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RESEARCH PAPERS

Measuring Parent Engagement in Early Childhood Intervention Programs

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Abstract: A primary aim of many early childhood intervention programs is to facilitate parent engagement to enhance child development and school success. Promoting meaningful parent engagement requires understanding the relationship of different types of caregiver behaviors and attitudes to learning and development. Yet, there is limited understanding about the specific aspects, levels, and patterns of involvement that differentially affect child outcomes. This is, in part, due to the variations in definitions and conceptualizations that have been used to guide evaluations and the limitations of available research measures. Given the potential importance of parent engagement as a protective factor for children experiencing multiple risk factors, understanding key dimensions that can be enhanced with early intervention is strongly warranted. Further, defining desired outcomes and appropriately measuring impact is increasingly necessary for funding and establishing "evidence based practice". This paper presents a review of issues related to assessing parent engagement as an early childhood intervention program outcome. It concludes with a description of the research efforts of one national early childhood home visiting program to address these issues.

Key words: parent engagement, early childhood intervention, measurement, program evaluation.

Introduction

A primary aim of many early childhood intervention programs is to facilitate parent engagement to enhance child development and school success. Promoting meaningful parent engagement through intervention requires understanding the relationship of different types of caregiver behaviors and attitudes to learning and development. Given the potential importance of parent engagement as a protective factor for children experiencing multiple risk factors, understanding key dimensions that can be enhanced with early intervention is strongly warranted. Enhancing parent engagement through early childhood intervention is a process that requires appropriately defining the behaviors, attitudes and knowledge a program intends to influence. Defining the desired outcomes and appropriately measuring impact is increasingly necessary for funding and establishing "evidence based practice". However, measuring parent engagement as a program outcome is challenged by limited understanding about effects of different parenting practices, variability in definition, and lack of available instruments. This paper presents a review of definitional and measurement challenges and considerations in evaluating parent engagement as a program outcome. It concludes with a description of the efforts of one national early childhood home visiting program to address these issues.

Why is Parent Engagement Important?

School success is a complex process facilitated by many factors beginning before a student enters the kindergarten classroom. Research shows that children who are successful in kindergarten generally demonstrate better long-term educational outcomes. Conversely, poor performance at the start of formal schooling has been associated with significantly lower future academic performance. Achievement discrepancies start early and persist. Many modifiable contextual factors including family income, high quality child care, and home literacy environment influence a child's readiness and successful entry into school (Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2011). In addition, several specific parent behaviors have been related to positive child educational outcomes including enriched language environments and shared book reading during early childhood (Farrant, 2012; Brinkman, Sayers, Goldfeld, & Kline, 2009; Hoff, 2012; Janus & Offord, 2007).

Thus, parent involvement and early childhood education have been regarded as two of the most important protective strategies to maximize positive outcomes for children, particularly important for children living at or below the poverty line (Sproul, 2012). Involving parents in the educational process has been identified as particularly important for "maximizing low-income children's opportunities for academic success" (Waanders et al., 2007, p620). Parental engagement with children has been associated with positive benefits for preschool age children including language and literacy development (Sheridan, Knoche, Kupzyk, Edwards, & Marvin, 2011). Further, parents are the first teachers of their children (Reese, Sparks, & Leyva, 2010; Bornstein, 1995; Britto, Brooks-Gunn, & Griffin, 2006) and are therefore in a unique position to encourage and promote strong language and literacy practices at an early age in order to promote academic success. Programs that are designed to support parent engagement during early childhood then may be particularly powerful to change the developmental and academic trajectories of many children.

It is well established that parent involvement in education is generally beneficial for achievement. Parent involvement can provide continuity between home and educational settings, increase teacher awareness of family cultural values and background, promote positive adaptation to formal schooling, and increase parent knowledge of developmentally appropriate parenting (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drza, 2010). However, rigorous research examining specific benefits of parent involvement for low-income families during preschool is lacking (Waanders et al., 2007). Early education programs that include a family component have also been positively associated with children's educational success, but the effects of specific features of such programs, "remain largely untested and unknown" (Boethel, 2004, p2). Studies that examine how programs can best facilitate parent engagement to promote early and long-term school success, what types and patterns of involvement enhance educational outcomes, and how to appropriately define and reliably measure key dimensions of parent engagement are strongly warranted. A clear definition of parent engagement and identified theoretical framework is necessary to guide the selection of measures to assess significant effects of different types and levels of parent attitudes and behaviors.

What is Parent Engagement?

Parent engagement is a complex, multifaceted construct (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Epstein, 1995). Many researchers agree that there are multiple dimensions that influence the developmental pathways that affect the child's approach to the learning, requires a multidimensional framework of involvement (Morrison, 2009; Edwards et al, 2010; Sheridan et al, 2011; Waanders, et al., 2007). Joyce Epstein's model (1995) is often cited as the theoretical framework in parent involvement research involving the following six dimensions: parenting, communicating, volunteering and supporting school programs, learning in the home, decision making, and community collaborations. These dimensions fit well for school age children. Current theoretical frameworks of parent engagement are situated within a broader ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2000). Yet, there is limited understanding about the specific aspects, levels, and patterns of parent engagement that differentially affect child outcomes. This is, in part, due to the variations in definitions and conceptualizations that have been used to guide evaluations and limitations of available research measures.

Parent engagement has been operationally defined and measured in many ways. This variability complicates the current understanding of what is actually meant by different programs who seek to promote parent engagement and what it would look like if programs were successful in achieving this aim. Further, the terms "Parent involvement", "family involvement", and "parent engagement" have been used interchangeably in research. Common definitions of parent involvement are often narrower in scope than those used to represent parent engagement. Parent involvement behaviors "range from ideological support of education to active communication with school personnel" (Waanders et al., 2007, p620). This term is often used in relation to education at school and in the home (Castro, Bryant, Peisner-Feinberg, & Skinner, 2004; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple & Peay, 1999). The term "parent engagement" is often used to represent a broader and more holistic operationalization that encompasses several types of parenting practices.

While the concept of parent involvement is often grounded in educational activities, the concept of parent engagement has been viewed as more generalized parenting practices. Parent engagement extends the parent role in academic achievement to include other ways parents promote their child's learning and development. For example, Sheridan and colleagues (2011) conceptualize parent engagement during early childhood as "behaviors that connect with and support children or others in their environment in ways that are interactive, purposeful, and directed toward meaningful learning and affective outcomes" and suggest that this includes "interactions and provision of experiences that nurture children and promote children's autonomy and learning" (p362). They define parent engagement as being composed of three dimensions: (a) warmth, sensitivity, and responsiveness; (b) support for a child's emerging autonomy and self-control; and (c) participation in learning and literacy. Despite differences in definition and measurement there is general agreement that parent engagement is a complex and multifaceted construct significantly associated with child academic achievement and social competence. Regardless of the term used, it is necessary to have a clear definition of this program goal to decide what and how to measure change in parent behavior, knowledge or attitude and assess effects of program participation.

Framework for School, Family, and Community Partnerships on Reading Skills and Attitudes

Studies indicate that more and different families get involved when schools implement a comprehensive partnership program with activities that represent six types of involvement, identified in a research-based framework (Epstein, et al., 2009). The six types of involvement may be designed to encourage family and community partnerships with students on reading and literacy skills.

Type 1-Parenting: Provide workshops for parents with ideas on how to: read aloud with young children at home and how to structure family conversations to discuss books and literacy skills across the grades. Activities may include home visits to meet with parents about their child's reading program and to learn what parents want to do at home to support children's reading. Workshops may be offered in multi-languages at school or in community locations.

Type 2-Communicating: Conduct parent-teacher-student conferences focused on reading goals and students' reading progress. Discuss with parents and students actions at school and at home that will help improve or sustain reading and literacy skills. Help students and parents know how reading skills are measured and reported on report cards and in annual school reports on achievement test scores.

Type 3-Volunteering: Organize reading volunteers, spelling buddies, tutors, and other well-trained literacy volunteers to work with individual children or small groups who need extra help on reading, writing, and other literacy skills. Volunteers may assist before school, during the school day, at lunch time, and in afterschool or Saturday programs. Parents also volunteer their time when they serve as "audience" for student activities.

Type 4-Learning at Home: Design weekly interactive reading and writing homework assignments for all students to share their work and ideas with their family partners, including reading, writing in all styles, and speeches. Interactive homework helps students practice oral reading, spelling, vocabulary and other literacy skills. Parents and students benefit from guidance on shared-reading to enjoy at home.

Type 5-Decision Making: Have the PTA or PTO conduct book fairs, family reading night, and other reading and literacy-related programs. The school's parent organization and the Action Team for Partnerships (which includes teachers, parents, and administrators) can work together to ensure that all parents feel welcome at the school and know that their engagement with their children at home is valued by teachers and administrators.

Type 6-Collaborating with the Community: Work with business partners and community groups to provide books for students to help establish a literacy-rich home environment and to increase students' reading for pleasure. With community groups, conduct adult literacy programs to help parents gain reading, English, or GED skills, and family literacy programs for parents and

Culturally Relevant Reading and Mathematics Instruction

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Abstract: The purpose of this research was to find culturally relevant ways to differentiate reading and mathematics instruction with populations of diverse students including those who are economically disadvantaged as well as culturally diverse. Learning culturally relevant ways to address reading and mathematics with historically marginalized student populations can help these students have a more equal opportunity at a quality education. The researchers present integrated behaviors that proved most likely to lead to academic achievement or content attainment in the areas of reading and mathematics instruction. This study is specialized because it was conducted with a population of economically disadvantaged students who attended tutoring on a bus that visited their housing complex once a week.

Key words: reading, mathematics, culture, community

Statement of the Research Topic

To the researcher's understanding, there has been no research on identifying what behaviors can be used by adults to enhance math understanding through reading math storybooks and participating in supplemental math activities in preschool age children. This study integrates the work of DeBruin-Parecki (1999) and "Edible Math: Hands on Math Strategies" by Project Central in order to create a math storybook and activity intervention. The goal of this study is to determine how providing culturally relevant experiences or stories into mathematics storybook reading time make children more receptive to mathematics and reading, and enhance children's interest in mathematics and reading.

Literature Review

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2002) agree that integrated, intentional curriculum can effectively introduce children to problem solving skills that can nurture both reading and mathematical development. Additionally, scholars affirm that shared reading that encourages behaviors such as mutual questioning, responding, and making stories relevant to the child's life promotes increased engagement in reading (DeBruin-Parecki, 1999, 2009; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004). Because mathematical learning occurs through concrete experiences (doing, seeing, or hearing) using reading as a tool for learning mathematics requires students to learn from hearing math stories (Capraro, Capraro, & Rupley, 2011) and doing math activities.

Learning mathematics is much like learning a new language. Although the concept of math as language is largely accepted in research, what is often excluded or given little attention is the basic notion of reading mathematics as a language (Adams, 2003) especially in early childhood. Children are expected to know a specialized vocabulary to learn math and be able to comprehend what that vocabulary means in order to apply those specialized, mathematics concepts when appropriate. Just like vocabulary development is essential for reading comprehension, mathematical vocabulary is essential for mathematics conceptual understanding (Capraro & Joffrion, 2006). As children learn mathematics, it is essential they learn the meaning of new words that are either not part of their oral vocabulary or have wholly different meanings from what they already know (Capraro, Capraro, & Rupley, 2011). For most students, mathematical language is learned almost entirely at school and it is not spoken at home (Cirillo, Bruna, & Herbal-Eisenmann, 2010) which is what makes math storybooks so important to an early learner. Through incorporating math storybooks into shared reading time, children are able to build their understanding of the language of mathematics. Hearing mathematics vocabulary during shared reading time is important because it can lay a foundation that can help further their future academic achievement in mathematics.

Preschoolers must make sense of mathematics vocabulary in order to communicate and think mathematically (Bryant, Ugel, Thompson, & Hamff, 1999; Samuels & Flor, 1997). Because mathematical learning occurs through concrete experiences such as doing, seeing or hearing (Capraro et al., 2011) children must be encouraged to engage in activities that allow them to apply new mathematics vocabulary or concepts learned from mathematics storybooks. Approaching mathematics in a relevant, practical way can be advantageous to parents in developing an effective shared reading practice. Then children are able to experience what could be perceived as an act of play that becomes a foundation for problem solving skills, building mathematics vocabulary, and future success in reading.

It is plausible that reading mathematics based storybooks and incorporating mathematics experiences into shared reading for preschool children could enhance both reading and mathematics skills in these early learners. Research (Miller & Mercer, 1997, 1993) has shown that in order to achieve the necessary level of abstract thinking in mathematics, students must start at the concrete level and gradually move through the abstract level. The concrete experience of hearing stories during shared reading becomes representational when children learn to read and apply mathematics vocabulary later in their classrooms at school. By including mathematics experiences in shared reading time, children can gain intellectual capital that can help them with sense making of both the abstract and the representational in the content areas of both mathematics and reading.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on several theoretical premises (Sulzby, 1985, 1988; Sulzby & Teale, 1987; Valencia & Sulzby, 1991). We first assume that children are becoming literate long before they are reading from print meaning that children are developing print awareness and alphabetic principle before learning to decode words on a page. Our research also assumes that early literacy experiences happen during shared storybook readings. Additionally we assume that children are acquiring both oral and written language

simultaneously. We also recognize that children are receptive to special language and cultural norms that are present in a particular culture despite their young age. By using this theoretical framework, the proposed study is able to explore literacy in early learners who are not considered literate by conventional standards.

Some researchers have argued that various types of reform will improve mathematics education for minority students. One particular solution of interest was presented by Ladson-Billings in the 90's termed culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). Ladson-Billings studied a group of teachers that were successful with African American students, and as a result she developed the grounded theory of CRP (2009). She defined CRP as "a theoretical model that addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools perpetuate"(Ladson-Billings, 1995, p.469). CRP produces students that 1) can achieve academically, 2) maintain cultural integrity, and 3) critique and analyze social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Students being able to achieve academically means that they are able to read, write, speak, compute, pose, and solve problems at sophisticated levels (Ladson-Billings). CRP was originally described as a mechanism to help African American students achieve academically, but throughout the years other researchers have also studied the success of CRP with Mexican American and Hispanic students. Therefore CRP has developed a track record of helping minority students achieve academically. Therefore another theoretical framework for this study rests within CRP.

Methodology

This research is a case study of mathematics tutors involved in administering shared reading and mathematics treatments to low socioeconomic status (SES) early childhood participants as an intervention. The focus of this case study was to engage the tutors in discourse about the developed intervention treatment that was designed to develop a culturally relevant foundation for children in mathematics through reading math storybooks. Creswell described a case study as the study of cases being explored through a bounded system (Creswell, 2007).

To save time, money, and effort, the site was selected due to its accessibility and convenience to the researchers (Creswell, 2007). The mobile tutoring project involved the use of a remodeled RV bus. The bus was remodeled to resemble the atmosphere of a classroom. The bus contained thirteen laptop computers, five flat screen televisions, tables, and chairs. MATH set up the bus once a week in one particular housing authority community located in the inner city, and provided free mathematics tutoring to children between grades one and twelve. One of the researchers was a part of the planning and grant writing team for the project; therefore the site was convenient and accessible to the researchers.

This study consisted of the tutors of children from the mobile tutoring project. The mobile tutoring project consisted of eight trained tutors. Tutors were trained by the nonprofit organization on CRP and mathematics content knowledge. All of the mathematics tutors were either college students or college graduates. Figure 1 represents gender and ethnicities of the tutors. The eight trained tutors were being paid from a foundation grant funding the mobile tutoring project.

Three months into the mobile tutoring project, one of the researchers presented the information about the research to the mathematics tutors. The tutors were informed about the

Then participants reflected on their experience with the targeted behavior for the week with the researcher. Through a structured interview participants shared experiences, concerns, and excitement about the previous week's mathematics storybook treatment and then inquired about the coming week's target intervention. Tutors were then instructed on the target behaviors for the coming week and were dismissed from the treatment with a "goodie bag" that contained (A) one mathematics counting storybook, (B) a snack to compliment the storybook such as Goldfish, and (C) a synopsis of the targeted behavior for the week. The "goodie bag" assisted tutors in remembering the treatment presentation and replicating and integrating targeted behaviors. The major emphasis was on how achieve symbiosis between mathematics and reading during shared readings.

Analysis

The three stages of analysis presented by Creswell (2007) are used in this study. They include preparing and organizing the transcribed data, reducing the data into themes, and representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and organized into data files. This step was followed by a read through of the data and initial coding. The data was then divided into themes through a process of coding called categorical aggregation (Creswell, 2007). Direct interpretation was used in the interpretation process by looking at a single instance to develop meaning. Naturalistic generalizations were drawn at the conclusion of the data analysis in an effort to determine what people can learn from this particular case study about an intervention integrating mathematics and reading for low SES early childhood participants.

Findings

Analyzing the results from the interviews and surveys led to the development of three consistent themes: 1) mathematics vocabulary; 2) interest and focus level; and, 3) development of reading habits. As a result of tutors engaging in shared storybook time with preschool aged children, students began to use mathematics vocabulary more frequently and confidently. Tutors shared their experiences of how they would hear the students using mathematics vocabulary more frequently such as comparing things using the terms "greater than" or less than". The intervention integrated aspects of the students culture by using items such as fruit loops, m&m's, cheerios, and goldfish to help young children with developing number sense. All tutors consistently voiced their opinion of how using these items from the students' culture helped to increase the students' interest and motivation for wanting to learn and do more. One tutor shared how she could see the eagerness in the students' eyes and how they would want to read another book or do another activity once they were finished. Students' also really enjoyed the fact that they were able to take a goody bag home of the items used in the storybook (cheerios, fruit loops, etc.). The tutor's also shared that the students began to count faster and more frequently and over time began to read the numbers on the pages. The third theme developed from the consistent pattern of the tutors changing their reading practices over time. According to the surveys, about 100% of the tutors changed at least 50% of their reading strategies over time throughout the intervention. The reading patterns that the tutors were asked about included:

allowing students to touch the pages; asking students questions about the stories; identifying pictures in the book related to the story; emphasizing repeated words; relating the story to the students' personal experiences; and, using hand motions to demonstrate numbers. The patterns that were changed most frequently involved the tutors allowing the students to touch the pages, using hand motions, and identifying pictures in the book. Tutors began to ask the students' to show them where the numbers were on the page in order for the students to be able to make the connections between the different representations of the numbers. Most of the books used numbers that involved pictures in the shape of numbers, and therefore the reading strategy of touching the pages and identifying pictures were directly related. Also, the tutors began to use their hands more to show students' numbers, and in turn the students began to use their hands to show numbers. This concept also helped the students be able to understand numbers using multiple representations.

Discussion

According to the tutor's perspectives, using the storybooks related to numbers was a great way to help students develop number sense. The tutors shared the extent to which the storybooks increased the students' desire to learn mathematics. Storybooks that were used in this study include The Cheerios Counting Book, The M&M's Counting Book, The Froot Loops Counting Book and The Goldfish Counting Book. A majority of the children that participated came to the tutoring program with little to no number sense, and the tutors were happy and amazed at how they witnessed the students' number sense begin to develop over time. One tutor stated, "We have seen progress in a small amount of time, so I would love to see how much progress will be made in a long time of the students engaging in these activities". Not only did the students enjoy the activities, but the tutors also expressed their enjoyment of participating in the storybook activities. Therefore, based on this intervention, using culturally relevant storybook experiences to teach children number sense helped to make students more receptive to mathematics and reading, and also increased their interest in mathematics and reading because it used items and ideas that the students were interested in and cared about.

Implications

The practical implications of creating an effective interactive shared reading practice that builds foundations for both mathematics and reading is nearly infinite. Children who have fulfilling shared reading experiences may also practice better interactions with others. Said children could become better learners and community leaders. Developing better community learners can improve the quality of the workforce, the post-secondary matriculation rate, and the overall fulfillment of the child and the uplifting of their community.

In order to justify the development of more programs integrating reading and mathematics, this research and similar studies are critical not only to enhancing children's interest in reading and mathematics today, but also enhancing shared reading time, and building relationships. Furthermore, information developed from this research could also be used to create professional development opportunities for early childcare professionals in order to reach a larger populace by creating leadership programs for literacy.

2010, 2011, forthcoming). While there are no data specifically documenting how many children act as their families' brokers, 61% of children of immigrants in the U.S. today have at least one parent who has difficulty speaking English. Among children with at least one parent from Central America, that proportion rises to 68% and to 82% for children with at least one parent from Mexico (Urban Institute, 2009). Furthermore, the likelihood that children of immigrants have at least one parent with limited English proficiency is rising steadily, from 49% in 1990, to 55% in 2000, and to 61% today. These trends suggest that for children of immigrants, growing up with parent(s) requiring brokering assistance is the norm, rather than the exception (Johnson et al., 2005).

Children in these families have sustained contact with a key U.S. institution by attending school, where they have extensive opportunities to develop language proficiency, cultural familiarity, and technological skills, as compared with their parents (Gonzales, 2011; Katz, forthcoming). Combined with children's developmentally greater facility for language acquisition, their time in schools helps them develop proficiencies more quickly than their parents. In many families, children make considerable contributions to how their families learn about and interact with their local communities, what resources they know about and connect with, and how they manage every day challenges. Brokering activities include, for example, facilitating parents' interactions with English-speaking service providers, explaining documents that arrive in the mail, and making phone calls to request information or services. While children play important roles in their families' connections with their English-speaking environments, they do not act independently when they do so. Children broker best when their parents are meaningfully engaged in shared efforts to seek and interpret information and make decisions about the best courses of action for their family's needs (Katz, forthcoming).

Children's brokering activities often involve connections to a range of media. Children may not only broker parents' connections to media content, but to new communication technologies and devices. Even in working poor communities, children are more likely to develop new media-related proficiencies than their parents (though often not as easily or extensively as their more socially privileged peers; see Lenhart, 2010). In some cases, they develop these skills as part of school curricula; otherwise, they may teach themselves requisite skills or pick up them up from friends (Ito et al, 2009). Of course, media brokering is not unique to children of immigrants. Even in middle class, native-born families, children broker media for their families by, for example, teaching their parents how to send text messages (Clark, 2012). However, children in immigrant families broker their parents' connections to media and technologies more often and for a wider range of tasks than the native born, because these media activities intertwine with brokering the linguistic and cultural information embedded in that media content (Katz, 2010).

Given that children play brokering roles, they are more likely than children of native-born parents to connect with a wide range of media alongside their parents. A 2002 study by researchers at Harvard University found that only 20% of adolescent children of immigrants (from Central America, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and China) reported watching TV "mainly alone," as they most often co-viewed with family members (Louie, 2003). By contrast, a general study of U.S. teens (conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation during the same period) found that over one-third of teens watched TV "mainly alone." They were also more likely to co-view television with their friends (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, & Brodie, 1999). These

findings suggest that media connections may be more embedded in immigrant families' literacy development than is the case in native-born families.

Parents and children in immigrant families connect with information resources around them to arrive at shared decisions about the best ways to address family challenges. This may mean that family members identify an issue (e.g., finding a quality homework help for a younger sibling) and individual members make connections that could yield helpful information. For example, immigrant mothers spend more time interacting in local institutions than fathers, even if they work full time (Jones-Correa, 1998). As a result, she may have contacts in local services that she is comfortable enough to approach for recommendations or advice. Her primary child broker (usually the eldest, or eldest female) will often negotiate that interaction. Parents may seek advice from friends and neighbors, or at their local church. Children may seek information at school, or go online to locate relevant suggestions about local programs. Family members pool these resources to make decisions. They also pool their respective skills when they engage in forms of "scaffolding" activities to learn from each other, enhancing family discussions and decision-making (Katz, forthcoming).

Scaffolding is a term associated with Vygotsky's (1978) situated learning theory, in which he posits that learning occurs through active engagement with others. Vygotsky distinguished between what learners can do without help (their actual development levels) and their "zones of proximate development." These zones are skills and content just beyond the limits of actual development levels. Scaffolding occurs when a more competent partner assists with skills and content in those zones, until their help becomes unnecessary, like a scaffold against a finished building. In families I have observed, scaffolding was not a one-way process; children contributed their greater dexterity with English, U.S. cultural norms, as well as media forms and content. Parents contributed their adult understandings of how the world works and of what the family needed, as well as their greater Spanish proficiency. Because parents and children came to these interactions as both learners and as more competent peers, scaffolding provided opportunities for all family members to simultaneously support each other's and their own learning. Dorner, Orellana and Li-Grining (2007) found these developmental interplays between parents and children "[led] to cognitive benefits for children who are both guided by more expert others on cognitively-demanding tasks, and who get placed in the 'expert' position where they are forced to articulate their understanding for novices" (p. 458).

To varying degrees, children reinforced their own skillsets by supporting their parents' needs. These interactions also provided natural opportunities for children to learn more sophisticated Spanish and social understandings from their parents' examples. Likewise, parents who actively engaged with their children around brokering tasks had natural opportunities to become more familiar with U.S. culture norms, spoken and written English, and a range of media forms, over time. Through scaffolding, children and parents could therefore facilitate each other's development of various literacies—including traditional reading, writing, and speaking in English and in Spanish, and media-related literacies—in the process of identifying and connecting with local resources the family needed (Katz, forthcoming).

Joint media engagement (JME) was a particularly important element of these families' scaffolding activities. The term refers to "spontaneous and designed experiences of people using media together…when there are multiple people interacting together with media…JME can support learning by providing resources for making sense and making meaning in a particular

situation, as well as for future situations" (Stevens & Penuel, 2010; Takeuchi et al., 2010). Cooperative engagement around media content has direct consequences for whether these families manage to make and maintain connections to locally available resources (e.g., related to health care, schools, social services) that can help address immediate and long-term needs. I found that JME is essential to understanding how and why some immigrant families integrate more readily than others; JME also helps account for variation in child brokers' own developmental trajectories. As a guide for future research, JME opens exciting avenues for considering literacy development as a cooperative, family-level learning process in which children are active, valued partners.

Learning, Immigrant Families, and Schools

Children's active contributions to family learning make it important to understand how these family scaffolding activities affect their schooling, and how formal education affects family learning. I found that teachers I interviewed were all familiar with and sympathetic to constraints low-income parents faced, such as work schedules that constrained their abilities to come to school for meetings or otherwise fully participate in their children's educations. However, most teachers were unaware of their students' brokering responsibilities to their families and how these might affect their connections to their schools (Katz, forthcoming).

Children were unlikely to divulge private information about their families to teachers unless they already had a trusting relationship with them. Many children were further motivated not to reveal their brokering roles to teachers, in order to protect their parents' vulnerabilities from outsiders' judgment, because their parents were undocumented immigrants, or both. For any or all of these reasons, teachers were generally unaware of what were often considerable family responsibilities for these students. Among children I interviewed, brokering when parents needed them often resulted in incomplete homework, foregone afterschool and weekend programs, and school absences. By spending less time on campus both during and after the school day, child brokers had fewer opportunities than their classmates for contact with adults who could become mentors and role models for them. Incomplete homework and missed school days could also directly contribute to lower grades and limited mastery of school-related material.

On the family front, many children's regular responsibilities involved brokering for parents at home and in community institutions, but also serving as tutors and guides for younger siblings, cousins, and neighbors. Younger children therefore benefited from elder brokers' trial-and-error movements through the U.S. school system, but these activities could infringe on the time, effort, and energy that brokers had to focus on their own schooling. Child brokers helped younger siblings and neighborhood kids with their schoolwork, but seldom had such assistance themselves when they needed it. Child brokers also generally accompanied parents to school in order to broker parent-teacher meetings. In some cases, elder children (high school age or older) sometimes attended meetings with their younger siblings' teachers in their parents' stead. The degree to which these efforts were appreciated and accommodated by teachers were critical to how much teachers knew about their students' family circumstances, and whether students were willing to trust them and ask for help if they needed it (Katz, forthcoming).

Hybrid Literacy Practices of English Language Learners

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Abstract: With an increase in the enrollment of English language learner (ELL) children as well as the persistence of high stakes testing as a standard of measurement of academic achievement, today's teachers and students struggle to find harmony between culturally sensitive classroom strategies for learning English and preparing for formal assessments. This review assesses the techniques and importance of hybrid literacy practices in qualitative studies published during 2001-2013. Inclusion criteria included a review of ELL students in preschool-third grade and focused primarily on techniques that were facilitated at home and during the school day. Findings indicate that more than a decade after No Child Left Behind very few qualitative studies have assessed the impact of hybrid literacy. In addition, studies are primarily conducted with native Spanish speaking ELL students while other populations are rarely discussed. Several implications for enhancing curriculum instruction and further areas of research are noted.

Keywords: hybrid literacy practices, English language learner, multiliteracies

With an increase in the enrollment of English language learner (ELL) children as well as the persistence of high stakes testing as a standard of measurement of academic achievement, today's teachers and students struggle to find harmony between culturally sensitive classroom strategies for learning English and preparing for formal assessments. Additionally, parents of ELL students are faced with sending their children to schools that are continually labeled as "failing" due to large enrollment numbers of ELL students, which causes feelings of stress and helplessness on part of ELL parents (Abedi, 2004). Still, many parents of ELL students recognize and stress the importance of education in their homes through continued encouragement of their students to excel academically and through sharing the cultural capital they have acquired from their homelands (de la Piedra, 2010; Derderian-Aghajanian, & Cong, 2012; Panferov, 2010).

In order to build classroom communities that are supportive of ELL students and their families it is critical to consider the differences in their backgrounds as well as the different funds of knowledge that ELL students come to school with (de la Piedra, 2010; Derderian-Aghajanian, & Cong, 2012; Panferov, 2010). One of the most significant challenges that ELL students face is the development of English vocabulary for communication at school and in their homes (Abedi, 2004; August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Blachowicz, 1999).

One solution to the issue of English vocabulary development is establishing a curriculum that allows for communication in both home language as well as in English; this is referred to as a hybrid literacy practice (de la Piedra, 2010). By providing a welcoming classroom environment for ELLs to use their cultural capital while acquiring a new language, we hypothesize that

to focus on studies that specifically looked at concrete hybrid practices between school and home. Out of that final review, seven articles were analyzed and findings of hybrid literacy practices in both the home and the school are discussed below.

Findings

Since NCLB's passing in 2001 and other individual state laws and programs that require English only in the classroom, there has been a large impact on ELL students (Combs, Evans, Fletcher, Parra, Jimenez, 2005). Understanding these broad sweeping education policies in the context of the United States' diverse, multilingual population is imperative. Particularly examining the advantages and disadvantages of hybrid literacy practices, as a way to integrate the domains of home and school, can provide solutions to policy makers on either side of the debate. Nevertheless, since the passing of NCLB, and seven years since the 2006 "Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth," the results from our review, suggests that over the past decade, there has been very little qualitative research done on the advantages and disadvantages of hybrid literacy practices (Escamilla, 2009). Although there are a dearth of studies on how to link practices of literacy in the home with those in school for a younger population of ELLs, this review of techniques with pre-K- third grade does provide some valuable insight for areas of future research.

Domain of Home: The Role of Extended Family Members in Literacy Practices

A common theme in ELL families regarding helping their child in school is that of hopelessness. Many ELL parents and families want to help students achieve academic success during their time in school but feel as though they are not prepared to facilitate or take part in such success because they lack knowledge of the English language (Borba, 2009; Derderian-Aghajanian, & Cong, 2012; Panferov, 2010). However, research has shown that ELL parent involvement in a child's schooling has a positive correlation with their overall academic achievement and their perception of school (Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Mace-Matluck, Alexander-Kasparki, & Qeen, 1998) as well as their English acquisition (Gardner, 1985, Panferov, 2010). It is apparent that family has an important role in student academic achievement. In order to facilitate positive relationships between schools and families, teachers can initiate communication in which parents are invited to take part in their students learning. A lack of English understanding does not mean a lack of cultural capital. Cultural capital can be used as a form of informal instruction that happens between exchanges among family members that include language acquisition and the acclimation of unique cultural practices.

In a study done with a preschooler, Reyes (2006) shows how informal learning environments that involves parents and extended kin are useful for young children to draw upon family cultural and social practices as well as developing literacy in both the child and the adult. Both languages are privileged in the home and amongst family members to keep the child is engaged in the learning process. Whereas older children in immigrant families may create a hybrid variety of language, such as "Spanglish" in the example of Mexican families that migrate north to the U.S., younger children may have a more limited command due to English spoken in schools.

In this example Reyes (2006) highlights the distribution of language and literacy socialization amongst multiple persons and experiences through the story of Alejandra. Alejandra's learning is mediated by her mother, uncle, and an aunt who help her learn the alphabet by teaching her through letter recognition and song in both languages. Providing thick description and dialogue of the ethnographic study Reyes (2006) shows the importance of the intersection of biliteracy and the support of extended family members in language and literacy development.

By establishing a reciprocal relationship of respect with parents, teachers are able to form an open communication within those ELL families that allows parents to take part in their child's education in a way that enhances cultural relevance and recognizes the funds of knowledge that students already bring to the classroom (Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Panferov, 2010). Furthermore, including family in the learning experiences of ELL students helps promote intergenerational exchanges that help foster each member of the family's development (Palmer, Chen, Chang, & Leclere, 2006). When it comes to literacy practices, family is important.

Domain of School

For ELL students, learning English is much like first language acquisition. Students learn a receptive vocabulary first and then progress to using the language proficiently by adding it to their expressive language bank as well (Blachowicz, 1999). Therefore, teaching ELL students in many ways becomes an activity in taking a proud step backward before running forward into what could be a more fortuitous future due to their dual language proficiency. English language learners must be able to first access a term, concept, or procedure in their mother language and then code switch that term, concept, or procedure into English. This code switching, or transfer, is a critical part of learning a new language, it is defined as being able to muddle through "the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired" (Odlin, 1989, p. 27). In order to correctly be able to transfer between languages (and cultures) students must be exposed to English in a setting where they feel safe enough to acculturate to the language of the classroom, and ultimately begin attempting to use English in the classroom.

Situated Identities

Sally Brown (2011) in a collaborative-ethnographic style research study in a second grade classroom, investigates the ways in which identities are constructed for and by Ana, an ELL student. Highlighting the importance of social identities, Brown connects the identities that Ana has at home as a reader with the competent reader identity Ana wants to display at school. Highlighting three opportunities for students to read in the classroom—independent reading, reading conferences, and partner reading—Brown suggests that especially when paired with other students that are similarly advanced and enjoy reading Ana thrives and is able to enact her social identity from home in the classroom as it pertains to her literacy.

Margaret Hawkins (2004) highlights the social and situated identities of children through a focus of one student, Shoua, a Hmong ELL student in a Kindergarten class. In this study Hawkins highlights reexamining methodology and theory as we examine techniques to observe ELLs. Hawkins conducts this study with the help of Shoua's teacher and suggests that new literacies studies go beyond the decoding print on the page and holistically examine the social

scripts children bring to the classroom. Hawkins suggests individuals are multiliterate and the ability to understand the ecology of the classroom in confluence with the diverse cultural scripts and identities students bring with them is critical to their literacy development. In one critical example of a photo book project integrated into the curriculum that upon first thought was benign, Hawkins upon further examination dictates that it opened up conversations about Shoua's situated identity and social interaction.

Identities Recognized and Used in the Classroom

As with the examples above, recognizing the individual abilities and expertise that students bring to the classroom are beneficial for native and non-native English speakers. Patrick Manyak (2002) presents an ethnographic analysis of the literacy practices in a first and second grade English immersion class. Key elements were observed as beneficial to the hybrid literacy practices: Spanish and English were freely used, interaction patterns, other social scripts and social identities were incorporated as a resource in classroom literacy practices, and finally, teacher and students used Spanish "consistently and strategically" to make English texts more comprehensible (p. 425). Despite monolingual mandates in California, Manyak (2002) draws a compelling argument in this study of the necessity of drawing on the collaboration of the classroom community and bridging the gaps between linguistic competencies.

In a study following the same ethnographic framework, Manyak (2006) provides greater examples of activities that provide examples of curriculum in which teacher's taught against the monolingual grain. These activities include such examples as the "Daily News" which students were able to report in English and Spanish the activities that happened in their home world. As Manyak describes "Daily News sanctioned the children's everyday experiences as appropriate content for classroom literacy tasks and their existing linguistic repertoires as tools for full participation in a valued literacy event" (p. 256). Activities such as these created hybrid literacy practices between not only the social identity and knowledge students were able to incorporate into the classroom but through the oral and written texts the entire class benefitted through the development of slight biliteracies.

Power of Positive Peer Interactions

As with the importance of family relationships, the importance of the peer relationships in the classroom setting is also a key component of hybrid literacies. As discussed in other areas of the domain of school the ability to be accepted and work with peers in both the student's primary language as well as the dominant language of the school is important. In a three year longitudinal study, Lucinda Solatero-Gonzalez (2007) observes Adalberto and demonstrates that during student-centered activities such as journals, centers, or free-choice time Adalberto is able to draw on things from Spanish (his primary language) and English (the language that is dominant in the school). Through the ability to draw from Language 1 (L1) and Language 2 (L2) with his peers he is able to feel comfortable in a collaborative environment in which students support each other's learning. Although Adalberto had little interest in teacher-guided activities that involved English print, the unofficial curriculum of peer interaction and self-regulation enhanced his English literacy.

Latino Parent Perspectives on Parental Involvement in Elementary Schools

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to provide insight into immigrant Latino parents' perspectives on parental involvement in elementary school settings as influenced by the Title I Family Literacy Program (TFLP). A comparison is made of Latino parents who have been participating in the TFLP for more than one year, participants new to the program and Latino parents who chose not to participate in the TFLP. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via a survey and individual interviews of randomly selected members of each comparison group. All research participants were immigrant Latino parents with children at one of ten Title I elementary schools operating a TFLP. The schools are part of a large, urban school district in the Southwest. Findings indicate the TFLP has a positive effect on parental involvement practices of immigrant Latino parents. Participating parents showed increased confidence in their ability to support their children's education and program participants are more engaged in school activities. The results of this study imply participation in the program for one year or more has the most impact on families. Parents who participated for more than one year communicated a high sense of responsibility toward their influence on their child's education and upbringing and an understanding of strategies needed to effectively support their children. This research also identifies barriers parents face to participation in the TFLP and parental involvement in general. Implementation of family literacy programs in other districts would need to follow guidelines similar to this TFLP to achieve comparable results. More research is needed on the effects of this program on parents, children, and school staff.

Keywords: Latino, Parent and Child Together Time (PACT) parent barriers, family literacy

Research Topic

The purpose of this study is to explore immigrant Latino parents' perspectives on parental involvement. The study will focus on the population of immigrant Latino parents of children in Title I elementary schools in a large, urban school district in Arizona. Through surveys and interviews, this phenomenological study intends to focus on the role of cultural and social capital in immigrant Latino parents' experiences in supporting their children's education. The focus on immigrant Latino parent perspectives on parental involvement in Arizona elementary schools will provide insight into how to maximize immigrant parents' positive

Research on parental involvement through a social and cultural capital lens highlights the mismatch between school staff and low income Latino parents' understanding of parental involvement in the areas of home-school communication, helping with homework and volunteering at school.

Suárez-Orozco, et. al. (2008) asked teachers how they expect parents to support their children's education. Teachers believed that parents who came to school and helped with homework were concerned parents, and usually parents of children that were doing well in school. Immigrant parents face major barriers to providing assistance with homework. In fact, Suárez-Orozco, et. al. (2008) found in their research that only 38% of immigrant children had someone in their household that they could ask for help on homework. Many children referenced their parents' long work hours in low-wage jobs as being a major barrier to parental support, not only with homework, but parents' inflexible work hours also hinder them from participating in school functions.

A second major barrier immigrant parents confront is their lack of formal education. Gándara and Contreras (2008) repeatedly make reference to the importance of mother's education in their children's success in school. They found that only one in ten Latino students has parents with higher levels of education, as opposed to four in ten white students. Latino parents often lack education and self-efficacy to assist their children with homework, and in addition, may not understand that it is an expectation of the teacher (Valdés, 1996). Suárez-Orozco, et. al. (2008) also emphasize the importance of parents' level of education as related to social capital. The researchers write:

In Arizona, the Pew Hispanic Center (2008) reports that 44% of the immigrant Latino population has less than a high school diploma. The low educational attainment of Latino parents creates barriers to their participation in their children's education not only because they cannot help their children at home, but also, as Gándara and Contreras (2009) note, "it is essential because it is tied to class, and class privilege is tied to social and cultural capital"(p. 51).

Communication between home and school is identified as an important component of parental involvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). When teachers were surveyed about what parental involvement practices were most important, communication with teachers was the most common answer (Joshi et al., 2005). According to teachers in several studies, forms of communication with parents consisted of parent teacher conferences, newsletters, emails, and report cards (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009; Joshi, et al., 2005; Lawson, 2003; Valdés, 1996). These forms of communication are generally one directional, from school to home. Parent teacher conferences, though opportunities for a two way exchange, often revert back to a one way form of communication from teacher to parent (Joshi, et al., 2005). In addition, communication from school to home is less frequent with low-income, Latino families (Enyeart, Diehl, Hampden-Thompson & Scotchmer, 2006). Latino parents' lack of response to teacher communication is often misinterpreted by teachers as the parents' disinterest.

Researchers in various studies discussed other reasons for Latino parents' difficulty communicating with teachers and school staff. First and foremost was the parent's lack of self-efficacy and feeling intimidated by the teachers and school itself (Jones, 2003). Valdés (1996) found that of the nineteen adults in the families she studied; only three had completed elementary school in Mexico. Parents felt incompetent and embarrassed by their lack of education and

preferred not to talk with the teacher or even go to the school. Parents who did communicate with personnel, often preferred to speak with the bilingual aide than the teacher (Valdés, 1996). Parents and teachers have preconceived notions about each other and appropriate forms of communication that make communication even more difficult (Joshi, et al, 2005). Parents recognize that teachers believe Latino parents aren't interested in their children's education. This pre-judgment makes it difficult for parents to feel comfortable going to the school and talking with staff (Jones, 2003).

Cultural differences in the role of communication also create barriers to parental involvement. In several studies, Latino parents felt a lack of trust and relationship building on the part of the schools (Auerbach, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Mapp, 2003). Latino parents were more likely to participate in social gatherings at the school than one-on-one communication with teachers (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). Parental involvement is often limited to ceremonial, festive occasions when the focus is not on academic conversation (Valdés, 1996). While for Latino families, these activities are important for relationship building; these types of activities provide parents with little opportunity to interact with teachers. For Latino families, schools seem to emphasize the programming of parental involvement and not the process (Mapp, 2003).

Jones (2003) found that Latino parents believe that teachers need to understand the context of the local Latino population and that Latino families want their children to preserve their Latino culture. According to Joshi, et al. (2005), teachers often do not have a good understanding of their own culture, much less that of their students. The researchers also found a disparity among teachers of what they understood about culture in its relation to learning and what they practiced.

Teachers do not understand or value the cultural capital of immigrant Latino families. Although they may realize the depth of the definition of culture, they are unable to incorporate the important aspects of culture to improve students' learning and their relationship with parents. Also, misperception of intentions on the part of teachers and parents leads to barriers to parental involvement of Latino parents, which further perpetuates the misperceptions (Jones, 2003).

Immigrant Latino families' lack of understanding about their role in their children's education also has long term implications. As children advance in schools, European American, middle-class parents typically know which teachers are better, which classes and extracurricular activities are better for getting accepted into college, how to communicate with school staff and get the best for their children (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Immigrant Latino parents lack this social and cultural capital to use on their children's behalf. Additionally, because of Arizona's implementation of the English Language Development (ELD) program, children may be segregated from their peers and their peers' families, thus further weakening their social capital networks.

The opportunities for parental involvement are usually dictated by the school and are limited, ignoring the cultural perspectives of minority populations (Gonzalez-DeHass & Willems, 2003). Generally, parental involvement focuses on how to get parents to do what the teachers and schools want them to do (Jones, 2003). Mapp (2003) identified three important components that schools must practice with parents if they want parents to connect to schools: welcoming parents' participation, honoring their culture and contributions, and connecting. She

also found that the lack of parental involvement options is what limits parent participation, not the parents' lack of interest.

Research suggests that when low- income, immigrant Latino parents are approached from a strengths based perspective, parents are more likely to participate in their children's school (Orozco, 2008). Research shows that teachers feel they have the fewest skills in involving parents in communities of color and/or where a language other than English is spoken (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Mapp (2003) believes dispelling the myth that Latino parents do not care about their children's education is fundamental, and then schools need to create a welcoming environment to parents and more options for parental involvement.

Research has shown that parental involvement is considered important to reducing the achievement gap between white and minority students, therefore gaining an understanding of effective parental involvement practices is essential. Furthermore, given the large population of Latino immigrant students in Arizona schools, parental involvement practices must be culturally appropriate for immigrant Latino families. This study will provide insight into immigrant Latino parents' perspectives on parental involvement, and hopefully help schools devise more effective strategies to increase parental involvement among immigrant Latino population.

Research Methodology

This mixed methods project gathered information about what Latino parents believe about parental involvement in their children's education as a function of participating in the TFLP. In this research, results from the surveys informed the approach to the interviews and the interviews built on the results from the surveys.

Individual survey questions were adapted from the "Parent Survey of Family and Community Involvement in the Elementary and Middle Grades", developed by Sheldon and Epstein (2007). The purpose of the surveys was to gather families' demographic information, parental involvement behaviors and parents' perceptions of the school climate and parental involvement practices. The survey was implemented to three groups of Latino parents at Title I elementary schools: parents who have participated in the TFLP program for one year or more, parents new to the program and parents who are not participating in the TFLP.

Interviews provided the qualitative data for the study. Results from the surveys were analyzed and used to create the format and questions for the interviews. Five survey respondents from each of the three groups were interviewed. All parents interviewed were asked the first nine interview questions about the school atmosphere, parent-teacher communication, and parental involvement in general. An additional seven questions were asked only in interviews with the new TFLP and veteran TFLP parents, since these questions were specifically about TFLP participants' experience in the program.

Analysis

Survey data was analyzed initially by basic descriptive analysis to identify frequency and means. Survey results from each of the three groups of participants were compared for trends in each group. Interview questions were developed from the survey results. Data from the

interviews was coded and categorized as per the Miles and Huberman (1994) model of qualitative data analysis and was used to enrich the summary information from the survey data.

Findings

Data from the surveys indicates the longer the parents were exposed to information related to the TFLP, the more positive and confident their responses related to their ability to support their child's education.

The results and discussion of the interviews are presented in two parts. The first part, addresses similarities and differences in the three groups of parents' communication with school staff and parental involvement across the three groups. Three trends emerged across the three groups of parents from these questions: communication, parental involvement in school, and parental involvement at home.

Participation in the TFLP program improved parent-teacher communication by providing the venue for increased relationship building between parents and teachers regardless of the language barrier. This activity validates the cultural capital of the parents: the need for relationship building among Latinos and the cultural capital of the school: the importance of parent-teacher communication to teachers.

TFLP participants began to recognize many different ways they could participate in schools. TFLP veterans listed a variety of participation strategies such as fund raising, attending their child's class, attending school activities, participating in PTO meetings, attending conferences, and just showing interest in what was going on at the school. A benefit of participating in the TFLP may be raising awareness among Latino parents of the many different ways they can participate and support their child's school. TFLP parents were comfortable at the school and willing to participate. Participation in the TFLP program did not change the Latino parent's desire for their children to do well; participation in the program involves parents being more visible at school and they are more likely to participate in school-based activities. Over time, their goals shifted from learning English for themselves, to learning English so they can help their child in school.

Parents participating in the TFLP program understood their responsibility to support their children's education at home and from the survey and interview data, TFLP parents felt more capable of providing this support.

Parents in the TFLP Program

This section presents the results of the second group of interview questions asked only of TFLP participants. The analysis of the additional interview questions with TFLP participants revealed three trends: changes in participants' lives, perceptions of student involvement, and effects on the participants' families.

After only 4 months in the program, parents new to the TFLP already noticed improvement in their English skills. They were able to communicate better in English with their children and others. They also felt more comfortable at the school and had more self-confidence. Veteran parents also noted improvement in their English skills but they elaborated more on how they have become more independent, and have improved they call their 'bad character' (character faults or ill-temperament) and their lives overall. Veteran parents' goals in the

program shifted. When they entered the program, their goals were to learn English. After participating in the program, the parents' primary goals shifted to wanting to learn how to help their children be successful in school.

Children overall were proud of their parents, happy that they came to class and wanted to help their parents do well. The children also motivated their parents. They tell them how well they are doing; congratulate them for speaking English to neighbors; and that they don't need them, kids, to translate. Children also noticed that the parents have more confidence now.

Changes in the participants' lives and the lives of their families are more profound when families attend the program for more than one year. First and foremost, parents felt that they have a better relationship with their children. They are more involved in their children's lives and have better communication. Parents became more aware of the example they were setting for their children and the absence of that example for other children.

Discussion and Implications

The results from the surveys and interviews presented above indicate changes in Latino parents' perceptions of parental involvement as a result of their participation in the TFLP. The design of the TFLP requires parents to be participants in their child's education. The program understands and respects the culture of the Latino families served, and also teaches Latino parents about the American school system.

The program facilitates the Latino parents' needs to build relationships with teachers and school staff, which improves teacher-parent communication. Increased communication is beneficial to teachers as well, since research shows teachers believe teacher-parent communication is one of the most important parental involvement practices (Joshi et al., 2005).

Parents noted their primary interest when entering the TFLP was to learn English. Improving English language skills has an impact on the parents' ability to communicate with their child's teacher, and also increased their self-confidence and independence. Parents were also able to help their children, even their older children, with homework. TFLP parents also felt more comfortable volunteering in their child's classroom and participating in school-based activities. Some veteran TFLP parents took on leadership roles on the PTO or organizing enrichment activities for children and their parents.

The TFLP program's English language classes are unique because children's curriculum is woven into English instruction. Parents receive lessons on phonics, reading strategies, etc., which are later reinforced when the parent experiences a similar lesson in their child's classroom during PACT time. The children's weekly homework packet is also part of the TFLP parents' English lesson. Veteran TFLP parents understood the importance of learning English so they could help their children in school. They also gained a collection of strategies to use to support their children's learning at home. Veteran parents also recognized that many parents may not know how to help their children be successful at school.

By participating in the TFLP program, parents are gaining knowledge of the cultural capital valued by the American school system. The TFLP provides an educational venue for Latino parents that respects their cultural capital and teaches them about the cultural capital of the school. Through English language instruction, parenting education, and instruction in their

for the general public, it was in the bottom half of responses (Langdon & Vesper, 2000). However, in this same poll, teachers and the general public concurred that the main obstacle to improving public schools was "parents/lack of parent involvement" (p. 609). But while opinions appear strong that involving parents is important, practice does not always follow belief. Barnyak and McNelly (2009) also surveyed teachers and administrators and found that they were supportive of a number of strategies for involving parents; however, their beliefs were not supported by their actual practices, as they were much less likely to actually implement many of the strategies that they so strongly supported.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate parents' engagement when they were asked by teachers to participate in children's learning at home activities, and whether parental level of involvement was related to the types of activities that parents were asked to engage in. More specifically, this study compared parents' willingness and involvement in completing activities in their homes after being invited to participate by teachers. Three levels of activities were included: teacher suggestions for parents (Level 1); teacher suggestions with prompts (Level 2); and teacher provided parent activities with resources to do at home (Level 3).

Procedures and Participants

Fifteen teaching staff members in 5 Head Start and 3 public prekindergarten classrooms representing 11 classes total in a Midwestern state agreed to participate. Participating staff averaged 12.47 years of teaching experience and had been in their current location for an average of 9.13 years. Teachers and aides averaged 15.86 years of education, with one high school education, one having some college, three with associate's degrees, four with Child Development Associate degrees, four with bachelor's degrees, and two with master's degrees. Class sizes ranged from 16 to 23, with an average of 18.11. Teachers were asked to recruit willing parents, with the knowledge that children would be bringing home activities or ideas to increase parent involvement, and that they would be asked to complete pre and posttest questions regarding their experiences. The intervention occurred from mid-September through November 2009.

During the intervention, teachers sent home one activity each week for 10 weeks. The researchers randomly assigned participating students to one of three groups so that they could investigate parents' participation in different types of activities sent home by teachers. This method of assignment prevented bias such as asking parents who always comply to participate in the more intensive activities. The randomization procedure resulted in each classroom having children in each level, except for the classroom which only had one participant. Three different types of activities were sent home: Level 1 activities included suggestions of activities that parents could do with their children, such as a "read to me" sticker or a finger play activity suggestion; Level 2 activities included suggestions with prompts such as a reading record sheet or a die cut prompt; Level 3 activities included parent resources and activities to do at home such as a learning game kit or a puzzle bag. Pretest and posttest information, including both quantitative and qualitative questions, was obtained from parents before sending materials home

and at the end of the project.

Sample

Teachers recruited 83 parents to participate, with 54% the parents of female children and 46% the parents of male children. Fifty-nine percent of parents recruited were married, 30% were single parents, 6% were divorced, and 4% were separated at the time of the intervention. In terms of education level, 31% of parents had a high school education or below, 50% had some college, and 19% had a college degree or higher. No pretest differences by group in demographic variables were evident at the pretest.

Parent participation in this project ranged from one parent in one classroom to 25 parents in another classroom. Of the 83 families agreeing to participate in the project, 93% completed all aspects of the project. Of the six children whose parents did not complete the posttest, two had moved and were no longer attending the school program.

Measures

Demographic information was obtained from parents using a short parent information survey developed by the researchers that included information such as the target child's gender, the number of children in the home, education level of parent completing the survey, and marital status of parent completing the survey. A 4-point Likert scale (not at all, very little, quite a bit, too much) scale was used to ask "How involved are you in your child's education?" Additional open-ended questions included "In what ways are you involved?" and "How else would you like to be involved?"

The posttest survey administered to parents was developed for use in this project. The survey included a table that listed each activity they had received with a number of questions regarding the activity, including "Do you remember this activity?", "Did you do this activity with your child?", "How many times did you work on this activity?", "About how long did you spend doing this activity?", "Would you like to receive additional activities to do with your child?", and "Which activities did you most enjoy?". The researchers wanted to learn whether parents remembered doing an activity with their children, and approximately how many times and how long they spent engaged in the activity. Since the intervention lasted for 10 weeks, the researchers hypothesized that parents would still recall the activities.

A posttest survey administered to teachers was developed for use in this project. The survey included teacher perception of parent and child interest in activities that were sent home for each level, questions regarding how difficult it was to send the activities and suggestions home, how easy or difficult it was to manage the activities, what teachers liked and would change about the process of involving parents, and teacher perception of how involved parents are in their child's education. Teachers were also given a list of each of the 30 activities (10 activities for each level) and were asked to indicate which strategies they saw as effective in engaging families.

Results

Before the intervention began, parents rated their level of involvement in their child's education as 2.93 on a 4.0 scale (not at all, very little, quite a bit, too much). No pretest

experiencing are essential aspects of literacy learning (Moll, 2010). Within under-served communities residing in the United States, and among culturally and linguistically diverse communities in particular, the need to meaningfully incorporate a profound respect for their culture, linguistic codes, and worldviews into the learning environments of the classroom has been clearly delineated in the literature (Ada & Zubizareta, 2001; Delgado- Gaitán, 1994; Valdés, 1996). In sum, family literacy from a sociocultural perspective, is a means of recognizing, validating, and meaningfully integrating a community's multiple perspectives, diverse realities, varying discourse patterns, and "diversity of literacies" into the heart of its programs curricular design.

Methodology

The general purpose of this Community Language and Literacy Mapping project was to better understand the experiences of three cohorts of teachers – at the preschool, elementary school, and middle school levels - who attempted to uncover the language and literacy resources of the families and communities surrounding their urban school sites. The aim of this project was to first understand how the process of mapping the literacy and language resources of diverse communities - within various social-cultural-historical-political contexts - impacts or informs teachers' production of knowledge. Second, we wanted to investigate what, if any, were the implications for teacher practice and student learning. This paper will share the findings of two cohorts of teachers: preschool and elementary school.

Using their own students' communities as settings for study and critical analysis, the teachers carried out a teacher inquiry project that required them to map the cultural, linguistic and literacy "geographies" (Moll, 2010, p. 454) of the their school households and communities. Teachers scouted, tabulated, and videotaped/photographed language and literacy resources. In order to gain deeper understandings of community resources, teachers also interviewed and/or surveyed families and conducted home visits. This community mapping activity was followed by community of practice meetings where teachers engaged in active thought and inquiry as they discussed their reflections on both the content and process of their mapping experience.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The key modes of data collection included participants' voluntary submission of their field work journals. These journals contained teachers' documented observations, transcribed interviews with parents/caregivers, and written reflections. Data collection also included artifacts such as student work and assessments, email correspondence, and recorded teacher meetings and conference calls.

Qualitative data were analyzed using Carney, Joiner, and Tragous' (1997) approach to sorting data. All interviews and recordings were transcribed. The teacher descriptive observational data, interview transcriptions, and reflective essays were coded to illuminate key emergent themes and patterns. Atlas I software was used for the second coding. A table was created to further organize the themes and identify their significance. This last level of analysis allowed for a deeper knowledge of the data. Teachers were included in data analysis. Participants were requested to reflect upon their mapping experiences and to describe significant discoveries.

Got Coalition? A National Study of the Differences Between Literacy and Non-Literacy Coalition Communities

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Abstract: There has been growing interest in the power of community coalitions to bring about sustained and systemic change in areas of community need ranging from health to poverty. Despite a growing literature on coalition building and potential gains, very little research to date exists on the impact of coalitions. In this project, we use national data to probe the discernable differences between coalition and non-coalition communities in the area of literacy. We find that U.S. counties with literacy coalitions have healthier nonprofits in terms of annual revenue and assets, are more likely to be classified as a creative class community by the U.S. Census, have a lower percent of residents not completing high school and a higher percent completing college and above. These findings remained statistically significant when controlling for county population characteristics including average household income, population density, racial ethnic diversity, immigration and language dynamics, household profiles, and major sectors of employment. While more research is needed to discern the extent to which coalitions are responsible for these noted differences, we offer a model for theorizing the relationships found in this research.

Keywords: literacy coalition, community impact

Community Coalitions are a growing national phenomenon. Though many definitions exist, they are perhaps most simply described as "multi-sector alliances of individuals and groups that promote change through citizen-based involvement" (Watson-Thompson, Fawcett, & Schultz, 2008). Over the past few decades, interest in coalitions has emerged across a spectrum of causes ranging from community health (Office of Health Policy, ASPE 2010), to environmental justice (Mix, 2011), urban neighborhood development (Watson-Thompson et. al., 2008), stopping gun violence, and creating affordable housing (Berkowitz, 2001). Such attempts at coalition formation have been accompanied by academic interests across disciplines as well, ranging from psychology (Cox 2009; McMillan, Florin, Stevenson, Kerman, & Mitchell, 1995), criminology (Fagan, Brook-Weiss, Cady, & Hawkins, 2009) and sociology (Mix, 2011), to health sciences (Office of Health Policy, ASPE 2010) and communications (Broom and Avanzino 2010). In fact, not only has the appearance of the word "coalition" steadily increased in printed text since the 1920s (Michel et al., 2010), but as Berkowitz (2001) reports, the number of scholarly articles referring to coalitions has grown more than 50 fold from the 1980s to the

turn of the century, from approximately 80 to 5,295. Their growth has been further promoted by funding for coalitions from the federal government (Office of Health Policy, ASPE 2010), private foundations such as the Robert Wood Johnson (Clark et al., 2010) and the Kauffman Foundations (Watson-Thompson et. al., 2008), and community foundations (Ridzi, Carmody, & Byrnes, 2011). In the words of Kaye (2001), "Coalitions are the rage. Every Community has one by now or one is most certainly coming to a community near you." (p. 269).

Despite this growing popularity and an expanding literature on how to build coalitions and why coalitions are an attractive means to "create population-wide, macro-level changes" (Clark et al. 2010, p. 904), research on coalition effectiveness is strikingly sparse. A comprehensive review of outcomes of community based coalitions completed in 2001 concluded that "coalitions and similar collaborative organizations are too complex to be adequately evaluated by the methodology that is now available" (Berkowitz, 2001, p. 213). Despite knowledge of an estimated several thousand community coalitions across the United States (see also Kegler, Rigler, & Honeycutt, 2010), the review lamented, "we do not know what percent of coalitions enjoy… success, what degrees of success are most typical, whether success in some areas is more common than in others, nor what factors were responsible for success when it occurred" (Berkowitz, 2001, p. 218). In short, data on coalition impact has been more qualitative than quantitative and limited largely to a series of case studies of single coalitions. The fear that was voiced in response to this finding was that, given a lack of evidence about their impact, "funders and practitioners may be expecting too much from these increasingly popular mechanisms" (Berkowitz, 2001, p. 219).

Since the publication of the 2001 review of coalition evaluation research, little has changed. A National Opinion Research Center review funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in 2010 also found "a limited body of literature examining the impacts of community coalitions" and concluded that "traditional program evaluation methods are often ill-suited to capture the dynamic nature of community coalitions" (Office of Health Policy, ASPE 2010, p.3). A contemporary study by Clark et al. (2010, p. 905) similarly asserted that "outcome data are scant given the level of effort expended by these collaborations on partnership building, mobilization, and action and the prevalence of coalitions in the United States alone."

In this paper, we set out to address the continued need for rigorous evaluation of the impact of coalitions on community life. Specifically, we respond to what Berkowitz (2001) noted as a need for studies comparing the outcomes of multiple coalitions while using statistical controls. This has remained a daunting challenge particularly because of the noted difficulty in finding a sample, given that there has not existed a national registry of coalitions and given that coalitions seldom have shared outcome indicators. In this paper, we utilize the sample of Literacy Coalitions because a national affiliation organization recently jas emerged to keep track of all of the coalitions in existence and because these coalitions aspire to common goals such as increased educational success which are measurable to some extent through U.S. Census data. Thus, although it is still a preliminary effort to assess the impact of Literacy Coalitions, it is the first national study to our knowledge of the differences that exist between coalition and non-coalition communities.

Review of the Literature

The foundation of early literacy experiences begins with the family environment, specifically with parent interactions (Darling & Lee, 2003; Neumann & Neumann, 2009). Research has shown that children who learn to read at the early stages of development will increase their literacy skills (Darling & Lee, 2003). Experiences provided by parents have a significant impact on literacy achievement (Darling & Lee, 2003). According to the research, parents who model and demonstrate uses of reading and writing have a strong influence on their child's literacy development in the school setting (Butler & Clay, 1982). Parents must see themselves as readers and expose their children to a variety of literacy experiences prior to the start of school (Butler & Clay, 1982).

The relationship between parent and child, the level of expectations, and the amount of participation in the family that is genuine and purposeful enhances the academic successes of a child (Benard, 2004). These three components are significant to the child's learning development. When families set high expectations for their children, they set the stage for a positive attitude towards academics.

Research shows that children who have been exposed to literature and have had many positive experiences with it, prior to entering school, have a greater lead to early success (Bishop, Yopp, & Yopp, 2000). When the home environment presents itself with positive interaction with the integration of various reading activities, children begin to see the importance and value of reading (Bishop et al., 2000). Parents and other family members in the home play a significant part in role modeling for the younger, emergent reader. The ultimate goal for parents and educators together is to create lifelong readers.

Motivation and encouragement are key components to establishing a positive attitude toward reading. It is critical that not only should parents share these with their children, but they too, should feel that same sense of motivation and encouragement (Bishop et al., 2000). Children who view these key components enacted by their parents discover the power and purpose of reading.

Parent involvement thrives at the elementary level. Both parents and teachers find this involvement essential at the early stages of reading development. According to Darling and Westberg (2004), parents are able to improve their own reading skills as they learn about what is needed for their children. Strategies that encourage family involvement have been found to increase more positive effects on reading achievement (Darling & Westberg, 2004). It is essential that educators model for parents the process for creating a positive reading environment for the child (Darling & Westberg, 2004). The home environment is a positive one when parents display the value and purpose for reading achievement (Smith, 1991). According to Gadsden (1998), parents understand their responsibility to literacy and want to provide a clear and comprehensible model to reading.

Why is it that a decline in achievement occurs at the beginning of young adolescence? A decline that is prevalent in literacy. There are a number of factors that influence this belief. Research has shown that reading instruction along with lack of interest in reading materials that are made available to them contribute to this downfall in literacy achievement (Ivey & Broaddus, 2000). It has also been found that parents are less involved at this stage in development (Brough & Irvin, 2001). Though parent involvement changes as children enter adolescence, teachers and

When Parents Go to School: Adult Education and Parent Involvement for School-Age Children

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Abstract: This paper presents findings from a comparative case study that explored the relationship between adult education participation and parent involvement beliefs and practices for parents of school-age children. One English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program and one Adult Basic Education (ABE)/General Educational Development (GED) program served as the cases. Data sources include semi-structured interviews with seven parents and eight adult educators, classroom observations, and documents. Connections between participation in the adult education courses and four parent involvement practices were evident: parent-school communication; assistance with homework; accessing resources to support children's education; and parent-child conversations about education. Four programmatic factors help explain the variation observed in the two programs: characteristics of the program and the student population served, the perceived roles and backgrounds of individual educators, and the nature and use of educators' and the organization's social networks. This case study identifies ways that ABE/GED and ESOL programs can be important partners for schools seeking to reach parents who did not complete high school or have limited English proficiency.

Key Words: parent involvement, parent engagement, adult education, K-12 education

Statement of Research Topic

Schools often struggle to involve parents who did not complete high school or have limited English proficiency. Formal adult education programs such as Adult Basic Education (ABE), General Educational Development (GED), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) offer potential contexts for supporting and strengthening parent involvement in a child's education by providing exposure to new knowledge, skills, and learning experiences. This paper presents findings from a comparative case study that explored the relationship between adult education participation and parent involvement beliefs and practices for parents of school-age children in an ESOL program and an ABE/GED program. The research question guiding this paper is: How do parents' experiences in adult education courses inform the ways in which they support their child's education? Data sources include observations, documents, and interviews with parents and adult educators from the two adult education programs and a coordinating organization providing support for English literacy instruction.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study is premised on the notion that parents' lives at home, work, community, and school are interconnected in ways that inform how parents understand and support their child's

program (Elm Project) served as the cases. The Learning Initiative, a coordinating organization for adult English literacy programs in the area, also participated and assisted in identifying the two cases.

Data collection included interviews, observations, and documents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight adult education instructors and program leaders, and seven parents who were participants in one of the two programs and have children enrolled in the local public school system. Interviews explored parent involvement beliefs and practices and connections between the adult education courses and parent involvement. Observations focused on the use of course material and interactions among students, instructors, and staff. Documents analyzed included program reports, policy statements, and instructional materials from the two programs and the Learning Initiative, as well as publicly available reports produced by the school system and state and county agencies.

Data analysis was guided by the study's theoretical propositions (Yin, 1994). Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded according to themes identified in the literature and those that emerged during the study. The coding process identified characteristics of adult students; parent involvement beliefs and practices; programmatic and curricular features; instructors' beliefs and actions; and interactions among instructors, students, and program leaders. The researcher developed individual descriptive case studies of each program and then conducted a comparative analysis of the two cases to identify themes.

Setting and Programs

The two programs are located in a large metropolitan county in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Residents are diverse in ethnicity, native language, country of origin, income, prior formal education, and citizenship status. The Learning Initiative provides coordination for English literacy programs in the area, and resources to strengthen English literacy programs through training, grants, and other supports. The Elm Project is a small community-based organization. Elm's ESOL program serves primarily low-income adults living in the community with broadly defined goals for learning English. The program enrolls over 200 men and women ranging widely in age and formal education. The majority are Spanish speakers from Central America. Classes are offered in the evening at a public school and are taught by a combination of paid and volunteer instructors. The Iris Center is a community-based organization that serves families with young children and focuses on healthy family functioning and school readiness. The ABE/GED program is one service of many offered at Iris. One evening and one day ABE/GED course are offered. Classes are small, with approximately eight students each—the majority of whom are young and female. The population served by Iris is approximately 50 percent Latino. The ABE/GED instructional staff includes one full-time adult education instructor and volunteer tutors.

Findings

Connections were identified between participation in the adult education courses and four types of parent involvement practices: parent-school communication; assistance with homework; accessing resources and information to support children's education; and parent-child

conversations about education. The extent of these connections varied by program. Connections between the Elm ESOL classes and parent involvement practices were most prominent in the areas of parent-school communication, accessing resources and information, and parent-child education conversations. Connections between the Iris ABE/GED classes and parent involvement practices were most prominent in the areas of homework assistance and parent-child conversations about education.

Parent-School Communication

Strengthening English communication skills is central to the work that occurs in the Elm ESOL courses. This takes the form of instruction and practice using written and conversational English and exploration of American culture and civics. Three of the four parents explained that they study English in part to communicate with their children and with their children's schools. Elm educators encourage parents to interact with school staff at formal school events such as parent-teacher conferences and back-to-school nights, and help them develop skills and build confidence to do so during class and in separate workshops. Staff noted that the program's location in a public school helps to familiarize students with a typical learning environment in this school system. Two of the four Elm parents explained that the courses help them communicate both orally and in writing with their child's school.

Communication is also a central focus at the Iris Center, however, the emphasis is on navigating relationships to facilitate peer support and minimize interpersonal conflicts. The ABE/GED instructor, a former middle school teacher, closely monitors student interactions and heads off interpersonal conflicts. She also helps students re-examine past relationships with teachers, an exploration that may prove useful in future interactions with their child's teachers. Among the three mothers interviewed, none directly discussed how the experience at Iris—and in the ABE/GED course in particular—impacted interactions with their children's schools. However, all three described substantive and productive communication with school staff that is consistent with the orientation at Iris. These communications involve discussing children's progress, asking questions about homework, navigating and advocating for children's special education needs, and participating in school events.

Homework Assistance

Iris Center staff members tell parents they have a responsibility to learn in order to support their child's learning. Parallels between the ABE/GED course content and work of school-age children are evident in similar curricular content, learning tasks, and strategies. In class, parents were observed practicing basic fractions, writing persuasive essays, and completing short answer responses on science, social studies, and English topics. The three parents enrolled in the ABE/GED course described fairly extensive roles in assisting their children with homework. Parents identified content knowledge and strategies they learned in the ABE/GED class which inform the assistance they provide. For example, the two parents of children who have regular homework share math shortcuts they learned in the ABE/GED class with their child.

Elm educators speculated and parents concurred that many Elm parents find it difficult to help their children with homework, particularly as the children advance in grade levels. Several adult educators observed that children do not ask their parents for help because they do not

believe their parents are able to assist them. Neither Elm parents nor educators viewed connections between children's homework and the content knowledge (such as English grammar and vocabulary) and learning tasks practiced in the adult education course as particularly relevant or robust. However, with guidance these might be areas for making productive connections.

Accessing Education Resources, Information, and Supports

Access to resources, information, and supports via adult educator and organization networks was indentified more often than via peer networks during interviews. At Elm, educator networks in the community are extensive, informal, and activated on an as-needed basis with the ESOL director at the nexus of these connections. Identified efforts to connect parents to school-related resources include facilitating communication between individual parents and school staff, and collecting and disseminating information about special programs offered by the school system. The Iris Center has an extensive and diverse network in the community consistent with the organization's mission to provide holistic support to families with young children. Unlike Elm, this organization's network is more formalized, with a caseworker as the primary contact point for securing external resources for families. The organization's interactions with the school system focus on the population of parents considering dropping out of school who might benefit from Iris services, rather than the population of parents with school-age children currently enrolled in Iris programs.

Peer support for parent involvement roles was not a prominent focus of interviews in either program. At Elm, class time was relaxed and informal during observations, indicating a climate conducive to impromptu conversations and forging peer relationships. Some parents discuss their children's schools with classmates but only one father referenced information he gleaned from these relationships about the area schools. At Iris, staff members encourage parents to turn to their peers for resources and support, but often this is a difficult step. Observed ABE/GED classes focused on coursework, leaving little time to discuss unrelated topics. A mother with older children described friendships at the center and her role as a resource to younger parents but said she does not seek advice from these classmates. The other two mothers interviewed are reserved in their relationships with classmates.

Parent-Child Communication about Education

In both programs, shared experiences as learners in formal settings provide opportunities for parents and their children to discuss the role of education in supporting future goals, empathize with learning challenges, and frame learning as a family activity. Five of the seven parents said they discuss their adult education experiences with their children. An Elm father explained that everyone in his household is in school and that they help one another with schoolwork. The three mothers in the ABE/GED program talk to their children about why they returned to school and described games they create out of school assignments. As students themselves, parents try to model the importance of education for future goals and its pursuit in the face of challenges. One mother tells her son, "Even though things are hard…you still have to push yourself to accomplish what you want in life."

Discussion

The Elm ESOL and Iris ABE/GED programs vary in opportunities to connect knowledge, experiences, and relationships to the ways in which parents communicate with school staff; assist their children with homework; access education resources, information, and networks; and talk about education with their children. Four programmatic factors help to explain the nature of connections between these adult learning experiences and parent involvement practices. These factors include characteristics of the program and of the adult student population served, the perceived roles and backgrounds of individual educators, and the use of an educator's and the organization's social networks.

Not surprisingly, program emphasis and population served are important determinants of the relative attention devoted to specific parent involvement topics and the likelihood that such connections are recognized. As preparation for a high school equivalency exam, the Iris ABE/GED program's curricular content is aligned with the K-12 curriculum. Furthermore, the population served is comprised of parents focused on strengthening their families and preparing children for school. Thus, opportunities for connection between adult and child learning in the ABE/GED context are pervasive and organic. In contrast, the Elm program serves students with diverse goals for learning English and includes students who are not parents of school-age children. Thus, the program must craft curriculum and instruction that broadly meet student interests, experiences, and priorities.

The Elm and Iris adult educators make connections between the courses and parent involvement needs based on how these educators define and enact their instructional role and make sense of their own experiences with K-12 schools. Some Elm educators described their role strictly in terms of adult English language instruction while others described a role that includes helping parents navigate school expectations of parents. Some use a shared identity as parents as a strategy to relate to students. In interviews, the Elm educators referenced their experiences as parents and grandparents to understand what parents need to do to support their children. The Iris ABE/GED instructor referenced her experience as a former middle school teacher and as a staff member of Iris to frame her instructional approach and advise her students on how to be successful in school.

The use of educators' and the organization's networks to access information about and connect students to school resources depends heavily on the nature of these networks and the extent to which individuals activate these relationships to support the parent involvement needs of students. Elm has an extensive, informal, and nimble community-based network ready to be activated when needs arise. Iris has a more formalized structure for connecting parents to needed resources that is less likely to funnel through the ABE/GED program.

Conclusion and Implications

This study suggests that adult ABE/GED and ESOL programs can be important partners for schools seeking to reach parents who did not complete high school or have limited English language proficiency. Adult educators who work with parents on a regular basis can provide insights regarding parental priorities and concerns. At the same time, schools can expand adult educators' frame of reference for understanding parent involvement needs by providing

The Relationship between the Home Literacy Environment, Parental Characteristics, and Children's Emergent Literacy Skills

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Abstract: The home literacy environment plays a critical role in the development of children's emergent literacy skills (Evans & Shaw, 2008; Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Wasik & Hindman, 2010). The purpose of this study was to assess the relationships between parents responses to a home literacy environment survey (HLES) and Title Recognition Test (TRT) and parents' characteristics (educational level, literacy skills), and preschoolers' emergent literacy skills. It also addressed whether or not parents' responses to a HLES and TRT uniquely contributed to preschoolers' emergent literacy skills. The study included 96 parent-child dyads. Descriptive analyses, correlations, and regressions were employed to gain information about the relationships among the variables. The HLE (measured by responses to the HLES and TRT) had positive relationships with parents' skills and children's skills. However, the HLE did not predict the children's skills beyond the contribution of parental characteristics. Interpreting the results of this study promotes thought about the specific role of the HLE as a potential mediator between parental characteristics and child skills. This study provides preliminary information about parental factors that may influence preschoolers' emergent literacy skills.

Keywords: emergent literacy, parents, home literacy environment

Home Literacy Environment

Children's emergent literacy skills are influenced by their Home Literacy Environment (HLE) (Burgess et al., 2002). The HLE can be characterized by a variety of aspects including shared reading, library visits, direct teaching of literacy skills, parental reading habits, and parental recognition of children's book titles (Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Wasik & Hindman, 2010). Shared reading is an interactive process which takes place between an adult and a child during book reading. It is often measured by frequency of reading between the adult and child and has positive implications towards the development of children's emergent literacy (Bus, van Ijzendoorn, & Pellegrini, 1995). Studies investigating the associations between shared reading and children's emergent literacy skills have found this practice to be related to different child skills such as phonological awareness , print knowledge, and oral vocabulary (Bingham 2007; Bus et al., 1995; Hood, Conlon, & Andrews, 2008; Levy, Gong, Hessels, Evans, & Jared 2006; Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002.

Another aspect of the HLE often studied is the frequency of library visits. When comparing the frequency of library visits and emergent literacy skills, previous research has demonstrated a positive relationship between the variables. For instance, how often parents take their preschool or a kindergarten child to the library is positively correlated to children's receptive oral vocabulary knowledge (Sénéchal, LeFevre, Hudson, & Lawson, 1996) phonological awareness (Frijters, Barron, & Brunello, 2000) and letter knowledge (Frijters et al., 2000).

When parents engage in the teaching of literacy skills, they may engage in activities such as teaching their child the alphabet, beginning sounds, or print recognition. Parental teaching of literacy skills has been recognized as an important contributor to specific child emergent literacy skills (Haney & Hill, 2004; Hood et al., 2008; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). However studies have found mixed results in terms of the specific skills that are impacted by parental teaching. For instance, Sénéchal and LeFevre (2002) reported parental teaching that occurred in the home during kindergarten had a predictive relationship with emergent literacy skills such as print awareness, alphabet knowledge, and decoding but not receptive vocabulary. However, Haney and Hill (2004) found that parents' teaching of literacy skills predicted their preschool children's oral receptive and expressive vocabulary. The inconsistencies in these findings may be due to the different ages of the samples (mean age = 5.36 years in Hood et al.'s study and 4-5 years in Sénéchal & LeFevre's study compared with 3-5 years in Haney & Hill's study). The different results may also be due to the fact that the studies assessed parental teaching differently (e.g., Hood et al. and Sénéchal & LeFevre used a questionnaire which asked parents to answer based on the frequency of parental teaching of skills while Haney & Hill used a questionnaire which asked parents to answer "yes" or "no" to whether or not they engaged in teaching of literacy skills in the home).

Studies also have assessed the relationship between parents' own literacy habits and their children's literacy skills. For example, Burgess et al. (2002) looked at the relationships between parents' literacy habits (e.g., how many books per month the parent reads, how often the child observed the parent reading) and their preschoolers' oral vocabulary, letter knowledge, and phonological awareness. The results of this study demonstrated positive relationships between the parents' literacy habits and their children's oral vocabulary and phonological awareness, but not their children's letter knowledge. As another example, Farver et al. (2006) found that parents' literacy habits (e.g., about how often do you read for fun or pleasure, about how often does your spouse read for fun or pleasure, how often does your child see you or your spouse reading for enjoyment) were related to their preschool children's receptive vocabulary.

Studies that focus on the relationship between parents' recognition of children's books and children's emergent literacy skills, have found positive relationships between parents' recognition of children's books and their children's oral vocabulary skills (Sénéchal et al. 1996) Additionally, Frijters et al. (2000) found parents' knowledge of children's books predicted their children's oral receptive and expressive vocabulary.

Parental Characteristics

In this study, parental characteristics are defined as parents' educational level and parental literacy skills. These characteristics may need to be considered when understanding the predictors of children's emergent literacy.

Several investigators have found parents' educational level (highest grade or level of education completed) to be positively associated to children's emergent literacy skills. For example, Bracken and Fischel (2008) found that parents' educational level significantly predicted preschoolers' emergent literacy skills such as oral receptive vocabulary, print awareness, emergent writing skills, and sound awareness. Korat (2009) indicated a positive relationship between mothers' educational level and their kindergarten and first grade children's emergent literacy (print awareness, phonological awareness, receptive vocabulary, word writing, word recognition) skills. Children of mothers in the high-education group (Bachelors degree or higher) performed better than the children of mothers in the low-education group (high school diploma or lower) on all the emergent literacy measures except for phonological awareness.

Not much is known about the associations between parents' literacy skills and their children's emergent literacy skills. Unfortunately, no studies were found that examined this specific relationship.

Assessing the Home Literacy Environment

Home Literacy Environment Survey

Home literacy environments are usually measured by self-report questionnaires that ask parents about the literacy activities they engage in with their children in the home (Hood et al., 2008; Sénéchal et al.,1996; Umek et al., 2005). Traditional measures of the HLE have focused on shared reading (i.e., the frequency of reading to children) with less emphasis on other factors (Bus et al., 1995). However in order to extend our understanding of the potential role of the HLE, researchers suggest that measures must attend to a variety of literacy activities that will address its extensive nature (Boudreau, 2005; Umek et al., 2005). For example, Boudreau (2005) described the importance of accurately measuring the HLE through parental self-report by obtaining information related to reading books, responses to print, and language awareness.

Recent investigations have used measures which assess different aspects of the HLE such as teaching of explicit skills (Haney & Hill, 2004; Hood et al., 2008). These types of questions ask parents to report the frequency of teaching literacy skills such as alphabet knowledge and reading words. Another important aspect to measure is parents' modeling of literacy activities. This can be addressed by questions such as "how often do you read for fun and pleasure" (Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006). Parental involvement in literacy activities is another essential area addressed by home literacy environment surveys (e.g., how many times per week do you read to your child, how often do you take your child to the library) (Umek et al., 2005).Through the use of HLE surveys, researchers strive to ascertain the importance of the diverse home literacy interactions between parents and their children.

Title Recognition Test

The Title Recognition Test (TRT) was originally developed by Stanovich and West (1989) in response to concern about the validity of self-reported HLE questionnaires. The TRT involves checking off the titles of popular books from among foils that are plausible but not actual book titles. Response bias is controlled by subtracting false positive responses to the foils from correct responses to the actual book titles (Hood et al., 2008).

Engaging Parents in Meaningful Roles: The Benefits of Parent Leadership Activities for Family, School, and Community

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Abstract: Nearly thirty years of research points to the formative role parents can play in children's education. Studies cite benefits such as higher test scores and grades, increased graduation and attendance rates, better social skills, and improved behavior. This paper surveys the parent leadership literature to argue for incorporating leadership components into family literacy programs. These leadership training and opportunities can support parents in having a meaningful voice in social and educational issues. These experiences can foster increased self- efficacy, agency, social capital, literacy, and skills and knowledge; key ingredients for effective leadership. Our survey of successful programs demonstrates how parents become active advocates for communities, schools, families, and children.

Keywords: family literacy, leadership, parent engagement, parent leadership, self-efficacy, social capital

Nearly thirty years of research points to the formative role parents can play in children's education. Studies cite benefits such as higher test scores and grades, increased graduation and attendance rates, better social skills, and improved behavior (Fan & Chen, 2001). These kinds of findings have led to educational policies and funding requiring schools to develop parent involvement programs. In this paper we survey the parent leadership (PL) literature to argue for incorporating PL components into family literacy programs; first, as a way to support parents to have a meaningful voice in social and educational issues; and second, to afford educators a better understanding of the benefits of leadership training and experiences. Through leadership programs parents can develop self-efficacy, social capital, and social networks (Chrispeels, 2011), components necessary to advocate effectively for communities, families, and children. We address definitions of parent leadership, the benefits of adding a PL program, and characteristics of leadership. Lastly, we develop a typology and offer examples of PL. We suggest that family literacy programs are well-suited to offer parent leadership opportunities.

Background

School, home, and community are usually defined as bounded locations; this separation does not reflect the reality of parents and children's day-to-day lives. Parents and children move between these spaces, whether in the guise of a homework assignment, negotiating forms at a local organization, or a visit to the school. Because these contexts are often defined as separate entities, the feeling of belonging, welcome, or knowledge of how to exercise voice as a member is often missing. Furthermore, cultural or formal educational levels may inform

one's perception of who belongs (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Linguistic background, and knowledge of and experience with the U.S. school system can also impact parent engagement (Sanders, 2010). Schools, based on middle class ideals, often exclude non-mainstream parents who do not automatically have the cultural, linguistic, or social entrée into public schools (Auerbach, 2011; Hubbard & Hands, 2011). Schools often offer token involvement opportunities that placate or use parents as opposed to offering them power to effect change through partnership or control (Auerbach, 2011) . Families, schools, and communities working in partnership tend to be more fruitful in supporting children's school success (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007).

Family literacy programs are ideal locations to foster leadership programs because they serve a population that—due to issues such as, lower educational attainment, poverty, and racism—is, perhaps, more disconnected from mainstream schooling.

Defining Parent Leadership

Parent involvement (PI), parent engagement (PE), and parent leadership (PL) are often used interchangeably; the most commonly used term is PI. We argue that PI, PE, and PL have distinct meanings. PE and PL suggest a partnership between school personnel and parents as they work together to determine and achieve common goals, whereas, PI activities are realized on the school's terms (for a lengthier discussion, see Pushor & Ruitenburg, 2005). The partner relationship implies sharing of knowledge and two-way conversations (Auerbach, 2011). If parents are to become central contributors to the schooling process it is essential to offer activities beyond traditional offerings, such as Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings or volunteer opportunities.

Parent Involvement is the primary model of how parents participate in schools. Typical parent activities (fund raising and volunteering) engage parents in the labor of making schools financially and academically successful (Hands & Hubbard, 2011). Communication is usually one direction, school to home (Auerbach, 2011); school staff and administrators set the agenda and are responsible for education while parents support their endeavors.

Parent Engagement programs position parents to have a voice on topics centering on children, schools, community and other issues that involve them as adults and parents. Parents are no longer conceived as helpers for schools and children (Miano, 2011); they are acknowledged as partners in the child's learning. A critical difference between PI and PE is that in the latter, school and parents mutually benefit (Henderson, 2010).

Parent Leadership is a form of PE wherein parents have the opportunity to guide and negotiate curricular or program decisions. Leadership can include subtle activities, for example, inviting another parent to a school event, and more robust activities, such as developing a petition or holding a seat on the school governance committee. Dependent on skill, knowledge, and concerns of the parent, parents may take a leadership role, support other parent leaders, or co-lead with a teacher, principal, or other administrator (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005).

While the qualities necessary to become a leader depend, to some degree, upon individual characteristics, effective leadership requires several external components, including