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A Descriptive Case Study Examining the Perceptions of Haitian American Parents and the Perceptions of their Children's Teachers on the Parents' Involvement in a Structured Parent Intervention Program

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A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE PERCEPTIONS OF HAITIAN

AMERICAN PARENTS AND THE PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S

TEACHERS ON THE PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN A STRUCTURED PARENT

INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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by

Kristina Taylor

2016

To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus
    College of Arts, Sciences, and Education

This dissertation, written by Kristina Taylor, and entitled A Descriptive Case Study Examining the Perceptions of Haitian American Parents and the Perceptions of their Children's Teachers on the Parents' Involvement in a Structured Parent Intervention Program, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

_____
Linda Blanton

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Maria Lovett

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Maria Elena Villar

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Elizabeth Cramer, Major Professor

Date of Defense: June 8, 2016

The dissertation of Kristina Taylor is approved.

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Dean Michael R. Heithaus
College of Arts, Sciences, and Education

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Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2016

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother Rina Hernandez, my father Jose Hernandez, my husband TJ Taylor, and my daughter Khloe Taylor. My parents, from a young age, taught me that my only job in life is to learn. Education was at the forefront of my home growing up and all of my passion not only for education, but also for eliciting change through education, can be attributed to them. Knowing everyday that I am making them proud is my driving force. My husband has been so patient and supportive throughout my doctoral journey and has been by my side every step of the way. His understanding and ability to always keep me motivated and centered have been critical to my successful completion of my research. Lastly, my daughter Khloe is and always will be the reason that I strive to be a change agent. Knowing that my research and my dedication to education are contributing to her life and her future motivate me everyday. Although this doesn't make for great bedtime material, I look forward to the day that she is old enough to sit with me, read the contents of this dissertation, and find ways to build and improve upon my research. This completed dissertation is the product not only of my efforts, but also of the love and support of those around me.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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HAITIAN AMERICAN PARENTS AND THE PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR

CHILDREN'S TEACHERS ON THE PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN A

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by

Kristina Taylor

Florida International University, 2016

Miami, Florida

Professor Elizabeth Cramer, Major Professor

Parental involvement is legally mandated requirement in schools across the United States, and prevalent in special education legislation. However, methods for increasing and promoting parent involvement of minority subgroups in low socioeconomic areas are scarce. The purpose of this study was to develop, implement, and describe Haitian parents' perceptions of their involvement in a structured parent intervention program and to describe the perceptions of their children's teachers concerning the parents' involvement in the program.

In this study, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative case study methodology. All participants in the 5-month program implementation were interviewed at three points throughout the program. (pre, mid, and post). Findings of the present study revealed that these parents' feelings towards parent involvement evolved throughout their participation in the program. Participants went from reported feelings of separation between home and school, to understanding the important role they can play in education.

Additionally, as reported by the students' teachers, the parents' increased involvement and presence in the school/classroom had a positive impact on their children's social and academic development. Through their participation in the program, as evidenced through interview responses, parents' confidence increased as well as their ability to overcome initially identified barriers to involvement including English language acquisition, lack of time, an unclear understanding of special education services, and feeling un-wanted.

This study found that parents' perceptions of their participation were guided by two categories of motivators as identified through coding of interview responses: intrinsic motivators and extrinsic motivators. Through the program, parents who were intrinsically motivated to be involved in their child's education embraced the whole program. Those who were extrinsically motivated also became more involved, however, their motivation was more dependent on society and perceived success of their child and their parenting.

Perceptions of parent participants concerning their involvement in the program was found to be defined by the American culture in which their children are growing up, but equally in part by their Haitian roots and remaining ties to the island. Through their participation in the program, the parents were able to identify and explore opportunities for involvement, develop relationships with their children's teachers, better understand the purpose of an IEP, and better themselves as individuals to in turn better the lives of their children.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Current and past research alike (e.g., Cordy & Wilson, 2004; Epstein, 2006;

Ferguson, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey, 1995) assert the importance of parental involvement

in the education of students in a variety of educational environments. Research also

supports the need to examine ways in which parental involvement was increased in

under-performing, urban schools serving students from diverse backgrounds (Diamond,

Wang, & Gomez, 2004; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Mandara, 2006;

Sheldon, 2003). While researchers agree that the need to increase and support parental

involvement should be a priority, many school districts and educational professionals are

struggling to do so effectively. Research is abundant in addressing motivators that

contribute to increased levels of parental involvement (e.g. Anderson & Minke, 2007;

Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007;

Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) as well as reasons supporting the need for involvement.

However, research, and consequently literature explaining and outlining the components

to successfully implement parent intervention programs, is sparse.

The role of Parental Involvement in Education and Special Education

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) serves as the latest reauthorization of

the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) which was last

reauthorized in 2002 as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Since its inception, the

intent of the law has been to raise achievement for low-income and otherwise

disadvantaged children. Parent and family engagement and consultation have always

been a key piece of the law, focused on the low-income parents of "Title I-participating"

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children. Through ESSA, its predecessor NCLB, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) parental involvement is no longer just an educational need, but instead it has become a legal mandate handed down to school districts by the federal government.

With regards to parent and community engagement, ESSA requires districts to set aside at least 1% of their Title I funds, which are aimed at helping disadvantaged children, to involve parents in the school community, and 90% of those dollars must be distributed by each district, with a priority given to "high-need" schools (USDOE, 2015). Under Title IV of the law, ESSA also authorizes federal grants to Statewide Family Engagement Centers. Those are a new iteration of the Parental Information and Resource Centers that were federally funded under NCLB, but which parent-advocates hope will play a bigger role, even though federal money for them is not guaranteed (ESSA, 2015). Additionally, in association with ESSA, the Department of Education has released a framework for creating and maintaining a partnership between schools and parents. Called Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, this document lays out a framework that helps support the development of the parent-school partnership (ESSA, 2015).

Specific to Title-I funded schools, ESSA requires that in order to receive Title I funds, districts must conduct outreach to parents and family members and must implement programs, activities and procedures to encourage the involvement of parents and families in Title I-funded activities. Each district must jointly develop with and distribute to families, in a language they can understand, a written parent and family engagement policy. The engagement policy must be periodically updated to reflect the

needs of families and be incorporated into the aforementioned district plans. Title I-receiving schools in the district must also distribute parent and family engagement policies agreed to by the parents in the reported language spoken by parents at home (USDOE, 2015). As is the clear intent throughout the Every Student Succeeds Act, parents and communities have the right to engage and help drive, financial, programmatic and policy decisions. Although legally required engagement and consultation is enumerated in the law, parents and communities continue to be challenged with finding methods of implementation of these programs.

The 1975 law titled the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA), reauthorized in 1990 as the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and most recently in 2014 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) states that Congress seeks to:

> "assure that all handicapped children have available to them . . . a free appropriate public education [FAPE] which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs, [and] to assure that the rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected (p. 20)".

The main vehicle through which these congressional goals are to be implemented is the "individualized educational program" (IEP), which the EHA, and now IDEIA, mandate for each child with a disability. Much of parents' input and the role they play in their child's education are through their participation in the IEP process.

Parents' rights and their role in the IEP process is clearly outlined in Sec. 300.322 of IDEIA titled "Parent Participation". As per this section, schools are legally mandated to do the following: take steps to increase the likelihood that one or both of the parents of a child with a disability are present at each IEP Team meeting or are afforded the opportunity to participate, notify parents of the meeting early enough to ensure that they

will have an opportunity to attend, schedule the meeting at a mutually agreed on time and place, and keep parents informed of their legal rights. If neither parent can attend an IEP Team meeting, the public agency must use other methods to ensure parent participation, including individual or conference telephone calls. Additionally, the public agency must take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the parent understands the proceedings of the IEP Team meeting, including arranging for an interpreter for parents with deafness or whose native language is other than English, and parents must be provided with a copy of their child's IEP in their native language (IDEA, 2004). Specific to parents of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, similar to those students participating in this study, the presence of a translator and the providing materials in the appropriate language is a key component to encouraging their involvement and helping them to feel respected as equal partners in their child's education.

Many states and school districts are finding themselves struggling to be compliant and find means by which they can meet the federal mandates in regards to parental involvement. The state of Florida is no exception to states finding compliance challenging, as is evident by the county-reported decrease in rates of involvement. In July of 2015, Florida, as per the 2015 census, was reported as having 20.3 million residents with 1.9 million of them residing in Broward County alone. Of these 1.9 million residents, 31.8% were identified by the census data as being "foreign-born". Additionally, Hispanics and African Americans are becoming highly concentrated in this region greatly populated by immigrants, a concentration currently mirrored in special education populations.

Parental involvement as a legal mandate is most prevalent in special education legislation as aforementioned. Being that this study exclusively focused on students with disabilities, the literature established a strong need for early intervention, primarily in populations found to be at-risk for potential special education placement. Parental involvement in the form as an early intervention has been found to have a positive effect on academic achievement and social development of at-risk students. Current trends identify a continued increase in the overrepresentation of African American males, as the most prevalent of several minority groups, receiving special education services (Artiles et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2004; Harry & Klingner, 2014; Ferri & Connor, 2005; Gregory et al., 2010; Jordan, 2005; Noguera, 2009; Takanishi, 2004). Additionally, research correlating (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2005) minority groups being overrepresented in special education to academic challenges, high school dropout rates, and the overrepresentation of African American males in correctional facilities is on the rise.

Florida has one of the highest populations of individuals identifying as being African-American and Caribbean, with Haitians included, and the second highest population of Hispanics in the Eastern United States. Haitian migrants have come to the United States since the Caribbean nation gained its independence from France in 1804 (Nicholas, 2014; Portes & Zhou, 1993). From 1950-1970 nearly eight percent of the Haitian population emigrated (Nicholas, 2014). In particular those with money, education, and professional, business, or trade skills found it possible to seek opportunities elsewhere (Catanese, 1999). Generally, most migrated to the Northeastern United States and Canada, and it was common for many Haitian immigrants to avoid the Southeastern

United States (Steppick, 1998). A major shift occurred in the 1970s, when instead of the more affluent members of Haitian society migrating, it became increasingly common for those from rural and urban sectors of Haiti to seek refuge in the United States (Steppick, 1998).

Along with the shift in the social classes migrating came a shift in the areas to which they were migrating. As early as 1977, poor and less educated immigrants from Haiti were arriving on the shores of Florida and an immigrant pocket of Haitians in South Florida quickly formed. It is estimated that up to 70,000 Haitian refugees arrived by boat from 1977-1981, with an additional 5,000-10,000 entering South Florida by plane (Stepick, 1992). Also between 1977 and 1981, an estimated 60,000 Haitians migrated to the South Florida neighborhood that has since been known as "Little Haiti".

Of the 548,199 persons of Haitian ancestry living in the United States in 2000, more than 155,000 lived in the South Florida counties of Miami-Dade and Broward where they comprised approximately four percent of the population (Nicholas, 2014; U.S. Census 2000). About two thirds are first generation immigrants, that is foreign born (Nicholas, 2014). In 2000, Florida was home to 183,000 foreign-born Haitians, a figure that represented 43.5% of the total foreign-born population from Haiti.

The number of Haitian parents with school age children has also been on the rise in South Florida, and more so in Broward County, for a number of years (Nicholas, 2014; Stepick, 1998). Haitians are a sub-group of the African American population that is not specifically identified as a separate ethnic group. In all data collected by ethnicity, African Americans or Blacks are considered one group, regardless of country of origin. As a result of the increase in Haitian students in public schools, districts are being

challenged to find effective means of communication and collaboration with Haitian-American parents and families.

Furthermore, along with the increase of Black populations in schools, there has been a notable and consistent increase of Black students, and more specifically children of immigrants, receiving special education services in schools. Research on learning disability identification and special education placement in U.S. schools indicate that children's demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender and social class affect their likelihood of being labeled with a disability and placed in special education (Hibel & Jasper, 2012). Findings from this "disproportionate placement" literature suggest that African Americans (Artiles et al., 2005; Harry & Klingner, 2014; Jordan, 2005), males (Skiba et al., 2002; Watkins & Kurtz, 2001; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 2001) and children from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds (O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006; Skiba et al., 2002) face greater risk of disability diagnosis and special education placement than their peers. Immigrant generational status represents an additional dimension along which special education placement disparities may arise. In the wake of recent increases in migration, first- and second-generation children currently represent nearly a quarter of the school-age population of the United States, making it increasingly important to track their experiences in American schools (Hernandez et al., 2009). Currently in Broward county, the system being used for Response to Intervention data tracking and monitoring, Basis 3.0, has made it possible for school staff to be made aware of students statistically found to be "at risk" for academic failure. The indicators used by the Basis 3.0 program assign points to students based on "at-risk" categories such as ELL

classification, attendance pattern, retention history, social work services, and psychological services.

Structural theories of educational stratification imply that children of immigrants would experience especially high risk for special education placement with a diagnosed learning disability (Hibel & Jasper, 2012). Immigrant families frequently face social and economic disadvantages upon arrival in the United States, including limited familiarity with English, a lack of community and school ties, lower levels of parental human capital and fewer financial resources (Carreón et al., 2005; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Lopez et al., 2001; Mattingly et al., 2002; Ramirez, 2003; Turney & Kao, 2009). Research has linked each of these background factors to lower educational performance among the children of immigrants, as well as to increased likelihood of special education placement in the general student population (Donovan & Cross, 2002). Many immigrants flee their native countries in search of the world renowned concept of the "American dream" only to find that different forms of oppression, such as inability to equally access a quality public education, await them in the United States (Hibel & Jasper, 2012).

Quality education, although highly desired by Haitians, is made difficult to attain in their native country because of the lack of quality public schooling (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2008). Almost 90 percent of all schools in Haiti are private or parochial and over three-fourths of private schools have a religious affiliation. Due to low and inconsistent budget allocation for non-salary expenditures from the government, it is common practice for public schools to require a parental financial contribution. In addition to those fees, parents who send their children to public schools must also purchase books, schools supplies and pay for uniforms. In many cases, parents who do not have access or the

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financial means to enroll their children in these schools in Haiti may move to the United States to offer their children increased access to quality public education.

Of the total population of Haitian immigrants in the United States, 15.7% reside in Lauderdale Lakes, a city in Broward County. It is estimated that of these immigrants residing in Lauderdale Lakes, 98% are educated in Broward County Public Schools (BCPS, 2014). Broward County Public Schools, as per the 2015/2016 district profile (BCPS, 2016), is the sixth largest public school system in the United States, the second largest in the state of Florida and the largest fully accredited K-12 and adult school district in the nation. BCPS has over 268,000 students with 97,359 students in grades K-5 alone. Currently, there are 238 schools and education centers and 103 charter schools. In the 2015-2016 school year, Broward County Public Schools consisted of 341 total schools, excluding virtual schools, serving 268,836 students in grades K-12 and an additional 175,000 adult students. The student racial/ethnic breakdown for the population served by Broward County Public Schools consisted of the following: 50.9% White, 40.6% Black, 3.15% ethnically Hispanic, with the remaining percentage identifying as other. Of the 40.6% of students identifying as being Black, nearly half further identify as being of Haitian descent (BCPS, 2016).

At the time of the study, the primary parental involvement initiative implemented in BCPS was a three-year strategic plan to increase overall rates of involvement. Enacted during the 2012-2013 school year, the 3-year plan was a response to the decreasing rates of parental involvement and consequent decrease in student scores primarily in schools servicing predominantly urban and culturally diverse populations. Although this plan has been implemented countywide, outcomes have not been as strong as initially expected.

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The BCPS parental involvement plan was designed to increase and promote communication and strengthen home-school partnerships however, a public critique and concern of the plan is that it is not culturally responsive and that current barriers to parent involvement are being overlooked as opposed to addressed. The school in which this research study was completed is demographically representative to BCPS, with a majority of the student population identifying with a minority racial or ethnic group. Furthermore, this study addresses the absence in current research related to Haitian-American parent perceptions of their involvement in public education.

Purpose

The research on parent involvement clearly establishes its positive impact on student achievement (Castro et al., 2015; Cordy & Wilson, 2004; Dawson-McClure et al., 2015; Epstein, 2006; Ferguson, 2008; Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Grolnick, 2015; Hoover-Dempsey, 1995; Jeynes, 2015). Additionally, research in early intervention supports increased parental involvement as a strong predictor of increased educational attainment and decreased likelihood of placement in a special education program (Barnard, 2004; Elbaum, Blatz, & Rodriguez, 2016; Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Gronlick, 2015; Haines et al., 2015; Mahoney et al., 1998; Miedel et al., 2000). The struggle of many school districts and schools to find ways to engage and involve their students' parents is a national problem that is likely to have long lasting negative effects on society. Parental involvement is an integral part of the educational system in the U.S. Yet, the changing demographics of our county have shifted the educational landscape due to the increased diversity of students in the educational system. Many parents, particularly those identifying as being culturally and linguistically diverse and most often

identified as having children who are "at-risk" for being identified as being affected by a disability, struggle to understand their role in education and the impact that their involvement has on student achievement (Castro et al., 2015; Dawson-McClure et al., 2015; Hagelskamp et al. 2010; Fan & Chen, 2001; Lopez et al., 2001; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Stanley, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative to analyze parent perceptions of their role in education and the levels of involvement they perceive to be appropriate and important.

Decreased rates of parent involvement have been strongly linked to increased drop-out rates and as contributing factors in the school to prison pipeline, predominantly in regards to African American males in urban educational settings (Anguiano, 2004; Barnard, 2004; Bridgeland et al. 2006 and 2010; Castro et al., 2015; Jeynes, 2015; El baum et al., 2016; Perna & Titus, 2005). The prevailing need for parent intervention programs that result in a lasting increase in parental involvement in education is causing schools to find and implement evidence-based approaches to parental involvement. Determining how to engage and retain involved parents is a critical component to student academic and social achievement that is a current need in many schools.

The primary problem faced by school districts is not identifying a need for increased parental involvement, but rather identifying and implementing effective programs to increase such involvement. While the literature has already identified parent motivators, (e.g., Anderson & Minke, 2007; Elbaum et al., 2016; Fishman & Nickserson, 2015; Green et al., 2007; Gronlick, 2015; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) barriers to parental involvement (e.g., Anderson & Minke; Gayt, 2007; Haines et al., 2015; Hirano & Rowe, 2015; Kalyanpur & Harry, 2014; Salas, 2004; Hill et al., 2004; Turney & Kao,

2009) and suggestions for ways to increase involvement (e.g. Anderson et al., 2007; Banjerjee et al., 2011; Brown & Beckett, 2007; DePlanty et al., 2007; Epstein, 2002; Ferguson, 2008; Haines et al., 2015; Hirano & Rowe, 2015), the present study was undertaken to assist in filling a gap in current literature by not only identifying and implemented a parent intervention program with an at-risk CLD population, but also by acquiring data to assess program effectiveness through the perceptions of parent participants. Combining all of the above and applying current literature to create a structured parent intervention program, this program was implemented with a target audience of Haitian-American immigrant parents of students in grades K-2 at Public Elementary School A in Broadview Park, Florida, a small unincorporated subdivision of Broward County where 43% of the population identifies as being Black/Haitian-American.

By accessing parent perceptions in addition to student outcomes, the parent intervention program was then evaluated for overall successes and presented in a way that lends itself to duplication by other school districts servicing varying populations. The intended outcome of this study is to produce a model for implementation in a variety of educational settings. This qualitative pilot study is projected to inform future, larger scale studies in the area of parent perceptions on parental involvement.

Problem

This study was undertaken to describe Haitian American immigrant parent perceptions of their involvement in a structured parent intervention program, based on Epstein's model of parental involvement. Upon completion of this structured program, parental involvement was analyzed and comparisons were drawn between parent

perceptions and those of their child's teachers. Although studies exist that examine the barriers and motivators associated with parental involvement, and suggestions for structured parent intervention programs, limited research has focused on actual implementation of these proposed programs.

Current literature is minimal on research specifically related to Haitian American parental involvement and that of immigrant parents in low-performing, urban schools. Although research can be found regarding the importance parental involvement in their child's education, existing research as to how parents can increase involvement through evidence-based intervention programs is sparse. To date, no published studies were found by the researcher that address Haitian American parent perceptions of their involvement in their child's education prior to, during, and post their involvement in a structured parent intervention program. Given the increase in Haitian immigrant populations in the Southeast region, where this pilot study is being conducted, and the apparent need for literature focusing on this population, the researcher felt it would be most appropriate to isolate this particular subgroup for the study. Furthermore, being that African American males are the most overrepresented population in special education, and that Haitians are most likely to identify themselves as being Black, findings from this study will serve as a foundation for early intervention research in special education.

Emphasis on engaging and retaining the involvement of parents in schools is important for compliance and ultimately student academic success in all school settings. The researcher anticipates that the study's findings will contribute to the existing body of research that attempts to describe effective parent intervention programs and identify a parent involvement protocol which schools can adapt accordingly to meet the needs of

their parent and student populations. Furthermore, an outcome of the study is to provide the county with a proposed model, lending itself to various adaptations; although this is a small study there is a large potential effect. Being that a need for a functional and effective method for increasing parental involvement has been identified, this study provides participant reported methods that have been proven to increase involvement.

Conceptual Framework

In 1991, Joyce L. Epstein began publishing research in the area of parental involvement, and more specifically parental involvement in urban school systems. Through her extensive research (e.g., Epstein, 1991, 2002, 2006: Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Epstein et al. 1991), Epstein identified what she explained as six types of parental involvement. These have been defined as: (a) parenting, (b) communicating, (c) volunteering, (d) learning at home, (e) decision-making, and (e) collaborating with the community. The identification of these types of involvement has served as a foundation for research on the importance and effects of different types of involvement (Epstein, 2008; Epstein et al., 2002; Lopez, 2001; Shumow et al., 2001; Starkey et al., 2000; Wright, 2009), and served as the primary tenets upon which this study's parent intervention program was built.

In addition to identifying the six types of parental involvement, Epstein developed a model for parental involvement and outlined ways for parents to become involved and provide support to educators to serve as facilitators for involvement (Epstein, 1991; Epstein et al., 2002). The model developed by Epstein served as a framework for the design and development of the model implemented by the researcher in this study. Although Epstein developed a model for structuring parent intervention programs, there

has been minimal extension research describing the results of program implementation or parent perceptions prior to, throughout, and upon completion of the program. Epstein's model for parental involvement established a framework, however, the subjectivity associated with implementation of this framework has proven to be challenging in practice (Bower & Griffin, 2011), as has supporting research for implementation of this model with culturally and linguistically divers (CLD) populations. Currently, little research exists in which researchers have implemented Epstein's framework with CLD populations.

Reasoning for using this particular model as a foundation is based upon the current body of literature where Epstein's model is most commonly referenced. Additionally, the researcher conducted this study to fill the gap in literature where implementation of Epstein's model is analyzed using a CLD population, and specifically Haitian American immigrant parents. The researcher developed and implemented a parent intervention program using the above listed six components as a framework for workshop and program development. Based upon the parent and teacher perceptions, the researcher will use the findings of this qualitative case study as a pilot for a parent intervention program model that can be modified and adapted to fit the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to describe parent perceptions of their involvement and effect on their child's education while participating in a structured parent intervention program. Also described and reported are what they considered their most valuable contribution resulting from the program to their child's education. Perceptions of the

teachers of the parent participants students were also examined in relation to the parents involvement. More specifically, the research questions addressed through the study are:

1. Before, during and after involvement in a structured parent intervention program, what are Haitian American parents' perceptions concerning

   a. their own level of involvement in their child's education?

   b. the types of opportunities their child's school facilitated for parental involvement?

   c. which opportunities for parental involvement are most valuable to their child's education?

2. How do parents' perceptions of their involvement compare to their child's teacher's perceptions of parental involvement prior to, during, and upon completion of their involvement in a structured parent intervention program?

3. What workshop components of a structured parent intervention program are perceived by Haitian American parents in a low-performing, urban school setting as being essential to their increased levels of involvement in their child's education prior to and upon completion of a structured parent intervention program?

Definition of Terms

The following section provides definitions of terms referred to throughout this study. These include terms and acronyms used universally in the field of education. They are listed in alphabetical order.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) describes parents or students who are

from a different culture and/or language than Anglo White Americans

(Harry, 2008).

Descriptive Case Study is a research design in which the researchers have initial

knowledge about the topic and are interested in developing a more in

depth understanding or in clarifying potentially conflicting or equivocal

information from previous data. It is not primarily concerned with

explaining the causes of things but attempts instead, to describe how

things are experienced first hand through the use of case studies

(Yin, 2013).

Second Language Acquisition is the process by which humans acquire the

capacity to perceive and comprehend a second language, as well as to

produce and use words and sentences to communicate (Ellis, 1994).

English Language Learner is an individual whose native language is one other

than English, who is learning to use and comprehend the English language.

Haitian American is a term used to describe individuals living in the United States

of Haitian descent.

Immigrants are people who were born in a foreign country, but have now decided

to make the U.S. their home for whatever reason.

Low-performing is used to describe schools performing below the national

average on standardized tests or assessments used to determine the overall

academic success of a group of students (Borman et al., 2000).

Parent Involvement is based on Joyce Epstein's framework of six types of

involvement, the conceptual foundation for this study, and includes

parents practicing any combination of the following: parenting,

communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and

collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2006).

Structured Parent Intervention Program is a workshop-format program designed

using feedback from parents on areas that they need assistance with to

increase their levels of involvement in their child's education. The

workshops were conducted based on Epstein's model of parent

involvement.

Urban is a term used to describe a school meeting the following criteria: (a) the

school is located in a urban area rather than a rural, small town, or

suburban area, (b) the school has a relatively high rate of poverty, as

measured by free and reduced lunch data, (c) the school has a relatively

high proportion of students of color, (d) the school has a relatively high

proportion of students who are English language learners, and (e) the

school has been designated as "high need" (Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, &

Higareda, 2005).

Chapter Summary

Throughout this chapter, the researcher has presented an introduction and basis

for understanding of the problems regarding ethic and racial minority parent involvement

in schools and need for the study. Research questions that have been answered upon

completion of the study have been described. Additionally, terms have been defined to

better aide in the understanding of the research being conducted and the researchers

target population and outcomes. In the next chapter, the researcher analyzes the current

body of literature including, but not limited to the following: importance of parent

involvement, barriers and motivators to parent involvement, Haitian-American and

immigrant parent involvement, and current proposed parent intervention programs.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher provides a review of the literature related to parental and family involvement in the education of economically disadvantaged, culturally and linguistically diverse students. In the first section, research related to the importance of parental involvement- both for academic and personal development of students is reviewed. In the second section, the researcher addresses motivators contributing to increased levels of parental involvement, both generally and also in minority urban environments. Following the motivators to involvement, the next section will focus on barriers hindering involvement in these same communities. Next, currently implemented parent intervention programs (PIP) were reviewed. Following this, the focus of the parental involvement was centralized with an emphasis on immigrant and Haitian-American families and parents. In the last section, the researcher addressed and included research on early intervention with CLD populations and connections that can be made to special education. Finally, the researcher summarizes the literature reviewed and makes direct connections to the current investigation.

The Importance of Parental Involvement in Academics and Social Domains of Development

Parental involvement in education is a critical component of student academic and social success (Ariza, 2002; Bagner & Eyberg, 2003; Brown, & Beckett, 2007; Dawson et al., 2015; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern & Duchane, 2007; Fan & Chen, 2001; Ferguson, 2008; Haines et al., 2015). Nationally, parent involvement in schools is experiencing a shift from being highly recommended to being legally mandated. The eighth U.S.

education goal in Goals 2000 (Barnard, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2002) states that every school will "promote partnerships that will increase parent involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children".

Section 1010 of ESSA (USDOE, 2015) outlines parent and family engagement. ESSA, similar to its predecessor NCLB, requires that schools communicate with parents in the languages they speak "to the extent practicable" and that they keep parents informed on their child's progress on assessments, their progress towards meeting standards, and their rights to transfer their child to another school if their local school fails to sufficiently progress. It is in these ways that schools are now being challenged to provide parents of LEP students the same rights as all other parents under ESSA. (USDOE, 2015). As schools find themselves needing to comply with these legal mandates, the first step is to understand why parental involvement is a cornerstone to academic attainment and cognitive/social development.

Researchers have extensively explored parental involvement in numerous settings to determine the role parental involvement plays in academic achievement and to what extent this involvement influenced student performance. In 1995 and 1997, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler published articles defining parental involvement broadly to include home-based activities (e.g., helping with homework, discussing school events or courses) and school-based activities (e.g., volunteering at school, coming to school events). These studies supported the importance of parental involvement and described ways in which parents were being encouraged and supported by schools to increase involvement in their child's education. They argued, based on findings from literature they reviewed, that parental involvement is a function of a parent's beliefs about parental roles and

responsibilities, a parent's sense that she can help her children succeed in school, and the opportunities for involvement provided by the school or teacher. In this theory, similar to that of Epstein (2001), when parents get involved, children's schooling is affected through their acquisition of knowledge, skills, and an increased sense of confidence that they can succeed in school.

With regards to parental involvement and special education, much of the literature is inconclusively in support of the positive effect of parental involvement on students with disabilities, or those labeled as being at risk, on social, emotional, and cognitive development (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Frew et al., 2013). When parents are actively involved, students, both with and without special needs, have been found to have increased levels of reading and math achievement, higher standardized test scores, increased graduation rates, decreased probability of dropping out, decreased reports of emotional disturbances, and for those labeled as being at risk, decreased placement in special education (Cordry & Wilson, 2004; Ferrera & Ferrera, 2005; Jeynes, 2003; Pena, 2007).

In a 2003 meta-analysis, Jeynes analyzed 20 studies with almost 12,000 total CLD subjects to determine the overall effects of parental involvement and identify specifically which types of parental involvement were statistically most effective. Four different measures of academic achievement were used to assess the effects of parental involvement on academic achievement. First, there was an overall measure of all components of academic achievement combined. The other measures included grades, academic achievement as determined by standardized tests, teacher rating scales, and indices of academic behaviors and attitudes. The results indicate that parental

involvement does strongly affect the academic achievement of the minority groups under study, the same minority groups at-risk for being affected by a disability (Jeynes, 2003).

In 1999 Child Trends, a research organization that conducts and synthesizes research across the broad area of child well-being, conducted longitudinal a study analyzing parental involvement and student achievement, 88% of the students participating in the study and completing high school with either a diploma or an equivalent stated they had strong parental involvement, 93 percent of students that went on to a vocational school or technical school stated their parents were strongly engaged in their academic growth, and 97 percent of students with a bachelors degree and 97 percent of students going onto to graduate or a professional school stated they had strong parental involvement in their academic progress. Furthermore, Child Trends found that parental involvement in the development of their own children dropped significantly for children in grades K-5 to grades 6-8 to grades 9-12. Also in their study, Child Trends provided support as to why parental involvement was vital to reducing the risk factors for academic failure, dropout prevention, increasing positive behavior, and social adjustment. Child Trends concluded that parental involvement was closely linked to student success and as parents disengaged, children would become more vulnerable to external, oftentimes negative influence (Child Trends Databank, 1999).

Similar findings were reported by Hill and colleagues (2004) who conducted a meta-analysis of the existing research on parental involvement in middle school and then situated their findings within existing theories and frameworks and within the developmental context of early adolescence. This meta-analysis addressed two broad questions: first, what is the strength of the relation between parental involvement in

education and achievement during middle school? Second, which types of involvement have the strongest positive relation with achievement? Higher rates of parental involvement academic involvement were found to be associated with fewer behavioral problems, which were related to achievement and then aspirations. Additionally, the decreased behavior problems can be associated with a decreased likelihood that the child would be referred based on emotional and behavioral concerns. For the less involved parental education group, parent academic involvement was related to aspirations but not to behavior or achievement in their children. Parent academic involvement was positively related to achievement for Black students, but not for Caucasian students (Hill et al., 2004).

When used as a form of early intervention for at risk populations, mirroring the sample selected for the current study, parental intervention has been found to be successful (Mahoney et al., 1998; Miedel et al., 2000; Meidel, 2004). In 2001, Lopez and colleagues conducted a 5-month qualitative study collecting observations and conducting interviews, on parent involvement practices in four school districts with large numbers of migrant students who were reported as being high achieving, based on standardized test scores and trends. These school districts also had high levels of parent involvement, especially among the migrant families. The study found that the main reason these schools were successful in involving migrant families was that school staff were "personally and systemically committed to meeting the multiple needs of these families" (p. 282). This process required an awareness of each family's needs, and a capacity to mobilize multiple community social services to help meet each family's needs. The researchers also included discussion about the need to rethink the "traditional concepts of

parent involvement" (p.284) and promote "dynamic programs that encourage greater accountability to all families" (p. 284) similar to the program being implemented through the current study (Lopez et al., 2001).

In 1986, Chicago began research on the Chicago Longitudinal Study. This study is a federally funded investigation of the effects of an early and extensive childhood intervention in central city Chicago called the Child-Parent Center (CPC) Program. The initial purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of government-funded kindergarten programs for 1,539 children in the Chicago Public Schools. At the time of the study, the Chicago Longitudinal Study continues to investigate the short- and long-term effects of early childhood intervention, the study traces the scholastic and social development of participating children and the contributions of family and school practices to children's behavior. The CPC program provides educational and family support services to children from preschool to third grade and closely monitors how parents participation in their child's education influences social and academic outcomes (Chicago Longitudinal Study, 1986).

The Chicago Longitudinal Study has four main objectives: (1) to evaluate comprehensively the impact of the CPC program on child and family development, (2) to identify and better understand the pathways (child, family, and school-related) through which the effects of program participation are manifested, and more generally, through which scholastic and behavioral development proceeds, (3) to document and describe children's patterns of school and social competence over time, including their school achievement, academic progress, and expectations for the future, and (4) to determine the effects of family, school, neighborhood, and child-specific factors and practices on social

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competence broadly defined, especially those can be altered to promote positive development and to prevent problematic outcomes. Currently, the CLS is one of the longest running studies researching the aforementioned topics in a public school system with resounding numbers of CLD learners (Chicago Longitudinal Study, 1986; Ou & Reynolds, 2008; Reynolds, 2000).

Extensive data and numerous studies have extended from the Chicago Longitudinal Study. In 1999 Meidel and Reynolds interviewed 704 parents of children participating in the Chicago Longitudinal Study about their school involvement in preschool and kindergarten. Using the data collected, the researchers established that teacher ratings of parent involvement in first and second grade were significantly associated with higher reading achievement in eighth grade, lower grade retention rates, and lower rates of special education placement through eighth grade (Meidel & Reynolds, 1999; Ou & Reynolds, 2008; Reynolds, 2000).

In 2004 Meidel, using data from the Chicago Longitudinal Study, examined the relation between parent involvement in elementary school and children's high-school success. Of the 1539 children in the original sample for the CLS, 1165 (76%) were included by Meidel in this study sample. Youth included in this study had information regarding their school status (dropout and high school completion) as well as having either: (a) parent ratings of their involvement in any elementary school survey, or (b) at least three out of six teacher ratings on parent involvement in grades 1–6. The majority of the sample used by Meidel participated in an early intervention program, the CPC. The CPCs offer services to children ages three to nine and their families. Participation in the program is reserved for children living in Title I neighborhoods. The programs, offered

within the Chicago Public Schools, provide both educational and family support activities (Meidel, 2004). The CPCs also offer a variety of programs for parents that include a parent resource room in each center and a parent-resource teacher who oversees parent activities. Parents learn developmentally appropriate activities for their children, learn ways to enhance their relationship with their child, learn about available community resources, attend educational courses, and can get their GED. Parents are also given the opportunity to be on the School Advisory Council, assisting in the design and implementation of educational planning. In addition, an outreach specialist works with in the neighborhoods to coordinate home visitations, resource distribution, and the recruitment of children in need for early educational services (Reynolds, 2000).

Based on the purpose of the CPCs and the CLD, Meidel (2004) sought to determine if parent involvement in elementary school, which is expected to increase with participation in the program, is associated with indicators of school success for children in high school. Parent involvement in school, according to Meidel, as outlined on parent and teacher reports, was a strong indicator of school success. Results of Meidels' research indicated that even after controlling for background characteristics and risk factors, parent involvement in school was significantly associated with lower rates of high school dropout, increased on-time high school completion, and highest grade completed. This study suggested that parent involvement in school is an important component in early childhood education and can be attributed to promotion of long-term effects (Meidel, 2004).

Although qualitative research in the area of parental involvement is abundant, empirical, quantitative research on this topic is sparse. In 2001, Xitao Fan and Michael

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Chen synthesized empirical evidence related to the topic of parental involvement and its influence on student achievement. Through a analysis of current literature, which included analyzing the "bivariate relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement, and conducting a meta-analysis involving correlation coefficients between the two constructs (p. 7)" from 25 studies, 92 correlation coefficients between parental involvement and students' academic achievement were collected (Fan & Chen, 2001). Conclusions from Fan and Chen's meta-analysis support the significant role played by parents in student academic success. Additionally, their findings provided important implications for future research and the role of operational definitions. With regards to operational definitions and types of measurements used in studies, Fan and Chen found these to significantly affect the conclusions about the relationship between parental involvement and academic success.

The majority of research conducted supporting the positive role of parental involvement on student academics is based on short-term data collection; longitudinal studies are emerging in the field analyzing parent involvement as an intervention in the academic achievement of their children. Results from the CLS indicate that even after controlling for background characteristics and risk factors, parent involvement in school was significantly associated with lower rates of high school dropout, increased on-time high school completion, and highest grade completed.

Research in the past and present supports the need for parental involvement in schools and as an early intervention tool for at risk populations (Ariza, 2002; Arzubiaga et al., 2008; Cordry & Wilson, 2004; Hill et al., 2004; Wells, 2010). Although the role of parental involvement is viewed as being a critical one, there is a significant emphasis on

identifying motivators and barriers to parental involvement. By establishing reasons why parents choose to become involved, researchers are better equipped to enable them and increase the amount involvement.

Motivators Contributing to Parental Involvement in Education

Research on the effects of parental involvement has shown a consistent, positive relationship between parents' engagement in their children's education and student outcomes (Anderson et al., 2007; Banjerjee et al., 2011; Brown & Beckett, 2007; DePlanty et al., 2007; Epstein, 2002; Ferguson, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2002; Zellman, 1998). Studies have also shown that parental involvement is associated with student outcomes such as lower dropout and truancy rates (Bridgeland et al., 2010; Christie et al., 2005; Cordry & Wilson, 2004; Prevatt & Kelly, 2003). Whether or not parental involvement can improve student outcomes is no longer in question. Instead, research, past and present, is seeking instead, to identify and examine motivators contributing to parental involvement in education (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Map, 2003; Weiss et al., 2003).

In 1995 and 1997 Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler proposed a theoretical model of the parental involvement process. Taking a psychological perspective, the model explained why parents become involved in their children's education and how their involvement makes a difference in student outcomes. After a thorough review of current literature and best practices related to parental involvement, the researchers were able to identify what they described as being "best guesses" for parental motivators for involvement. The model produced by the researchers was produced in five sequential

levels: (a) parents basic involvement decision, (b) parents choice of involvement forms, (c) mechanisms of parental involvement's influence on children's school outcomes, (d) tempering/mediating variables, and (e) student outcomes.

In 2005, Walker et al. published, "Parental involvement: Model revision through scale development." In this article, the researchers operationalize the Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model and propose revisions to the theoretical model. The revisions to the model included an emphasis on teacher preparation to work with parents collaboratively. The researchers suggested the following as means by which schools can increase parental involvement: (a) improve school climate, (b) seek in-service training for parental involvement, and (c) advocate for the development of in-school resources that support teacher–parent communication and trust. The researchers went on to state that, "achieving the goal of effective parent involvement is not a one-size-fits all proposition and often requires a long-term commitment to changing deeply held perceptions and habits" (p. 100).

With the intention of differentiating opportunities for parental involvement and communication methods that increase involvement, researchers have worked to extend their knowledge base not only on what motivates parents to become involved, but also what hinders their involvement. Although not encouraged to look at parental involvement from a deficit perspective, it is imperative that researchers and practitioners alike understand challenges they are likely to face to better prepare and plan for overcoming obstacles.

Barriers Hindering Parental Involvement in Education

Many parents, when asked, are likely to express that they have a desire to be involved in the education of their child, however, they are also likely to provide barriers hindering their involvement. Not only do parents have barriers to involvement, but teachers also report encountering significant barriers to enacting family–school partnerships (Gayt, 2007; Lawson, 2003). These barriers can be described as family based or related to parents' circumstances (e.g., practical or psychological barriers in families) and school based or grounded in teachers' involvement practices and knowledge of family circumstances and traditions (Walker et al. 2005). Researchers have worked to identify the barriers to involvement, because only through identification will it be possible to identify ways to overcome these barriers (Parrette & Petch-Hogan, 2000).

In 2009, Kim reviewed a total of 69 studies in the field of education focusing on the school barriers and minority parents' participation in their children's schooling from preschool through middle school. The studies were selected according to the following criteria: (a) their specific focus was on minority parents but their school involvement was studied; (b) their main focus was on parental involvement in school and minority parents were included; and (c) their report was based on studies of minority parental involvement in school (Kim, 2009). Of the 69 studies, 33 were qualitative, 33 were quantitative, three were identified as being mixed methods, and six studies were literature reviews. This literature review provided available research findings on the school barriers that prevent minority parents' participation in their children's school in the United States (Kim, 2009). The following school barriers were identified by the researcher: (a) teachers' perception about the efficacy of minority parents, (b) teachers' perception concerning the capacity of

minority parents, (c) teachers' beliefs in the effectiveness of parental involvement and developmental philosophy, (d) teachers' self-efficacy in teaching effectiveness, (e) school friendliness and positive communication, (f) diversity of parental involvement programs, (g) school policies, and (h) school leadership. Increased understanding about the nature of minority parental involvement in their children's school will lead to a more collaborative home-school partnership and ensure the long-term success of parental involvement. With the changing demography of America's schools, it is imperative that research specific to minorities be conducted and used to initiate change in the school system (Capps et al., 2005).

From 1999-2000 McDermott and Rothenberg used a combination of methods including focus groups comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators in a predominantly minority populated urban community to explore motivators and barriers to parent involvement and identify ways in which the researchers could better prepare teachers for serving in urban schools (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). The study was two-fold, in the first study the researchers used a rating scale of best teachers and a Likert survey of 25 teachers from high poverty buildings (McDermott & Rothenberg, 1999), in the second study (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000) the researchers conducted qualitative focus group interviews of four of the original teachers who responded to the survey, and the children and parents of children in their classes. The data revealed that the teachers were frustrated with a lack of parental involvement in literacy activities at home and at school. Parents, however, expressed distrust toward the local elementary school because they felt the faculty has been biased against African American and Latino children and their families. Consequently, the parents said they deliberately decided not to participate

in school activities. Parents explained they would only work with teachers who respected and valued their children (McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000). Results of the study, similar to findings of several other studies, identify the importance of helping new teachers learn strategies for developing strong trusting relationships and effective communication strategies when working with urban families (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Hill et al., 2004; McDermott & Rothenberg, 1999; McDermott & Rothenberg, 2000; McWayne et al., 2004).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher sought to find information specific to parental involvement and immigrant parents. Studies on foreign-born, minority parents have found that these parents are almost 10 times more likely to report language as a barrier to involvement at their children's schools than their American-born counterparts, and that these language related barriers are more likely to hinder their involvement in their child's education (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; Lamb-Parker et al., 2001; Nzinga-Johnson et al., 2009; Pena, 2000; Tinkler, 2002; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). By applying a theory of social and cultural reproduction, Abrams and Gibbs interviewed 10 mothers from diverse ethnocultural and socioeconomic groups on topics relating to parent roles, access to power, and practices of inclusion and exclusion at an urban elementary school. Findings from their in-depth interviews support that intimidation and feelings of inadequacy on the part of parents of CLD learners can serve as contributing factors to decreased parental involvement. Additionally, Turney & Kao also found that parents who had limited English proficiency were more likely to report meeting time inconvenience and not feeling welcome by their child's school teachers and administration as barriers to their involvement. Time spent in the United States and

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increased English language ability was, however, positively associated with increased

parental involvement. Additional research findings suggest that providing opportunities

for involvement, training parents in ways they can assist their child academically and

socially, and preparing teachers in developing strong trusting relationships and effective

communication strategies when working with immigrant families (McDermott &

Rothenberg, 2000).

Barriers to parent involvement are undeniable and have an overpowering presence

that is greatened in respect to minority and immigrant parents. Sustained high levels of

immigration have also led to a rapid increase in the number of children with immigrant

parents. In 2000, immigrants represented one in nine of all U.S. residents, but their

children represented one in five of all children under age 18. Children of immigrants

represented an even higher share, one in four, of all school-age children who were low-

income, defined by eligibility for the National School Lunch Program (Capps et al.,

2005). Based on current trends and the changing demographics of the United States, there

is an increased need for research specific to immigrant parent involvement in education.

Established and Previously Proposed Parent Intervention Programs (PIP)

A commonly proposed way to increase parental involvement in schools is through

parent intervention programs and by applying and making educators aware of established

parent involvement models (Auerbach & Collier, 2012; Chrispeels & Gonzalez, 2006;

Darch et al., 2004; Heinrichs et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2002; Kaminski, 2008).

Current research examining the role families play in children's education has investigated

a variety of activities or methods through which parents participate in learning. These

programs are typically characterized as parent involvement models, which are defined as

the participation of significant caregivers (including parents, grandparents, stepparents, foster parents, etc.) in activities promoting the educational process of their children in order to promote their academic and social well being (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Kim, 2012). There is a growing body of research with proposed parental involvement and parent trainings programs in existence, however there is counter research that challenges the usefulness of existing parent intervention programs and models. In 2002, Mattingly and colleagues sought to analyze 41 evaluations of interventions designed to improve the educational involvement of parents of children in grades K-12 to assess the existing evidence about the effects of parent involvement programs. The 41 evaluations were selected from 213 studies initially evaluated by the researchers because these were the only ones to report evaluation findings about outcomes of parent involvement interventions.

The researchers recognized that the information provided in the articles reviewed was often "sparse and uneven" (p. 551), and because of the assessment tools utilized, very few evaluations "could be trusted" (p. 551; Mattingly, et al, 2002). Overall, the researchers found the studies analyzed to be moderately successful with initial evaluation. Upon conclusion of in-depth analysis, the researchers found that evidence of parent program success was insufficient and programs being implemented were not "rigorous" enough to yield significant results. Mattingly et al. concluded that based on the minimal support from the studies analyzed, and despite general support for parent involvement programs, some large scale there was little to no effect on student achievement or parent or teacher behavior.

In 2011, Sheridan et al. identified a need to differentiate between parental involvement programs and those promoting family-school partnerships. Previous research had failed to operationalize the variables of interest, or failed to differentiate between general parent involvement models (focusing on structural activities that parents implement) and family-school partnership models (focusing on relationships between family members and school personnel for supporting children's learning and development) and because of this Sheridan et al. investigated the two distinctive approaches to involvement. In 2012, as a result of this and similar studies, the Children, Youth, Families, and Schools subdivision of the Nebraska Center for Research published a literature review examining parent involvement and family-school partnership programs and approaches (Kim et al., 2012). Researchers reviewed 41 randomly selected parent involvement models and family-school partnership intervention studies. Findings from the extensive review found that most studies were conducted in the United States, and the participants for most studies were middle-class parents of students defined as being under-achieving. Although the researchers found programs to be research-based and implemented with fidelity, insufficient conclusions regarding outcomes of the programs and models were identified. As a result, these involvement models served only as an addition to previously proposed models with little description or added contributions regarding student outcomes and parent perceptions of involvement. Essentially serving only as models, these studies did little to close the gap in research between proposed program implementation and potential outcomes whereas, this study focused on data rich descriptions of parent and teacher perceptions to assess program effectiveness.

The most widely cited among existing frameworks for parent involvement is

Epstein's (1987; Conners & Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2002), which includes

school-based involvement strategies (e.g., volunteering at school, communication

between parents and teachers, and involvement in school governance); home-based

involvement strategies, including engaging in educational activities at home; school

support for parenting (e.g., parent training programs); and involvement between the

school and community agencies. Additionally, the framework serving as a foundation for

Comer's (1995) School Development Program has also informed research in this field.

Comer's framework also includes school-based involvement—such as parent–teacher

conferences, volunteering and being present in the school, and participation in school

governance—and home-based involvement, such as parental reinforcement of learning at

home. Another well-known model for parent involvement was introduced in 1994 by

Grolnick and Slowiaczek. Their three-pronged framework included the following: First,

behavioral involvement including both home-based and school-based involvement

strategies, such as active connections and communication between home and school,

volunteering at school, and assisting with homework. Second, cognitive–intellectual

involvement reflects home-based involvement and includes parental role in exposing

their children to educationally stimulating activities and experiences. Finally, personal

involvement includes attitudes and expectations about school and education and

conveying the enjoyment of learning, which reflects parental socialization around the

value and utility of education (Hill & Tyson, 2009).

Immigrant and Haitian-American Parental Involvement in Education

Although research specific to Haitian American immigrant parent involvement is

scarce, for the purpose of this study, the researcher will seek to fill this gap in research and refer to research focusing on immigrant parent involvement as a whole being that often times Haitian immigrants are included in these larger scale studies (e.g., Aldous, 2006; Auerbach, 2007; Doucet, 2005; Giles, 1990; Harry, 1996; Harry, 2001; Harry, 2008; Harry et al., 2005; Harry & Kalyanpur, 2014).

With regards to Black families and immigrant families, overlap exist with barriers and motivators to involvement previously discussed. Additionally, specific to African American, and therefore it is implied Haitian-American, research commonly cites teachers feeling underprepared to effectively communicate with CLD learners and their families (Auerbach, 2007; Harry, 2008; Harry et al., 2005; Harry, et a., 1999). Dr. Beth Harry has conducted extensive research in communication and collaboration of professionals with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, parents, and families and her research serves as a foundation for the implemented parent intervention program (Harry, 1996; Harry, 2001; Harry, 2008; Harry et al., 1995; Harry et al., 2005; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Harry & Kalyanpur, 2014). Through Dr. Harry's research, themes have emerged and remained a constant with regards to communication and collaboration within CLD families, one of which is the need for effective collaboration. In her 1997 article "Leaning Forward or Bending Over Backwards: Cultural Reciprocity in Working With Families", Dr. Beth Harry wrote that when collaborating with families, professionals need to ask themselves if they are, "leaning forward or bending over backwards working with families (p. 62)", because if they are, then she asserts that they are, "leaning forward comes pretty naturally, while bending backwards seems to go against the grain and is a whole lot harder (p. 62)". Additionally, Dr. Harry goes on to

describe challenges faced by professionals when working with families who "look very different from ourselves (p. 62) ". Parallels can be drawn between these challenges and those reported by parents, and specific to Haitian-American immigrant families (Nicholas, 2008; Nicolas et al. 2009; Stepick, 1995; Stepick & Stepick, 2003).

Oftentimes, immigrant parent involvement is hindered by a lack of acceptance and sense of not being wanted, as described in the research regarding barriers to involvement. To counter these challenges, teachers, administrators, and the parents themselves, need to be educated on their roles and effectives means of collaboration. With immigrant populations, now being the majority group, as opposed to the minority group, effective communication is essential to the majority student success in South Florida, and in many parts of the United States. It is estimated, that by 2040, one in every three children in the United States will have parents' that migrated from a non-European country (Doucet, 2005).

Specific to Haitian-American immigrants, a significant challenge is posed regarding cultural assimilation, ethnic identity, and parental involvement in schooling (Doucet, 2005; Nicholas, 2008). Haitian-American immigrants oftentimes entered schools where they spoke little of the native language and therefore reported feeling "unwelcomed" or "not needed" by their child's teachers and school administration (Nicholas, 2014). Many parents also reported concerns regarding acculturation and schooling in the United States. Hagelskamp and colleagues, using data from 256 families from the longitudinal immigrant student adaptation study, including families from Haiti, analyzed quantitative descriptions of parents' responses to open-ended questions and individual growth curve analysis of adolescents' grade point average (GPA) trajectories

over five consecutive years to draw connections between parents reasoning for migrating to America and students' academic performance. Their findings support that children learned and became immersed in American culture far quicker than their parents, because of their involvement in schools, and that children whose parents more often mentioned schooling as a reason to immigrate had higher GPAs. (Hagelskamp et al., 2010).

The structured parent intervention program implemented by the researcher helped to address areas of need as described in aforementioned literature on Haitian-American immigrant parents. Research supports the high emphasis placed by Haitian-American immigrants on education, a sense of community, cultural responsibility, and family (Doucet, 2005; Nicholas, 2008; Steppick, 1998). There is a need, as is evident by the absence of literature, for a parent intervention program addressing the needs of the Haitian-American immigrant parent population in areas that already identified as being highly populated, or trending towards becoming highly population, with this particular subgroup.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher provided a review of the literature on various aspects related to parental and family involvement in the education of economically disadvantaged, culturally and linguistically diverse students. Literature regarding parental involvement defined, the importance of parental involvement, barriers preventing parental involvement, motivators contributing to involvement, currently proposed parent intervention models, and parental involvement specific to immigrant and Haitian-American parents was synthesized. Additionally, the researcher made connections between existing literature and the current study by identifying areas of overlap and areas

of need for a study researching parent and teacher perceptions of participation in a structured parent intervention program. Lastly, while seeking to identify literature with a focus on early intervention, Haitian American immigrant populations, and special education the researcher found there to be a deficit in the research.

Having identified a need for research in the field of special education specific to Haitian American populations, the researcher was able to find substantive literature in relation to CLD populations and parental involvement as an early intervention strategy.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter reviews the research methods that were used in the study. Additionally, there is a more in depth explanation of the research question and sub-questions. Methods that were used for selecting the sample subjects along with a detailed description of the setting, sample, research design and procedures are presented. Furthermore, justifications are provided as to why the research methods were most appropriate given the nature of the study. The chapter includes a description of the role of the researcher and provides background information on the researcher relevant to the topic of the research. The chapter ends with a review of the methods of data analysis that were used to organize and analyze the data collected through the research process. Additionally, the present researcher's role and background are discussed later in this chapter. Her relationships within the community where she conducted the study provided her with access and a high level of rapport with her subjects and the target population.

Currently, research exists that supports the need for parent involvement in education and proposed programs and methods to increase parent involvement. These programs, many of which are based on existing research, predominantly suggest that programs be implemented to increase parental involvement. The problem however, lies in that the program implementation is done without research and data to support the effectiveness of the proposed programs, as is evident by the absence of research on the effectiveness of these programs after having been implemented. This study's purpose was to extend the current body of knowledge on structured parent intervention programs by examining a subgroup of parents, Haitian-American immigrants, and collecting data

before, during, and after the participants' involvement in a structured parent intervention program.

Research Questions

The primary research questions that were investigated through this study identified the evolution of Haitian parent participation in a structured parent intervention program. Connections are then made to future program implementation, model development, and student academic outcomes. Specifically, the researcher answered the following questions:

1. Before, during and after involvement in a structured parent intervention program, what are Haitian American parents' perceptions concerning

    i.   their own level of involvement in their child's education?

    ii. the types of opportunities their child's school facilitated for parental involvement?

    iii. which opportunities for parental involvement are most valuable to their child's education?

2. How do parents' perceptions of their involvement compare to their child's teacher's perceptions of parental involvement prior to, during, and upon completion of their involvement in a structured parent intervention program?

3. What workshop components of a structured parent intervention program are perceived by Haitian American parents in a low-performing, urban school setting as being essential to their increased levels of involvement in their child's education prior to and upon completion of a structured parent intervention program?

Setting

This study was conducted in Broward County, the sixth largest public school system in the United States, the second largest in the state of Florida and the largest fully accredited K-12 and adult school district in the nation. This district is also among the most diverse nationally with regard to culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, currently serving students from 204 different countries, speaking 130 different languages. Data available from the district statistical highlights in 2015-2016 report that the district is currently serving over 268,000 students with 97,359 students in grades K-5 alone. In the 2015-2016 school year, Broward County Public Schools consisted of 341 total schools, excluding virtual schools, serving 268,836 students in grades K-12 and an additional 175,000 adult students. The student racial/ethnic breakdown for the population served by Broward County Public Schools consisted of the following: 50.9% White, 3.15% ethnically Hispanic, with the remaining percentage identifying as other. Black/Non-Hispanic students accounted for 40.6% of the population, the second largest group.

Haitian-American students, as reported by the county, were included in those identified as being Black/Non-Hispanic. To identify a more specific estimate of the number of Haitian students being serviced in the district, the researcher contacted the district offices directly for a report of languages being used at home by students. As of May 2015, 13% of students reported Haitian Creole as being their primary language. French was reported by 4% of the student population as their primary language. The researcher chose to include those reporting French as their home language because many Haitians identify French as their home language since it was the official language of Haiti

along with Haitian Creole. For the purpose of this study, students reporting both Haitian Creole and French were included to comprise a total of 11% of the student population as identified by the researcher as being Haitian.

The district in which this study was conducted is divided into zones consisting of a cluster of schools that includes a high school, middle schools, elementary schools and centers. The zones divide the district into 28 manageable geographic areas. When developing the innovation zone concept for the district, schools were organized in a feeder pattern or community-centered concept to promote a smooth, constant base of support, and open lines of communication to students, families, and the community. The school at which the study was conducted is one of four elementary schools in the South Plantation innovation zone of the district. Students from this elementary school feed directly into two middle schools, and ultimately one high school.

The study was restricted to one school because of several factors. First, because of the need for strong rapport with the population, the researcher selected a school site where relationships were already established between the researcher and the population spanning the course of five years. Also, an analysis of the district and area demographics found that there was a profoundly high concentration of Haitian-American families redsiding in the innovation zone selected for the study (58 %), and at the school selected for the study (42 %). This concentration of the target population provided for a larger pool of interested and qualified participants for the researcher to include in the study and the number of families needed to complete the research were attainable within the population available. Lastly, the close proximity of participants in the sample increased the commonalities amongst participants in regards to socioeconomic status and

demographics.

The school selected for the study is identified as being Title I. The basic principles of Title I state that schools with large concentrations of low-income students will receive supplemental funds to assist in meeting students' educational goals. The number of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program determines which schools are considered to be low-income schools. For an entire school to qualify for Title I funds, at least 50% of students must enroll in the free and reduced lunch program. Currently at the school selected for the study, there are 94% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Title I school are provided with additional funding by the U.S. Department of Education. In addition to these funds, students at the school selected for the study are participants in the Migrant Education program offered by the U.S. Department of Education. The Migrant Education program offers additional resources to students of migratory agricultural workers and migratory fishermen such as meals in the summers on-site, and access to healthy fruit options on a weekly basis during school hours. The selected school, also has a large population of students with an individualized education plan (IEP) and a significant number of students identified as potentially having learning disabilities, therefore being referred for the response to intervention (RTI) process to identify needs and provide intervention services.

Haitian American parents of students with identified exceptionalities were the exclusive focus of the study, and therefore, the only members of the group. The researcher made it a requirement that all parents participating in the structured parent intervention program have a student identified with a disability or in the identification process (e.g., students from intensive pre-K programs waiting to be staffed into

specialized programs at the Kindergarten level), and also allowed for the inclusion of a parent with a child identified as being gifted and currently receiving services through an Educational Plan (EP). The student on an EP was previously diagnosed with a developmental disability and received services for language impairment when he first began in the public school system. The researcher feels it is important to address the opportunities for parental involvement as it related to exceptional student education services in education and the classroom. The sample selected for this study allowed for the targeting of at risk populations of students commonly overrepresented in special education.

Parent Participants

Participants were purposefully selected for this study to generate information rich data on the evolution of parent perceptions of their involvement in their child's education while participating in a structured parent intervention program. The size of the sample of parents who participated in the workshops was five minority immigrant parents. For this study, the researcher selected all five participants, all of who identified as being Haitian parents of children between the ages of five and eight currently receiving ESOL services in the selected Title I public school. Of these five, all five identified as being parents of children with a diagnosed disability or exceptionality. The criteria for participation in the study, for these five participants, was the following: (a) the parent has a child in a primary elementary school grade (K-2), (b) the child is receiving free or reduced lunch while attending a Title I public school, (c) the parent is an immigrant to the U.S. from Haiti within the past 20 years, (d) the families native language and language predominantly spoken at home is Haitian-Creole or French, (e) the child's current ESOL

classification is an A1 or A2, (f) the child is currently eligible for and receiving exceptional student education, and (g) the parent agrees to attend as many workshops as life situations and time permit throughout the 5-month/10 workshop duration of the program.

To determine a student's ESOL classification, schools in Broward County, and throughout Florida, administer the Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA). CELLA is a four-skill language proficiency assessment that is designed to test students in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the English language and scores are then used to determine an ESOL classification for all students. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will only be including students classified as being A1s (Non-English Speaker or minimal knowledge of English/ Demonstrates very little understanding/ Cannot communicate meaning orally/ Unable to participate in regular classroom instruction) and A2s (Limited English Speaker/ Demonstrates limited understanding/ Communicates orally in English with one or two word responses; FLDOE, 2009).

These students were also identified by the Florida Assessment in Reading (FAIR), baseline assessment for the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year, as performing below grade level in reading, with the exception of the one gifted student included in the study. Students in grades K-2 are assessed three times per school year using FAIR in the following areas: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Text Comprehension, and Orthographic Skills (Spelling). Based upon student performance on the FAIR, teachers guide their instruction and schools are made more aware of student probability of reading success.

Information regarding the criteria for participants was shared with the school administrators and ESOL coordinator. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested, "…find people whose job it is to monitor [a specific] arena and ask them with whom to speak" (p. 66). Therefore, these criteria were then used by the researcher, in partnership with the school administrators and ESOL coordinator, to identify and extend invitations to all families meeting the outlined criteria. Each of the families who responded and met the criteria received an invitation to participate from the researcher in addition to receiving an open-ended inventory on parental involvement perspectives. In total, 41 invitations were distributed to families in May of 2015. Of those 41 invitations, 16 interested families responded, of the 16 families that responded, nine confirmed that they were able to make the time commitment. Being that the study is focused not only on parent participants, but also on the teachers of their children, the nine who confirmed ultimately became five when teacher participants were confirmed. The change from nine to five participants resulted in the interest in participating on the part of the teachers of the children. Being that only three teachers confirmed their ability to participate, the researcher had to narrow the parent participants accordingly. Participants completed a demographic survey prior to commencement of the intervention program to provide the researcher with background information.

After receiving permission from the school district in May 2015, a process which took significantly longer than anticipated, successfully completing the district and Florida International University IRB process, and prior to the commencement of the conclusion of the 2014-2015 school year, the researcher worked closely with the administrators, ESOL coordinator, and Title I liaison at the selected school. Together, they identified all

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families that met the selection criteria outlined above for potential research participants.

Letters informing these parents about the parent intervention program and their invitation

to participate in the workshops were sent home with the students once Broward County

Public Schools' IRB clearance was granted. Additionally, these parents received in-

person and phone call invitations to participate in the structured parent intervention

program, as well as reminders to return paperwork to the researcher.

Based on the parental response to the aforementioned invitation, the next form

that was sent home was an open-ended, parent questionnaire presented in English, Creole,

and French, depending on the language identified by participants as being their home

language. This questionnaire provided the researcher with demographic information

concerning the participants (e.g. name, age, time spent residing in the United States,

profession, level of schooling completed, number of children; Table 1). Additionally,

information specific to their views on parental involvement in their child's education (e.g.

the types of involvement they currently participate in, involvement they hope to

participate in, reasons for participating; Table 2) was provided. The inventory was

developed in English and translated into the students' home languages using the on-site

translators who collaborated with the researcher throughout the study. Participants were

probed about motivators contributing to involvement, barriers preventing involvement,

personal thoughts on parental involvement, and cultural norms regarding involvement.

Additionally, they were asked, in an open-ended format, to describe areas they feel would

be beneficial if presented in workshop form by the researcher (e.g. written

communication, mastery of the English language, school protocols and procedures). To

contend with barriers associated with parent literacy, the forms were also accompanied

by a phone call or face-to-face conversation with the researcher and/or translator. The open-ended questionnaire did not utilize any type of scale or rating system. All responses provided by the participants were in their own words and reflective of their own experiences. When communicating with potential participants, the researcher explained the rationale for the study, the possible use of the information and how she would maintain the confidentiality of the information obtained and of the identity of the participants themselves.

Once all preliminary forms were returned to the researcher (interest in participating, a commitment form where participants are agreeing to attend as many workshops as possible throughout the 5-month period during which the study was conducted, the open-ended questionnaire, and signed agreements from the teachers of the participants children to work collaboratively with the researcher throughout the process), formal pre-program interviews were scheduled with the selected participants and the teachers of their children. The format for the interviews in this study was semi-structured. Interviews were conducted in a location and at a time of the participants choosing; oftentimes, this location was the home of the participant, the child's school, or the local public library. The only individuals present for the interviews were the researcher and the participant and the translator when requested. Parents also had the option of having their children or a translator of their choosing present to increase levels of comfort. The interviews were conducted using an interview protocol and question bank to guide discussion (Appendix A). The most structured of all the interviews were the first interviews as a result of participants' initial unwillingness to volunteer information without maximum prompting. Although the researcher had a question bank to use if

needed, the interviews were predominantly dependent on probing and allowing the participant to guide discussion. Interview questions for the question bank were developed by the researcher and were the result of the following: an extensive literature review, participation in workshops and meetings with participants, and observations of the participants in the workshops. All questions were designed to elicit in-depth responses from the participants and lend themselves to subsequent probing. The researcher used minimal, if any, yes/no response questions, and only if necessary.

Participant #1: "Noel"

Noel is a 24 year-old single mother who moved to South Florida 3 years ago with her young son. She lives in a one-bedroom apartment with her eight-year old son, father, and mother. She is the sole breadwinner in the family and works full-time at a local Dunkin' Donuts. Noel's son was recently diagnosed with an intellectual disability after extensive academic and behavioral concerns raised red flags at his school. Noel doesn't fully understand what her son's 49 IQ means as is evidenced by statements she has made in interviews such as, " I know he's slow, but he will catch up it just takes him a little longer". Noel reports that she doesn't understand what the IQ stands for and the cognitive limitations her son has:

> He's a good boy. A good, good boy. He tries, everyday he tries his very best. Sometimes, his best just ain't enough. Sometimes my best ain't enough too. Sometimes we just can't do some things. He's real real good at art. He loves coloring, and building things. He wants to be a builder when he grows up. I know he can be anything he wants. When I went to that meeting, I signed all the papers and listened and nodded, but I don't think they know him well enough yet. They'll see what he can do.

Noel loves her son unconditionally, and often during interviews would refer to him as her, "forever baby boy". Noel trusts the public school system and her son's teacher implicitly,

however, she reported sometimes, "worrying about if she should do more".

Up until mid-way through the research implementation, Noel's son has been educated in a general education, public school classroom only receiving services for a speech impediment so minor the researcher wouldn't have known it existed had she not read his individualized education plan (IEP). Being that he was in general education, Noel's son was required to take all of the same assessments and complete the same academic learning tasks as his cognitively higher functioning peers. Noel always knew there was something "not right", but she never knew how to go about addressing it with the schools. She recalls attending all of the meetings they held for her son, but would nod and smile and then sign where they asked her to. Noel attended all workshops and is the participant whom for the duration of this study most utilized a familiar female translator who worked directly with her and her son.

Participant #2: "Michael"

Michael is a 43 year-old father of four, three sons and one daughter ranging in ages from two to 17. Michael earned a Bachelor's degree from a university in Haiti, and worked as a professor in Haiti for 10 years before moving to Florida 13 years ago with his family. Currently, Michael's work is based out of Haiti and is reported to be in the field of fashion merchandising. Being that the home base for his employer is in Haiti, Michael commutes back and forth on an almost weekly basis. Michael describes himself as a, "typical Haitian head of household". His wife does not work in the traditional sense of the word, however, she is kept quite busy caring for their four children. When probed about his wife's participation in the children's education, Michael stated, "I am the only one who communicates with the teachers because my English is much better than hers".

When reviewing documents, the researcher found that Michael in fact was the only parent to ever sign an IEP or attend a meeting for his five year-old daughter who was recently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. About his only daughter, and only child with a diagnosed exceptionality, Michael had the following to say:

> She is my princess. She means the entire world to me. I know she needs the extra help and although I wasn't on board for the services when they were first offered, I have come to realize that she needs more than what I can do. My boys never had any problems in school. Maybe some behavior problems, but I was able to iron those out straight away. My princess is the only one who has needed the extra help. I think it is because of her mom or her mom's side. Or maybe because she is a woman. I don't know, but I know she can do more than the tests or the papers say and I know I can help her do more.

Michael did not utilize a translator at any point throughout the research study. He attended all workshops and completed any extension activities requested by the researcher. At no point in the research process did the researcher have any communication with Michael's wife; he served as the "family representative" and assured the researcher he would share the information with his wife to increase her involvement as well. Not only did the researcher have no communication with Michael's wife, his daughter's teacher also reported never having spoken to or meeting Michael's wife throughout the duration of the study.

Participant #3: "Rose"

Rose is a 39 year-old mother of three boys between the ages of seven and 11. One of her sons is identified as having a significant learning disability and the other two of her sons are identified as meeting the eligibility criteria for the gifted program through the county. For the study, the researcher focused on Rose's involvement in the education of her youngest son, age 7, who has an educational plan (EP) for giftedness. Rose has lived in Florida for 10 years and is currently completing a program in nursing. She has worked

as a volunteer school nurse for the past five years and reports that although she tries to be involved, she "could always do more". Rose's son's teacher during the study is the same teacher who had her son two years prior for kindergarten. In kindergarten, her son has such severe behaviors that he put in the response to intervention (RTI) process for behavior. Rose was told that, "there was something wrong with him" and that she needed to do more. In regards to her seven year old, this is what Rose had to say:

> He is a very sweet, active, kind boy. He is always happy, but he has a lot going on at home. His father left us when he was young and he never really understood why. He blames himself a lot and that makes him behave badly sometimes. Behaving badly doesn't mean you're a bad boy. He was misunderstood. I knew he was bright and when he was found to qualify for the gifted program, I knew it would help make his tantrums less frequent. He just needed to be challenged more. At home, he is the hardest one for me to help, but that's why I need as much help as I can get for him from the school and his teacher.

Rose did not utilize a translator at any point throughout the study and she attended all workshops. During the study, Rose reported that the boys' father wanted to become more involved in their education and because of this, he too attended a few workshops.

Participant #4: "Trudy"

Trudy is a 45 year-old mother to one son, age six, who was diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder a few months prior to the commencement of the research study. Trudy has lived in Florida for the past eight years and had the least amount of formal education out of all participants, middle school in Haiti. Trudy is a single mother and the language predominantly spoken at home is Haitian-Creole. Trudy's son is an interesting case because he was first identified as having and emotional behavioral disorder (EBD). However, after being placed in a special program for students with EBD for kindergarten, Trudy was then told that he no longer was identified as having EBD and instead

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presented as a child with autism spectrum disorder. Although she was incredibly

confused, Trudy had, "no choice", but to accept what she was being told by her son's

school and sign the paperwork agreeing that he be placed in a special program for

students with similar needs. Almost immediately after being transferred to the special

program for Autism at the school where the research was conducted, it became evident

that Trudy's son would be an ideal candidate for servicing in the general education

population. At the beginning of the research study, Trudy needed guidance on what all

the changes meant for her son and utilized the workshops as an opportunity to prepare her

for her sons transition to general education. Trudy reported the following:

> I don't know what any of this means for him. I know he would be in small classes anymore because they told me that much, but I also know he still is going to need extra help. I want to know how he's going to get it. I want to make sure he does better than me. I need him to do better than me because I know he can. Right now, I am not even sure exactly what he has or does not have or what it means. I just know he needs help, but the school told me he's going to get it. I trust them.

Trudy used a translator at all interviews, and although she reported having, "good

comfort" with the researcher, she wanted to be sure that the researcher understood

everything she said.

Participant #5: "Jean"

Jean is a 32 year-old widowed mother of one who was relocated to Florida after losing

everything in the earthquake that devastated Haiti on January 12, 2010. Jean and her eight

year-old son, identified last year as having a significant learning disability, live with

friends and Jean is currently unemployed, but hoping to find a job soon. The language

predominantly spoken at home is Haitian-Creole, and Jean, although she has concerns

about her son's speech, was told that because of language they, "aren't looking at speech

or language until he has spent more time in the U.S.". Jean is confused about this because

although Haitian-Creole is spoken at home, her son predominantly speaks English with his peers, teachers, and friends in the neighborhood. Jean reports having gone to school in Haiti, but she did not pursue higher education because she began working in her family's business at a young age. Although she feels there wasn't as much of an emphasis on education in Haiti, she had the following to say about her son's education in Florida:

> He is learning so much more than he ever would have in Haiti. Although I miss home and it saddens me to think of why we had to move, I know it was a blessing in disguise because he is learning so much. He loves to learn and he loves to work. That is how I know he will be successful. He has it in him I just need to learn how to help him. Also, how to help myself so I can better help him. I am going to make sure we turn a bad situation into a good one.

Jean attended all the workshops and worked closely with the researcher throughout the process outside of the workshops. Jean began the research study unemployed and by the end of the study implementation was able to obtain employment.

Teacher Participants

Although there were five parent participants, the children of the participants were concentrated in three classes: one kindergarten class (Ms. Red), one first grade class (Ms. Green) and one second grade class (Ms. Blue). It is important to note that because the study took place from May 2015- September 2015, the three aforementioned teachers were the students' teachers during 6-week extended school year (ESY) and coincidentally, they were also their teachers the previous year (2014-2015 school year). By selecting these three teacher participants, the researcher was able to gain insight into how the teachers understood the participating parents' participation in the program.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

	Sex	Age	Time Spent Living in the U.S.	Highest Level of Education	Age and Eligibility of Child Meeting Criteria	Relationship Status	Employment Status	Number and Ages of Children	Primary Language Spoken
P1 Noel	F	24	3 years	Middle School in Haiti	8/ Male/ Intellectually Disabled and Language Impaired	Single-Never married	Employed at Dunkin' Donuts	**1 child** Male/ 8 years old	Haitian-Creole
P2 Michael	M	43	18 years/ but he lives here part-time because business is in Haiti	Bachelor's Degree	5/ Female/ Developmentally Delayed when the study began and then found eligible for Autism Spectrum Disorder and Language Impaired during the study	Married living with spouse	Former teacher in Haiti, currently works as a fashion merchandiser for a company based out of Haiti	**4 children** Male/ 2 years old Female/ 5 years old Male/ 13 years old Male/ 17 years old	Haitian-Creole
P3 Rose	F	39	10 years	Bachelor's Degree (Currently in Nursing School)	7/Male/ Gifted	Single-Divorced	School nurse	**3 children** All males 7 years old 10 years old 11 years old	Haitian-Creole
P4 Trudy	F	45	8 years	Elementary School in Haiti	6/ Male/ Autism Spectrum Disorder	Married-Living with spouse	Unemployed	**1 child** Male/ 6 years old	Haitian-Creole
P5 Jean	F	32	6 years/ Were re-located with the earthquake in Haiti	Middle School in Haiti	8/ Male/ Specific Learning Disabled	Widowed	Unemployed	**1 child** Male/8 years old	Haitian-Creole

Table 2

Initial Parent Requests for Workshops

	What workshop topics would you benefit from during your participation in the Structured Parent Intervention Program (please list at least 3)?
P1	• Something to help me get a better job or go back to school • Something to help me understand the meetings better • Something to help me know who to talk to when I want to help • Something to help me with learning English
P2	• Community resources • Understanding different disabilities • Ways to help with ---'s routine
P3	• Enrichment opportunities • County-wide opportunities for involvement • How to help my sons prepare over the summer
P4	• IEP meetings and all the testing information, how can I know what they mean? • How can I help --- with homework? • What can I do to learn more myself to be better for him? • Where can I take him for help when he's not in school that isn't expensive?
P5	• Resources for counseling to help him with what happened in Haiti • How to help him with the computer work he has assigned to him • Ways I can help his teacher and his school • Community events and resources • Where can I go to learn to better speak English?

Procedure

The primary source of data collection was interviews, and the researcher also kept observations of participants responses to workshop topics to idenfity any non-verbal reactions that would be relevant to the study. Parents of students and the teachers working directly with the students were interviewed using a notebook to record body language and observations as well as a digital tape recorder. Interviews were conducted at three different times throughout participation in the structured parent intervention program: before commencement of the program (in May 2015), mid-way through completion of the program (in July 2015), and upon successful completion of the program (in September/October 2015). Similar protocol and questions were used in all three interviews; however, the responses of the participant influenced the direction taken by the interview. By using identical protocols in all interviews, the researcher was able to to identify parent and teacher participants' growth and development throughout their participation in the program and study.

Prior to beginning interviews and participation, a questionnaire was completed by the parent participants in which they explained the language they felt most comfortable being interviewed in, amongst other areas. The language identified in this questionnaire was the language predominantly used in interviews. Being that the researcher does not speak Haitian-Creole or French fluently, a translator, a pre-determined member of the faculty at the selected school site with whom the participants already have strong rapport and reported high levels of comfort, was present at all interviews and assisted in the translating to ensure that the responses of participants were being clearly communicated

and understood. Based on the combination of male and female participants, and participant feedback, the researcher worked with both a male and female translator for the duration of the study. If a language preference was not identified, the interviews were conducted in English with the researcher and the recordings of these interviews were shared with a translator for clarification purposes only. All interviews were transcribed and coded manually with case notes being recorded at each session.

Utilizing Epstein's model as a framework and participant feedback, the following 10 topics were selected for the workshops (Figure 1): Understanding the IEP Process, Working Collaboratively to Develop Quality IEP Goals, Your Role as an Educator, English as a Second Language, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Resume Writing and Interview Preparation, Working Collaboratively with your Child's Teacher, Afterschool and Summer Opportunities, The Importance of Promoting Healthy Habits in the Home, and Internet Resources for Academic Success. Although the foundation for the program was guided by Epstein's research, the strategies implemented in the workshops were those of cooperative learning, more specifically the aforementioned Kagan strategies.
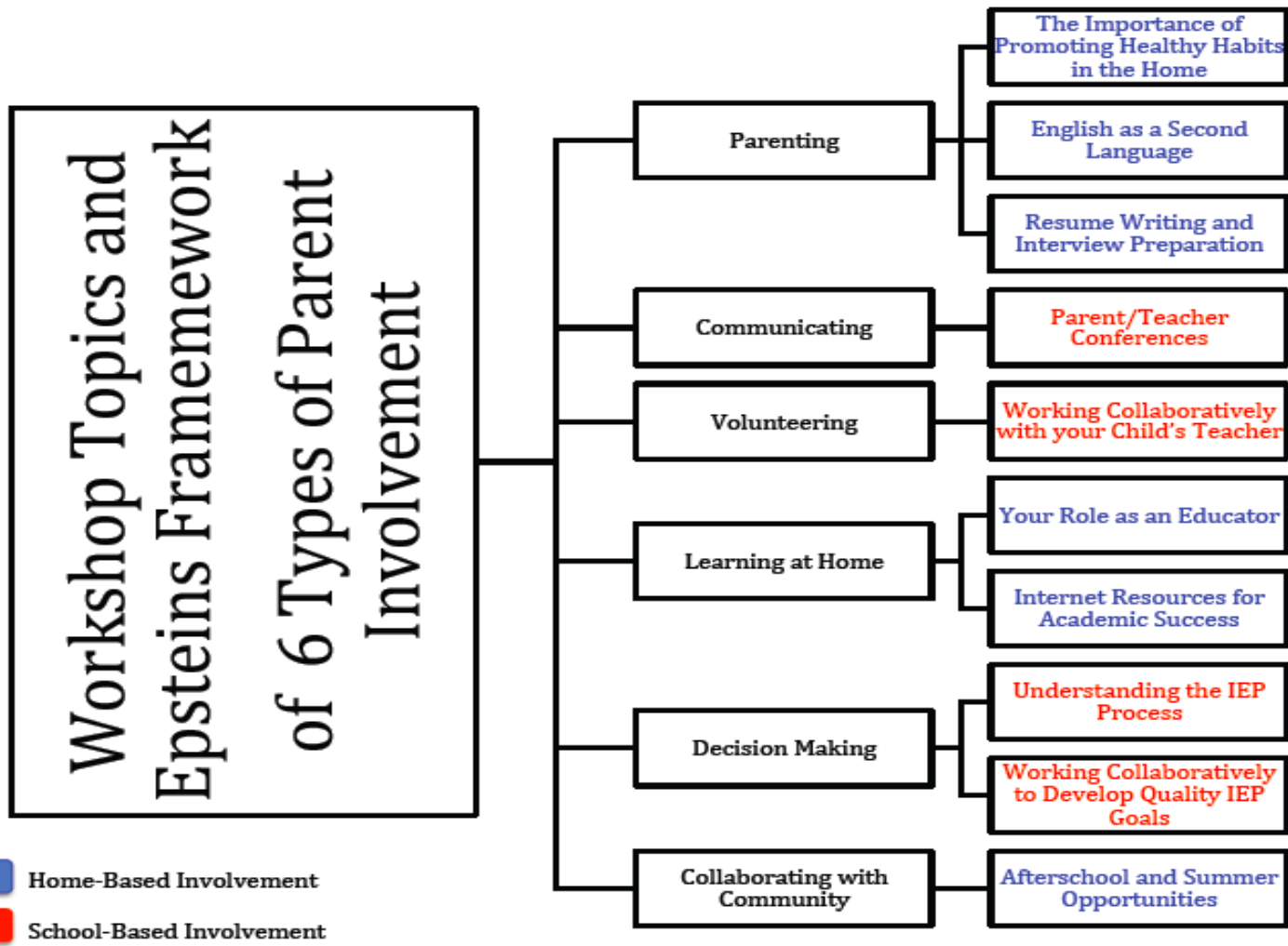
Figure 1. Visual representation showing the methods used for development and organization of workshop topics for the Structured Parent Intervention Program.

Workshops were held twice a month from May of 2015 through September of 2015. Each workshop lasted two and a half hours with a 30-minute session at the conclusion for questions and extension activities entirely guided by the response of the participants. The workshops, although developed using Epstein's model, employed cooperative learning strategies, more specifically those outlined in the Kagan approach to cooperative learning.

The Kagan strategies, known as structures, are research-based instructional strategies that have a track record of improving academic achievement and social outcomes of participants in both classrooms and professional development environments (Ellis, 2005; Kagan, 1989; Kagan & Kagan, 1994; Moore, 2011; Slavin & Davis, 2006). The basic principles of good cooperative learning, according to the Kagan approach, are that (a) the learning task promotes teamwork, (b) each learner is held accountable for their individual contribution, (c) learners participate about equally, and (d) many learners are engaged at once. Kagan approaches to learning require that participants be active contributors to the learning process and be engaged in non-traditional methods of cooperative learning to increase attainment of concepts or skills.

For the scope of this study, the researcher utilized these strategies to assist parent participants in understanding and implementing Epstein's model for parental involvement. Although traditionally this approach to learning has been implemented in the classroom, being that these workshops were learning environments, it was anticipated that results would mirror those of participants in varying educational environments.

All workshops had one primary focus and several activities related to the topic. Although most workshops were conducted on-site at the selected school, the researcher

held, on average, one workshop per month at an off-site location more appropriate for the topic being presented.

Research Design

In this study, the researcher applied a qualitative research methodology of a descriptive case study to answer the research questions asked. The research design was a "all encompassing method...a comprehensive research strategy" (Yin, 2014, p.14) that allowed the researcher to obtain a detailed account of the perceptions of the parent and teacher participants throughout the course of the 5-month long intervention program. For the scope of this study, the researcher used the case study application of "describing an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurs" (Yin, 2014, p. 15). Findings from this study were then used to identify and establish the foundation for a structured parent intervention program that can be used in varying settings, yet yielding similar results. By establishing commonalities amongst groups of participants (i.e. immigrant status, time residing in the United States, acquisition of the English language, socioeconomic class), the researcher was able to make connections and draw comparisons to establish the strength of this pilot study as a foundation for future implications with varying populations.

Reasoning behind selecting Haitian immigrant parents for the scope of this dissertation is closely tied to the growing population of Haitians residing in the area where the research is being conducted. Although Hispanic immigrants would have also been valid based upon this reasoning, the researcher decided to not focus on this particular subgroup because of the evident need for research related to Haitian immigrants in the existing body of literature. The questions that were asked by the

researcher provided insight as to parent perceptions concerning their participation and how these perceptions were similar or different to those of their children's teachers.

All participants were asked similar, if not identical questions, the intent of which were to elicit substantive responses. Being that the participants guided questioning, there were variations from one interview to the next. For clarity of elaboration, the researcher probed the participants responses, and ensured that interviews were conducted in a manner, which provide participants with optimal levels of comfort (Seidman, 2012). To ensure participants were comfortable, interviews were conducted in varying settings and dependent upon requests made by participants (e.g. in homes, at area restaurants, at community centers, etc.). Additionally, no time constraints were placed on interviews. All interviews were conducted in a manner that allowed for open conversation and the further development of rapport between the participants and the researcher. The format of the interviews was informal, in hopes that participants were open and at ease throughout the conversations. Because this type of information has yet to be obtained previously with this particular population, open-ended questions (Creswell, 2011) in a semi-structured interview format provided opportunities to elaborate or ask probing questions as necessary. Interviews were conducted at three pre-determined points during the study, and workshops were strategically facilitated at specific points during implementation to increase exposure contributing to participant responses (Figure 2).

Research supports that this type of interview process allowed the researcher to collect data concerning participants' emotions and feelings regarding parent involvement in a comfortable and open environment (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 2007). The interviews focused on parent perceptions of perceived benefits of participation in the

Pre-SPIP
(May 2015)

Mid-SPIP
(July 2015)

Post-SPIP
(October 2015)

- Identify potential participants with school-based professionals
- Invite potential participants
- Host informational session for interested participants
- Gather baseline information on selected participants
  o Demographics
  o Current involvement feedback
  o Workshop topics of interest
- Conduct initial interviews with selected participants
- Facilitate the following workshops (2nd and 4th weeks of the month):
  o English as a Second Language
  o The Importance of Promoting Healthy Habits in the Home

- In the second month of implementation, facilitate the following workshops:
  o Your Role as an Educator
  o Afterschool and Summer Opportunities

- Facilitate the following workshops:
  o Resume Writing and Interview Preparation
  o Internet Resources for Academic Success
- Conduct mid-SPIP interviews with all participants

- In the fourth and fifth month of implementation, facilitate the following workshops:
  o Resume Writing and Interview Preparation
  o Internet Resources for Academic Success
  o Parent/Teacher Conferences
  o Working Collaboratively with your Child's Teacher
  o Understanding the IEP Process
  o Working Collaboratively to Develop Quality IEP Goals

- After all 10 workshops have been facilitated, conduct post-SPIP interviews with all participants

Figure 2. Flowchart showing the timeline used for the SPIP and the points during implementation when workshops were conducted.

workshops and teacher perceptions of perceived benefits of parents' participation in the

workshops. The open-ended structure of the interview allowed participants to use their

own words (Seidman, 2013) to describe how they perceive their involvement in the

structured parent intervention program and their child's education. Specifically, parents

were asked about what they are doing and have done in the program and what their

thoughts and feelings are about what they are doing and have done in the program. It is

important to note that the researcher interviewed participants at what were deemed

critical points during participation in the SPIP (Figure 3). The researcher included data

collection informal conversations that may arise with participants throughout the course

of the study. Although these interactions were not formally transcribed or recorded, the

researcher reflected upon these impromptu exchanges and analyzed the data to include

alongside any existing themes.

Once the interviews of both the participants and teachers were completed, the

researcher transcribed the tapes. All interviews conducted primarily in Haitian Creole or

French were transcribed by the translator present at the time of the interview. The

researcher retained the services of an additional translator fluent in Haitian Creole and

French to translate. Although more than one translator was used for the study, to increase

the accuracy of transcribed information and to increase the reliability of data obtained,

the translator present during the interviews provided a final review of all completed

transcripts.

Data Sources

To increase reliability of data collected, the researcher used data triangulation

(Patton, 2002). Triangulation is a method used in qualitative research that involves

crosschecking multiple data sources and collection procedures to evaluate the extent to which all evidence converges (Suter, 2011). Data sources used for determining findings included transcribed interviews with participants and the teachers working directly with the children of the participants. The benefits of triangulation include "increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem" (Thurmond, 2001, p. 254). These benefits largely result from the diversity and quantity of data that can be used for analysis. Additionally, the researcher used data collected through her own observation journal and field notes related to all aspects of the study including, but not limited to, the workshops, interviews with participants, and interviews with teachers.

Interviews

Parent and teacher participants engaged in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with the researcher at three points throughout their participation in the structured parent intervention program. All interview questions were open-ended and selected from a pre-determined list of questions developed by the researcher using the information from the initial parent inventories, feedback from participants, and the topics addressed through the workshops. The interviews were constructed with a combination of more-structured and less-structured questions (Seidman, 2013). Although questions varied depending on participant feedback, a set of five questions were consistently asked in all three interviews. These main questions allowed for the researcher to identify trends in the data and shifts in the perceptions of participants throughout their participation in the program. An interview protocol, the aforementioned five questions and a pre-determined set of

sample questions which the researcher used only as needed can be found in Appendix A.

Digital voice-recorders were used to record each of the participant's interviews. As per the participants' request, translators were present at some of the interviews, predominantly those at the beginning stages of implementation. In the event of a translator being needed, the researcher asked all questions and did all probing through the translator. Probing questions were used to give the participants an opportunity to clarify any information and to elaborate on areas they would like to further explore (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Probes were also used as an exploratory tool with the participant to gain deeper insight as to the participants' perceptions (Seidman, 2013).

After discussing Haitian religious beliefs with Dr. Tekla Nicholas, the researcher was able to anticipate the likelihood of challenges associated with recording the voices of participants because of common religious beliefs held by those of Haitian descent that shine a negative light on voice recording (personal communication, May 1, 2014). In anticipation of this, the researcher was sure to take thorough notes throughout the interviews to ensure that as much detail was being included in the notes as possible. However, when the interviews began none of the participants had concerns about their voices being recorded. The researcher chose to still complete a journal with notes from the interviews to note any significant body language or gestures that could contribute to the study. Additionally, the researcher allowed participants the option of writing responses to questions they feel more comfortable responding to in writing than verbally. Again, this was not utilized throughout the interviews, by the choice of the participants.

In the same conversation, Dr. Nicholas advised the researcher about possible cultural challenges that the researcher may face regarding the use of a translator of

Haitian descent. In Haitian culture, it is common for individuals to feel less inclined to be honest and open when they fear being judged by members of their community. If the literacy of the participants is low, it is likely that they will feel as though they are going to be looked down upon by translator viewed as being more educated (personal communication, May 1, 2014). Based on this information and the possibility of this happening, the researcher was flexible with the use of a translator, meaning, if the selected translator was not well received by the participants, the researcher had translators not of Haitian ancestry available to assist with translations. Additionally, the researcher allowed the participants the option of using their own children as translators for clarification purposes during interviews. Although this is a less traditional approach to translator services, the increased level of comfort of the participants was viewed by the researcher to contribute to more authentic responses, which would in turn provide for substantive data. The most commonly utilized translators were a male and female educator from the students' school with whom the parents already had some rapport.

Field Notes/Observations

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used Corbetta's (2003) suggestion of observing (a) the physical setting, (b) the participants and their roles and tasks, (c) formal interactions, (d) informal interactions, and (e) the social individuals' own interpretations (by informal conversation and formal interviews). Field notes were kept throughout the sample selection process, before, during, and after all structured parent intervention program workshops and interviews, and at the completion of the program to assess changes in parent perceptions through program implementation. Use of the field notes allowed for the researcher to record and recall specifics of the events being studied and

provided the researcher's immediate reactions to events (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

All field notes were handwritten in a journal and then transferred to a word processing document. Once the notes were typed, the researcher hand-coded the field notes and observations to identify common themes and trends. In addition to providing an additional level of insight, the journals kept for field notes and observations provided the researcher with an audit trail for validity purposes in the study (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data collection and analysis proceeded simultaneously and ongoing findings affected what types of data were collected and how they were collected. Making notes, referred to as memos (Suter, 2011), as the data collection and analysis proceeded is one important data analysis strategy that was utilized by the researcher. All interview transcripts were analyzed using a coding process in order to sort, compare, and analyze the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). All transcripts were coded independently and manually using color codes determined by the researcher. Although coding by the researcher was done solo, as recommended by the 2008 Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers, the researcher used stakeholder checks to validate findings and increase accuracy (Suter, 2011). Additionally, some coding on translated interviews was done collaboratively with the translators that transcribed those particular interviews.

Ezzy (2002) recommends several strategies for monitoring your accuracy and progress while still in the field, all of which the researcher implemented. To assess the trustworthiness of her accounts, the researcher did the following: check findings and analysis with participants and/or translators themselves (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Suter, 2011; Yin, 2014), initially code while transcribing, and maintain a reflection and

observation journal with "copious analytic memos" (Ezzy, 2002). Levels for coding were identical regardless of methods used and were as follows: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Chan, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Tufford, 2012).

While open coding, the researcher broke down, compared, and categorized data (Suter, 2011). Throughout the axial coding process, the researcher grouped the open codes so that their categories (and properties) related to each other in some analytical way (Suter). Lastly, through selective coding, the "most theoretical level of coding" (Suter, p. 354), the researcher selected a core category and identified relationships between this category and others identified. Qualitative data analysis often follows a general inductive approach (as opposed to a hypothetical-deductive one) in the sense that explicit theories are not imposed on the data in a test of a specific hypothesis. Rather, the data are allowed to "speak for themselves" by the emergence of conceptual categories and descriptive themes (Suter, p. 346). The goal of the researcher through these levels of coding was to identify themes that emerged in the data and led to conclusions on the basis of interpretation (Lockyer, 2008). See Figure 3.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher, a Cuban-American educator having previously taught in the selected school for 5 years, conducted all the interviews, although assistance was provided as needed by a native speaker of Haitian Creole. The researcher has lived her entire life in the United States and is a product of Broward County Public Schools. She is the daughter of Cuban-immigrant parents and is a first generation college student. Although she does not have the first-hand experience as an immigrant, her parents' immigration to the U.S. has significantly impacted the emphasis placed upon education in

Themes

Intrinsic Factors

Extrinsic Factors

| Parental Barriers/ Motivators | Higher Level Axial Coding Categories | Parent Response to Participation in Structured Parent Intervention Program | School/ Community Based Influences | Higher Level Axial Coding Categories | Cultural Barriers/ Motivators |

Parental Barriers/Motivators
- o Availability of time
- o Marital status
- o Employment status
- o Demands placed by other children
- o Location
- o Transportation
- o Levels of education
- o Desire for a better life for their kids
- o English language acquisition
- o Priorities

Parent Response to Participation in Structured Parent Intervention Program
- o Length of workshops
- o Investment in the program
- o "Buy-In" to the program
- o Differentiation to meet parent needs
- o Attendance at the workshops
- o Relationships formed through participation
- o Confidence
- o Belonging to a whole
- o Feeling wanted
- o Understanding their role

School/Community Based Influences
- o Rapport with teacher
- o Demeanor of administration
- o Opportunities for involvement
- o Access to resources
- o Knowledge of resources
- o Invitations to be involved
- o Relationships within the community
- o Levels of safety and comfort in their home

Cultural Barriers/Motivators
- o Ways they were raised
- o Education in Haiti
- o Clearly defined roles in education
- o Language
- o Access to education
- o Understanding of disabilities
- o Presence of generations within the home
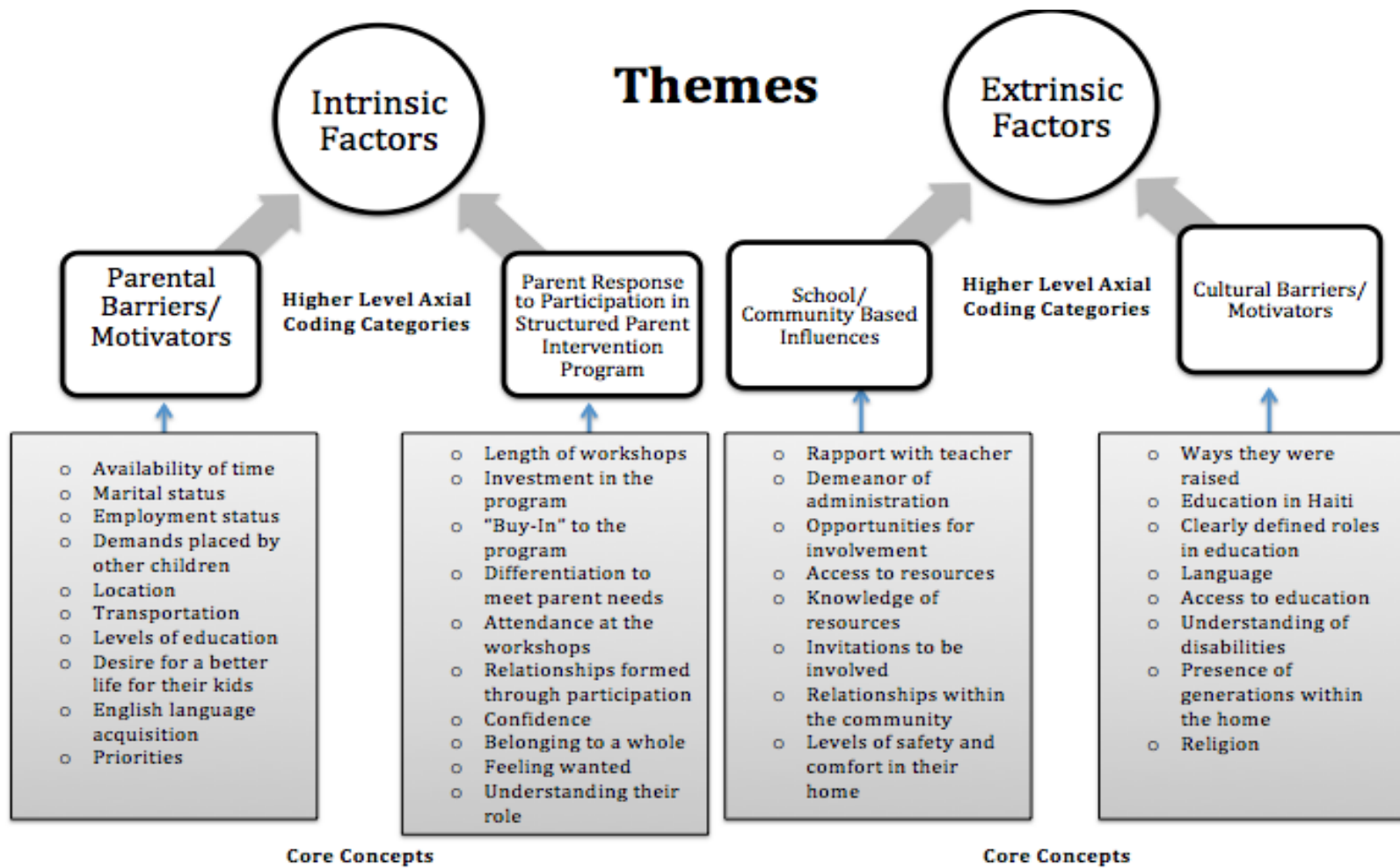- o Religion

Core Concepts

Core Concepts

Figure 3. Flowchart showing the way in which data was organized by the researcher.

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her home. Additionally, the researcher has always experienced first hand issues associated with assimilation. Her parents have prioritized the need for keeping Cuban culture strongly instilled in their family, while learning that the society in which we live will undoubtedly influence all aspects of our life. Her formal expertise is that she has a Master's degree in special education and has taught her entire career in urban, Title I, high-needs schools servicing at-risk populations of students. In her time with the district, the researcher has worked as an educator, parent trainer, translator, and advocate for students with special needs. Through her involvement at Florida International University, the researcher has taught pre-service teachers as an adjunct professor in the College of Education. Affiliations with the Council for Exceptional Children and the Florida Council for Exceptional Children have provided the researcher with opportunities to present at conferences at the local and national level on the topics of children with disabilities in urban educational settings. Although the researcher has ties to the community in which she conducted the research, in an effort to eliminate bias, she did not interview any participants whose children she has previously taught or with whom she has a personal relationship.

Being that the researcher does not have a history of conducting research within the Haitian community, after conversations with Dr. Nicholas, she anticipated challenges to penetrating this tightly knit community (personal communication, May 1, 2014). In an attempt to increase levels of trust between participants and the researcher, the researcher chose to work in a school where she has established a strong rapport with parents and students for many years prior to conducting the study. Additionally, the researcher was as transparent as possible with participants throughout the study and flexible to ensure that

the needs of the participants are a priority. Lastly, the researcher retained Dr. Nicholas and Dr. Alex Steppick, both of who have extensive histories and ties to the Haitian American communities in South Florida, as consultants for the duration of the study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the framework for the research study and described the procedures that were used to obtain information. Additionally, the researcher has described how the data were disaggregated and analyzed. Grounded in the research questions and purpose of the study, this chapter provided a detailed description of the setting, sample, procedure, research design, data analysis, and data sources. The chapter outlined who the participants were and how these individuals were identified and secured for the study. The utilized method for interviews, transcription and coding were all presented. The rationale for the research design was provided along with a description of the data acquisition and organization. This chapter concluded with a description of the qualifications and background of the researcher.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study using information obtained from the interviews, field notes recorded during the course of the study, and researcher observations documented through journaling. The information from interviews was sorted using organizational codes based on data analysis methods suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and Stauss and Corbin (2007). Afterwards, the parent participant responses were organized using open coding of the information into upwards of 50 codes including, but not limited to: time constrictions, length of workshops, quality of workshops, cultural influences, rapport with the teacher, rapport with the parent, opportunities for involvement, religion, ties to the community, program "buy in", marital status, employment status, and demands placed by other children. The open coding of the data subsequently revealed four axial coding categories, which were: (a) cultural barriers/motivators, (b) parental barriers/motivators, (c) parent response to the structured parent intervention program, and (d) school/community based influences. Lastly, the axial coding translated into two conceptual themes that explained the findings of the research and answered the research questions. These themes were intrinsic factors influencing parental involvement and extrinsic factors influencing parental involvement. Within each of the categories that emerged from the open coding, the topics that contributed to the final development of the structured parent intervention protocol will be discussed further to provide insight into how the responses provided by participants resulted in the conclusions reached by the researcher. The themes, patterns, and ideas provided insight into the perceptions, concerns, needs, and priorities of Haitian parents of

children with disabilities. They answered the research questions and sub-questions, which were:

1. Before, during and after involvement in a structured parent intervention program, what are Haitian American parents' perceptions concerning

      i. their own level of involvement in their child's education?

     ii. the types of opportunities their child's school facilitated for parental involvement?

   iii. which opportunities for parental involvement are most valuable to their child's education?

2. How do parents' perceptions of their involvement compare to their child's teacher's perceptions of parental involvement prior to, during, and upon completion of their involvement in a structured parent intervention program?

3. What workshop components of a structured parent intervention program are perceived by Haitian American parents in a low-performing, urban school setting as being essential to their increased levels of involvement in their child's education prior to and upon completion of a structured parent intervention program?

Cultural Barriers/Motivators

This theme encompassed topics such as English as a second language, the role of education in Haitian households, and contributing family dynamics influenced by ties to Haiti. Additionally, it explored significant differences between Haiti and the United States in all aspects including, but not limited to education systems and processes. As so much of the data gathered through the interviews was culturally based, this theme was evident from the beginning of the study through the end.

"They Just Don't Talk Like Me"

All five parent participants in the study were native speakers of Haitian-Creole and in varying points of learning English as a second language. Almost immediately, all participants identified the language barrier as being a barrier to their involvement in their child's education. Initial interviews conducted in May 2015, found the following. Trudy, the least fluent in English reported:

> I know I have to learn the language, but it is so hard. A lot of people learn from the TV., but what do you do when you don't even have a T.V. or time to watch T.V.? Then how do you learn? My boy tries to teach me, but bless his heart, he doesn't realize how difficult it is for me. He is around English all day. His teacher speaks in English, his friends speak in English, everything he does for most of his day is in English. That just isn't my life. Although I am in America, in my home it still feels like Haiti.

Many of the other participants less fluent in English echoed Trudy's concerns, Noel said, "I want to learn English, its not that I don't, it just that I don't have a lot of time. Luckily at work, I am able to learn from the clients who come in and order, but none of the English I am learning will help me, help my son at school".

English as a second language and the IEP.

Rose and Michael were the two participants most fluent in English, but they too reported that although they could socially interact, it was much more challenging to understand the language and the terms used by the schools. Michael said, "I know what an IEP is, but then they start talking about ESY and ELL and accommodations, and they completely lose me. Well not completely, but it definitely makes it much harder to know what is going on". Even though Rose is in the school as a volunteer and in the past as an employee, she also finds herself highly dependent on translator services when it comes to meetings for her sons. She says, " I feel better having someone there who knows the

education side of things". Being that there was such a strong participant sense that their language serves as a form of a cultural barrier it came as no surprise that they requested English be one of the workshop topics during the structured parent intervention program. After identifying the need for English, specifically academic terminology, the researcher focused an entire workshop on English as a second language and further infused it into other workshop topics such as understanding the IEP process and parent teacher conferences. Mid-way through the structured parent intervention program, and shortly after the aforementioned workshops, the participants were interviewed again and the researcher identified a shift in language and cultural barriers.

Although originally, the participants considered their lack of knowledge of the English language as a barrier to their involvement, after completion of workshops rich in English colloquial and academic language, participants began viewing their involvement in their children's education as opportunities to expand their knowledge of English. After the English as a second language workshop, Trudy stated that she, "felt more ready to help at the school and to help her son- even with "just talking about how his day went". Jean was optimistic that by learning about and gaining access to resources, such as Rosetta Stone, she would be "stronger in English and a stronger helper for her son to get better with his language and speaking". Michael, although confident in his ability to use English appropriately reported feeling, "increased confidence in not only speaking, but understanding what it being told to me".

"My Parents were my Parents and my Teachers were my Teachers"

Additional cultural barriers/motivators that emerged included the difference between the type of education and roles of education in Haiti as opposed to in the United States.

All five participants reported that the quality and emphasis placed upon education in the United States is significantly more than the quality and emphasis placed upon education in Haiti, although in Haiti formal schooling is a legal mandate. Trudy said that the education system in Haiti is, "a means to an ends for those who can afford it", and Rose reported that, "instead of learning our books in the rural parts, we would learn to work". Michael and Noel, those with the highest levels of education in the group, had differing opinions of Haitian education. Michael reported the following:

> In Haiti school was required as it is here, but quality education families viewed as optional and a luxury if you could afford it. If it better benefited a family to keep their kids home and not in private schools, then that is what they would do. If they could not use the children yet, many children would be sent to school and then when they became of age to contribute to the family business whatever it might be they would be kept home. My parents, like their parents before them had little schooling. However, they wanted me to do better. They made school a requirement in my home and my siblings, all seven of them, and I all have formal post-secondary schooling. I am successful today because of my education.

Although he has fond memories and an evident positive view of education in Haiti, Michael believes that the "rigor and pace" in public school in the United States is much more "intense". Michael explains that in Haiti public schools are "scarce" and many parents have to pay for their children to attend private schools. On these challenges and differences, Michael stated the following:

> School for me was hard when I went, but it was nothing like what I see my boys doing now. The work they bring home is too hard for me to understand sometimes and I consider myself well educated and knowledgeable. Everyday my kids are learning something new and more challenging than the day before, as a parent, that is intimidating. I don't want them to know that they are learning something I have not mastered and that makes me continue to learn. I learn everyday alongside my kids and that is something my parents did not do with me.

Michael was not the only participant to make mention of differences between his parents' involvement in his education and his in that of his children. Jean said, "my

parents never came down to the school for anything". Noel reported that she has "not a single memory" of her parents attending events at her school or being invited to. All parents described the delineation of roles in education and parenting. Rose said, "my parents were my parents and my teachers were my teachers. The two did not step on each others toes and their roles determined who had the control in each environment".

Throughout their participation in the structured parent intervention program, and specifically through the school-based workshops, the participants began to demonstrate an understanding of how to balance their cultural norms with those of the new culture in which they are submersed. After the workshop focusing on parent-teacher conferences, where parent participants engaged in "mock" conferences with volunteer teachers from their child's school, Rose had the following thoughts:

> This isn't as scary as I thought it was. She actually listens to me and cares what I have to say. That is something I didn't know. I thought she was the expert and I had to listen to her for everything, but now I know she thinks I am an expert too- an expert at my son.

Noel, who has had a relationship with her son's teacher for 3 years at the time of the workshop on parent-teacher conferences described a sense of "understanding and camaraderie" that she didn't recall ever having felt before. Jean said she went from being, "intimidated and embarrassed" to feeling "welcomed and important". Michael, the participant who reported the highest level of comfort going into the parent-teacher conference workshop described the mock conference as, "an invitation to a partnership". When probed as to what he meant by that statement, he continued by saying, "my daughter's teacher is my partner much like my wife is my partner. Without her the system would be broken and my daughter would not learn".

Parental Barriers/Motivators

This theme encompassed topics related to parental barriers such as lack of time, work demands, and family demands. Additionally, parental motivators were addressed such as being portrayed by the community and school professionals as being adequate parents.

"There Aren't Enough Hours in the Day Here"

All participants in the study reported that they felt their being involved in their child's education was, as Rose put it, "very time consuming and demanding". Although not all participants were employed, they all reported having roles and responsibilities whether it was as caretakers or students, which made their time limited. Even with their limited time, Jean said she, "made the time" for the structured parent intervention program because she had, "faith in the process", and "knew in her heart the impact it would have on her son's future". Given the frequently reported "lack of time" the researcher felt it was essential to the quality of the program to obtain a level of buy-in from the participants early on. By ensuring that all aspects of the program catered to the identified needs of the participants it increased the likelihood that they would feel responsible for their successful interactions and participation throughout the 5-month implementation. Having made the time commitment clear to the participants initially, and by being flexible to the needs of the participants, the researcher was able to secure perfect attendance from all participants at all workshops. Many times, there were changes to the program with regards to scheduling, however, the researcher and all participants were open to the changes and persevered.

Michael, who traveled regularly back and forth to Haiti, said, "when I am here, and even when I am not here, I make sure all my time is spent with my children". When

probed as to why he didn't make more of an effort to come in to school for non-IEP related meetings, he said, "I didn't know they wanted me here so much". All participants shared Michael's sentiments especially at the beginning stages of the parent intervention program. Initial and even some mid-point interviews revealed that parents felt their role was in the home and not in the school setting. Many parents only walked into the school for the IEP meetings, and otherwise they would walk their children to end of the long walkway in the morning and pick them up in the afternoon.

In the final interviews, the researcher identified there to be a shift in perceptions of how much time should be dedicated to their child's education. Trudy, the parent initially reporting the lowest level of involvement because of time constraints, came to the realization that she was "making excuses to make herself feel better about not being involved". Trudy attributed her realization to the experiences shared by fellow participants and learning that when you care about something so deeply, you "find the time".

Employment Status

The participants' employment status serves as a strong contributor to their involvement in the program and in the education of their child. Of the five participants, three were employed full-time and two were currently unemployed, but would pick up odd jobs to "help make ends meet". All participants reported living in single-income homes and the three employed participants were the primary financial providers in their homes. As a result of often challenging work schedules, the researcher worked very closely with all participants to guarantee full parent participation in all workshops and the

school administration facilitated the accessibility to rooms and resources on-site for workshops.

Many interviews were conducted on lunch breaks and the researcher became very involved with the participants at their places of employment because of the amount of time spent there. Noel's work schedule had her at a local Dunkin' Donuts anywhere from 40-55 hours per week depending on the attendance of coworkers. Michael's dividing his time between his work in Haiti and his family in Florida resulted in a living arrangement that he felt was neither, "stable" nor conducive to, "educational advancement". The dichotomy between the parents' desire to better the lives of their family through employment and the amount of time their employment removed them from their families was evident immediately.

Many of the workshop sessions, primarily the question and answer sessions, explored ways to balance time and as Noel put it, "wear many hats at once". The researcher found it necessary to dedicate time to assist parents with scheduling of their weeks and identifying times when the parents could be involved both in and out of the school setting. After the workshop focusing on homework and ways to promote effective study habits, Trudy, Rose, and Jean initiated homework schedules. Jean said that she, "never understood how much children need routines and how well they thrive when certain systems are in place". After having been displaced as a result of an earthquake in 2010 that devastated Haiti, Jean continued to say the following as a reflection in her last interview:

> When our lives changed after the earthquake, finding consistency was hard. [sons' name] had such a hard time adjusting and I don't think I helped to make it any better even though, at the time I thought I did. Even though I wasn't working at the time, I was keeping myself busy as a way to not have to deal with what

happened to me. To us. My job was to mourn, or so I thought. Now, I know that my job was to help my son. I feel like I was selfish and now I need to dedicate my energy and my time to my son. To his education. To his well-being. To him entirely.

Parent participants employment status was also closely linked to involvement and education and strongly guided the workshops on resume writing, completing work applications, applying for adult educational programs, and mock interviews. Almost all participants reported on their initial responses suggesting workshop topics that they desired more information to learn how to obtain better jobs, or jobs in general. As a result of this, partnerships were formed by the researcher with local businesses, and these businesses assisted with applications and interviews of participations for job openings.

Throughout the duration of the study, parent perceptions of employment shifted from a barrier to a motivator. They began to describe understanding that education is a means by which gainful employment is attained. Rose, who was working full-time and in nursing school, said, " I used to feel guilty about not having as much time as I would like with my boys, but now I know that I am their role model. If I want better for them, I have to show them how to do better not just wait for them to do better".

"He Deserves Better*"*

In initial interviews, mid-point interviews, and post interviews, parent perceptions about what their children deserve remained consistent. However, more emphasis became placed on educational access and children being more deserving of their parents' presence in school. Initially, Jean, Noel, and Rose all said their sons, "deserved better", when probed as to what she meant, Jean gave the following feedback:

> My son deserves better than the life he has had so far. He has been through more in his short life than many go through in a full lifetime. He deserves happiness

and safety and the tools he needs to succeed. To be better, a better man and a better person for others to know. He deserves better than what we could give him in Haiti, and better than what I have been giving him here.

Noel, when probed, elaborated on her son deserving more access to opportunities. Initially, she thought this access would come from the "American dream" that she moved to Florida in search of, but by the end of the workshops, Noel had an evolved understanding of opportunity.

> The American dream that I thought we would have isn't something handed to you like a lot of my family and friends thought. I have had to work everyday and work very hard and that's what I want for my boys. I want them to not expect things to be handed to them, but instead to understand the importance of hard work. I want them to want to work hard. I want them to understand why I did everything I have done for them. Why I worked so hard. They deserve better, but for that, they need me to give them the tools to do better.

"I Don't Want to be Judged"

Through background research and consultations with experts on the Haitian community and those fully submerged in it, the researcher anticipated cultural challenges. Although parent participants, in great part due to their rapport with the researcher, were open and willing to share, interviews did reveal a fear of judgment from within their community. When initially asked reasons why she wasn't more involved, Trudy said, "I don't want to be judged". The researcher asked for clarification as to who she feared would judge her and why, to which Trudy responded, "my family and friends back home in Haiti". Trudy went on to say, "in Haiti parents let the teachers teach and the teachers let the parents be parents. If I began getting involved and putting myself in the business of others, I would be judged".

Michael, also reported fear of being judged, but not by his family and peers, instead by the faculty and staff at the school. Being someone who prided himself in his

professional success, and having a background in education, Michael didn't want his "lack of knowledge on American language and customs" to reflect on his capabilities. To justify his lack of involvement, Michael jokingly said, "no one knows a fool is a fool until they open their mouth and make their presence known". Fear of judgment initially substantiated decreased parental involvement, however as confidence what they can contribute through their involvement increased, parent perceptions on the judgment of others changed. After gaining exposure to different types of involvement and accessing their funds of knowledge to contribute in the school setting and on IEPs and EPs, the participants began identifying concerns for a different type of judgment.

In the post-interview, Trudy was prompted to describe any continued fears of judgment she might still have. Instead of worrying about Haitian culture norms affecting her involvement, her fears aligned themselves with assimilation to American society. She was no longer concerned with Haitian perceptions of roles, but instead with those of the school where her son is enrolled. She didn't want her son's teacher to think she, "didn't care" and because of this, she made sure that, "her presence was known in the classroom and in home-based learning".

School/Community Based Influences

This theme encompassed topics such as opportunities for involvement within the school and rapport with teachers/administrators. Additionally, the participants described awareness of and access to community resources including, but not limited to the public library and programs implemented in schools to assist families with receiving proper nutrition.

Opportunities for Involvement

Almost immediately, it became evident to the researcher that all participants were unaware of opportunities for them to be involved outside of the IEP/EP meetings. When asked to describe opportunities for involvement during initial interviews, all five participants reported being invited to and participating in the annual meetings for their children. Rose stated, " I have been to every meeting that the school sends me the letters for". Michael too reported that he has never missed a single meeting for his daughter. When probed by the researcher, the participants were unable to identify other opportunities for involvement in initial interviews, with the exception of Rose. Rose described, "volunteering as a chaperone on field trips, helping with chorus, signing up to be the room mom, helping during school events like the field day and school clean up day", she also attributed her knowledge of these opportunities to her, "always being at the school from when she was a volunteer in the clinic in prior years".

The knowledge on opportunities for involvement was influenced by presence at the school and access to school information. As a result of this, many of the workshops were held on or around campus. Parent participants were taught to access and utilize the school website and calendar from the public library, at no cost, to stay up to date on upcoming events. Also, through collaborations between parent and teacher participants, methods of communication were developed to keep parents informed on opportunities for involvement.

Michael's daughter's teacher worked with him to develop a communication log where she gave weekly and monthly updates on important dates and opportunities for him to volunteer. The communication log was implemented beginning with the school

year in August 2015, and in his post-interview one month later, Michael stated that he, "never realized how much goes on that they could use my help with". In the one month since school began and the communication log was utilized, Michael had already assisted with open house, chaperoned and in-house enrichment activity, and had his initial parent-teacher conference with his daughter's teacher.

Trudy's son was in the same class as Michael's daughter, and she too had positive feedback on the implementation of the communication log and class newsletter. Trudy stated that using the communication log taught her that, "there isn't only one type of involvement". She learned about, "different ways to get involved in the classroom and at the school". She found that there weren't "designated times" for involvement, instead, there were, "different things she could do at different times and in different ways".

Rapport with Teachers and School Administration

This study was conducted at a transitional time in the school year (May 2015-September 2015). Fortunately, school administration worked with the researcher to facilitate parent access to teachers, and in some instances teachers looped with their students. Looping in education is a term used to describe when a teacher moves with her students from one grade level to the next. Michael and Trudy's children were in the same class and their teacher looped therefore, they had a year prior to the study to establish a rapport with her. Rose knew her son's teacher because she was also his teacher in kindergarten. Although she knew her, their relationship did not "strengthen" in Rose's opinion until she began participating in the study. Lastly, Jean's and Noel's sons were placed in the same class, and this was the first time either of them met their teacher. All three teacher participants have a background in exceptional student education; two serve

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as what the participating school call supported classrooms with the other serving as a high achiever classroom teacher.

A supported classroom, as described by a teacher participant, is "a classroom where students with disability are educated with a smaller adult to child ratio than in other classrooms on campus". For Noel, Michael, Trudy, and Jean, that means that their children were in a classroom with no more than 18 students, receiving instruction from one teacher with additional support from a paraprofessional making the ratio in their rooms one to nine. Rose's son, who was eligible for an EP for giftedness, was in a high-achiever classroom comprised of other students with similar exceptionalities with a one to 15 ratio.

Rapport with teachers was always reported as being positive, however, throughout participation in the workshops, parent and teacher participants described strengthening of bonds and mutual understandings. Michael stated that by participating in the workshops, he was able to "see things from their side" referring to his daughters teacher. He reported that before the parent intervention program, he didn't always, "understand how or why the teachers would want or need" his help. However, after the workshops, particularly the parent teacher conferencing workshop, the reciprocal relationship became evident. Noel too described a shift in her perception of how her son's teacher views her role in his education. Noel stated in her post interview that, "I feel wanted. Maybe I should have always felt that way, because I can't remember a time I was made to feel unwanted, but now I really see why I am wanted. Not only wanted, but needed too… I am needed".

Access to Resources

A workshop topic that was requested by all participants was information and exposure to community resources. Being that most of their time is spent in the home or at work, the parent participants reported being "unaware" of what their community offered in terms of educational resources. Jean said, " I have lived here for some time now and I still don't know what there is out there that can help my boy". Michael stated, "…even though my kids are different ages, I am always looking for activities we can do together to learn, but I don't always know where to look".

Based on participant feedback, the researcher held a workshop on available community resources at the local library conveniently located within walking distance to the homes of some participants. Of the five parent participants, none had ever applied for a library card, nor did they know how to go about doing so. Trudy said that her son, "always checked out books at the school library" and Noel reported that, the only books her son read were, "sent home by his teacher". The primary activity for the community resources workshop was to register all participants for library cards and facilitate their learning of using the computers in the library as supplementary learning aides for their children and themselves. Jean described her experience at the library workshops in the following way:

> The library was a place I heard about, and we had places like this in Haiti, but its not the same. My son's teacher sent home papers to get a library card, but I couldn't really understand all of it so it just went in the trash. Walking in that day was a lot. There were so many people and so many sounds and conversations. It was a lot. I have been back though a few times with [sons' name] and every time we go I learn more about the library. People there are so helpful and patient. Its close and its free. All that stuff is free.

The cost of community resources was a recurring topic in interviews with the participants. All resources at the local library were provided to the participants free of cost. Additionally, throughout the program, as resources became available (i.e., free breakfast, free meals during the summer months at the school, community family activity days, etc.), the participants were made aware of them and encouraged to participate and utilize them.

None of the participants in the study owned their own computers and being that schools and education are advancing rapidly with regards to technology, it was a critical component of the workshops and the program process. Technology was incorporated throughout the parent intervention program in varying ways and many community resources explored were technology-based. Trudy stated in her post-interview that one of the most beneficial parts of the parent program was how much she learned about technology. She said, " I learned how to use the computer at the library to look for jobs, and find AR books for my son. I was able to do for him and for me in one place using just the computer". The school at which the workshops were based obtained licenses for Rosetta Stone and were kind enough to allow the parent participants to utilize the program throughout the study. Participants were able to visit the school site and use Rosetta Stone to advance their understanding and use of English at no cost to them and will be permitted to continue doing so during the hours of 7:30-8:00am, Monday through Friday on days the school is opened. All participants expressed gratitude and excitement about being able to access Rosetta Stone, and all participants utilized the program during the morning availability at least once per week.

Rose had the following to say about being allowed to use Rosetta Stone and the school library/computers:

> Being able to use the school library not only got me out here onto the campus more, but I got to learn a lot more too. The more I know the more I can help my son and his teacher. I never knew I could come out to the school everyday or over the summer. These are all new things I learned and I can use now.

Additional resources that were explored through the community resources workshop included adult education courses provided locally, English speaking groups for adults at the local library branch, completing applications for free/reduced lunch, and applications for scholarships (for Michael in particular who has sons in high school preparing for college). In post-interviews, all five participants made reference to the positive impact of technology on their involvement and the education of their children and themselves. Teacher participants described parents' increased comfort utilizing technology as having, "a tremendous positive and noticeable impact" on the reading fluency and comprehension of their children, as measured by the Rigby Progress Monitoring and Florida Assessment in Reading (FAIR) assessments serving as baselines for the 2015-2016 school year.

Parent Response to Structured Parent Intervention Program

This theme encompassed topics such as students' desire for parents to be involved, feeling wanted by the school, and belonging to a whole. Also described, is the evolution of understanding their role in education, understanding of the academic, social-emotional, and parent impact on the independent functioning needs of students as identified by the exceptional student education plans (IEP or EP).

Students' Desire for Parents to be Involved

Initial interviews with the parent participants revealed that parents felt most pressure to be involved from their children. Rose said her sons would make her,

"calendars of events that she needed to attend" for them. Jean's son became extremely involved at the school almost immediately by joining the school chorus and recycling club and he encouraged his mom to spend time volunteering for these same groups at the school. Jean said that she, "wanted to do it, but [I] just never got around to it". All parents, except Michael whose daughter is still young and her language impairment often affects her ability to express herself, were asked by their children to chaperone field trips or school events such as dances and curriculum nights.

Midway through the study, the researcher began to identify a shift in parent motivation to be involved. Upon the conclusion of implementation, instead of their children asking for them to volunteer their time, parents self-reported their motivation to be more intrinsic. Trudy said, "I want to be there now more than I think he wants me there". Rose stated that her son was beginning to think she was there "way too much" and would "roll his eyes and ask her to give him some space". As she told the researcher this, the researcher observed Rose beaming with pride and laughing as she said, "My, how the times have changed".

Feeling Wanted

Prior to beginning the parent intervention program, the researcher established, based on participant feedback, that there was an overwhelming lack of "feeling wanted there" as reported by Trudy about the school. Trudy went on to say the following in her pre-interview:

> I think that when I walk in they feel like I am only there to complain or for something bad. I almost feel like I am out of place. Its like when you go to a party and you weren't invited. I don't want to force myself on them. The teacher is busy… she doesn't want me in there. So is the principal and everybody else too.

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Similar to Trudy's initial feelings, Michael too felt like he was only wanted certain times, specifically times when he was formally invited. "I go to the meetings every year", Michael said regarding his daughter's IEP meetings. He continued, "I go and I nod and I agree and at the beginning I say my peace and then when its done I leave and let them do what they need to do". Through the course of their participation in the study, the participants' responses when asked about feeling wanted or needed at their child's school changed significantly.

In the post-interview, and after a month of "active and consistent involvement", as reported by her son's teacher, Trudy described feeling "important and valuable". Noel, although less involved time-wise than Trudy because of her work schedule, reported similar feelings of "value" and that she felt like she was "making a difference by being there".

Initial interviews with teachers revealed perceptions that parents weren't more actively involved because they "choose not to be". When it was revealed to the teachers, by the parents during communication drills, that they felt they weren't needed, the teachers made conscious efforts to change the dynamics between themselves and their students' parents. Analysis of participant and teacher responses revealed that lack of communication and preconceived notions about parental involvement negatively contributed to levels of parental involvement in the classroom. By being able to identify the miscommunication and address it, all participants and teachers described a "positive effect" resulting from increased parent presence in their classrooms.

Belonging to a Whole

At the beginning of the study, none of the parent participants were aware of or involved with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) of the school at the commencement of the parent intervention program. When asked about the PTA in pre-interviews, the researcher received the following responses from participants: "What is that?", "What do they do?", "They have one here?", and "Do the teachers run that?". To help the parents better understand the purpose of the school PTA, the researcher attended a PTA meeting with the parents and the teachers of their children and had the PTA President speak at a workshop to the parent participants.

Initially, thoughts on the PTA were mixed and some were negative. Michael described the PTA as, "a group you have to pay to be a part of" and Jean said, " I don't have extra money to spend to go to some meetings. Why would I pay to go to meetings anyways?" After better understanding what exactly the school PTA is responsible for and the role they play in education, all parent participants, with the exception of one made the decision to join the PTA, as a way to "do more" as reported by Jean in her post-interview. Involvement in the PTA was not only an additional time commitment made by the parent participants, but it was also an additional responsibility. Michael, the only participant who chose not to become involved said that he would "reconsider" his involvement in the future, but at the time of the study, "his work schedule did not allow for his PTA participation". Instead of just joining the PTA, the parent participants who chose to join became actively involved in the operations of the PTA (schedules permitting).

Jean, one of the participants initially most against the PTA, described being a member of the PTA as "belonging to a whole". When probed as to describe this concept and feeling further, Jean stated the following:

A lot of times here, its easy to feel alone. The community may be big, but unless you put yourself out there you end up feeling lonely. I always preach to my son about surrounding himself with people who make him better, make him want to be better. That's what the PTA is. It's belonging to a whole and as a whole being better.

As members of the PTA, the participants helped to organize school fundraisers, host teacher appreciation events and allocate supplies for students in need. Also, participants in the study began to work with the existing PTA members to recruit new members during the 2015-2016 school year through membership drives and by developing incentives to increase overall parental involvement.

The Evolution of Parent Participants Understanding Their Role in Education

Upon first being interviewed by the researcher, Noel said, " I am his mom at home and his teacher is his mom at school". The separation of roles and powers while still maintaining a sense of overlap, clearly described participant views on their involvement. Initially, parent participants believed their realm was that of the home and the teachers' was that of the school. Education was reported in a way that was based on setting and environmental factors. In her pre-interview Rose said, " in the home I do what I can, but at school it is the teacher's job". Michael in his pre-interview described his involvement based only on what he does in his home to facilitate learning, " I make sure she does all her homework and sign her agenda".
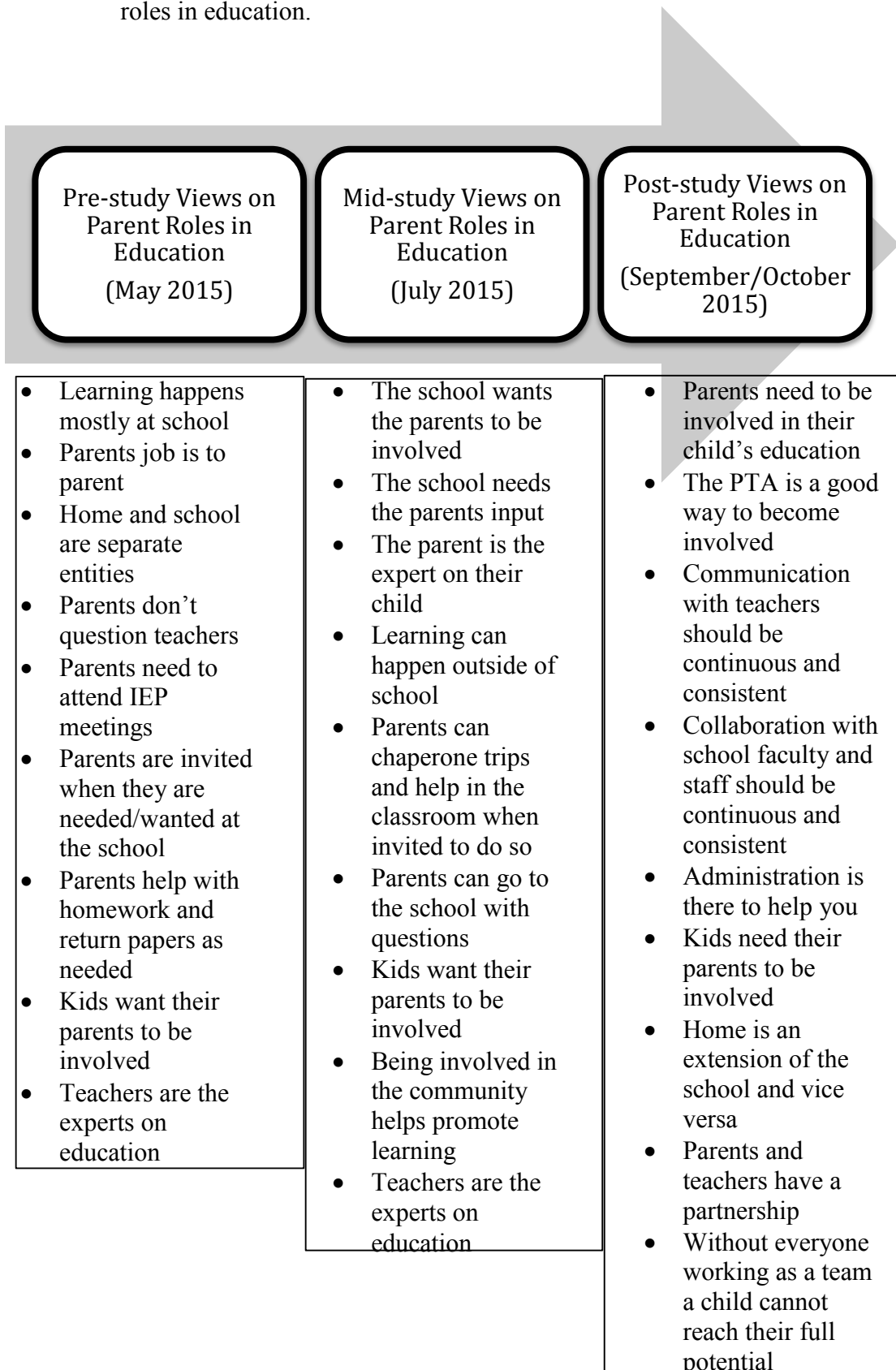
Mid-way through the study, interviews began to evolve as the participants began learning about ways that they could be involved outside of their home. Trudy described

feelings of "excitement" about the 2015-2016 school year because she was, "ready to do whatever needs to be done to help [her son's name] be successful". Being that the study were conducted during a transitional period in education (end of the 2014-2015 school year through the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year) it allowed for participants to learn about their roles in education and then implement what they learned with what Rose described as being, "a fresh start".

At the conclusion of each workshop, the parent participants and the researcher engaged in informal round table discussions about anything related to parent involvement. During these discussions, the researcher observed what is described as an evolution in parents understanding of their roles in education (Figure 4). Analysis of interviews and observations during workshops showed that initially parents felt like their involvement was isolated to their homes. Mid-way through the study, parents began identifying their role as communicating with the teacher and providing assistance as needed or as requested. In post-interviews, parents described their role in education in the following ways: "a partnership", "a kind of marriage", and "a co-dependency". The later descriptor was given by Michael, and when probed about his choice of words and the negative connotations sometimes associated with them, Michael stated the following:

> We are co-dependent because one cannot fully succeed at their job without the assistance of the other. I need her and she needs me in the same way… to help [his daughter]. There are academic things she knows that I don't and there are things about my daughter I know that she doesn't. Because of this, we are co-dependent. Our ability to work together is what determines how well [his daughter] does, how much she progresses, and how many goals she meets or exceeds.

Figure 4. Flowchart summarizing the evolution of perceived parent roles in education.

Pre-study Views on Parent Roles in Education (May 2015)	Mid-study Views on Parent Roles in Education (July 2015)	Post-study Views on Parent Roles in Education (September/October 2015)
• Learning happens mostly at school • Parents job is to parent • Home and school are separate entities • Parents don't question teachers • Parents need to attend IEP meetings • Parents are invited when they are needed/wanted at the school • Parents help with homework and return papers as needed • Kids want their parents to be involved • Teachers are the experts on education	• The school wants the parents to be involved • The school needs the parents input • The parent is the expert on their child • Learning can happen outside of school • Parents can chaperone trips and help in the classroom when invited to do so • Parents can go to the school with questions • Kids want their parents to be involved • Being involved in the community helps promote learning • Teachers are the experts on education	• Parents need to be involved in their child's education • The PTA is a good way to become involved • Communication with teachers should be continuous and consistent • Collaboration with school faculty and staff should be continuous and consistent • Administration is there to help you • Kids need their parents to be involved • Home is an extension of the school and vice versa • Parents and teachers have a partnership • Without everyone working as a team a child cannot reach their full potential

Understanding of their Role in the IEP Process

All parent participants had children with an IEP or an EP for varying

exceptionalities. Therefore, all parents were participants on their children's IEP team and

legally responsible for assisting in developing, monitoring, and evaluating of annual

goals in the following domains: curriculum and instruction, social emotional/behavioral,

independent functioning, and communication. Being that all students were being serviced

at the same school, parents' initial descriptions of the processes in place mirrored one

another. Noel described the IEP process as follows:

> One time a year I get invited to the school for a meeting. Sometimes it more than
> one time if there is a lot going on with [her son]. I get a letter in his backpack and
> I sign it saying I can come to the meeting. When I come for the meeting I always
> start by telling them how I think he is doing. Then they tell me how he's actually
> doing. They're usually long meetings if a lot is going on with him. If not, it is
> quick. This year they have all been long. I sign a lot of papers and I leave with a
> lot of papers. The information isn't written in Creole so it's hard to read
> sometimes. They always have [the translator] there though. She helps me.

Trudy too described a similar explanation of what her role is in the IEP process:

> Every year around December the school sends me a letter to come for a meeting.
> When I come, I tell them how my son is at home and if I see change. They let me
> know how he is going in school and how his grades are. They talk about
> [stammering to find word accommodations] they talk about how they help him. I
> appreciate their help so I nod and I smile and sometimes I laugh. We talk about
> what he is going to do for the next year and then it is over. I sign papers and leave.
> I always leave with my papers.

As evidenced by their responses, the participants appeared to have a limited

understanding of their role in the IEP and EP processes and the development of goals.

Based on their initial feedback, and the identified needs of their children. The researcher

dedicated a workshop entirely to the IEP process and unwrapping all components of a

quality IEP. With the assistance of school personnel who play key roles in the IEP

process, including the exceptional student education specialist who facilitates IEP meetings, the speech/language pathologist who provides direct services, and the classroom teacher, parents participated in a three hour simulated IEP meeting. Instead of being expedited through the process, all questions were answered and participants were encouraged to share questions and concerns openly and freely. Parents were informed about the papers that they all described as "signing and leaving with" to have proof that they knew what they were signing and leaving with. Additionally, the development of quality IEP and EP goals was addressed through group discussions and samples.

In their post-interviews, all participants described the IEP workshop as having been the most important and beneficial. Michael said he left the workshop feeling, "stronger and more ready to help [his daughter]". Trudy stated that the workshop made the IEP process more "personal" and "easier to get". Rose, whose experience was slightly different yet still relevant because her older son is diagnosed with a specific learning disability, described the workshop as a "turning point" in her involvement. She went on to say that at this point is when she, "realized how important she is in her sons' education and future".

Evolution of Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in the SPIP

Similar to the evolution of parent perceptions of involvement through the SPIP, teacher participant perceptions also evolved. Teachers not only played a critical role in the understanding of changes to parent participants' involvement, they also were key contributors to the workshop process. Through interviews with the teachers, the researcher was able to gain valuable insight to existing biases in educators, professionally

perceived valuable workshops, and overall indicators of SPIP success as measured by parent involvement in their children's education.

Pre-SPIP Teacher Perceptions

During pre-SPIP interviews of teacher participants conducted in May 2015, the researcher found common beliefs and biases to be evident based on responses to interview questions. Of the three teachers participating in the study, all three had spent most of their teaching careers at the school where the study was implemented. Ms. Red, the teacher with most experience educating students with exceptionalities, initially described parent involvement at the school, "minimal and rare". She reported having memory of few instances where parents were actively engaged in their children's education. When probed about what she attributed to the lack of parental involvement at the school she stated the following:

> Parents here mean well, and they trust us implicitly, but they just aren't around much. If they are around, it is usually because they receive a letter from the school or a phone call. Even then, it can be so difficult to get a hold of a lot of my parents. I usually make the kids' IEP meetings double as a conference because if not, I won't be able to get in the two conferences per year required of me.

Ms. Blue, a second grade teacher, described similar challenges with getting parents to be "present" in their children's education. She stated that she attributed much of the lack of parent involvement at the school to be the result of "financial responsibilities and cultural or language-related barriers". Self identifying as a "middle aged Caucasian-American female with little exposure to Haitian culture", Ms. Red felt that this contributed greatly to the absence of parents in her classroom. Ms. Red went on to say that the parents of her students had a difficult time "communicating effectively" and "relating" to her although she tried to create a, "welcoming and inviting classroom".

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Similar to Ms. Blue and Ms. Red, Ms. Green described trying to get parents involved as a "lost cause". Describing herself as, "jaded", she said that couldn't "remember a time when she had a room mom, or had a parent come in for something good that wasn't a birthday". Ms. Green elaborated on her feelings of hopelessness and stated:

> It is great that, when they can, my kids parents come in with cupcakes, or for Breakfast with your Child and PTA events. The problem is that I don't think they realize how needed their presence is on a daily basis. I understand a lot of them work odd hours or more than one job, but if we don't communicate then everything I do here is essentially for nothing.

All three teachers echoed Ms. Green's statement that the work they put in is, "essentially for nothing", if there is no follow through or partnership established at home. When probed about whether or not they could think of anytime that they had a positive and successful relationship with a parents, they were all able to describe these bonds. For Ms. Blue, her most positive memory of a parent being involved the parent participant Rose. Ms. Blue had Rose's son when he was in Kindergarten and now has him as a student again in second grade. She described Rose as being, "the most dedicated parent" and "the closest [I've] ever come to a room mom". She described times that Rose would bring her extra supplies for her classroom and snacks for the kids without being asked. She also stated that as Rose's work demands increased she noticed a "decrease in her presence" not only at the school, but supporting her son at home.

Common themes emerged amongst the teacher participants in pre-interviews that mirrored those of parent participants. Recurring themes included the language and cultural barrier, lack of time on the part of parents, and lack of opportunities being advertised to parents for them to become involved. Ms. Red stated that although there

were opportunities for involvement, they were often "not well advertised, or communicated to parents". All three teacher participants felt confident in the opportunities for involvement they provided within their classrooms, but limitations to involvement varied based on grade level and the needs of the students. Ms. Red, the teacher with the most students receiving special education services, said that a lot of times she involves parents when she, "needs something in the room or needs an extra body for safety reasons". When asked to elaborate on the safety reasons, she stated that for "field trips, swimming lessons, and school events such as field day" managing all of her students without extra support is a "impossible task". Ms. Blue "tries [my] best" to involve parents "as much as possible", but mostly she does this by "communicating with them on a regular basis on the needs and progress of their children".

All three teacher participants described paper-based communication methods involving the kids' agendas or letters being sent home. When asked about more personal forms of communication, the teachers reported that home visits were "frowned upon" by administration, "phones are frequently disconnected", and "not many parents have emails". Furthermore, the three teachers made reference to their pre-service education and Ms. Rose for example, had a difficult time remembering a course in college that, "prepared [me] for working collaboratively with parents". Given the population in which they work, Ms. Green said that although she was aware of great resources for communicating, "such as class websites and Class Dojo (an app that allows for teachers to send text messages directly to parents cell phones and vice-versa)", these methods weren't "do-able" for all for her families. She went on to say that even though something

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is "convenient" for her if it doesn't work for her kids' families then, "it just doesn't work".

Mid-SPIP Teacher Perceptions

After participants had completed halfway completed with the SPIP, the teacher participants were interviewed again to ascertain their perceptions concerning the outcomes of parent participation thus far. At the time of these interviews, all three teachers had played key roles in at least two workshops (Afterschool/Summer Opportunities and Internet Resources for Academic Success). Also, by this time, all teachers had worked collaboratively with parent participants in an educational setting for close to a month (Ms. Red and Ms. Blue as Extended School Year teachers, and Ms. Green as a private tutor). When asked about her overall thoughts about the effectiveness of the SPIP, Ms. Blue reported the following:

> I see a big change in not only the parents participating in the workshops, but also their children. The parents are communicating more regularly, and the communication is more quality communication. Instead of signatures on home notes, I am getting notes back addressing my comments or thoughtful questions about the kids. The area where I see the biggest change is in their confidence. The parents seem to be more comfortable talking to me and appear to be using the materials I send home.

Ms. Red , similarly to Ms. Blue, described increased effort on the part of parents and associated this effort with the students "progress towards mastery of IEP goals". Being that the SPIP began with the language based workshop, the researcher asked the teachers questions specific to the parents acquisition of English and use of the language. All three teachers found the parents to appear "more comfortable", "more confident", and "more inclined to communicate orally" since beginning to use Rosetta Stone on a regular

basis. Although as stated by Ms. Red, the parents still had "a ways to go with learning the language, their efforts were not going unnoticed".

A theme that emerged during the mid-point interviews with the teachers was a dichotomy of excitement for the parents increased involvement accompanied by fear. Ms. Green said that as Rose became more involved, she began to find herself "under more pressure to challenge Rose's son academically". Ms. Red said that although she "welcomed the parent presence in her room", at times she did feel, "as though she was being watched and scrutinized". Upon reflection, Ms. Red came to following conclusions:

> At first I was so excited to have the parents more involved in my room and in their kids' educational lives. However, I soon felt myself second guessing my teaching approaches and feeling almost territorial over my space. I realized that I had become so removed from the idea of parents in my room that I began to look at it as just that – my room. I had to not only push the kids, but I had to challenge myself to change what years of teaching taught me to think about parent involvement. I had to realize this wasn't my room, this was our room.

Ms. Blue, when describing the changes she observed in the kids, stated that as "the parents became more motivated, so did the kids". She stated that, "the kids motivation comes from wanting to please not just me, but their parents too. Their parents that they get to see a lot more than ever before in the school". She went on to state that:

> The line between what happens at school and what happens at home became blurred. The more that line blurred, the more the roles the kids fit me and their parents into also blurred. I wasn't just their teacher anymore, I was someone who worked with their parents. Their parents weren't just their parents anymore, they became like me, a teacher.

Post-SPIP Teacher Perceptions

The large majority of direct teacher involvement in the workshops came in the last quarter of the SPIP. Teacher participants participated in mock parent-teacher conferences, and stimulated IEPs. They worked with IEP teams, parents included to

develop quality IEP goals and explore progress monitoring tools that included the parents

and kept everyone in constant communication. In their post-SPIP interviews, feedback

focused greatly on the aforementioned workshops. Teacher response to the IEP workshop

was also positive and insightful. Ms. Blue reported that monitoring student progress was

made "easier and more manageable" because the parent participants now were able to

"understand the goals and objectives". Ms. Red stated that she felt it was more "fair to the

parents," because they "appeared to genuinely understand the IEP process after the

stimulated meeting". All participants described feeling like they were part of a "team

effort" to educate the children.

The mock conferences were described by Ms. Green as being "eye-opening".

Basic modifications were made to routines teachers had been using for years such as

which side of the table they sit at during a parent conference made what Ms. Red

described as a "huge difference". By providing both parents and teachers with feedback

after the parent-teacher conference workshop, Ms. Blue said that she felt the workshop

helped her to "become a better communicator and teacher". She went on to say the

following:

> I never realized the little things I was doing that could be perceived by parents as being intimidating or off-putting. I never realized how often I start a conference with a negative statement or a poor grade instead of with areas in which their child is excelling. I never realized how often I use academic language and abbreviations that would be lost on anyone who is not actively working for the school system or in special education. Most important, I never realized that just like the IEP is individualized I need to make sure each and every one of my conferences too be individualized. This isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. I differentiate for my kids, so I have to differentiate for my parents too.

When questioned specifically on changes to the types of parent involvement they

observed or promoted, all participants reported an increase in what Ms. Red described as,

"parent presence and parent involvement". When probed as to why she separated the two,

Ms. Red said the following:

> Initially, the parents were more present. Present at the school, present at the workshops, present in the computer lab [for Rosetta Stone]. Now, parents are more involved. Instead of just being there they are actively contributing to meetings, conferences, PTA events, and learning that occurs at home. Presence and involvement are two different things. Anyone can show up, but involvement is when you show up and make a difference.

Ms. Green, working with Rose's son, said that "he became a mirror image of Rose". She described the change by saying it was as though, "they were growing together". Although Rose had always had some levels of involvement, Ms. Green saw the involvement become more "meaningful" and "academic". By academic, Ms. Green said that she meant "the involvement directly affected [Rose's son's] learning and motivation to learn". Ms. Red, Ms. Green, and Ms. Blue all provided positive feedback on the SPIP and also provided the researcher with critical recommendations for future research and implications for their professional practice. These recommendations and the critical feedback will be addressed by the researcher in the next chapter.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the researcher presented the findings obtained through analysis of parent and teacher participant interviews. The researcher used and open-coding technique to narrow a field upwards of 50 codes including, but not limited to, time constrictions, length of workshops, quality of workshops, cultural influences, rapport with the teacher, rapport with the parent, opportunities for involvement, religion, ties to the community, program "buy in", marital status, employment status, and demands placed by other children. Four axial coding categories were identified: (a) cultural barriers/motivators, (b)

parental barriers/motivators, (c) parent response to the structured parent intervention

program, and (d) school/community based influences. From these, two conceptual themes

emerged that explained the findings of the research and answered the research questions.

These themes were intrinsic factors influencing parental involvement and extrinsic

factors influencing parental involvement. Lastly, this chapter described what participants

believed to be the most impactful workshops and ways in which participation in the SPIP

influenced parental involvement both in and outside of the classroom.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to develop a structured parent intervention program (SPIP), implement the SPIP, and identify Haitian parents' perceptions and the perceptions of their children's teachers on their involvement in a structured parent intervention program. Also explored were the perceptions of their children's teachers on the parents' involvement in the program. This chapter presents a discussion of the research question and sub-questions. The discussion will establish connections between previous research findings and participant responses obtained from the current research. Lastly, it discusses the limitations, make recommendations for future implementations and provide suggestions for future research.

Perceptions of Parents concerning Their Involvement in the Structured Parent Intervention Program

Through the 5 month period of their involvement in the SPIP, all participants described a shift in their perceptions of involvement. Initially, parent participants described clearly defined roles and expectations that differed within the school setting and the home setting. Many initial perceptions of involvement and schooling were rooted in cultural perspectives associated with education. Formal education in Haiti begins at optional preschool and is followed by nine years of Fundamental Education described as first, second and third cycles (Suzzata, 2011). Secondary education is comprised of four years of schooling. Starting at the second cycle of Fundamental Education, students have the option of following vocational training programs as part of their school curriculum similar to high school work-study offerings in the United States. Higher education

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follows completion of secondary education, and can be a wide range of years depending on program of study similar to the higher education programs in the United States. Cultural assimilation to social norms associated with education in the United States was something participants initially feared. Through their participation in the SPIP parents and teachers agreed that the parents learned to better understand the system and the role necessary for them to fill to maximize student success.

Throughout the study, parent participants' desire for their children to be more successful then they themselves are was consistent. Initially, participants did not have a clear understanding as to how they could facilitate their children's success; however, after each workshop, participants learned tools for promoting success. Participants described increased confidence in their own abilities to promote growth and indicated that they learned methods to become involved that aligned with their personal goals. Additionally, by having exposure to community resources, participants stated that they were able to learn how to use what is provided to them to help their children.

Participants' participation in the SPIP also changed their perceptions of school-based professionals and the ways in which they interacted with these individuals. Initially, professionals were described by participants as being the experts not just on education, but also on their children in regards to education. As they learned more through the SPIP, the participants continued to described the professionals as experts in the realm of education, but they also began to view themselves as experts on their children. Through increased frequency, duration, and quality of communication with school professionals, partnerships were developed. Parents and teachers worked collaboratively towards an agreed upon common interest- academic and social success of children.

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By addressing barriers to parent involvement, the SPIP provided participants with methods to overcome self-reported obstacles to involvement. The SPIP addressed all barriers identified as being primary as perceived by the parents (time, opportunities for involvement, and language) through comprehensive workshop topics and access to resources. Through participation in the SPIP, participants increased their ability to communicate in English. Mock conferences and simulated IEP meeting workshops were described by parents as being most beneficial to their abilities to directly impact student academic growth. Participants reported that the more they learned about exceptional student education, the more they could directly contribute to the process. Additionally, participants, through the SPIP, perceived their roles not only as partners in education, but as advocates for their children. Fear of being judged and inadequacy were replaced by empowerment and a described abandon for caution. Participants utilized the tools they were exposed to through the SPIP immediately, and as their involvement increased, parents reported that their children were positively impacted in aspects both educational and personal.

Research and participant feedback both support that increased parental involvement oftentimes results in increased academic achievement of the parents' children (Cordy & Wilson, 2004; Epstein, 2006; Ferguson, 2008; Hoover-Dempsey, 1995). Although the researcher didn't formally examine or interpret academic data, based on parent and teacher responses in post-interviews, it was evident that student scores across the curriculum increased and inappropriate behaviors decreased. In the classroom setting, teachers reported increased student motivation to earn good grades and receive positive home-notes or communication with parents.

Perceptions of Teachers Concerning the Parents' Involvement in the Structured

Parent Intervention Program

Teacher participants' perceptions of parent involvement, both generally and specific to parent participants, also evolved throughout the study. Initially, teacher participants described themselves as being solely responsible for student success, and were more inclined to attribute student failure to parenting or circumstances outside of their control. Although they did not want to admit a need for parent involvement, especially in the physical school setting, teachers were quick to place the blame on parents when they weren't actively involved. General perceptions of parents' involvement from the teachers were initially negative. Negative prior experiences set precedent for expected low levels of participation. Also, teachers seemed to make excuses for the parents themselves using many of the parent reported barriers to involvement (ie. time constraints, language, and cultural beliefs about education).

Specific to the participants in the study, the teachers were familiar with all participants and the children of the participants. Based on prior experiences with the families, the teachers had biases that they were unaware of at the beginning stages of implementation. Throughout the study, teacher interviews described ways in which they were setting lower expectations for the participants in the study because of culture, the exceptionalities of their children, and prior experiences with the families. Cultural differences were described as contributing to low-levels of parental involvement from teacher perspectives. Being that none of the teachers servicing the children of participants were of Haitian-descent, they had little understanding of the Haitian culture. Teachers stated that by promoting parent and teacher involvement, the SPIP increased their

awareness and acceptance of Haitian culture. The same was true for the researcher facilitating the SPIP workshops and communicating regularly with participants.

In addition to increased awareness and acceptance, through participation in the SPIP teachers learned non-language based methods of communication and ways to partner with parents. Teachers began to utilize translator services provided through the school for home notes, phone calls, and conferences. Additionally, teachers reported that as the participation of the parents increased, they themselves were more motivated to increase communication. Initial negative connotations associated with parent involvement were replaced with positive ones because the efforts being made by parent participants was evident. Teacher perceptions of parents evolved and so did their understanding of the co-dependency that is inherent to school-home partnerships. Instead of viewing themselves as independent entities, parents and teachers described a more reciprocal relationship described in existing research as, "interpersonal trust" (Newman, 2000). By building interpersonal trust with one another, parents and teachers were able to function as a unit and accomplish more together than in isolation.

Before beginning participation in the study, all participants described negative associations with parental involvement. Upon conclusion of the SPIP, all participants not only understood the impact of parental involvement on student success, but were actively implementing what they learned to maximize student outcomes. Broward County Public Schools' three year strategic plan for parent involvement outlines the following goals: (a) high quality instruction, (b) continuous improvement, and (c) effective communication (BCPS, 2012). All three of these goals, and many more specific to CLD students with exceptionalities, were addressed through the SPIP. Teachers learned methods to promote

culturally responsive communication and provide culturally responsive services. Parents and teachers were continually improving themselves, their views on education, and their practices. Lastly, effective communication methods were taught, practiced, and mastered as measured through self-reporting by all participants.

Limitations

Findings from the current study revealed that Haitian-American parents of students with exceptionalities had a desire to be involved, but often lacked the fundamental tools to be able to do so effectively. Parent and teacher participant feedback on the structured parent intervention program identified a clear shift in perceptions of opportunities for involvement, need to be involved, and overall levels of parent involvement. The researcher cautions against over generalizing the findings as a result of the small sample size used to obtain data. It is possible that a study with larger groups may yield differing results for a variety of reasons. Additionally, the varying ages and exceptionalities of the children included in the study could influence the parents' perceptions of involvement. Two out of the three participants had more than one child with an exceptionality currently being educated in Broward County Public Schools.

Another limitation to this study, were the previously established relationships between parent and teacher participants as well as relationships between the participants and the researcher. The researcher, having had strong ties to the school in which the study was implemented, could have had an impact on the attendance of participants and willingness of school administration and staff for cooperation. Had this study been conducted at a school with fewer ties to the researcher, results may have varied. Teacher buy-in to the study was a key contributor to the facilitation of almost half of the

workshops from the SPIP. Without this support and participation from the teachers, the successful implementation of the SPIP is unlikely. Also, the homogenous make up of the group of participants is also an identified limitation to the study. For the purpose of the study the researcher chose this particular subgroup however, modifications may be necessary to generalize the program across ethnic groups and settings.

Parents' varying educational levels and time spent in the United States also is a limitation to the study because of the impact on their understanding of the school system and access to resources. Those parents who spent longer periods of time in the United States and had more extensive formal education clearly impacted their assimilation and acculturation where as a group with differing backgrounds may provide different results.

Lastly, it is important to note that the researcher initially planned to implement the SPIP over the span of 10 months during the school year. The initial timeline for implementation was one in which recruitment would take place in the first two weeks of school and workshops would be conducted from September through June with post interviews done after the conclusion of the school year. As a result of a delay in receiving Broward County Institutional Review Board approval to conduct the study, the researcher had to condense the 10 workshops into a 5-month window. Had the SPIP been facilitated through the duration of a full school year, the researcher asserts that the study would have yielded richer and more substantive data.

Implications for Current Practice

Currently in Broward County Public Schools, all schools are required to develop, implement, and monitor a parent involvement plan. This plan differs from school-to-school and is based upon the identified needs of their populations. Based on the data

acquired through this study, implementation of a structured parent intervention program was found to positively influence the perceptions of parent involvement of parent and teacher participants.

All parent participants in the structured parent intervention program implemented by the researcher, over a five-month implementation, perceived their roles in education and special education to evolve. Initial parent perceptions of involvement were that their roles were essentially isolated to their homes. Through the differentiated and intensive workshops, parent participants became more involved as contributing members of their children's education and the school system. Being that there is currently no formal district-wide plan for increasing and sustaining high level of parent involvement, especially in underperforming low-socioeconomic areas with high representation of immigrant families, the data supports that the implementation of the described structured parent intervention program would assist with this.

Information regarding the Haitian-American parents can be useful to professionals as they seek to implement parent involvement programs in their schools and classrooms. Professionals need to understand parents' viewpoints, their backgrounds, beliefs and value systems as well as how these factors influence parental behavior (Diamond et al., 2004). Additionally, preliminary data acquired from teacher participants found that professionals sometimes lack cultural competence and have negative pre-conceived notions of particular parent groups. These findings mirrored those of Beth Harry (2008), Michaela Colombo (2006), and Souto-Manning & Swift (2008) all of which described challenges and methods for overcoming challenges associated with working collaboratively with families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Given that the participants, similar to many parents in schools today, were not only minority parents, but also parents of children with exceptionalities created an increased likelihood that professionals were predisposed to negative associations concerning their involvement. Professionals tend to treat these minority groups as if their needs and/or concerns are not important because the mainstream culture has not even begun to address the primary layer, which is that minorities have different needs, concerns, and priorities (Harry, 2001, 2008).

The researcher was able to identify preliminary systems in place to address parent involvement. However, aside from the preliminary systems little follow through was evident. The lack of follow through on parent involvement initiatives at the school level is particularly concerning because of legal mandates requiring otherwise. The findings of this study echoed the findings of those before it (Gregoire, 2010; Steppick & Steppick, 2003), which determined that Haitians in South Florida emigrated there for several reasons especially the access to educational opportunities and advancement for their children. This study built upon an existing body of evidence that Haitian-American parents want to be involved by identifying a way that parents and teachers indicated influenced their perceptions about involvement and increase awareness on methods for involvement.

Based on data obtained through interviews with teacher participants, it is evident that more needs to be done by the school district in regards to professional development opportunities for teachers and staff servicing minority populations. At this time, no formal training exists for school personnel in Broward County Public Schools in communication and collaboration with families in general, much less families of foreign

descent. The only training offered by the county to professionals, identified using the countywide professional development My Learning Plan system associated with parent involvement is a training entitled "Active Parenting". For the sake of the study and to be clear on what is currently available, the researcher attended an Active Parenting training hosted by the county as a professional participant. Although the training was informative, it provided parenting-based recommendations instead of addressing parental involvement in education. Furthermore, the training made no mention of students with exceptionalities or families of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Teachers, administrators, and schools need to be assessed annually on their methods for promoting and sustaining parental involvement. Currently, the school district conducts an annual parent survey where parent's feedback on their child's school is assessed however, this survey is biased and not in favor of ELL parents and parents with less financial means. Most parent surveys are administered electronically and therefore parents without access to a computer and the Internet are at a significant disadvantage. Additionally, although the survey is offered in some languages other than English, many of the terms used are academic terms and therefore the parents would benefit from access to a translator when completing the survey. Accountability measures should also be implemented for parents of students. Parent involvement should be tracked longitudinally to identify district, area, school, and class specific trends.

Language was also found to be a key factor in parents' perceived involvement and the IEP process. IDEA mandates that parents be provided information on their children's progress in their native language and that meetings be conducted within the presence of a translator who can address parent questions and concerns in their native language.

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Feedback from teachers gave insight to the process of requesting a formal translator from the district and how long that can sometimes take. As a result of the time constraints on the schools to facilitate the IEP process in a timely manner, many times schools depend on school-based translators. Although these translators are better than nothing at all, they often lack the background in the educational and formal terminology to properly convey all the information to parents.

Additionally, the current system used for developing IEPs in Broward County, EasyIEP, is not appropriate for speakers of languages other than English. Although information and forms using this system can be translated in other languages, the information put into the actual IEP about the students is presented in English to the parents on the copies that they take away from the meeting. The purpose of an IEP is to individualize each plan according to the needs of the student; by producing IEPs all in one language, the EasyIEP system is not individualizing the information to meet the needs of the parents or families of the students. It is important that the district explore options within the EasyIEP system or from another developer that are more appropriate for culturally and linguistically diverse populations not only to ensure that they are in compliance with legal mandates, but also to maximize student progress.

Lastly, it is recommended that schools and classroom teachers specifically, identify and implement systems to promote involvement of Haitian-American and all parents. This was a study of parent and teacher perceptions concerning a researcher-developed program adaptable across settings. Much like this study, Darch, Miso and Shippen (2004) suggested a prescriptive approach to parental involvement where professionals recruited parents, developed materials based on their needs, provided

training and sought ways to sustain their engagement. Professionals can use the information from this study and workshop outline to develop their own parent intervention programs based on the needs of their parent populations and current trends in involvement. People of ethnic and racial minorities and CLD groups have specific "identities, needs and challenges" (p. 128; Gregoire, 2010). An inherent prerequisite to conducting research within a specific group similar to what was done in this study, is "an interest in and/or specific knowledge regarding the specific sub-group within which the research is conducted" (Gregoire, 2010, p.129). Once this interest is identified and a knowledge base is established, support should be provided to school-based professionals to facilitate programs like that, which was described in this study. Furthermore, the goal of any and all implementations should be to promote, facilitate, sustain, and retain high levels of parent involvement in education.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the future, this study should serve as a foundation for other researchers to build upon and further develop structured parent intervention programs. Researchers can implement the model used in this study with varying subgroups in a variety of educational settings. Furthermore, researchers can use this study to develop protocols for implementation. These protocols can be researched using other overrepresented minority groups (e.g. Hispanic, African Americans not identifying as Haitian) to increase the body of evidence on parental involvement and special education within minority populations.

Additionally, future research can use this study as a foundation for extension studies on perceptions of those directly affected by structured parent intervention programs (e.g. teachers, administrators, students, etc.). Furthermore, although this study

was qualitative, the SPIP lends itself to the collection of quantitative, longitudinal data as related to parent involvement in the SPIP including, but not limited to: student scores on standardized state assessments, student CELLA scores, student mastery of IEP goals, and student performance on assessments used for annual promotion criteria. By analyzing quantitative data associated with student outcomes, researchers will be able to make modifications to the SPIP accordingly and use it as a tool to increase student achievement.

Lastly, although this study added to the body of knowledge having been implemented with Haitian-American parents of children with disabilities, the literature in this area remains sparse. The absence of literature on a rapidly growing minority group, as identified by recent population trends and projections (U.S. Census, 2015), is anticipated to pose a challenge to school-based professionals. Insight into these parents' perceptions, and those of other minority groups over-represented in special education, will educate professionals on methods by which they can collaborate and partner effectively as is legally mandated. The study will empower districts and school-based professionals through varying components of an easily differentiated model that can be implemented to promote parental involvement in special education.

Discussion Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the research and elaborated on the conclusions that can be drawn from the results obtained. It explored parent and teacher perceptions of parent involvement in a structured parent intervention program and how perceptions changed throughout implementation. It described specific implications for the Broward County Public School system as well as general implications for professionals working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations. This chapter described

similarities between current and previous research findings. Additionally, it outlined the

limitations of the current research and it made recommendations for future research

within the field of special education.

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APPENDIX A

Possible interview questions for parent participants are as follows, these questions will

not all be asked at each interview; however, they will provide the researcher with

a question bank to reference as needed:

Parental Involvement Opportunities

1.   In what ways are you involved in your child's education?

2.   What opportunities does your child's school provide for you to be
     involved?

3.   In what ways do you feel your child's school tries to involve you?

4.   In what ways do you think your child's school could do more to involve
     you?

5.   How has your involvement in your child's education differed from
     parental involvement in your native country of Haiti?

Relationship with Teacher

1.   What are your thoughts and/or feelings about your child's teacher?

2.   In what ways do you feel your child's teacher encouraged your
     involvement?

3.   In what ways does your child's teacher make your input feel welcome?

4.   What areas do you think your child's teacher could work on that would
     increase parental involvement?

5.   When and why do you feel most welcome and needed in your child's
     class?

Self-Awareness

1.   What motivates you to be involved in your child's education?

      a.   How is this similar to your parents involvement in your education?

      b.   How much do these factors have to do with the age of your child?

2.   What barriers have you encountered trying to be involved in your child's education?

      a.   What have you done to overcome these barriers?

      b.   What supports could be put into place to help you overcome these barriers in the future?

3.   Why do you think your child does or doesn't need you to be as involved as possible in their schooling?

4.   In what ways were your own parents involved in your education growing up in Haiti?

5.   How does parental involvement in education differ from Haiti to the United States?

Questions Specific to the Structured Parent Intervention Program (SPIP)

1.   In what ways has your participation in the SPIP increased your involvement in your child's education?

2.   What has your child's response to your increased involvement been?

3.   What has your child's teacher's response to your increased involvement been?

4.   How do you feel participation in the SPIP is changing your role in your child's life?

5. What are your personal goals for your participation in the SPIP?

   a. Tell me about the workshop that has been the most beneficial to you thus far.

   b. Tell me about the workshop that has been the least beneficial to you thus far.

   c. If you could change anything about the SPIP what would it be? Why?

APPENDIX B

Possible interview questions for teacher participants are as follows, these questions will

not all be asked at each interview, however, they will provide the researcher with

a question bank to reference as needed:

Parental Involvement Opportunities

1. In what ways are you involved in your student's education outside of

   school?

   2. What opportunities does your school provide for parents to be involved?

   3. In what ways do you feel your school is most successful at involving

   parents?

   4. In what ways do you think your school could do more to involve parents?

   5. How have you noticed differences between students of different

   backgrounds and the involvement of their parents?

Relationship with Parents

   1. What are your thoughts and/or feelings about your students parents in

   general?

   2. In what ways do you feel you encourage parent involvement?

   3. In what ways do you make your parents input feel welcome?

   4. What areas do you think you could work on that would increase

   parental involvement?

   5. In what ways do you feel you were prepared to actively engage and

   involve parents?

      a. In your pre-service program?

b. In professional development opportunities offered through your school?

c. In professional development opportunities offered through the county?

Self-Awareness

1. What motivates you to involve your student's parents?

2. How is parent's involvement in education similar or different from your involvement in their education?

3. How much do these factors have to do with the age of your students?

4. What barriers have you encountered trying to involve parents in their child's education?

5. What have you done to overcome these barriers?

6. What supports could be put into place to help you overcome these barriers in the future?

7. Why do you think your student's do or don't need their parents to be as involved as possible in their schooling?

8. In what ways were your own parents involved in your education growing up?

a. Do you think this has to do with your ethnic background?

9. How does parental involvement differ based on student backgrounds in your experience teaching?

a. For example, low-SES vs. more affluent populations

Questions Specific to the Structured Parent Intervention Program (SPIP)

1. In what ways has your student's parents participation in the SPIP increased their involvement in their child's education?

2. What has the student's responses been to their parents increased involvement?

3. What has your response to the increased involvement of your students parents been?

4. How do you feel participation in the SPIP is changing parents' roles in their child's life?

5. What would you consider to be strong personal goals for parents participating in the SPIP?

6. What have parents reported to be the most beneficial workshop thus far in the SPIP.

7. What have parents reported to be the least beneficial workshop thus far in the SPIP.

8. If you could change anything about the SPIP what would it be? Why?

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