further demonstrated the conceptual adequacy of the emerging explanation. Recruitment concluded when the categories were sufficiently developed to explain the central processes represented in the data.

Credibility and Triangulation

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately and meaningfully represents participants' experiences and the case under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was supported through triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement with the case, and peer debriefing.

Triangulation involved comparing multiple forms of evidence to reduce the limitations associated with relying on a single data source and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the Parent Advisory Board (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln,

2026; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Yin (2018) similarly identifies the use of converging lines of evidence as an important feature of rigorous case study research.

Four primary sources contributed to triangulation in this study: participant interviews, observations, reflexive surveys, and organizational documents. Interviews captured parents' descriptions of their roles, experiences, contributions, and participation. Observations documented meeting structures, interactions, and advisory practices as they occurred. Reflexive surveys provided participants with an additional opportunity to describe and consider their experiences. Organizational documents offered evidence of the formal structures, expectations, and principles guiding the board. Researcher memos supplemented these sources by documenting analytic decisions, methodological reflections, and issues related to positionality.

The Advisory Board Handbook served as an important organizational point of comparison. The Handbook outlined the board's mission, guiding principles, membership expectations, meeting structures, and alignment with the Strengthening Families Framework. Because it represented the formal design of the advisory board, it provided an anchor for examining how participant accounts and observed practices aligned with, extended, or differed from the board's documented expectations.

Triangulation did not require all sources to produce identical findings. Instead, the sources were examined for convergence, complementarity, and divergence. Converging evidence increased confidence in recurring patterns, complementary evidence provided additional context, and divergent evidence identified differences or complexities that required further analytic attention. This process ensured that the findings were grounded in multiple forms of evidence and attentive to the organizational context in which the case was situated.

Member Checking

Member checking was used to strengthen credibility by providing participants with opportunities to review summaries, clarify intended meanings, and respond to the researcher's developing understanding of their experiences. This process helped reduce the likelihood of misrepresentation and ensured that participant perspectives remained central to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Member checking was not treated as a requirement that participants approve every analytic interpretation. Rather, it provided an opportunity to identify factual inaccuracies, clarify meaning, and determine whether the developing account reasonably reflected participants' experiences.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing occurred through ongoing discussions with colleagues and dissertation committee members. These individuals questioned assumptions, challenged emerging interpretations, and encouraged consideration of alternative explanations. Peer debriefing strengthened analytic rigor by making the researcher's reasoning visible and reducing the likelihood that unexamined assumptions would determine the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2026).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability refers to the consistency and transparency of the research process, while confirmability concerns the extent to which the findings can be traced to the data rather than solely to researcher preferences or assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

An audit trail was maintained to document recruitment, data collection, coding decisions, category development, analytic memos, methodological revisions, and the integration of the final

findings. ATLAS.ti supported the organization of interview quotations, codes, categories, memos, and code-to-data relationships. These records created a transparent account of how the analysis progressed from initial coding to category development and theoretical integration.

Confirmability was further supported through reflexive memo writing. Reflexive memos documented the researcher's positionality, assumptions, interactions with participants, emerging interpretations, and decisions made during analysis. This process was particularly important because of the researcher's existing relationship with the Parent Advisory Board. Reflexivity did not eliminate subjectivity; rather, it made the researcher's influence visible and open to critical examination.

Transferability

Transferability was supported through thick description of the participants, the Parent Advisory Board, the child abuse and neglect prevention context, and the relational and organizational conditions surrounding participation. Detailed descriptions of the case allow readers to determine whether the findings may be meaningful or applicable in other parent advisory groups, prevention systems, or community-engaged settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The study does not claim statistical generalizability. Instead, it provides sufficient contextual and conceptual detail to support informed judgments about the relevance of the findings to comparable settings.

Ethical Considerations

Because participants discussed lived experiences connected to child abuse and neglect prevention work, ethical practice remained central throughout the design and implementation of the study. Institutional approval was obtained before data collection, including approval of

procedures for recruitment, informed consent, confidentiality, data security, and risk minimization.

Participants received information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and voluntary nature before providing informed consent. They were informed that they could decline to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms, secure data-storage procedures, and the removal or modification of potentially identifying information.

Careful attention was also given to participants' privacy, dignity, and autonomy throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. Because the study centered parents' lived experiences, the researcher sought to represent their accounts respectfully while avoiding unnecessary disclosure of personal or potentially identifying details (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2018).

Data Analysis

Overview

This study used a theory-informed thematic content analysis as the overarching analytic approach, incorporating constructivist grounded-theory procedures. Thematic content analysis provided a systematic structure for identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns across interviews, observations, documents, reflexive surveys, and analytic memos. Constructivist grounded-theory procedures supported the iterative development and integration of codes, categories, relationships, and explanatory patterns grounded in participants' experiences (Charmaz, 2014).

Initial and focused coding, constant comparative analysis, category development, and memo writing were used to identify recurring experiences, social processes, relational

conditions, and contextual influences. ATLAS.ti supported data organization, coding, retrieval, comparison, code grouping, and memo writing; however, the software did not generate codes, determine categories, or interpret the findings.

Principles drawn from Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis informed the review and refinement of patterned meanings across the dataset. Attention was given to both semantic meanings explicitly expressed by participants and latent meanings reflected in relationships, assumptions, and recurring patterns across data sources. In this study, thematic synthesis helped evaluate whether the developing categories were internally coherent, sufficiently distinct, supported across the dataset, and responsive to the research question.

Portraiture informed the representation of the findings. Rather than functioning as a separate analytic method or research design, portraiture served as an interpretive and representational strategy for preserving participant voice, context, complexity, and meaning (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Participant portraits were constructed from coded interview data, observational notes, documents, and reflexive memos. The portraits were developed after coding and category construction and did not independently generate the study's themes or findings.

Coding Approach

The study used a theory-informed but primarily inductive, a posteriori, and context-sensitive coding process. Ecological Systems Theory, Social Capital Theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework informed the literature review, research question, and broad areas explored through the semi structured interview guide. However, these frameworks were not converted into a predetermined a priori coding template.

Instead, codes were generated through close examination of participant language, observed interactions, organizational documents, reflexive survey responses, and ongoing analytic comparisons. The theoretical frameworks functioned as sensitizing concepts that provided an initial orientation while remaining provisional and open to revision through engagement with the data.

The analytic process moved through data preparation and immersion, initial or open coding, constant comparative analysis, memo writing, focused category development, axial coding, selective or integrative coding, and theoretical integration. This sequence supported movement from descriptive codes to broader thematic categories and then to an integrated interpretation of how parents experienced and sustained participation within the Parent Advisory Board (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saldaña, 2016).

Initial or Open Coding

Initial or open coding divided the data into smaller units of meaning and assigned descriptive or action-oriented labels to experiences, interactions, conditions, and ideas expressed by participants or reflected in documents and observations (Charmaz, 2014). Codes were kept close to participants' language when possible to limit premature abstraction and theoretical imposition.

Early coding identified experiences and processes related to belonging, connection, confidence, leadership, barriers, facilitators, parent voice, collaboration, decision-making, participation, and organizational support. These concepts were not retained because they aligned with the study's theoretical frameworks; they were retained when supported by the empirical data and recurring comparisons. The ATLAS.ti code structure documented the breadth and evolution of this coding process.

Constant Comparison and Memo Writing

Constant comparative analysis was used throughout the analytic process to compare incidents within individual interviews, experiences across participants, codes across data sources, and developing categories against the original data. For example, descriptions of connection, support, and shared experience were compared with later accounts of confidence, parent voice, advocacy, leadership, and continued participation.

Comparisons also included experiences that complicated, contradicted, or did not align with the developing categories. This process helped clarify category boundaries, identify variations, and prevent the theoretical frameworks from determining the findings.

Analytic memo writing occurred alongside coding to document conceptual questions, assumptions, category properties, coding decisions, relationships among categories, disconfirming evidence, and emerging interpretations (Charmaz, 2014; Chun Tie et al., 2019; Saldaña, 2016). Reflexive memos also documented how the researcher's positionality and prior familiarity with the theoretical frameworks could influence interpretation.

Focused, Axial, and Integrative Coding

Focused coding was used to identify the most analytically significant and frequently recurring codes and to determine which codes provided the strongest explanation of participants' experiences. Related codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories.

Axial coding supported examination of relationships among categories by considering the conditions under which participation occurred, the actions and interactions associated with participation, and the consequences of those processes across the dataset (Charmaz, 2014; Chun Tie et al., 2019). The analysis examined how belonging and relational connection supported confidence and voice; how confidence and voice contributed to leadership, advocacy, and

participation; and how time, access, communication, structure, flexibility, and organizational support facilitated or constrained engagement.

Selective or integrative coding brought the major categories together around a central explanatory pattern. Through this process, the categories converged around the core category of sustaining parent participation through relational belonging, parent voice and agency, and collaborative prevention-system learning.

The resulting conceptual explanation was grounded in the relationships identified through coding and constant comparison. The preexisting theoretical frameworks were subsequently returned to during interpretation to examine how the data-grounded findings aligned with, extended, or complicated existing theoretical understandings.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

As stated in Chapter 1, the researcher approached the study from the position that parents are knowledgeable partners whose lived experiences can strengthen prevention systems and inform policy and practice. This orientation required sustained reflexive attention to power, representation, voice, trauma-informed practice, confidentiality, organizational relationships, and the potential for tokenizing parent participation.

Because the theoretical frameworks preceded data collection, reflexivity was also necessary to distinguish concepts supported by the data from concepts anticipated through the literature. Reflexive surveys and analytic memos were used to examine assumptions, relationships with participants, theoretical expectations, coding decisions, category development, and interpretive choices throughout the study (Augsberger et al., 2023; Charmaz, 2014; Hartling et al., 2021; Lalayants, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Codes and categories were repeatedly compared with the original data to determine whether they accurately represented participants' accounts. Unexpected findings, disconfirming evidence, and experiences that did not align with the theoretical frameworks were retained and examined rather than excluded.

Research Aims and Analytic Alignment

The analysis was aligned with the study's three research aims. Aim 1 sought to understand parents' lived experiences of Parent Advisory Board participation. Aim 2 examined how parents experienced and described prevention-related practices, protective factors, family resilience, shared decision-making, and system influence. These findings were subsequently interpreted in relation to the Strengthening Families Framework rather than coded according to predetermined framework categories. Aim 3 identified the relational, organizational, and structural barriers and facilitators that shaped meaningful participation.

Interviews, observations, documents, reflexive surveys, and analytic memos were examined across the three aims through thematic content analysis and constructivist grounded-theory procedures. Coding was not restricted by the research aims; findings that crossed aims or revealed unanticipated relationships were retained and incorporated into the final thematic and conceptual integration.

Limitations

Several limitations shaped the study. First, the single-case design enabled intensive contextual examination but limited statistical generalizability. Readers must determine the transferability of the findings to other advisory boards, organizations, communities, and prevention systems.

Second, the findings reflected the organizational culture, membership, relationships, and prevention context of one Parent Advisory Board. Third, interview data relied partly on self-report and may have been influenced by recall, social desirability, existing relationships, or participants' perceptions of the researcher and organization.

Fourth, the theoretical frameworks informed the research question and interview guide before data collection. Although they were treated as provisional sensitizing concepts rather than predetermined coding categories, they may have influenced the topics explored and the researcher's initial analytic attention.

Fifth, the researcher was actively involved in constructing meaning from the data. Reflexive memo writing, constant comparison, examination of disconfirming evidence, and maintenance of an audit trail were used to strengthen confirmability and transparency. Finally, the Parent Advisory Board was a dynamic social system; therefore, the findings represented participation during a bounded period rather than every present or future form of advisory participation.

In addition to the above, voluntary self-selection may have shaped the interview sample. Members who agreed to participate may have differed from non-interviewed members in their availability, length or intensity of board involvement, comfort discussing their experiences, relationship with the researcher or organization, or perceptions of the board. Because reasons for nonparticipation were not collected, the direction or extent of this influence cannot be determined.

The six participants may have held experiences that were more positive, more critical, more visible, or otherwise distinct from those of members who did not participate. Consequently, the findings should not be treated as representing the full range of experiences within the

approximately 15-member board. Repeated observations and document analysis provided broader contextual evidence and allowed comparison between interview narratives and board practices, but these sources could not recover the private meanings, experiences, or perspectives of non-interviewed members.

The findings support an in-depth explanation of how the six participants experienced and interpreted advisory participation rather than a claim of complete experiential coverage across the board.

Conclusion

This methodology positioned the study to examine one Parent Advisory Board in depth as a bounded, prevention-oriented case. A theory-informed thematic content analysis provided the overarching analytic structure, while constructivist grounded-theory procedures supported iterative coding, constant comparison, memo writing, category development, and conceptual integration.

Purposeful sampling, semi structured interviews, observations, document analysis, reflexive practices, and systematic ATLAS.ti-supported data management enabled examination of the relational, structural, and contextual dimensions of parent participation. Portraiture supported the ethical and contextual representation of participants' experiences without functioning as a separate analytic method.

Together, these methodological choices supported a rigorous qualitative examination of how parents experienced belonging, voice, leadership, barriers, facilitators, collaborative decision-making, and participation in prevention-system learning.

Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

The findings presented in this chapter are grounded primarily in the interview accounts of six members who voluntarily participated from an approximately 15-member Parent Advisory Board. Observations and organizational documents were used to contextualize, compare, and strengthen interpretation of the interview data. The findings therefore describe the experiences and meanings constructed by the six interviewed members and should not be interpreted as a complete representation of every board member's perspective. Observational data provided insight into broader meeting interactions but could not substitute for the uncollected personal accounts of non-interviewed members.

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative case study examining how members of one Parent Advisory Board experienced and made meaning of participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work. The findings presented in this chapter were developed through a theory-informed thematic content analysis supported by constructivist grounded-theory coding and constant comparative procedures(Charmaz, 2014). Drawing on Zaidi's (2022) discussion of sensitizing concepts in constructivist grounded theory, this clarifies that the frameworks provided an initial direction for inquiry but were not used as predetermined coding categories. They remained provisional and open to modification as the analysis progressed (Zaidi, 2022).

The grounded-theory procedures accurately describe how the data were analyzed. These procedures included iterative coding, constant comparative analysis, memo writing, category development, and conceptual integration. The relationship among the study design, overarching

analytic approach, theoretical sensitizing concepts, and grounded-theory procedures remain unchanged and do not affect the dataset, coding process, findings, or emergent conceptual model.

The three theoretical frameworks informed the literature review, research question, and interview guide before data collection. Following Zaidi's discussion of sensitizing concepts, those frameworks were provisional guides rather than predetermined coding categories (Zaidi, 2022). Thematic content analysis is therefore the overarching analytic approach, while grounded-theory procedures describe how I coded, compared, developed, and integrated the categories. Grounded-theory procedures where within the broader case-study design. Interview, observation, document, and memo data were examined through open coding, constant comparison, axial coding, and selective coding. The analysis moved from initial codes to broader categories and then to an integrated explanation of the process through which parent participation was initiated, sustained, and shaped within the Advisory Board.

Theoretical Lens Guiding the Findings

Ecological Systems Theory, Social Capital Theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework informed the study as sensitizing concepts and were returned to during interpretation of the findings. Although these frameworks shaped the broader research context, research question, and areas explored through the interview guide, they were not used as predetermined coding categories or imposed on participants' accounts. The findings were first developed through thematic content analysis and constructivist grounded-theory procedures and were subsequently interpreted in relation to the three frameworks.

Rather than assigning one framework to each research aim or finding, the frameworks were used together as an integrated interpretive lens. Ecological Systems Theory helped explain the multilevel context in which parent advisory participation occurred, including influences at

the family, board, organizational, community, and prevention-system levels. Social Capital Theory helped explain the relational conditions that supported meaningful participation, including trust, reciprocity, belonging, shared experience, connection, and access to networks. The Strengthening Families Framework connected the findings to child abuse and neglect prevention practice through its emphasis on protective factors, family resilience, supportive relationships, communication, and access to concrete resources.

Together, these perspectives helped explain why the Parent Advisory Board functioned as more than a formal meeting structure. It operated as a relational, ecological, and prevention-oriented setting in which parents' lived expertise could be shared, interpreted collectively, incorporated into collaborative decision-making, and translated into prevention-system learning.

Organization of Findings / Roadmap

The findings are presented in relation to the study's three research aims, while recognizing that several themes extend across more than one aim. Aim 1 examines parents' lived experiences of advisory participation, with particular attention to belonging and connection, parent voice and agency, and opportunities for leadership and contribution. Aim 2 examines how parents understood and experienced prevention in practice, including protective factors, family resilience, shared decision-making, and parents' influence on prevention-system practices. Aim 3 examines the organizational and structural conditions that facilitated or constrained meaningful participation, including time, access, communication, flexibility, resources, role clarity, and supportive leadership.

Across the three aims, the thematic findings converge around an integrative core category developed through constructivist grounded-theory procedures: sustaining parent participation through relational belonging, parent voice and agency, and collaborative prevention-system

learning. ***This core category connects parents' individual experiences of participation with the relational and structural conditions that enabled their lived expertise to contribute to collective decision-making and system learning.***

Portraiture-Informed Narrative Approach

Portraiture is used here as a representational lens rather than as the primary analytic model. Following the study's methodology, portraiture supports attention to context, voice, relationships, complexity, and the dignity of participants' experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In these findings narrative, brief participant portraits should be used as descriptors that situate parents' voices before or within each ecological setting. The portraits should help readers understand who is speaking, what lived experience shaped the parent's perspective, and how that perspective contributes to the collective case.

The following participant portraits provide contextual entry points into the findings. They are not intended to replace the cross-participant analysis; rather, they preserve voice, context, relationship, and variation across participants. Together, the portraits show how members entered the Parent Advisory Board, how they understood their participation, and how their experiences illuminate the broader themes of belonging, voice, leadership, support, barriers, and system learning.

Portrait of Jennifer: From School Nurse to National Advocate

Jennifer's pathway into the Parent Advisory Board emerged from her work as a school nurse, where she first encountered the program while supporting students and families. Her initial response was cautious. As she explained, "I thought the program was interesting, but I was not willing." This hesitation reflected the uncertainty that can accompany entry into unfamiliar community structures.

Jennifer's perspective was shaped by a dual identity. She entered the advisory space as both a parent participant and a professional who had seen the importance of parent voice in child-serving systems. She identified her age, maturity, and life experience as assets that helped her contribute meaningfully. Over time, Jennifer moved from cautious participant to recognized leader, mentor, and advocate.

Her voice throughout the data carries a tone of quiet determination and deep satisfaction. Her statement, "My voice matters always," captures the sense of agency that developed through participation. Jennifer also described a relational model of growth in her connection with a facilitator: "I go to her with problems, and I don't think she gives me advice, but she lets me hear myself and work things out for myself." For Jennifer, the board became a space where reflection, mentorship, and contribution were connected. Her portrait illustrates how advisory participation can move from cautious entry to meaningful leadership when parent voice is recognized as valuable knowledge."

Portrait of Tamika: The Resilient Mother of Five

"Tamika entered the Parent Advisory Board as a mother of five seeking to reshape her approach to parenting after recognizing gaps in her own upbringing. Her journey began through the facilitator's outreach, first through home visits and later through in-person meetings with the Advisory Board. As a survivor of childhood abuse, Tamika joined with a clear purpose: "to unlearn what I had already learned and put in new information... the right way to parent and prevent abuse."

Despite her mother's warning that participation might lead to judgment or surveillance, Tamika exercised personal agency: "It's my decision, so I'm gonna show up." Her long-term membership demonstrates sustained commitment and positions her as one of the board's most

experienced participants. What began as a search for parenting tools became a role through which she encouraged others and shared hard-earned wisdom.

Tamika's voice carries warmth, humor, and grounded resilience. She speaks honestly about both practical motivations and deeper meaning. Her comment about appreciating meals at meetings humanizes her engagement, while her statement, "I have that resilience to keep going," captures the strength she brings to the board. Tamika described the Advisory Board as a parenting community that gave her "a voice to speak up about different aspects of parenting." She valued the diversity of families at the table and the opportunity to learn from others' experiences. Tamika's portrait shows participation as both personal growth and relational contribution, especially when the board creates space for parents to transform lived experience into encouragement for others."

Portrait of Rebecca: Voice for the Latino Community

"For Rebecca, participation in the Parent Advisory Board represented an opportunity to engage her Spanish-speaking Latino community while accessing culturally responsive support. Her experience highlights the importance of language access in inclusive parent engagement. Spanish translation was not a secondary support; it was central to her ability to participate fully and feel secure in the advisory space.

Rebecca entered the board with three clear motivations: contributing to her Latino community, participating in a learning circle, and receiving practical economic support through compensation. Her journey shows how cultural connection, educational opportunity, and material support can work together to sustain participation.

Rebecca's voice carries confidence and clarity. She described feeling safe from the beginning: "No de duda, me sentí muy segura desde el principio" [No doubt, I felt very safe from

the beginning]. She also emphasized how the board's investment in communication made her feel valued: "Me lo explicaron en mi idioma. Se tomaron el tiempo para hacerlo" [They explained it to me in my language. They took the time to do so]. For Rebecca, belonging was also connected to hospitality. She described being welcomed with food as "algo que te hace sentir como en casa" [something that makes you feel at home]. Rebecca's portrait highlights how culturally and linguistically responsive practices can turn access into belonging and belonging into meaningful contribution."

Portrait of Jarome: First-Time Father Breaking Cycles

"As a first-time father navigating parenthood in a new country, Jarome engaged with the Parent Advisory Board alongside his wife in search of guidance and community. Separated from extended family support systems, they were "pretty much on our own in the process of being parents." His participation represents the experience of an immigrant father seeking support while also working to transform inherited parenting patterns.

Jarome's perspective is significant because he entered the board not as someone claiming expertise, but as someone committed to learning. He described wanting to "change the parenting method that I received from my parents" and to parent "in a better way." His goal was to learn how to raise his children "in a respectful way, full of affection." Over time, his participation expanded from seeking resources to recognizing that his experience and opinions could also help other parents.

Jarome's voice carries humility, intentionality, and a powerful sense of mutual aid. He described the board as "a support group" and "a place where we were able to find information and also resources." Unlike participants who emphasized formal leadership, Jarome preferred accompaniment: "It would be more comfortable to accompany instead of leading." His portrait

broadens the meaning of parent engagement by showing that contribution may take the form of shared learning, peer support, and walking alongside others rather than formal leadership."

Portrait of Jackson: The Father Determined to Be Different

"Jackson's involvement in the Parent Advisory Board began with uncertainty as a new father determined to approach parenting differently from his own upbringing. His participation began through his partner's invitation: "She said, 'Hey, are you interested in this?'" What began as an invitation quickly became a regular commitment. Jackson brought his daughters to meetings, modeling engaged fatherhood while seeking resources for his own growth.

Jackson's perspective is significant because he represents fathers who actively seek to transform difficult childhood experiences. He spoke candidly about growing up in a "rough environment" and about his determination to "not be him." For Jackson, participation was connected to deliberate intergenerational change. He explained, "Anything I can do to contribute... to be a better dad, I'm all for."

Jackson's voice is candid and unpretentious. He did not claim expertise; instead, he acknowledged his need to learn: "I don't really know like really anything, because, like I said, I'm a new father." His worldview centers on practical improvement and the desire to become a better parent. He described parents as children's "first line of knowledge," positioning his participation as an investment in his role as a father. Jackson's portrait shows how advisory participation can support fathers who are actively seeking knowledge, resources, and new models for parenting."

Portrait of Becky: The Honest Observer

"Becky's experience reflects a more tentative form of engagement, marked by observation and careful distance rather than immediate investment in the Parent Advisory Board.

Unlike participants who described strong connection or leadership development, Becky entered the advisory space with measured expectations. She acknowledged, “I honestly don’t know, because I have not been that active.” Her perspective provides an important counterpoint to more affirming narratives of transformation.

What makes Becky’s portrait significant is her willingness to name barriers that other participants may not have voiced. When asked about feeling connected, she stated plainly, “I’m not. I’m not connected.” Although she described group members as “cool” and affirmed that she felt free to express herself, she also made clear that openness did not automatically produce belonging. Her pattern of observing, listening, and gaining resources rather than developing deeper relational ties represents an important variation in participation.

Becky’s voice carries guarded pragmatism. She assessed the board in practical terms, saying, “I haven’t gained anything, to be honest. I mean, I gained some resources.” She also identified translation as a factor that affected her willingness to speak, while still expressing respect for participants who needed language access. Becky positioned herself as an observer: “I’m learning to just observe. So, I’m just kind of laid back, listening.” Her portrait demonstrates that meaningful participation is not automatic; even welcoming spaces require ongoing attention to connection, meeting design, accessibility, and varied participation styles."

In summary, the portraits provide a close, textured view of Advisory Board members’ experiences. They show that participation was not uniform: some parents moved toward leadership, some emphasized mutual support, some entered through cultural or linguistic access, and others remained more cautious or observational. The next section moves from these individual portraits to the cross-participant patterns that emerged across the full data set, organized by research aim and theme.

Findings by Research Aim & Themes

Building on the participant portraits, this section presents the findings through five interrelated settings. Chapter Two established that child abuse and neglect prevention is a systems issue, that parent voice and leadership are increasingly viewed as necessary to responsive prevention systems, and that advisory boards are often named as promising structures. However, the literature also identified a gap: it does not sufficiently explain how parents serving together on advisory boards make meaning, develop shared knowledge, and translate lived expertise into prevention-system learning (Hartling, 2021; Wallis, 2020; Augsberger, 2023). The findings below address that gap by showing how the board functioned as a collective meaning-making setting.

Core Categories

Sustained advisory participation occurred through relational belonging, parent voice and agency, and collaborative system learning.

The core category that integrated the findings was **(1) personal relevance and lived experience, (2) relational belonging, (3) parent voice and agency, (4) collaborative system learning, and (5) sustaining parent participation.** Across participants, the data show that engagement was sustained when members could connect their personal experience to a larger advisory purpose. Jennifer described being "welcomed into the group" and later advised new members that "Your voice is heard, and it's whatever you have to offer is valuable to somebody." Tamika framed participation as "being part of… a parenting community" that gave her "a voice to… speak up" about parenting. Rebecca connected contribution to cultural and linguistic inclusion, explaining that the board was meaningful because "they explained it to me in my language" and that this helped her feel she "could contribute." Jarome described the group as "a

support group," while Jackson saw participation as useful because "parents are the first line of knowledge"(Table 3).

Table 3. Analytic Theme Summary Matrix

Summary of participant representation, quotation segment density, and interview prompt coverage across the five emergent themes.

Emergent Theme	Participants	% Participants	Quotation Segments (n)	% of Quotation Segments	Interview Coverage
Activating Parent Advisory Engagement	6	100%	826	86.9%	**High** (Q2–Q4, Q7–Q8)
Belonging as a Holding Setting	6	100%	275	28.9%	**Moderate** (Q5, Q11–Q14, Q17–Q18)
Parent Voice, Agency, and Leadership	6	100%	242	25.4%	**Moderate** (Q11–Q16, Q17–Q20)
Collaborative Decision Making and System Learning	6	100%	275	28.9%	**Extensive** (Q15–Q16, Q22–Q40)
Sustaining Conditions for Meaningful Participation	6	100%	279	29.3%	**Moderate** (Q5–Q6, Q9–Q10, Q41)

Note. *Quotation segment percentages were calculated using the 951 coded quotation rows as the denominator. Because individual quotation rows could be assigned to more than one theme, percentages overlap and should not be summed to 100%. Interview coverage breadth of semi-structured interview with each theme established through constant comparative analysis, memo writing, triangulation across data sources, and theoretical integration.*

Becky complicates the pattern by saying, “I’m not. I’m not connected,” while also acknowledging that connection can happen “when we share our experiences.” Analytically, the broader pattern is movement between access, voice, usefulness, and uneven connection. It is integral to the research question because it explains how participation became meaningful when lived experience could become shared advisory knowledge. This finding builds on literature that distinguishes attendance, consultation, voice, and leadership, but it adds the internal process through which belonging, voice, and system learning were connected inside this board (Kemp et al., 2009); Lalayants, 2012; Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023)(Table 4)

Table 4. Coding Summary Matrix

Summary of the analytic support underlying each emergent theme following constructivist grounded theory analysis.

Emergent Theme	***Distinct Codes (n)***	***Code Assignments (n)***	***Supporting Quotation Segments (n)***
Activating Parent Advisory Engagement	573	2,844	826
Belonging as a Holding Setting	86	1,047	275
Parent Voice, Agency, and Leadership	112	912	242
Collaborative Decision Making and System Learning	179	1,476	275
Sustaining Conditions for Meaningful Participation	163	1,216	279

Note. *Distinct codes represent the number of unique codes contributing to each emergent theme following focused coding and category refinement. Code assignments represent the total number of coding applications across the dataset, including repeated applications of the same code to multiple quotation segments. Supporting quotation segments represent the number of coded text segments associated with each theme. Because a single quotation segment could receive multiple code assignments and contribute to more than one emergent theme, values are not mutually exclusive and should not be interpreted as statistical frequencies. Rather, these counts are presented as descriptive indicators of analytic depth and the breadth of evidence supporting each emergent theme.*

Theme 1: Activating Parent Advisory Engagement

Participation Motivations; Role Entry. Parents entered the board when invitation, personal relevance, and lived experience helped them see themselves as contributors to prevention work.

The first setting was activating parent advisory engagement. The data show that participation began through invitation, personal relevance, parenting need, cultural connection, and uncertainty. Jennifer located her entry in both professional and personal experience, explaining that she came to the board as “a school nurse at an alternative school,” but she also noted, “I thought the program was interesting, but I was not willing.” Tamika joined because “there wasn’t really… a clear understanding of how-to parent,” and the board offered “a free resource” where she could learn with other parents. Rebecca’s entry centered on contribution to “my Latino community,” a “circle of study and learning,” and compensation as a practical factor in giving back. Jarome accepted because he and his wife were “first-time parents” who “needed a lot of information about parenting.” Jackson similarly entered as “a new father who wanted “to be a better dad.”

The significant point is that recruitment did not work as a single pathway. Participants entered through need, identity, family stage, community responsibility, language access, and practical support. It is constitutive of the research question because participation began as interpretation: members had to decide whether the board spoke to their lives and whether their experience belonged in prevention work. Against the literature on parent engagement and lived expertise, this finding shows that advisory-board entry is activated through lived relevance rather than invitation alone (McKenna & Millen, 2013); Merritt, 2020;(Bekaert et al., 2021); Hartling, 2021).

Theme 2: Belonging as a Holding Setting

Belonging and Connection. Belonging created the relational safety needed for parents to remain engaged and begin contributing.

The second setting belonged as a holding setting. The data show that belonging created the relational conditions that allowed participation to continue, but the pattern was uneven across participants. Jennifer's statement, "I was welcomed into the group," presents welcome as an entry point, while "We all have a say so" and "everybody always has something encouraging to say… and support you" show belonging as a practical condition for speaking. Tamika described the board as "a parenting community" where families from diverse backgrounds brought "something new to the table." Rebecca showed how belonging was shaped by cultural and language access: "They received me very well," provided translation "in Spanish," and made her "feel at home." Jarome described the board as "a support group," and Jackson described the group as "very open" where "everyone gets a voice if they want it." Yet Becky's statement, "I'm not. I'm not connected," prevents the finding from becoming overly positive. She also identifies

translation as a barrier to talking, while saying connection happens “when we share our experiences.”

The broader pattern is that belonging was produced through welcome, language access, shared parenting identity, openness, and support, but it could be interrupted by translation strain, meeting dynamics, or limited connection. It is essential to the research question because it explains why participation continued for some members while remaining fragile for others. Read alongside the literature on trust, reciprocity, social capital, and relational resources, this finding shows belonging as an active holding setting rather than an assumed benefit of advisory-board membership (Coleman, 1988; (Andress et al., 2020); Collins, 2018; Augsberger, 2023)(Table 5).

Theme 3: Parent Voice, Agency, and Leadership

Empowerment and Parent Voice; Leadership and Participation. Parent contribution developed when members experienced their voices as useful, respected, and capable of shaping board work.

The third setting was parent voice, agency, and leadership. The data show that voice became meaningful when participants experienced their contributions as useful, respected, and capable of shaping board work, but leadership did not look the same for everyone. Jennifer captured the core meaning of voice when she advised new members, “Your voice is heard, and it’s whatever you have to offer is valuable to somebody.” Tamika described the board as “giving me a voice to… speak up” and later identified her contribution to making a website “legible” and “welcoming with many diverse photographs.” Rebecca described a shift in confidence: “I feel safer” giving her opinion and more oriented to offer resources, make calls, or help people complete forms. Jarome complicated formal leadership by saying he felt more comfortable “accompany[ing] instead of leading,” yet he also said the group was improving because “our

voices are being heard." Jackson similarly said he was "not much of a leader," but still contributed "my thoughts." Becky added a critical variation: "if we're talking about a certain topic… then I'll share my input."

The significant pattern is that leadership emerged not only as title or visibility but as contribution, accompaniment, critique, translation, representation, and selective participation. It is directly related to the research question because it shows how parents interpreted their roles and how voice could become agency even when participants did not name themselves as leaders. Placed within the literature's continuum from presence to leadership, this finding demonstrates (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019), 2019; Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023) (Table 5).

Theme 4: Collaborative Decision Making and System Learning.

Shared Decision Making; System Influence; From Framework to Practice

Parent knowledge became consequential when it entered collective interpretation, recommendations, and prevention-system learning.

The fourth setting was collaborative decision making and system learning. The data show that parent knowledge became consequential when it moved from individual experience into group interpretation, resource sharing, agenda setting, and community response. Jennifer described "knowledge acquired through the experiences and contributions of the Parent Advisory Group," noted that members asked whether they had "resources that we want to share," and encouraged members to "find the needs in your community." Tamika explained that meetings included questions about "what are some things we want to cover," which helped shape the agenda.

Rebecca described the board's practical influence as becoming more oriented to offer resources, make calls, help people fill out forms, and understand how "resources" and

“opportunities” work. Jarome described contacting other members “to find out if they have any information so that we can share in our community with people who are in need.” Jackson explained that members “voice our opinions” about topics and information that can be provided. Becky also described collective contribution: “we all give our own perspective.”

The broader pattern is that decision making was not only formal voting; it was a cycle of identifying needs, comparing perspectives, sharing resources, shaping agendas, and translating lived experience into community-facing knowledge. This matters to the research question because personal experience became group interpretation, and group interpretation became resource sharing and recommendations. In the context of prevention-systems and Strengthening Families literature, this finding shows how protective-factor ideas were translated into everyday practices of discussion, resource circulation, and community interpretation (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007); Harper Browne, 2016; Hartling, 2021; Wallis, 2020; Augsberger, 2023)(Table 6).

Theme 5: Sustaining Conditions for Meaningful Participation

Barriers to Engagement; Facilitators of Participation Sustained participation depended on whether relational and structural supports made engagement possible, accessible, and consequential.

The fifth setting was sustaining conditions for meaningful participation. The data show that participation was shaped by practical, relational, cultural, and organizational conditions rather than motivation alone. Jennifer’s hesitation “I didn’t know. It was really a new concept to me” shows how uncertainty can limit participation before members understand the board’s purpose, while her later comment that “the facilitators are so accessible” shows how communication and relational availability supported continued engagement.

Rebecca identified language access as central: “They explained it to me in my language,” and people translated “in Spanish,” which helped her feel able to contribute; she also named compensation as a factor in participating and giving back. Jarome’s account shows the importance of information and resources for families navigating “a new language” away from family support. Jackson treated gift cards as helpful but secondary, saying “the gift cards are cool,” while emphasizing the benefit for children and parents who do not know resources are available. Tamika identified a different kind of barrier: some topics were emotionally difficult because they connected to personal experience. Becky sharpened the critique by naming translation as something that made her “not want to talk,” describing meetings as “boring at times,” and suggesting an icebreaker; at the same time, she noted compensation, food, and “good resources” as reasons parents come.

The significant pattern is that barriers and facilitators were intertwined: the same setting could be supportive, useful, emotionally difficult, inaccessible, and meaningful. It is pivotal to the research question because it explains the conditions under which parent advisory engagement was sustained, constrained, or renewed. Building from literature on power, trust, equity, reciprocity, cultural relevance, and access, this finding provides concrete evidence of how those conditions appeared in members’ descriptions of uncertainty, translation, compensation, communication, and meeting design (Andress, 2020; Collins, 2018; Augsberger, 2023; Hartling, 2021)(Table 7).

Conclusion

Across the five settings, parent advisory engagement appeared as a recursive ecological process rather than a linear checklist. The diverse participant evidence shows that members entered through different doors: Jennifer through professional and parenting experience, Tamika

through a desire to learn and unlearn parenting patterns, Rebecca through contribution to her Latino community and language-accessible participation, Jarome through first-time parenting and resource need, Jackson through fatherhood and the desire to be a better dad, and Becky through a more ambivalent relationship to resources, connection, and meeting structure.

Across these differences, the same broader process emerged: invitation and relevance activated participation; belonging and access held participation; voice and agency developed through contribution; collaborative decision-making converted experience into shared interpretation; and structural conditions shaped whether participation could continue. The contradictory evidence is central, not peripheral. Becky's lack of connection, Tamika's emotional difficulty with some topics, Jennifer's hesitation, Jackson's reluctance to call himself a leader, and Jarome's preference for accompaniment all show that advisory participation was not automatically empowering. It had to be built through relationships, language access, resource exchange, meeting practices, and visible usefulness.

It is consequential for the research question because it explains how Parent Advisory Board members made meaning of participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work and how that meaning became connected to collective advisory knowledge. Taken together, the findings answer the gap identified in the literature by showing how parent voice, relational trust, advisory participation, and prevention-system learning operated together inside one board, while preserving variation across participant experiences (Hartling, 2021; Wallis, 2020; Augsberger, 2023; (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)(Table 8).

Table 8: Integration of Findings Across Themes

INTEGRATED THEME	PATHWAY / PROCESS	KEY FINDING
ACTIVATING PARENT ADVISORY ENGAGEMENT	Lived experience → relevance → initial engagement	Members connected the board to parenting experience, professional roles, cultural identity, family needs, or desire to help.
BELONGING AS A HOLDING SETTING	Welcome → trust → relational safety	Belonging helped members feel recognized, respected, and able to remain engaged.
PARENT VOICE, AGENCY, AND LEADERSHIP	Recognition → confidence → role construction	Members made meaning of roles as contributors, advocates, mentors, resource sharers, and informal leaders.
COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING AND SYSTEM LEARNING	Shared experience → advisory contribution → prevention learning	Parent knowledge entered discussion, resource sharing, recommendations, and system learning.
SUSTAINING CONDITIONS FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT	Access + communication + role clarity + responsiveness → consequential participation	Structural supports shaped whether participation felt meaningful, accessible, and useful.

Note: This table integrates themes as a recursive model rather than a linear sequence. The themes explain how members experienced and made meaning of lived experiences, roles, contributions, participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter interprets the findings in relation to the study's central research question: how do members of a Parent Advisory Board experience and make meaning of their lived experiences, roles, contributions, participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work? The study addressed a gap in understanding how Parent Advisory Boards function as collective meaning-making spaces within child abuse and neglect prevention systems, particularly as mechanisms through which parent lived expertise can inform prevention-system learning (Augsberger et al., 2023; Hartling et al., 2021; Wallis, 2020). Rather than treating participation as attendance or consultation alone, the findings show that meaningful parent advisory engagement developed through five interconnected settings: (1) activating parent advisory engagement, (2) belonging as a holding setting, (3) parent voice/agency/leadership, (4) collaborative decision making and system learning, and (5) sustaining conditions for meaningful participation.

Together, these settings explain participation as a relational, ecological, and recursive process. Activation began when members connected the board to personal relevance, parenting need, cultural identity, professional background, or a desire to contribute. Belonging then created relational conditions of welcome, trust, shared experience, language access, and recognition. Voice, agency, and leadership developed as members used lived experience through advocacy, mentoring, representation, accompaniment, critique, and shared learning. Collaborative decision making transformed individual stories, questions, observations, and recommendations into collective advisory knowledge through discussion, resource sharing, agenda shaping, and prevention-oriented guidance. Sustaining conditions including communication, accessibility,

language support, compensation, role clarity, flexibility, resources, supportive leadership, and visible responsiveness shaped whether members experienced participation as feasible, valued, and consequential.

The Ecological Parent Advisory Model (EPA), an emerging Theory of Prevention Learning™, provides the organizing frame for interpreting these findings. An emergent model is appropriate because the study's analytic product is an explanation of relationships, not a catalog of isolated themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Yezdani et al., 2015). The model aligns theory, evidence, and interpretation by connecting ecological systems, social capital, parent voice, advisory participation, and prevention-system learning within one bounded case (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Coleman, 1988; Harper Browne, 2016; Kimbrough-Melton & Melton, 2015). It also preserves the portraiture-informed emphasis on situated experience, voice, context, relationship, and the dignity of experience while interpreting cross-participant patterns (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Taken together, the findings suggest that participation was not simply attendance, inclusion, or symbolic consultation. It was an ecological meaning-making process through which lived experience became recognized parent knowledge, parent knowledge developed into voice and agency, and voice and agency contributed to collaborative prevention-system learning (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019 Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2018).

Ecological Setting Domain

Domain I: Activating Setting

The first ecological setting was an activating parent advisory engagement setting. This setting describes how parents came into the board and began to understand their experiences as relevant to prevention work. Participation was activated through invitation, recruitment, personal

experience, curiosity, professional background, parenting experience, and the desire to help other families. In this setting, parent experience became advisory knowledge. The finding suggests that recruitment and orientation are not merely procedural; they are important moments where parents begin to see themselves as legitimate contributors to the board's purpose. Jennifer connected joining the board to curiosity and learning, explaining, "I elected to join… to really… find out what it was all about." The same participant also described wanting "to know a little bit more about how to be… a successful parent."

These excerpts show how personal relevance and the desire to learn activated early participation. The literature review suggests that parent participation matters because parents bring lived expertise about service access, cultural relevance, trust, barriers, and everyday system realities. This finding shows how that expertise first became available to the board: parents entered with personal experience, curiosity, and a desire to contribute, and the setting helped translate those experiences into advisory participation (McKenna, 2013; Merritt, 2020; Bekaert et al., 2021).

This activating setting, parallels ecological models of collective parent engagement because it begins with parent strengths rather than parent deficits. The board's role was not simply to ask parents to attend; it was to create an opening where parents could connect their lived experience to prevention-oriented work. For this study, activation occurred when parents recognized that their firsthand experiences, family knowledge, and community perspectives could help shape conversations about child safety, family support, and prevention. This interpretation aligns with collective parent engagement literature, which argues that meaningful engagement begins when parents' existing strengths, knowledge, and community commitments are activated rather than treated as deficits (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019).

It also fits Yosso's community cultural wealth perspective, especially the idea that families bring aspirational, familial, social, and navigational forms of capital into institutional spaces (Yosso *, 2005). In this study, the board became an entry point where lived experience could be translated into advisory knowledge.

Domain II: Belonging and Holding Setting

The second ecological setting was a belonging and holding setting. This setting developed through trust, connection, shared experience, support, recognition, and feeling valued. Belonging Impact and Relational Factors were among the strongest code families in the analysis, indicating that relational connection was central to sustained participation. Belonging functioned as a holding environment: it helped parents feel safe enough to speak, return, contribute, and build relationships with other members.

A participant described the relational climate directly: "when I came into… the program, I felt welcome," adding that members communicated that "I was going to make mistakes, but that was okay." This quote illustrates belonging as a holding environment where parents could participate without needing to be perfect. These finding matters because the literature identifies power, trust, equity, reciprocity, tokenism, and cultural relevance as key conditions for meaningful participation. The belonging setting shows how those conditions were experienced at the board level: parents needed to feel welcomed, respected, and safe enough to participate before their knowledge could become part of collective deliberation (Andress et al., 2020; Collins et al., 2018; Augsberger et al., 2023).

This finding shows that parent advisory engagement requires relational infrastructure. Formal structures such as agendas, titles, and meetings may organize the board, but they do not by themselves create meaningful participation. Parents needed to experience the board as a place

where they were welcomed, respected, and connected. In this way, belonging was not only an outcome of participation; it was a condition that made further participation possible. This finding also connects to ecological and social-capital perspectives in the literature.

Alameda-Lawson and Lawson (2019) emphasized that collective engagement depends on social settings that allow parents to use their resources in relationship with others. Similarly, social capital theory helps explain why trust, connection, and shared support mattered: parents' relationships became resources that helped sustain participation. Within this study, belonging was therefore both affective and practical; it helped parents feel connected while also supporting their ability to remain involved.

Domain III: Voice, Agency, and Leadership Setting

The third ecological setting was a voice, agency, and leadership setting. In this setting, parents gained confidence, spoke up, advocated, shared lived expertise, mentored others, and contributed to board leadership. Although the workbook's original code family used the term Empowerment Effects, the finding is better described as parent voice and agency because the data emphasized being heard, contributing knowledge, and influencing discussion. Leadership appeared both formally and informally through roles, advocacy, facilitation, storytelling, mentoring, and helping guide board conversations. Parent voice and agency were also reflected in the participant's account of becoming a representative: "As a school nurse… with no kids and no experience… as a parent, [I moved] to graduating to be the representative."

This excerpt shows movement from uncertainty toward recognized contribution and leadership. The literature review emphasizes that meaningful parent leadership requires structures that allow parents to interpret experience, influence priorities, participate in decisions, and see evidence that their contributions affect practice. This setting matters because it shows the

movement from voice to agency: parents were not only invited to speak but began to occupy advisory and leadership roles that gave their experiences practical significance (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Hartling et al., 2021).

This setting marks the movement from relational connection to meaningful contribution. Parents were not only supported by the board; they also helped shape the board. As parents gained confidence and opportunities to contribute, the board gained access to lived expertise that could not be produced by professionals alone. This finding supports the study's argument that parent advisory boards can become mechanisms for prevention learning when parent voice is treated as knowledge. The literature on family voice, parent leadership, and participatory governance supports this interpretation.

Parent engagement becomes more powerful when parents are not positioned only as recipients of services but as contributors, leaders, and co-constructors of knowledge. This is consistent with constructivist grounded theory, which recognizes meaning as co-constructed through interaction (Charmaz, 2014). In this study, parent voice and agency developed because the board created repeated opportunities for parents to speak from experience and have that experience recognized as useful.

Domain IV: Navigating and Collaborative Decision-Making Setting

The fourth ecological setting was a navigating and collaborative decision-making setting. This setting developed through collaboration, discussion, consensus, feedback, diverse perspectives, and shared decision making. Parents helped the board navigate between family experience and prevention-system practice by identifying needs, naming barriers, offering recommendations, and contributing to decisions. Decision Processes and System Influence codes showed that parent participation became collective when their perspectives entered the board's

deliberations and shaped its work. Collaborative decision making appeared in descriptions of shared leadership. One participant explained, “I think it’s a little bit… 50-50, a little bit led by the parents, a little bit led by the facilitators”.

This quote suggests that decision making was experienced as shared rather than entirely professional-directed. This finding addresses the literature gap concerning what happens inside board deliberations. Existing literature often explains why advisory boards are useful or how they may be formed, but less often examines how parents collectively construct shared understandings and recommendations. The navigating setting shows that shared decision making was the process through which parent knowledge entered board-level interpretation and prevention-system feedback (Hartling et al., 2021; Wallis, 2020; Augsberger et al., 2023).

This finding adapts the idea of a navigating setting to the Parent Advisory Board context. In this study, navigation did not only mean helping families locate services. It also meant helping the prevention system understand family realities. Parents served as interpreters of lived experience, community needs, cultural considerations, and practical barriers. Through collaborative decision making, the board became a bridge between parent knowledge and organizational responsiveness. Alameda-Lawson and Lawson’s (2019) navigating setting is useful here because it shows how collective engagement can help families and institutions move across boundaries. In this study, the Parent Advisory Board served a similar bridging function.

Parents helped translate lived experience into system feedback, while the board created a structure through which organizations could hear and respond to family knowledge. This supports prevention literature that emphasizes family voice, community partnership, and feedback loops as mechanisms for more responsive systems.

Domain V: Sustaining and Transformative Prevention Setting

The fifth ecological setting was a sustaining and potentially transformative prevention setting. This setting describes the conditions that allowed parent advisory engagement to continue and potentially influence prevention practice. Facilitators included communication, accessibility, flexibility, welcoming environments, supportive leadership, role clarity, respectful relationships, and visible responsiveness to parent input. Barriers included time constraints, uncertainty, lack of information, accessibility concerns, resource limitations, and hesitation. Structural facilitators were evident when a participant described accessible communication with facilitators: “the facilitators are so accessible… I [do not] have to wait till the next meeting to speak to them.”

This illustrates how communication access helped sustain participation between formal meetings. These findings matter because the literature cautions that participation can become tokenistic when systems invite parent voice without changing structures, routines, or decision-making practices. The sustaining setting shows that parent engagement depended on communication, accessibility, flexibility, role clarity, resources, and responsiveness. These supports are not optional; they are the conditions that determine whether advisory participation becomes meaningful system learning or remains symbolic inclusion.

This setting is important because it shows that participation depends on structure as well as motivation. Parents may value the board and still face barriers that limit involvement. Therefore, organizations cannot assume that interest alone produces sustained participation. If parent input is invited but not supported, advisory participation can become symbolic. If parent input is supported through clear communication, flexible structures, leadership pathways, and responsiveness, the board can become a mechanism for prevention-system learning.

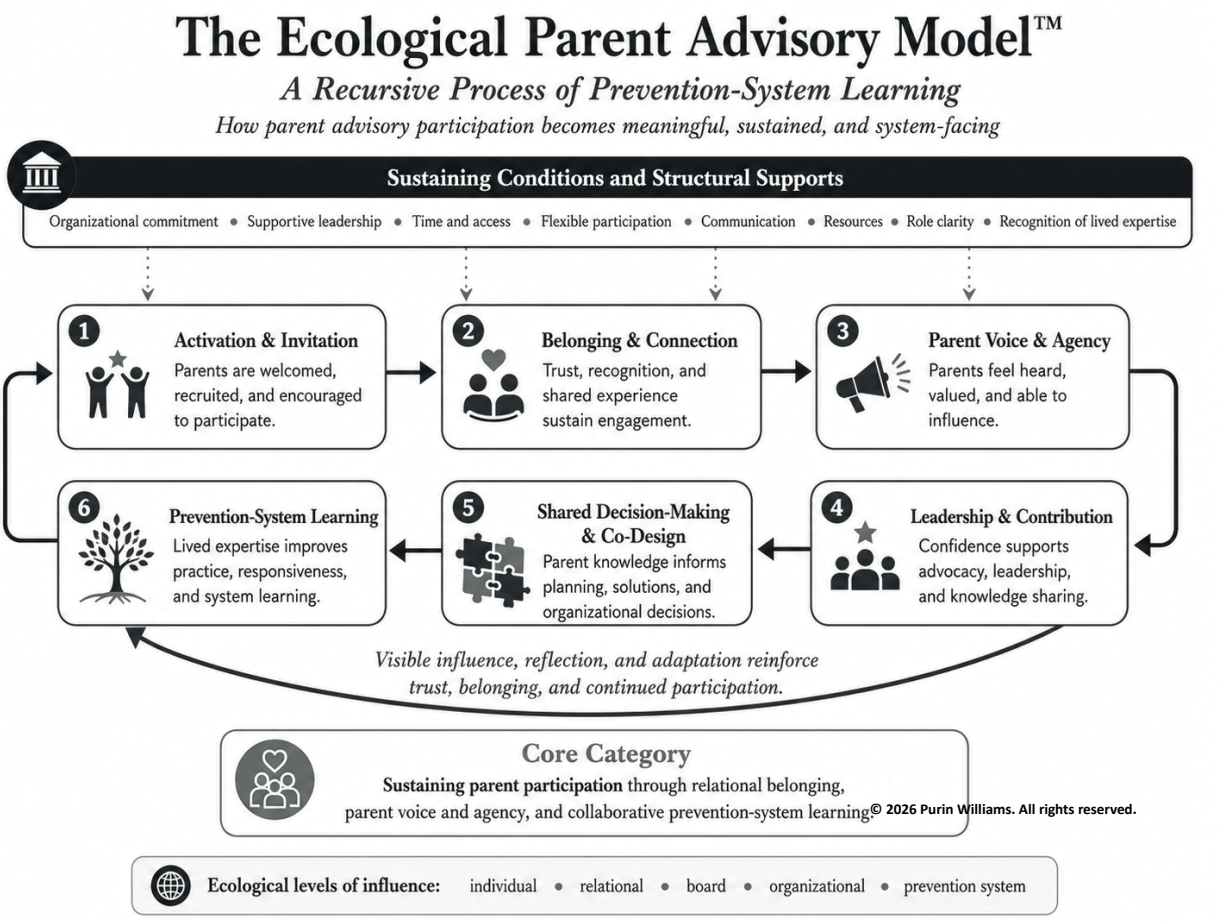
This interpretation is supported by ecological systems thinking, which suggests that participation is shaped by the fit between individuals and their environments. Parents may have motivation, knowledge, and commitment, but engagement can still be limited when structures do not support access, time, communication, or role clarity. Alameda-Lawson and Lawson (2019) similarly cautioned that collective parent engagement is weakened when it remains an add-on rather than becoming embedded in organizational routines. For this study, sustained advisory engagement required both relational care and structural responsiveness.

Integrated Model Explanation

The model can be read as a recursive pathway: lived experience and invitation activate participation; belonging sustains engagement; voice and agency support contribution; collaborative decision making connects parent knowledge to advisory work; and structural supports determine whether participation becomes sustained and system-facing. The process is ecological because each setting influences the others. Belonging strengthens voice, voice strengthens leadership, leadership strengthens decision making, and decision making reinforces parents' sense that their participation matters.

Read through the literature, this model extends collective parent engagement into a child abuse prevention context. Alameda-Lawson and Lawson (2019) showed how parent engagement can be understood ecologically across individual, collective, and institutional levels. This study applies a similar ecological logic to parent advisory participation: parents' lived experience, relational belonging, voice, leadership, decision making, and structural supports interact to shape prevention-system learning (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Ecological Parent Advisory Model



Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution of this study is its reframing of parent advisory engagement as collective, ecological, and prevention-oriented. Rather than defining participation as attendance, compliance, or individual involvement, the model explains how parents become prevention partners when advisory settings activate lived expertise, support belonging, strengthen voice and agency, and connect parent knowledge to collaborative system learning.

The model also contributes to literature on protective factors and family-centered prevention by showing how parent advisory structures may operationalize prevention principles. Social connections, concrete support, knowledge sharing, resilience, and parent leadership are

not only program goals; they are also relational processes that develop inside the advisory board. This positions the board as both a site of parent participation and a mechanism for strengthening prevention-system responsiveness.

This contribution connects directly to the gap stated in the literature review: limited research explains how Parent Advisory Boards operate as collective meaning-making structures in child abuse and neglect prevention systems. The model contributes by naming the ecological process through which parents' lived expertise becomes relational belonging, parent voice and agency, collaborative decision making, and prevention-system learning.

Practical Contribution

The practical contribution is that parent advisory boards should be designed as relational and structural systems. Recruitment should clarify why parent experience matters. Meetings should create belonging and trust. Leadership pathways should be visible, flexible, and accessible. Decision-making processes should show how parent input is used. Supports such as scheduling flexibility, communication, access, role clarity, and resource responsiveness should be treated as central infrastructure for parent participation.

This practical implication is consistent with participatory and ecological approaches to family engagement: organizations must design settings that make engagement possible, not simply invite parents into existing structures. A parent advisory board becomes stronger when it is intentionally built as an activating, belonging, voice-building, navigating, and sustaining setting. The practical importance follows from the literature's systems framing.

If maltreatment prevention depends on coordinated family, community, organizational, and policy support, then prevention organizations need advisory structures that do more than

collect parent feedback. They need structures that help parents interpret experience collectively, influence priorities, and see how their contributions shape practice.

Conclusion

Overall, the findings suggest that the Parent Advisory Board functioned as both a relational space and a prevention-system learning structure. Parents' participation was activated by lived experience and invitation, sustained by belonging, strengthened through parent voice and agency, expressed through leadership and shared decision making, and shaped by structural supports and barriers.

The emergent ecological grounded model offers a way to present the study's findings as an integrated explanation of collective parent advisory engagement in child abuse prevention. In this way, the study moves beyond portraiture alone while still preserving participant voice. Portraiture helps represent the human texture of the case, while the ecological grounded model explains the process that connects individual experience to collective advisory engagement and prevention-system learning.

The significance of the model is that it connects the literature review's central claims to the study's findings. The literature shows that prevention is systemic, parent voice is necessary, and advisory boards are underexamined as collective meaning-making structures. The findings show how one Parent Advisory Board operated as such a structure by transforming lived experience into belonging, voice, leadership, shared decision making, and prevention-system learning.

Overall Meaning of the Findings

Explains what the findings mean overall for members' lived experiences, roles, contributions, and participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work.

The central meaning of the findings is that Parent Advisory Boards become consequential when they treat parents as knowledge holders rather than symbolic participants. According to the data, members did not describe the board only as a place they attended. They described learning why their lived experiences mattered, constructing roles through trust and opportunity, gaining voice, sharing resources, shaping discussion, and identifying community needs.

The core category that integrates the findings is sustaining parent participation through relational belonging, parent voice and agency, and collaborative system learning; however, participation in this formulation is not a narrow attendance concept. It refers to the broader process through which lived experience, role construction, and contribution become meaningful within prevention work. This means that the board functioned as both a relational space and a prevention-system learning structure. Jennifer's description of an "upward trajectory" through participation and Jarome's emphasis on sharing experience with other parents illustrate how meaning could move outward from individual experience toward community contribution.

The broader insight is that parent advisory engagement becomes meaningful when systems create conditions for lived experience to become shared knowledge with practical value. As read through the Social Capital Theory literature, this finding shows that the board's relational ties were not merely supportive feelings; they were resources that helped members access information, build trust, exchange knowledge, and act on behalf of families and communities (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000).

Synthesis of Literature and Findings

The Chapter Two literature review established four key points that frame this discussion. First, child abuse and neglect prevention is best understood as a systems issue requiring attention to families, communities, organizations, and policy environments (Widom, 1996; Kimbrough-Melton & Melton, 2015; Ferrara, 2016; Administration for Children and Families, 2026). Second, Ecological Systems Theory, Social Capital Theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework provide the conceptual foundation for understanding prevention as multilevel, relational, and protective factor oriented (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Coleman, 1988; Harper Browne, 2016).

Third, the literature on parent participation shows that family voice, parent engagement, and parent leadership are increasingly viewed as necessary for responsive prevention systems, but participation exists on a continuum from presence to consultation, feedback, voice, and leadership (Kemp, 2009; Lalayants, 2012; Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023). Fourth, the review identified a gap: existing literature supports prevention systems, parent voice, advisory participation, relational trust, and feedback loops, but it does not sufficiently explain how Parent Advisory Boards operate internally as collective meaning-making structures that translate parent lived expertise into prevention-system learning (Hartling, 2021; Wallis, 2020; Augsberger, 2023). The present findings speak directly about that gap.

How the Findings Reshape Existing Literature

Explains how the findings extend and complicate the specific literature.

reviewed in Chapter Two.

Building from the Chapter Two literature review, the findings affirm that parent voice, family engagement, and parent leadership are necessary for responsive prevention systems

(Kemp, 2009; Lalayants, 2012; Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Hartling, 2021; Augsberger, 2023). However, the findings extend the reviewed literature by showing how lived experience, roles, contributions, and participation become meaningful inside advisory-board interaction. The literature reviewed for this study explains why parent voice matters and identifies conditions such as power, trust, equity, reciprocity, tokenism, and cultural relevance, but it less often explains how those conditions operate together in board deliberation over time (Andress, 2020; Collins, 2018; Augsberger, 2023).

This study offers a process explanation: parent lived expertise becomes useful when it is welcomed, interpreted collectively, connected to roles and decisions, and supported by accessible structures. The findings also complicate overly optimistic accounts of advisory participation. Jackson's uncertainty about support and Becky's suggestion that meetings needed stronger relational design show that open environments do not automatically produce connection, role clarity, or meaningful contribution. This complexity matters because it keeps the study from treating parent participation as inherently empowering. Meaningful advisory engagement must be intentionally built, maintained, and made consequential.

Theoretical Insight

The theoretical insight emerging from this study is that collective parent advisory engagement can be understood as a recursive ecological process of meaning making. The model links individual experience, group belonging, parent voice, collaborative interpretation, and system learning across multiple levels. At the individual level, participants entered with parenting experiences, professional roles, cultural identities, questions, needs, and hopes. At the group level, the board created or failed to create belonging, voice, shared interpretation, and

mutual learning. At the system level, parent knowledge became prevention learning when it informed discussion, resources, recommendations, and responsiveness.

This insight connects ecological thinking, social capital, and parent leadership by showing that prevention-system learning depends on the relational and structural conditions that allow lived experience to travel from individual story to collective advisory knowledge (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Coleman, 1988; Harper Browne, 2016). Social capital is especially important because the findings show how trust, reciprocity, networks, shared norms, and mutual support allowed parent knowledge to circulate within the board and become useful beyond the individual member (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). The model's theoretical value lies in explaining movement: from experience to meaning, from meaning to contribution, and from contribution to system learning.

Contribution to Knowledge

States what this research-question answer contributes to knowledge about Parent Advisory Boards and prevention systems.

The study contributes to knowledge by explaining how one Parent Advisory Board operated as a collective meaning-making structure within child abuse and neglect prevention. Its contribution is not the general claim that parent voice matters; the literature already establishes that. The contribution is a prevention-focused model of how lived experience becomes recognized expertise, how members construct roles through relational and structural conditions, how contributions become collective advisory knowledge, and how participation becomes consequential for prevention-system learning.

The study shows that parent advisory engagement develops through linked settings: invitation and relevance activate the connection between lived experience and board purpose;

belonging holds members in relationship; voice and agency create meaningful role construction and contribution; collaborative decision-making transforms experience into system learning; and sustaining conditions determine whether engagement remains accessible and consequential. This model addresses the literature gap by making visible the internal processes through which advisory boards can move from symbolic inclusion toward collective interpretation and prevention-system responsiveness.

Implications for Practice

The findings suggest that prevention organizations should design Parent Advisory Boards as relational and structural systems, not only as meeting bodies. Recruitment and orientation should explain why parent experience matters and how input will be used. Meeting practices should build belonging through welcome, respect, shared norms, language access, and opportunities for members to speak in diverse ways.

Leadership should be flexible enough to include formal roles, peer mentoring, accompaniment, cultural representation, observation, and critique. Decision-making processes should document how parent input shapes agendas, recommendations, resources, and organizational responses. Supports such as compensation, interpretation, childcare, transportation, flexible scheduling, clear communication, and follow-up should be treated as core infrastructure rather than optional accommodations. These supports are not peripheral conveniences; they are the conditions that determine whether participation can become meaningful and prevention oriented.

Implications for Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention

Makes explicit how the research-question answer matters for child abuse and neglect-prevention practice.

The findings have direct implications for child abuse and neglect prevention because they show how members' lived experiences, roles, contributions, and participation can strengthen prevention work before families reach crisis points. First, the model suggests that prevention systems should treat parent lived experience as a form of early knowledge about family stress, service barriers, cultural fit, resource gaps, and community needs. Parents can identify practical concerns that may not be visible from an organizational perspective. Second, the findings show that prevention is relational as well as programmatic.

Belonging, trust, respect, and shared experience helped parents remain engaged long enough for their knowledge to enter discussion and decision making. Third, the model shows that prevention systems need feedback loops. Parent contributions become prevention learning only when organizations show how parent knowledge shapes resources, recommendations, outreach, communication, or practice. Finally, the findings point to equity-centered prevention. Language access, compensation, childcare, transportation, flexible scheduling, and culturally recognizable inclusion are not peripheral supports; they are prevention infrastructure because they determine who can participate, what roles become available, and whose knowledge informs the system.

In this sense, the Ecological Parent Advisory Model positions parent advisory boards as prevention-system learning structures that can help organizations move from family engagement as presence toward family engagement as shared prevention knowledge. From a social-capital perspective, this means prevention systems should invest in the relationships and networks that

allow families to exchange information, develop trust, and mobilize support before crises intensify (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000).

Implications for Policy and Systems

Translates the full research-question answer into system and policy implications for meaningful lived-experience recognition, role construction, contribution, and participation.

At the policy and system level, the findings suggest that parent advisory engagement should be evaluated by more than attendance counts or membership diversity. Systems should ask whether parents experience belonging, whether their lived experiences are treated as knowledge, whether multiple roles and forms of voice are supported, whether contributions enter decisions, and whether organizations close the feedback loop by showing how parent knowledge influenced action. Prevention systems should also recognize language access, compensation, communication, role clarity, and culturally recognizable inclusion as equity conditions.

Tamika's emphasis on diverse and welcoming representation and Jennifer's description of cultural celebration show that inclusion must be visible and practical, not only stated. Without these supports, advisory boards risk reproducing symbolic inclusion: parents may be present without being able to make meaning, construct roles, contribute knowledge, or shape system learning. Policies that support interpretation, compensation, transportation, and accessible communication therefore also support social capital because they make it possible for diverse parents to enter and remain connected to the advisory network (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000).

Implications for Research

Identifies future research needed based on this study's answer to the research question.

Future research should examine how Parent Advisory Boards function across different prevention contexts, cultural communities, organizational structures, and levels of authority.

Comparative case studies could explore how advisory boards differ when parent lived experience is formally tied to decision-making power versus when it remains consultative. Longitudinal studies could examine how belonging, voice, role construction, contribution, and leadership develop over time.

Research should also address negative and mixed cases, including members who feel disconnected, overburdened, silenced by translation processes, uncertain about the value of participation, unclear about their role, unsure whether their contributions matter, or unsure whether support is available. These lines of inquiry would strengthen understanding of how advisory boards generate, limit, or translate parent knowledge into prevention-system change.

Trustworthiness, Limitations, and Boundaries of the Model

The model is an emergent model generated from one bounded Parent Advisory Board case (Yezdani et al., 2015). The model offers transferable concepts for similar prevention and advisory settings, but readers should consider whether their settings share similar relational, cultural, organizational, and structural conditions. The model's variation and contradictions are preserved, for example, Becky's account of gaining some resources while "learning to just observe" is useful because it shows partial benefit without full connection. Such evidence helps prevent the model from overstating transformation.

Chapter Conclusion

Synthesizes how the chapter answered the research question and why the answer matters for child abuse prevention.

This discussion shows that the findings mean more than the presence of five themes. Taken together, the settings explain how Parent Advisory Board members experienced and made meaning of their lived experiences, roles, contributions, and participation in child abuse and

neglect prevention work. The model shows that lived experience becomes prevention knowledge when advisory structures create conditions for belonging, voice, shared interpretation, action, and accountability.

The study therefore offers an emergent explanation of collective parent advisory engagement in child abuse prevention: lived experience is activated through relevance, roles are constructed through relationship and voice, contributions are translated through collaborative decision making, and participation is shaped by structural conditions. The central implication is that Parent Advisory Boards should be designed and evaluated as learning structures through which parent knowledge can inform prevention systems. This is the study's broader contribution: it shows how a board can become more than a venue for parent input and instead function as a relational and interpretive mechanism for prevention-system learning.

Chapter Six

This chapter concludes the study by synthesizing the meaning, contribution, and implications of the findings rather than re-discussing the full Chapter 5 model. Chapter 5 interpreted the five-setting model in depth; Chapter 6 uses that model only as a concluding frame to answer the study question, state the contribution to knowledge, and identify recommendations for prevention systems that use Parent Advisory Boards.

Restatement of the Study Purpose

The purpose of the study was to understand how Parent Advisory Board participation may function as a structured mechanism for parent leadership and system learning in child abuse and neglect prevention systems. The study was grounded in the problem that prevention systems often value parent voice in principle but have difficulty learning from structured parent leadership mechanisms in practice. This chapter therefore focuses on what the study adds conceptually, practically, and methodologically.

Answer to the Research Question

The study found that Parent Advisory Board participation became meaningful when parent lived experience was recognized as relevant prevention knowledge and connected to collective advisory work. Rather than repeating each model setting, the conclusion emphasizes the larger finding: parent advisory boards can function as relational learning structures when parent voice is welcomed, interpreted, acted upon, and supported by accessible organizational conditions.

Summary of the Emergent Model

Chapter 5 presented the Ecological Parent Advisory Model in detail. For the conclusion, the model can be summarized: parent advisory engagement becomes consequential when lived

expertise moves from participation to influence. This movement depends on relational trust, parent voice, collaborative interpretation, and visible use of parent input.

Connection to Literature and Theory

The findings connect back to the literature by showing how the study's central gap was addressed. The literature review established that child abuse and neglect prevention is a systems issue shaped by family conditions, community support, organizational practices, and policy environments, which aligns with the ecological framing of prevention work (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Kimbrough-Melton & Melton, 2015; Ferrara, 2016).

The themes extend that literature by showing how one Parent Advisory Board operated within that system: participation was activated through lived relevance, sustained through belonging and trust, strengthened through parent voice and agency, translated through collaborative decision making, and constrained or supported by structural conditions. Social Capital Theory helps explain why trust, reciprocity, relationships, and shared knowledge were not secondary findings but central mechanisms through which participation became meaningful (Coleman, 1988; Andress, 2020; Collins, 2018).

The Strengthening Families Framework connects the findings to prevention practice because parents' contributions centered on protective factors, resources, resilience, concrete support, parenting knowledge, cultural access, and family-centered support (Harper Browne, 2016; National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2019). Taken together, the literature named the need for prevention systems, parent voice, advisory participation, relational trust, and feedback loops, while the findings show how those ideas operated inside one board. This is the study's contribution: it explains how Parent Advisory Boards can function as collective meaning-making

structures that translate parent lived expertise into prevention-system learning (Hartling, 2021; Wallis, 2020; Augsberger, 2023).

Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes to knowledge by explaining how a Parent Advisory Board can move beyond symbolic participation toward prevention-system learning. Its contribution is the process explanation: parent knowledge becomes consequential when it is invited, held relationally, interpreted collectively, connected to decisions, and supported structurally.

Practical Significance

The practical significance of the study is that parent advisory engagement must be intentionally designed. Prevention organizations should not only invite parents into existing structures; they should build settings that activate lived expertise, create belonging, strengthen parent voice and agency, support collaborative decision making, and sustain participation through accessible infrastructure. The study suggests that advisory boards are most useful when organizations can show how parent input influences discussion, decisions, recommendations, and practice adaptation.

Recommendations for Practice

Recommendation 1: Clarify the purpose of parent leadership during recruitment and orientation so parents understand why their experience matters. **Recommendation 2:** Design meetings that create belonging, trust, recognition, and relational safety. **Recommendation 3:** Create multiple leadership pathways, including speaking, mentoring, resource sharing, agenda input, feedback, and representation. **Recommendation 4:** Document how parent input shapes decisions so participation is visible and consequential. **Recommendation 5:** Provide practical supports such as flexible scheduling, childcare, transportation, stipends, interpretation, accessible

communication, and role clarity. **Recommendation 6:** Use feedback loops so parents can see how their contributions influence prevention practice and system learning.

Recommendations for Policy and Systems

At the policy and systems level, prevention organizations should treat parent advisory structures as part of prevention infrastructure rather than as optional engagement activities. Policies should support compensation, accessibility, interpretation, transportation, childcare, shared agenda setting, documentation of parent input, and transparent decision feedback. System leaders should evaluate not only whether parents attended meetings, but whether parent voice influenced priorities, practices, communication, and family-facing prevention strategies.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should examine whether the five-setting model appears in other Parent Advisory Boards, prevention coalitions, and family leadership structures. Comparative case studies could explore how board design, organizational support, compensation, role clarity, and community context influence the relationship between parent participation and system learning. Longitudinal studies could examine how parent voice and agency develop over time. Additional research could also examine how advisory-board recommendations are tracked, acted upon, and communicated back to parents and communities.

Emergence of the Ecological Parent Advisory Model (EPA Model)

Through iterative analysis of interviews, observations, organizational documents, and reflexive interpretation, a coherent explanatory framework emerged that extended beyond the individual themes identified in the findings. Rather than functioning as isolated categories, the findings revealed an interconnected process through which Parent Advisory Boards contributed

to prevention system learning. This integrative understanding culminated in the development of The Ecological Parent Advisory Model.

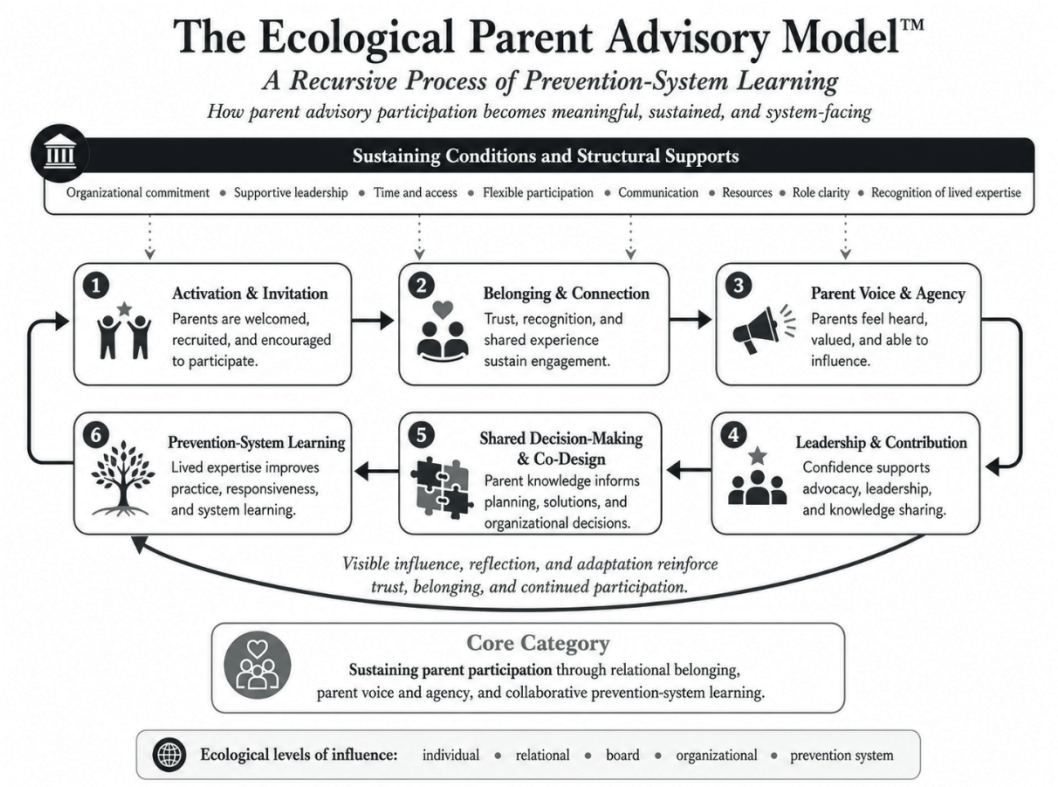
The EPA Model is an emergent theoretical and implementation framework that explains how Parent Advisory Boards may help prevention systems learn from the families and communities they are intended to serve. The framework proposes that meaningful parent participation alone is insufficient to produce organizational learning. Instead, prevention system learning emerges when lived experience is translated into usable organizational knowledge through relational trust, parent voice and agency, collaborative decision making, and prevention practice alignment. These relational and organizational processes enable parent knowledge to inform decisions, strengthen prevention practices, and support continuous organizational adaptation.

The framework is grounded in the theoretical foundations that informed this study, including ecological systems theory, social capital theory, the Strengthening Families Framework, and organizational learning. However, the EPA Model extends these perspectives by integrating them into a single explanatory structure centered on Parent Advisory Boards as relational learning systems. Rather than positioning parents solely as program participants or advisory members, the model conceptualizes them as active contributors to prevention system learning whose lived experiences become meaningful when organizations intentionally create opportunities for collaboration, trust, and shared decision making.

Because the framework emerged inductively from this qualitative case study. The EPA Model is intended to provide both a conceptual understanding of how Parent Advisory Boards may function within prevention systems and a practical framework that organizations may adapt when designing or strengthening advisory board structures. Future research should examine the

applicability of the framework across diverse prevention settings, organizational contexts, and populations (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Ecological Parent Advisory Model



Final Conclusion

The significance of this study is that it shows how parent advisory participation can become system learning without reducing parents to attendance, consultation, or feedback providers. Chapter 5 explained the model; Chapter 6 closes by emphasizing what the model means: prevention systems learn from families when they build structures where parent knowledge is welcomed, trusted, used, and made visible in practice. The Ecological Parent Advisory Model offers a grounded explanation of how Parent Advisory Boards may help prevention systems learn from the families and communities they are intended to serve.

Final Reflection: Humanizing the Work and Future Hope

This study began with a concern that is both practical and deeply human: child abuse and neglect prevention systems cannot become more responsive if they do not learn from the families and communities most affected by their decisions. The work of prevention is often described through programs, policies, frameworks, and outcomes, but behind each of those structures are parents, children, practitioners, and communities trying to make sense of need, harm, resilience, support, and trust. This study kept that human reality at the center. By listening closely to Parent Advisory Board members, the study showed that parent participation is not simply a procedural activity. It is a relational and interpretive process through which lived experience can become shared knowledge, collective voice, and system learning.

This work also helped demystify qualitative research. Qualitative inquiry is sometimes misunderstood as less rigorous because it does not rely on statistical measurement in the same way quantitative research does. Yet the complexity of this study demonstrates that qualitative rigor can be equal to, and in some ways more demanding than, quantitative analysis. The study required careful attention to context, language, meaning, contradiction, participant voice, coding, comparison, interpretation, and representation. The challenge was not only to identify themes, but to understand how those themes related to one another and how they explained a real prevention-system process. The resulting model made that complexity more digestible without flattening it. It organized lived experience, belonging, voice, decision making, and sustaining conditions into a framework that can be understood and used by people working inside affected ecosystems.

My hope is that the Ecological Parent Advisory Model will be useful beyond this case. The model speaks directly to maltreatment prevention advisory boards, but its broader value is in

showing how systems can move from inviting participation to implementing parent-informed learning. It offers a way for organizations to ask not only whether parents are present, but whether their knowledge is welcomed, interpreted, acted upon, and made visible in practice. In that sense, the study responds to the gap identified in the literature: advisory boards are often named as promising structures, but less is known about how they actually generate shared understanding and influence system process. This model offers one grounded explanation of that process.

Ultimately, this dissertation is about prevention as relationship, not only prevention as service delivery. It suggests that systems affected by maltreatment can become more humane and more effective when they create structures where parent voice is not symbolic, but consequential. The future hope of this work is that advisory boards, prevention organizations, and related systems will use the model to strengthen implementation, build trust, support parent leadership, and create feedback loops that allow lived expertise to shape real decisions. If prevention systems are willing to learn with parents rather than merely listen to them, Parent Advisory Boards can become more than engagement structures; they can become spaces where families help systems imagine and practice prevention differently."

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Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographics (N = 6)

Participant	*Race*	*Gender*	*Age*	*Marital Status*	*Education*	*Employed*	*No. of Children*
Jennifer	African American	Female	65 or over	Widowed	Graduate Degree	Yes	1
Becky	African American	Female	25-34	Married	Some Colleges	Yes	5
Rebecca	Hispanic	Female	25-34	Married	Graduate Degree	Yes	2
Jarome	Hispanic	Male	35-44	Married	Some Colleges	Yes	2
Tamika	African American	Female	35-45	Single	Some Colleges	Yes	5
Jackson	Caucasian	Male	35-46	Domestic Partnership	Some Colleges	Yes	1

Note: All names are pseudonyms used to protect participant identity and support confidentiality.

All participants were active members of the Parent Advisory Board at the time of the study.

Table 2. Data Collection Matrix

Alignment of Research Aims, Data Sources, and Analysis

Research Aim	**Data Source**	**Collection Method**	**Purpose**	**Analytic Contribution**	**Triangulation**
Aim 1: Understand lived experiences	Interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Parent experiences	Initial coding → Categories → Themes	Documents, observations, survey
	Reflexive Survey	Written reflections	Researcher reflexivity and participant interpretation	Memo development	Interviews
	Documents	Minutes, agendas, reports	Organizational context	Constant comparison	Interviews
	Observations	PPAC meetings	Interaction and behaviors	Analytic memos	Interviews
Aim 2: Examine Strengthening Families in practice	Interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Protective factors	Axial coding	Documents
	Documents	Prevention framework materials	Organizational implementation	Pattern comparison	Observations
Aim 3: Identify barriers and facilitators	Interviews	Semi-structured interviews	Experiences of barriers/facilitators	Selective coding	Observations, documents

Note: The alignment between the research aims, data sources, and analytic procedures used in this study. The matrix was developed based on recommendations for establishing methodological coherence in qualitative case study research and grounded theory analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018; Charmaz, 2014).

Table 3. Analytic Theme Summary Matrix

Summary of participant representation, quotation segment density, and interview prompt coverage across the five emergent themes.

Emergent Theme	**Participants**	**% Participants**	**Quotation Segments (n)**	**% of Quotation Segments**	**Interview Coverage**
Activating Parent Advisory Engagement	6	100%	826	86.9%	**High** (Q2–Q4, Q7–Q8)
Belonging as a Holding Setting	6	100%	275	28.9%	**Moderate** (Q5, Q11–Q14, Q17–Q18)
Parent Voice, Agency, and Leadership	6	100%	242	25.4%	**Moderate** (Q11–Q16, Q17–Q20)
Collaborative Decision Making and System Learning	6	100%	275	28.9%	**Extensive** (Q15–Q16, Q22–Q40)
Sustaining Conditions for Meaningful Participation	6	100%	279	29.3%	**Moderate** (Q5–Q6, Q9–Q10, Q41)

Note. *Quotation segment percentages were calculated using the 951 coded quotation rows as the denominator. Because individual quotation rows could be assigned to more than one theme, percentages overlap and should not be summed to 100%. These percentages are presented as descriptive indicators of analytic salience within the interview protocol rather than measures of statistical prevalence or thematic importance. Interview coverage reflects the relative breadth of semi-structured interview prompts associated with each theme. The significance of each theme was established through constant comparative analysis, memo writing, triangulation across data sources, and theoretical integration rather than by quotation frequency alone.*

Table 4. Coding Summary Matrix

Summary of the analytic support underlying each emergent theme following constructivist grounded theory analysis.

Emergent Theme	***Distinct Codes (n)***	***Code Assignments (n)***	***Supporting Quotation Segments (n)***
Activating Parent Advisory Engagement	573	2,844	826
Belonging as a Holding Setting	86	1,047	275
Parent Voice, Agency, and Leadership	112	912	242
Collaborative Decision Making and System Learning	179	1,476	275
Sustaining Conditions for Meaningful Participation	163	1,216	279

Note. *Distinct codes represent the number of unique codes contributing to each emergent theme following focused coding and category refinement. Code assignments represent the total number of coding applications across the dataset, including repeated applications of the same code to multiple quotation segments. Supporting quotation segments represent the number of coded text segments associated with each theme. Because a single quotation segment could receive multiple code assignments and contribute to more than one emergent theme, values are not mutually exclusive and should not be interpreted as statistical frequencies. Rather, these counts are presented as descriptive indicators of analytic depth and the breadth of evidence supporting each emergent theme.*

Table 5. AIM 1: Understanding Parents' Lived Experiences on the Advisory Board

Three major themes emerged reflecting interpersonal, developmental, and action-oriented dimensions of parent engagement.

Main Category	Subcategory	Groundedness	% of Category
Belonging Impact	**(Process Total)**	**578**	
	└─ Connection	92	15.9%
	└─ Community	78	13.5%
	└─ Belonging	70	12.1%
	└─ Supportive Network	46	8.0%
	└─ Shared Experiences	39	6.7%
	└─ Support	33	5.7%
	└─ Value	29	5.0%
	└─ Shared Goals	24	4.2%
	└─ Support Network	20	3.5%
	└─ Sense of Belonging	16	2.8%
	└─ Engagement	11	1.9%
	└─ Inclusion	9	1.6%
	└─ Understanding	9	1.6%
	└─ Community Connection	7	1.2%
	└─ Personal Connections	6	1.0%
	└─ Shared Concerns	6	1.0%
	└─ Shared Experience	6	1.0%
	└─ Recognition	5	0.9%
	└─ Acceptance	4	0.7%
	└─ Closeness	4	0.7%
Relational Factors	**(Process Total)**	**469**	
	└─ Trust	126	26.9%
	└─ Communication	32	6.8%
	└─ Collaboration	56	11.9%
	└─ Shared Goals	15	3.2%
	└─ Support	11	2.3%
	└─ Connection	0	
	└─ Mutual Respect	44	9.4%
	└─ Relationships	14	3.0%
	└─ Respect	34	7.2%
	└─ Understanding	0	

Theme 2: Empowerment and Parent Voice

Main Category	**Subcategory**	**Groundedness**	**% of Category**
Empowerment Effects	**(Process Total)**	**473**	
	└ Voice	84	17.8%
	└ Advocacy	78	16.5%
	└ Confidence	54	11.4%
	└ Empowerment	48	10.1%
	└ Influence	25	5.3%
	└ Expression	17	3.6%
	└ Knowledge	13	2.7%
	└ Decision-Making	10	2.1%
	└ Agency	9	1.9%
	└ Support	9	1.9%
	└ Contribution	8	1.7%
	└ Engagement	7	1.5%
	└ Community Engagement	6	1.3%
	└ Community Voice	6	1.3%
	└ Voice in Decision-Making	6	1.3%
	└ Community Empowerment	5	1.1%
	└ Resources	5	1.1%
	└ Skills	5	1.1%
	└ Values	5	1.1%
	└ Active Roles	4	0.8%

Main Category	**Subcategory**	**Groundedness**	**% of Category**
Leadership Roles	**(Process Total)**	**439**	
	└ Facilitators	65	14.8%
	└ Guidance	55	12.5%
	└ Leadership	52	11.8%
	└ Facilitation	37	8.4%
	└ Advocates	34	7.7%
	└ Mentorship	0	
	└ Support	9	2.1%
	└ Child Welfare	2	0.5%
	└ Decision-Makers	4	0.9%
	└ Community Leadership	0	
	(Process Total)	**853**	

Participation Motivations			
	└─ Contribution	62	7.3%
	└─ Support	60	7.0%
	└─ Community Impact	39	4.6%
	└─ Motivation	36	4.2%
	└─ Community Contribution	35	4.1%
	└─ Personal Experience	10	1.2%
	└─ Engagement	33	3.9%
	└─ Helping Others	5	0.6%
	└─ Learning	18	2.1%
	└─ Desire to Help	5	0.6%
	└─ Personal Growth	7	0.8%
	└─ Involvement	10	1.2%
	└─ Community Well-being	6	0.7%
	└─ Advocacy	9	1.1%
	└─ Connection	24	2.8%

Table 6. AIM 2: From Framework to Practice – Protective Factors Framework (SFF)

Two themes illustrating how parents enacted Protective Factor *principles within their advisory work.*

Main Category	**Subcategory**	**Groundedness**	**% of Category**
Protective Factors	**(Process Total)**	**357**	
	└─ Support	33	9.2%
	└─ Communication	34	9.5%
	└─ Resources	50	14.0%
	└─ Community Support	27	7.6%
	└─ Respect	9	2.5%
	└─ Supportive Relationships	46	12.9%
	└─ Training	8	2.2%
	└─ Knowledge	0	
	└─ Guidance	0	
	└─ Resilience	0	
	└─ Shared Objectives	3	0.8%
	└─ Safety	1	0.3%
	└─ Trust	0	
	└─ Family Support	0	
	└─ Education	0	
Family Resilience	**(Process Total)**	**329**	
	└─ Support Networks	51	15.5%
	└─ Resilience	54	16.4%
	└─ Coping Strategies	64	19.5%
	└─ Community Ties	3	0.9%
	└─ Shared Resources	7	2.1%
	└─ Adaptability	0	
	└─ Support Systems	28	8.5%
	└─ Overcoming Challenges	2	0.6%
	└─ Family Bonds	5	1.5%
	└─ Strength	0	

Main Category	**Subcategory**	**Groundedness**	**% of Category**
Decision Processes	**(Process Total)**	**416**	
	└─ Collaboration	103	24.8%
	└─ Consensus	57	13.7%
	└─ Discussion	30	7.2%
	└─ Diverse Perspectives	28	6.7%

	└─ Decision-Making	14	3.4%
	└─ Input	12	2.9%
	└─ Group Discussions	11	2.6%
	└─ Conflict Resolution	10	2.4%
	└─ Collaborative Decision-Making	9	2.2%
	└─ Perspectives	6	1.4%
	└─ Community Focus	5	1.2%
	└─ Acknowledgment	5	1.2%
	└─ Input Valuation	5	1.2%
	└─ Group Dynamics	5	1.2%
	└─ Engagement	4	1.0%
System Influence	**(Process Total)**	**374**	
	└─ Advocacy	49	13.1%
	└─ Feedback	99	26.5%
	└─ Best Practices	12	3.2%
	└─ Policy Shaping	8	2.1%
	└─ Recommendations	57	15.2%
	└─ Community Needs	24	6.4%
	└─ System Change	0	
	└─ Policy Impact	0	
	└─ Influence	28	7.5%
	└─ Voice	0	

Table 7. AIM 3: Barriers and Facilitators to Parent Engagement

Two themes capturing structural, relational, and contextual factors shaping meaningful participation.

Main Category	Subcategory	Groundedness	% of Category
Engagement Barriers	**(Process Total)**	**423**	
	└─ Lack of Awareness	28	6.6%
	└─ Awareness	27	6.4%
	└─ Inadequacy	24	5.7%
	└─ Information Gap	23	5.4%
	└─ Barriers	20	4.7%
	└─ Lack of Information	19	4.5%
	└─ Engagement	16	3.8%
	└─ Time Constraints	121	28.6%
	└─ Challenges	11	2.6%
	└─ Time Limitations	2	0.5%
	└─ Fear	7	1.7%
	└─ Hesitation	6	1.4%
	└─ Concerns	6	1.4%
	└─ Resource Lack	2	0.5%
	└─ Engagement Barriers	4	0.9%
	└─ Intimidation	3	0.7%
	└─ Communication	3	0.7%
	└─ Knowledge Deficiency	3	0.7%
	└─ Scheduling	0	
	└─ Transportation	0	

Main Category	Subcategory	Groundedness	% of Category
Participation Facilitators	**(Process Total)**	**396**	
	└─ Support	20	5.1%
	└─ Facilitation	30	7.6%
	└─ Communication	37	9.3%
	└─ Leadership	17	4.3%
	└─ Welcoming Environment	26	6.6%
	└─ Clear Communication	59	14.9%
	└─ Supportive Leadership	36	9.1%
	└─ Effectiveness	19	4.8%
	└─ Clear Objectives	2	0.5%

	└─ Encouragement	6	1.5%
	└─ Resources	0	
	└─ Training	7	1.8%
	└─ Flexibility	0	
	└─ Accessibility	2	0.5%
	└─ Recognition	0	
Structural Factors	**(Process Total)**	**397**	
	└─ Accessibility	99	24.9%
	└─ Flexibility	57	14.4%
	└─ Resources	56	14.1%
	└─ Constraints	2	0.5%
	└─ Organizational Support	26	6.5%
	└─ Communication	0	
	└─ Scheduling	16	4.0%
	└─ Meeting Format	0	
	└─ Virtual Options	0	
	└─ Support Systems	0	

Table 8: Integration of Findings Across Themes

INTEGRATED THEME	PATHWAY / PROCESS	KEY FINDING
ACTIVATING PARENT ADVISORY ENGAGEMENT	Lived experience → relevance → initial engagement	Members connected the board to parenting experience, professional roles, cultural identity, family needs, or desire to help.
BELONGING AS A HOLDING SETTING	Welcome → trust → relational safety	Belonging helped members feel recognized, respected, and able to remain engaged.
PARENT VOICE, AGENCY, AND LEADERSHIP	Recognition → confidence → role construction	Members made meaning of roles as contributors, advocates, mentors, resource sharers, and informal leaders.
COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING AND SYSTEM LEARNING	Shared experience → advisory contribution → prevention learning	Parent knowledge entered discussion, resource sharing, recommendations, and system learning.
SUSTAINING CONDITIONS FOR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT	Access + communication + role clarity + responsiveness → consequential participation	Structural supports shaped whether participation felt meaningful, accessible, and useful.

Note: This table integrates themes as a recursive model rather than a linear sequence. The themes explain how members experienced and made meaning of lived experiences, roles, contributions, participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work.

Figures

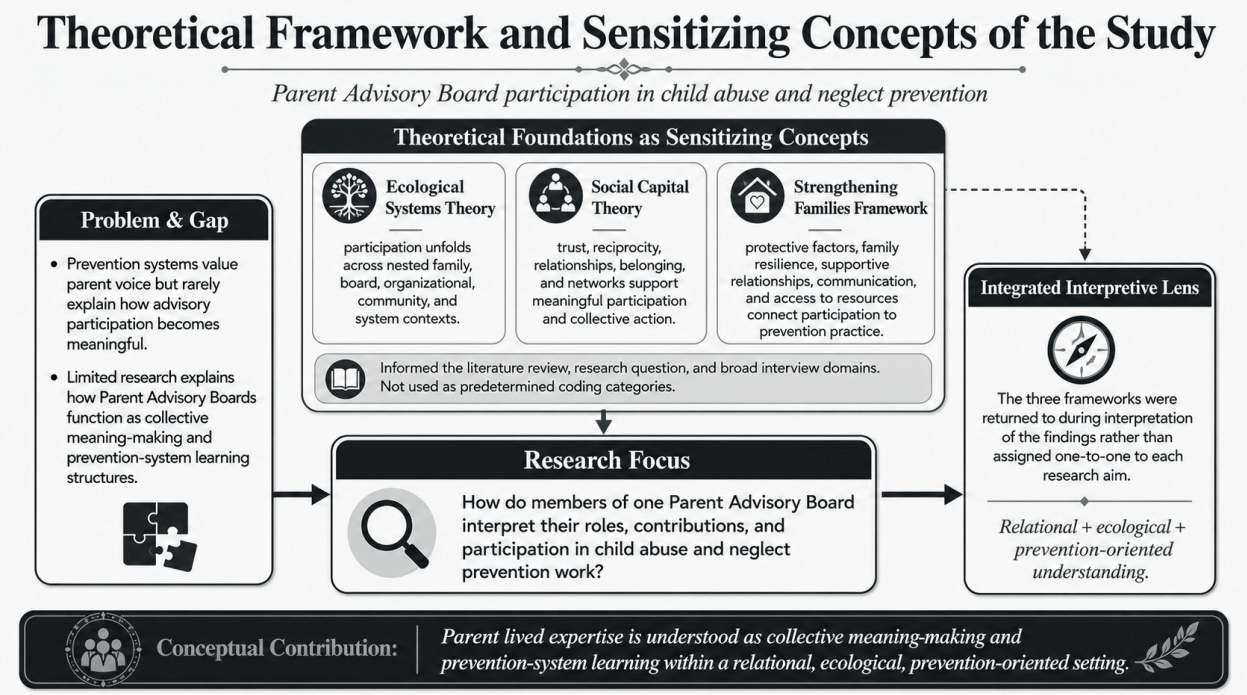
Figure 1. Literature Search Strategy/ Inclusion Matrix

Count Display	Value
Total Zotero/Excel sources	614
Priority window sources: 2000–2025	406
Earlier foundational sources: before	55
2026+ / outside priority window	8
Sources with abstracts	410

Concept / Theme Block	Search terms / phrase examples	Include: conceptual relevance	Include: theoretical fit	Include: empirical contribution	Include: gap relevance	Exclude / lower priority if off-topic	Live topic count	% of total sources	Use in review synthesis	Notes
Parents / caregivers / families + parent voice or leadership	parent*, caregiver*, famil*, mother*, father*, parent leadership, parent voice, engagement, participation	X	X	X	X		196	31.9%	Builds the case that lived expertise, family voice, parent engagement, and parent leadership matter for prevention systems.	Broad parent/family block; use for conceptual breadth.
Advisory boards, councils, committees, and participatory governance	advisory board, parent advisory, council, committee, participatory governance, stakeholder engagement, collaboration	X	X	X	X		41	6.7%	Supports the dissertation focus on Parent Advisory Boards as structured participatory spaces rather than informal engagement alone.	Important for naming the gap around board-level processes.
Child welfare, maltreatment, abuse/neglect prevention, and prevention systems	child welfare, maltreatment, child abuse, neglect, prevention, family support, protective services, prevention system	X	X	X	X		139	22.6%	Anchors the review in child abuse and neglect prevention systems and public-health/system prevention logic.	Core substantive field.
Strengthening Families Framework, protective factors, and family resilience	Strengthening Families, protective factors, resilience, social connections, concrete support, knowledge of parenting	X	X	X	X		36	5.9%	Connects advisory participation to protective factor application and prevention-oriented practice.	Use to align Aim 2 and framework-to-practice discussion.
Relational conditions: trust, power, equity, reciprocity, social capital	trust, power, equity, reciprocity, tokenism, cultural relevance, social capital, relationships, belonging	X	X	X	X		68	11.1%	Explains conditions that make participation meaningful rather than symbolic.	Use to support belonging, voice, and anti-tokenism claims.
System learning, feedback loops, meaning-making, and responsiveness	feedback loop, system learning, organizational learning, meaning-making, sensemaking, responsiveness, recommendations	X	X	X	X		43	7.0%	Supports the gap: how parent lived expertise becomes collective meaning-making and prevention-system learning.	Most directly tied to the dissertation's research gap.
Methods / qualitative case study / narrative or thematic review support	qualitative case study, thematic synthesis, narrative review, matrix method, constructivist, interpretivist, methodology		X		X		36	5.9%	Justifies narrative/thematic synthesis, qualitative case-study design, and literature matrix organization.	Use mainly in methods/rationale, not substantive findings.
Exclude or lower priority: unrelated clinical, classroom, technology, or intervention-only sources	classroom technology, unrelated clinical intervention, purely biomedical, unrelated education achievement, off-topic assessment					X	22	3.6%	Flags sources that may remain in Zotero but should not drive the dissertation synthesis unless they provide transferable method/theory support.	Use as screening note, not automatic deletion.

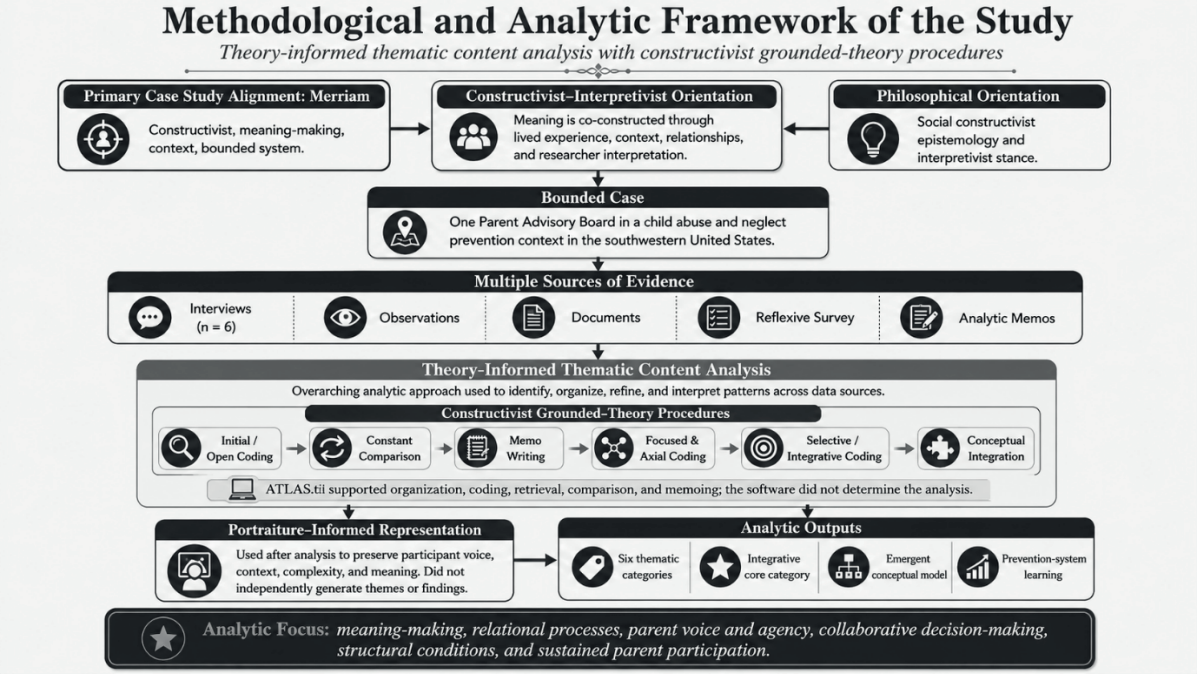
Notes: Searches were iterative and concept-block based; screening emphasized conceptual relevance, theoretical fit, empirical contribution, and usefulness for identifying the research gap.

Figure 2. Conceptual and Methodological Alignment



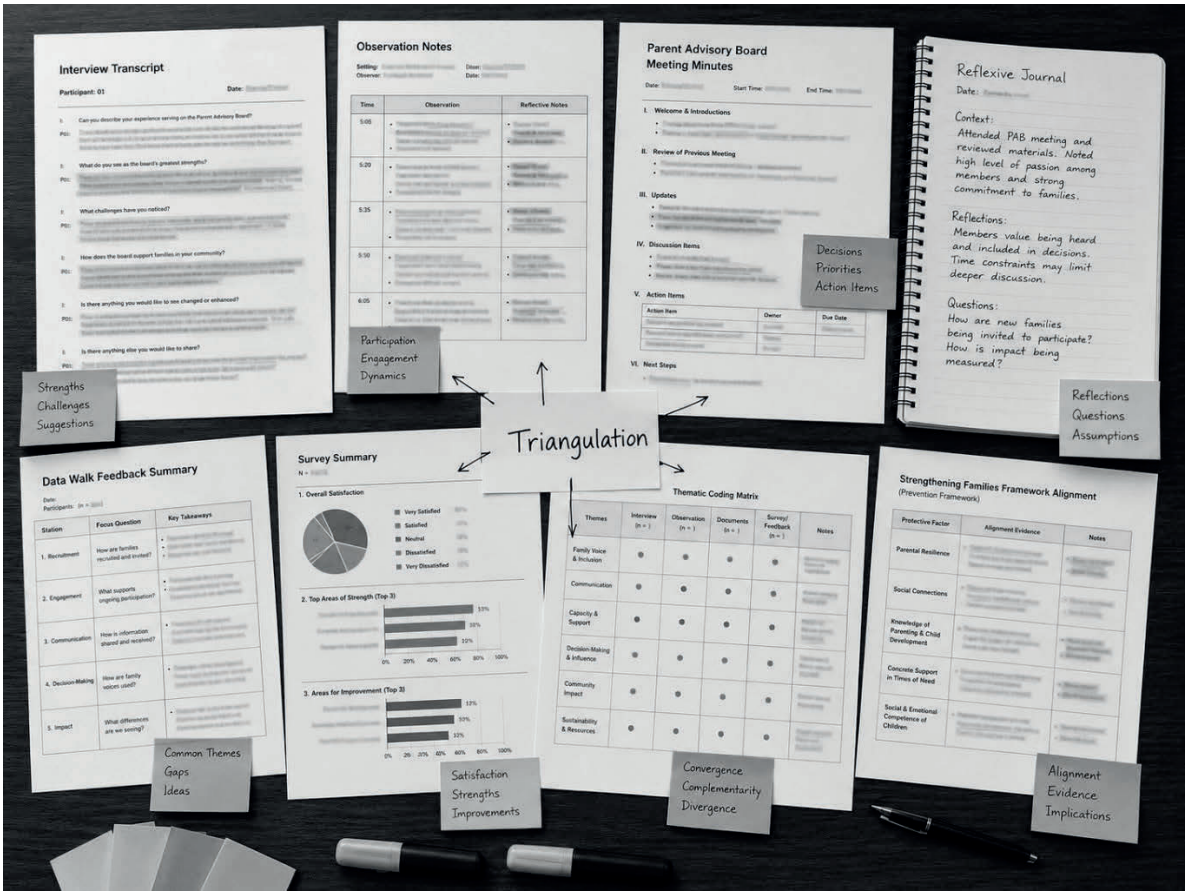
Note. This conceptual framework served as sensitizing concepts.

Figure 3. Methodological Framework



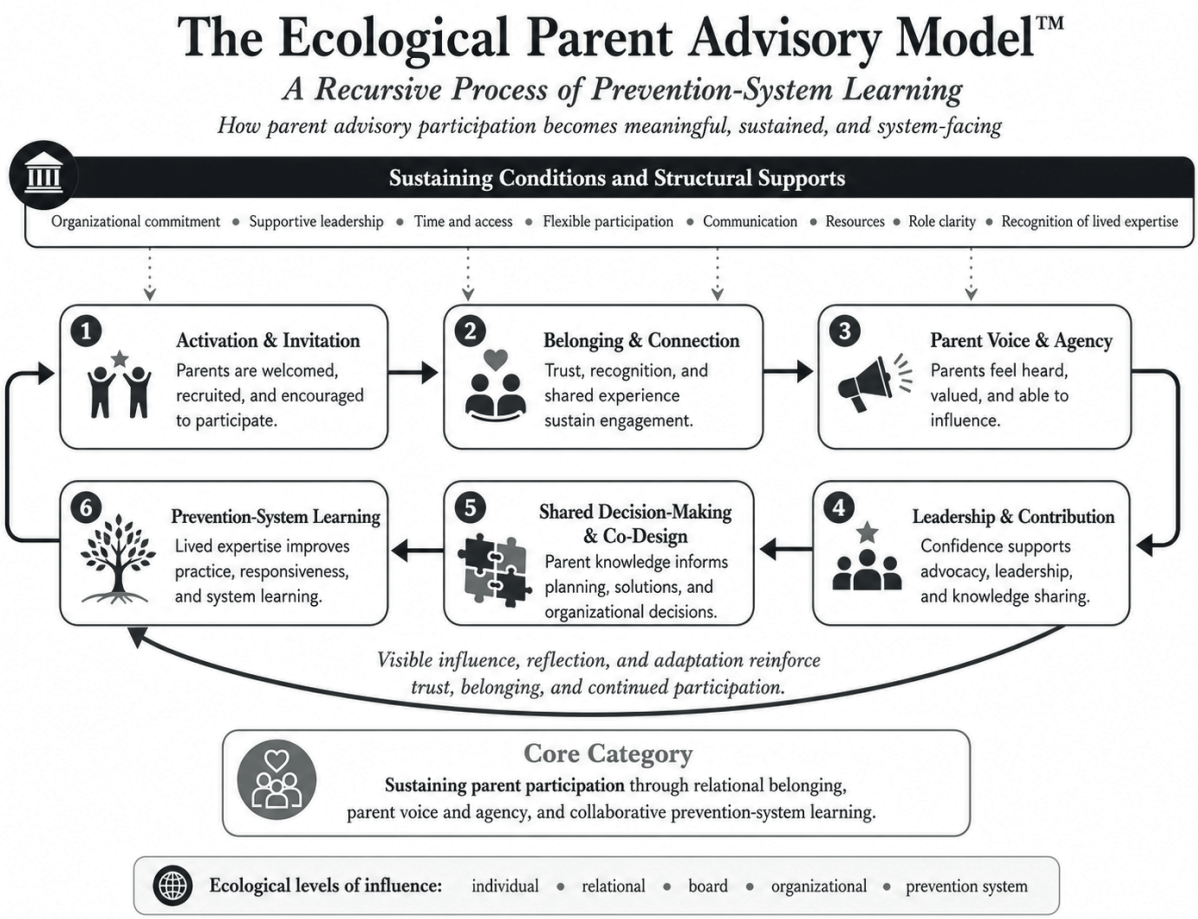
Note: Qualitative Case Study Orientation: Integrating Constructivist, Interpretivist, and Relational Commitments (Yin, Stake, Merriam).

Figure 4. Cross-Triangulation of Parent Advisory Board Data Sources



Notes: This *figure provides a visual representation of the types of anonymized documents used to support cross-triangulation in the Parent Advisory Board study. Data sources included interview transcripts, observation notes, meeting minutes, reflexive journal entries, data walk feedback, survey summaries, thematic coding matrices, and framework alignment notes. Together, these materials supported comparison across participant perspectives, researcher observations, meeting records, and analytic reflections. The image is illustrative only and does not include actual study documents or identifiable participant information.*

Figure 5. The Ecological Parent Advisory Model



Appendix

Appendix A: Planned Articles

This dissertation will be completed in article format and will produce three publishable manuscripts. Together, the articles examine how members of a Parent Advisory Board experience and make meaning of their lived experiences, roles, contributions, participation in child abuse and neglect prevention work.

Article 1: Conceptual / Theoretical Article

Title: *Parent Advisory Boards as Prevention-System Learning Structures: A Relational-Ecological Framework*

This conceptual article synthesizes literature on child abuse and neglect prevention, parent voice, parent leadership, social capital, ecological systems theory, and the Strengthening Families Framework. It identifies a gap in how the literature explains the internal processes through which Parent Advisory Boards transform parent lived experience into collective advisory knowledge. The article introduces the **Ecological Parent Advisory Model** as a conceptual framework.

Target journals: *Child Abuse & Neglect; Family Relations; Journal of Family Strengths*

Article 2: Empirical Article

Title: *Making Meaning of Lived Experience, Roles, and Contributions: A Qualitative Case Study of a Parent Advisory Board*

This empirical article reports on the study findings from the qualitative case study. Using portraiture-informed interpretation and qualitative coding, it examines how board members experienced and made meaning of their lived experiences, roles, contributions, and participation

in prevention work. The article presents the major themes, participant meaning making, and the emergent model.

Target journals: *Qualitative Inquiry; Journal of Public Child Welfare; Children and Youth Services Review*

Article 3: Practice / Systems Implications Article

Title: From Parent Voice to Prevention-System Learning: Applying the Ecological Parent Advisory Model

This article applies the Ecological Parent Advisory Model to prevention-system design. It focuses on the relational, structural, and ecological conditions that support or constrain meaningful parent advisory engagement, including belonging, role clarity, voice, accessibility, compensation, communication, and feedback loops.

Target journals: *Journal of Community Psychology; Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community; Families in Society*

Appendix B: Interview Questions

QUESTIONS

1. Interview Questions
2. Introduction and Easy Start: When you were first invited to participate in the parent advisory group, what was the biggest factor in your decision to say yes? Please elaborate on your thought process at that time.
3. Building Rapport: Reflecting on when you were first invited to join the parent advisory group, did you have any reservations, concerns, or hesitations about the merits of this group or whether it would be a worthwhile endeavor for you? Please share your thoughts.
4. Establishing Trust: Do you still have any concerns or reservations about the parent advisory group? We would appreciate it if you could elaborate.
5. Understanding Successes: What would you say is working well for this group?
6. Addressing Challenges: What would you say is NOT working well for this group?
7. Clarifying Purpose: Could you share your understanding of the purpose behind the Parent Advisory Group's formation?
8. Defining Roles: How would you describe your role within the Parent Advisory Group?
9. Support and Resources: Can you discuss the availability of necessary support, such as travel assistance or meeting preparation, for your participation in the Parent Advisory Group?
10. Ensuring Participation: From your perspective, do you feel adequately informed to actively contribute to the discussions within the Parent Advisory Group?
11. Encouraging Expression: Can you reflect on your comfort level when expressing your ideas and opinions during group discussions?

12. Opportunities for Contribution: How often do you find opportunities to voice your thoughts within the Parent Advisory Group?
13. Acknowledgment of Contributions: In your experience, do you believe your contributions are genuinely heard and valued by others in the Parent Advisory Group?
14. Respect for Opinions: Could you elaborate on how you perceive the level of respect and consideration given to your opinions within the Parent Advisory Group?
15. Seeking Input: Can you describe how and when the Parent Advisory Group seeks input from its members?
16. Handling Disagreements: From your observations, how does the Parent Advisory Group handle disagreements or differing opinions?
17. Personal Impact: In your opinion, what value does participation in the Parent Advisory Group bring to your time and efforts?
18. Recommendation: Would you recommend involvement in the Parent Advisory Group to others based on your experiences?
19. Optimism about Impact: How optimistic are you about the Parent Advisory Group's potential impact on pediatric research?
20. Confidence in Objectives: Lastly, what level of confidence do you have in the Parent Advisory Group's ability to achieve its intended objectives?
21. Strengthening Families Framework:
22. Introduction and Easy Start: Could you tell me what the parent advisory board does in supporting families and children?

23. Parental Resilience: How does the parent advisory board support families in managing stress and overcoming challenges to achieve the overall well-being and growth of every child and family, as stated in the mission?
24. Social Connections: How does the parent advisory board foster positive relationships and support networks within the community, in line with the collaborative and respectful environment emphasized in the mission and vision?
25. Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development: How does the parent advisory board empower parents with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote the health and growth of their children, as envisioned in the mission?
26. Concrete Support in Times of Need: How does the parent advisory board ensure families have access to concrete support and services during challenging times, supporting the mission's commitment to creating an environment of collaboration, respect, and advocacy?
27. Social and Emotional Competence of Children: How does the parent advisory board promote positive family and child interactions that contribute to children's social and emotional competence, aligning with the mission's focus on achieving overall health, happiness, and readiness for school?
28. Examples for Illustration: Can you provide examples of how the parent advisory board helps families function well when faced with adversity, aligning with the vision of empowering families and advocating for equitable practices and policies?
29. Examples of Collaborative Initiatives: Can you share examples of collaborative initiatives undertaken by the parent advisory board to strengthen social connections among families,

communities, and children, reflecting the commitment to strengthening the connection between families, communities, and children for overall health and happiness?

30. Enhancing Understanding: Can you discuss how the parent advisory board enhances parents' understanding of child development and effective parenting strategies to achieve readiness for school, in alignment with the vision of ensuring equitable practices and policies that support children's health and growth?
31. Assisting Families: Can you provide examples of how the parent advisory board assists families in accessing necessary resources to address their needs, reflecting the dedication to empowering families and advocating for them at the state and local levels?
32. Programs and Initiatives: Can you share examples of programs or initiatives designed by the parent advisory board to help children develop social and emotional skills, in line with the vision of creating an atmosphere of respect and building upon the strengths, expertise, and culture of all individuals involved?
33. Closing: Is there anything else you would like to add about the parent advisory board's efforts or your experience with it?
34. How does your involvement in the Parent Advisory Board contribute to promoting family strengths and enhancing protective factors that help families overcome challenges?
35. From your perspective, how can the Parent Advisory Board better support pre-pregnancy, pregnant, and parenting individuals in accessing services that are beneficial for families facing various risk factors?
36. In what ways do you believe the Parent Advisory Board can foster community support for families, helping to build resilience in the face of adversity?

37. Can you share examples of how the Parent Advisory Board has worked to address societal attitudes toward family well-being, aiming to mitigate risk factors and promote resilience within families?
38. How do you see the Parent Advisory Board's efforts aligning with strategies for addressing risk factors, such as poverty or social isolation, and promoting resilience among families?
39. Are there specific initiatives or programs implemented by the Parent Advisory Board that have positively impacted family relationships and dynamics, strengthening resilience in the face of challenges?
40. From your experience, what opportunities exist for collaboration between the Parent Advisory Board and other stakeholders to advance family support initiatives within the community, particularly in addressing risk factors and building resilience?
41. How can the Parent Advisory Board ensure that its efforts are inclusive and culturally sensitive, ensuring that all families, especially those facing adversity, are empowered to build resilience and overcome challenges?

Appendix C: IRB/Exemption

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: August 07, 2024 **IRB#:** 17096

Principal Investigator: Purin C Williams

Approval Date: 08/06/2024

Exempt Category: 2

Study Title: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF A PARENT ADVISORY BOARD DEVOTED TO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION Parental Insight Project (PIP)

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Lara Mayeux

Lara Mayeux, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board