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The Essence of Participating in a Comprehensive Family Literacy Program

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THE ESSENCE OF PARTICIPATING IN A COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

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THE ESSENCE OF PARTICIPATING IN A COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

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This is a qualitative inquiry of the phenomenon of participating in a 4-component family literacy program comprised of adult education, child education, parenting classes, and Parent and Child Together Time® (PACT Time). PACT Time was the component of the program where the parent and child learned together. The case selected for this inquiry was the Jefferson County Public Schools Family Literacy Project in Louisville, Kentucky. Informants for this study included 7 immigrant parents, 4 teachers, and 2 principals. The parent participants spoke Spanish as their first language, and 100% were female. The number of informants interviewed for this study totaled 13 individuals.

After the interviews themes were used to construct the essence of the experience for each group. One finding of this study was that informant motivation to participate was a desire to help families reach their full potential—including, but not limited to, English language acquisition, attaining a GED, and/or supporting children in school academically. Informants described success in these same categories. Parents gained confidence, which led to more informed school-choice decisions, strong feelings toward teachers, and improved perceptions of teachers. Teachers used strategies to involve parents in the classroom such as offering volunteer roles, inviting parents to work with their child, encouraging the use of home languages, and encouraging students to

complement their mothers. Teachers and principals described the importance of family engagement to education in general as a result of participation. Teachers and parents contextualized the experience within their shared gender roles.

Findings from the principals included recognizing family literacy as a strategy for improving ELL achievement. Principal motivation to host the program included helping families understand school culture and increasing engagement. Space and funding were limitations for principal participation. Principals raised issues linked to family literacy that provided areas for future research: family engagement as part of school improvement, Common Core State Standards, school safety, and family literacy and achievement (including one principal that linked family literacy directly to kindergarten readiness).

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manner. Your daily plight should be the subject of intense interest for numerous educational and political discussions. I truly believe that within your story, and the larger story of family literacy, the 21st century American dream resides.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

The intent of this study was to capture the essence of the experience of participating in a comprehensive family literacy program in one school district. This exploration deepens the understanding of the characteristics of an effective family literacy program and its relationship to education. This qualitative study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the shared experience of participating in a family literacy program conducted in elementary schools in the school district serving Jefferson County, Kentucky. The district primarily served the Louisville metropolitan area. The program was school-based and served primarily immigrant and refugee families. Although there have been studies of family literacy programs in the past, relatively few specifically address immigrants and refugees seeking to improve their English literacy skills (Hirst, Hannon, & Nutbrown, 2010). In a survey of family literacy programs, researchers echoed this need by commenting that there should be more studies of family literacy programs that serve cultural and/or ethnic minority groups (Padak, Sapin, & Baycich, 2002).

Comprehensive family literacy programs are a unique phenomenon experienced by adult participants, children, teachers, and principals. The comprehensive family literacy program in this study included four mandatory components for participating families: adult education, early childhood or school age education for the child, parenting education classes, and Parent and Child Together Time® (PACT Time). PACT Time is the component of the program where the parent and child learned together

simultaneously. In the case of the JCPS program, PACT Time occurred in the child's classroom, although it could technically have occurred whenever a parent and child were learning together. The definition of four-component family literacy can be found in expanded form later in this chapter. Programs are rich with exchanges that have been shown to, among other things, improve student academic achievement, parent involvement, and overall family wellbeing. One principal noted in a planning meeting for her school's family literacy program that instead of watching parents wistfully peer into the school after dropping children off in the morning, she could now invite them in to learn the English literacy and parenting skills necessary to help their children succeed in school. When parents come to school with their children, the entire family has been shown to benefit. Parents participating in the family literacy program spend several hours a week in their child's school—including hours in the elementary classroom while instruction is being delivered. Informal visits and observations of the program by staff and community members have exposed deep academic and emotional interactions between teachers and the families they serve. These interactions between elementary school educators and participating family members provide the backdrop for a rich inquiry into the phenomenon of family literacy.

Statement of the Problem

The importance of literacy and family involvement to economic and life success is well documented. Literacy serves as a mitigating factor to the negative impacts of poverty. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) released a study in 2010 concluding that a mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her child's future academic success. Rebecca Clark, Ph.D., of the NIH explained, "The findings indicate that programs to

improve maternal literacy skills may provide an effective means to overcome the disparity in academic achievement between children in poor and affluent neighborhoods" (retrieved online, 2012). Family involvement can serve as a mitigating factor for low maternal education levels. According to another large and comprehensive study, "The achievement gap in literacy performance between elementary-age children with more or less educated mothers was closed if family involvement levels were high" (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006, p. 653). When the literacy level of the family is improved or when family involvement levels are increased, children in the family are more likely to improve their literacy level (Carter, Chard, & Pool, 2009). These findings were important to this family literacy inquiry, as most participants in comprehensive family literacy programs across the country and in this inquiry were women.

Conversely, risk factors for low levels of literacy and family involvement are numerous. The negative impacts of low literacy are disproportionate for those populations that are limited in their English proficiency (Braun, Kirsch, & Sum, 2007). Most immigrants limited in their English proficiency were women. In the United States in 2007, 16% of adults reported not having a high school diploma, 10% were limited in their English proficiency, and 15% lacked basic reading skills in English (Batalova & Fix, 2010, p. 512). This means that 30 million adults would not qualify for jobs in the knowledge-based American economy and 22 million adults struggled with basic communication in English in their lives (Batalova & Fix, 2010, p. 512). It is estimated that roughly 38 million legal and illegal immigrants reside in the United States. Nearly one in four (16 million) of these immigrants are children under the age of 18. Those who are limited in English proficiency are less likely to find a job, secure a well-paying job, or

get promoted (Mora, 2003; as cited in Batalova & Fix, 2010). The economic harms of limited English proficiency are described in more detail in the literature review section. Comprehensive family literacy programs, including the program explored in this study, report statistically significant growth in English language progression for immigrant and refugee adult participants (NCFL, 2012; Padak et al., 2002). It is important to further explore the phenomenon of family literacy in an effort to understand these interactions and apply this information to programs and policies seeking to foster family engagement in education.

As mentioned, high levels of family involvement have been associated with improved levels of academic success. Low levels of family involvement—especially in elementary school—are associated with lower levels of student achievement. This has been confirmed by several researchers (Compton-Lilly & Greene, 2011; Dearing et al., 2006; Epstein, 2001; Hattie, 2009; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2001). Increased family involvement can also counterbalance the negative harms of low levels of maternal literacy, low socioeconomic status, lack of English language skills, and has been shown to improve parental self-efficacy (Dearing et al., 2006). The improvement of parental self-efficacy has a compounding positive effect on student literacy achievement over time (Dearing et al., 2006; Hindman, Skibbe, Miller, & Zimmerman, 2010). Family literacy programs like the one explored here have been directly associated with increased levels of parent and family involvement and engagement. The benefits of improving parent involvement are particularly acute for immigrant and refugee families who are at a greater risk of not attaining a job or being promoted once an entry-level job is achieved (Braun et al., 2007). Gaining a deeper understanding of the family literacy experience

could reveal trends that lead to increases in effective parent involvement and family engagement.

The benefits of parent and family involvement and family literacy are numerous and grow over time for both students and adults. Benefits include: academic success for the student and parent; improved relationships between parents and children and between parents, children, teachers, and principals; greater economic livelihood for the family, and a greater sense of self-efficacy for the adult (Kirp, 2007; Swick, 2009). The benefits of literacy in general and English language literacy in particular have been credited with robust positive outcomes for families in the United States. Comprehensive family literacy programs have been shown to improve literacy rates for participating adults and to create positive outcomes for children. While family engagement, literacy, and comprehensive family literacy programs have been studied previously, the relationship between the three in terms of how families and educators experience them remains to be fully understood. This is especially true for refugee and immigrant families learning to navigate American society for the first time. The experience of a parent entering the school doors to learn with their child after their arrival in the United States is unique. The rich exchanges between immigrant and refugee parents, their adult education teachers, their children's teachers, and school principals in a comprehensive family literacy program contain major themes for improving school and family relationships. Whether the themes invite further study or serve as ends themselves, this inquiry informs the implementation of family literacy programs and family engagement programs.

Most refugees and immigrants do not have the opportunity to enroll in a family literacy program. There are a number of reasons: lack of programs available, lack of time

in the family, lack of funded programs, lack of awareness about programs, scheduling issues, etc. Individuals with little or no English language are left to navigate an American society that premium on English language literacy. While enclaves of bilingualism exist, they are primarily populated by groups of Spanish-speaking individuals, and are the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, English is the language of access for most facets of American society. The work force is English-centered and where there are high concentrations of individuals that do not speak English as their first language (i.e., meat packing plants), rules can require English language literacy within a given timeframe. These "English-only" rules may or may not be supported by a formal program within the company. Without English, a family will have a difficult time accessing American society.

As mentioned above, the reasons there are not enough family literacy programs to accommodate the growing numbers of immigrants and refugees are numerous. One major barrier to the successful implementation of more family literacy programs is a lack of adequate and consistent funding. Peyton (1999) analyzed 11 states and their efforts to fund family literacy programs and found that there was a lack of funding in general (cited in Padak et al., 2002). The lack of funding has become especially true since the elimination of Even Start Family Literacy Program funding (Title 1, Subpart B, Section 3, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965; No Child Left Behind, 2001, as amended). Another limiting factor affecting the number of family literacy programs is a lack of programs operating according to research-based practices. When family literacy programs are not following a firm research base, principals may be frustrated by a perceived lack of outcomes when the reality could be an actual lack of adherence to

research-based practices. In the case of an unsuccessful family literacy program, it is likely that the program is discontinued and/or not replicated. In cases where family literacy programs are in existence but not at full enrollment, recruitment of families or inflexible scheduling could be part of the problem (Alamprese, 2004). Another reason for the overall lack of family literacy programs is that school principals may not have the capacity to carryout successful comprehensive family literacy programs (Alamprese, 2004). Finally, if participating adult educators lack the ability to teach to multiple levels of students, then the program may not be effective (Alamprese, 2004).

Understanding the themes that emerge from the interactions between parents, teachers, and principals in a comprehensive family literacy program that serves refugees and immigrants could illuminate practices worthy of further exploration and possible replication. Such practices will inform the field and potentially give way to more and better comprehensive family literacy programs. For those families with limited English language literacy, the replication of these successful interactions can make a critical difference to the generational success of the family.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of the phenomenon of participating in a family literacy program at elementary schools in Jefferson County Public Schools. This exploration of the family literacy experience for immigrant families and their schools will inform the national and international parent and family engagement discussion. Themes that emerge from this study could yield results for direct application and further research in the field.

Research Question

Overall question. What can be learned from the phenomenon of parent, teacher, and principal interactions in a comprehensive family literacy program? There were a number of guiding questions:

- How do interactions in a comprehensive family literacy program affect participating families?
- How do interactions in a comprehensive family literacy program affect participating teachers?
- How do interactions in a comprehensive family literacy program affect participating principals?
- Do these exchanges change the culture of a school?
- Are there positive themes that could be studied further for possible replication in other schools and programs?
- Are there negative themes that could be avoided in other schools and programs?

Definition of Terms

Words are important. In this section the researcher defines terms. These definitions helped to construct a lens through which this research project was written. Several of these terms will be utilized throughout this document. The following definitions should help to provide clarity for the reader.

Literacy—Literacy will be thought of in both a narrow and a broad context for the purposes of this paper. Conventionally literacy is defined as the ability to read and write (Wasik & Herrmann, 2004). At its most basic level, reading and writing are needed for an

individual to navigate modern society. In America, English is the primary language and therefore plays a prominent role in all forms of literacy. The United States Federal Government has defined literacy in the National Literacy Act as "an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals and develop one's knowledge and potential" (Wasik & Herrmann, 2004, p. 4). The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 included the definition to include the ability to function in the family (as cited in Wasik & Herrmann, 2004, p. 4). In addition to the expanded definitions of literacy provided by the federal government, Kell has analyzed literacy to be a context in and of itself that is a shared social event (2004). Wasik and Herrmann observed the definition of literacy as evolving to include "social and cultural aspects" as well as "individual characteristics and immediate contexts" (2004, p. 4). The broader definitions of literacy that include social context, culture, and immediate context, begin to blur the line between literacy and family literacy. The combination of the ability to read, write, and apply literacy skills to these broader contexts is appropriate to this discussion of family literacy.

Comprehensive family literacy—A comprehensive family literacy program is based on a family-centered approach to education that brings students and families together to learn. Parents or guardians and their children are asked to identify academic and life goals that will improve their quality of life. Educators and community agencies typically work with parents or guardians and their children to achieve these goals. According to Wasik and Van Horn (2012), the most widely recognized definition of

family literacy comes from section 910(20) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-10):

> Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children, training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children, parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency, and an age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

Curriculum and pedagogy are selected and implemented with fidelity to these ends.

The term family has traditionally referred to parents and their children living in the same household. A more contemporary and realistic definition of family was offered by Wasik and Herrmann (2004): "extended families, adults, and children living in one household; and other individuals living together who call themselves family" (p. 6). The family literacy program investigated in this study has served family members that would be included in this more broad definition of family. In an analysis of 700 different family literacy programs, researchers have defined family literacy to including these six features: goals, instructional practices, assessment methods, staff training, collaboration with surrounding agencies, and social support for participants (DeBruin-Parecki, Paris, & Siedenburg, 1997). The same authors deemed the following as components of an effective design: access to participation, curriculum with meaning in participants' lives, collaborating staff and administration with varied backgrounds, and stable funding (Timmons, 2008). All of these definitional elements are in place for the family literacy program explored in this study. Additionally, the family literacy program studied here serves immigrant and refugee families. Serving limited English proficient families has not been the traditional target of family literacy programs; however, the combination of

services offered by family literacy programs has tended to be an effective match for their needs (Wasik & Hermann, 2004).

The four-component comprehensive family literacy model—There are at least two main approaches to comprehensive family literacy programs: one that focuses on the separate education of parents and students and a more collaborative approach that focuses on collectively educating families about literacy practices through group activities and seminars (Timmons, 2008). The program explored here would be placed in the first general category of a program that focuses on the separate education of parents and students; however, because this program follows the four-component family literacy model promoted by the National Center for Families Learning (Darling, 2004; Timmons, 2008) and the Federal Government (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 2001), it includes "Parent and Child Together Time (PACT)." The four-component family literacy program includes adult education, early childhood or school age education, parent education, and PACT Time (Padak et al., 2002). The inclusion of PACT Time erodes the dichotomy between the more separate and the more collaborative approaches explained above and more accurately places the four-component model in its own category that combines elements from different program types. PACT Time has been defined as parent-child interactions, including bringing children and parents together to work, play, read, and learn. Such interactions have occurred in the classroom, at home, or in the community and can lead to positive language, literacy, emotional, and cognitive development of children (Jacobs, 2004). Although there are four distinct components, it is the interrelated execution of each that that can make the four component model strong.

For the sake of this inquiry, the four-component model will be used throughout to describe the comprehensive family literacy program that was to be researched.

Parent and family involvement and engagement—Parent and family involvement is used throughout to describe the actions taken by school and community members to increase parent and family engagement. The relationship between involvement and engagement is that of *a goal* and *an outcome*. The goal is to increase parent involvement and increased parent engagement as the intended outcome. For the purposes of this document, these are the definitions used:

- Parent and Family Involvement: Parental activities within schools, the community, and the home.
- Parent and Family Engagement: To occupy the attention and efforts of a parent or parents and families.

Joyce Epstein's "Six Types of Involvement" (2001, pp. 408-409) have become a cornerstone of the parent involvement discussion across the nation. The six types of parent involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community. These six types of parent involvement provide clear parameters for the definition of parent involvement. Family engagement is a deeper level of involvement that includes the whole family in learning together.

Significance of the Study

This study could have far-reaching impacts in the field of education. High quality family literacy programs have been shown in general to positively impact student achievement, student/teacher interactions, family involvement, family engagement,

positive social emotional development, and future economic success. These and other outcomes are likely the result of several complex interactions between family literacy participants, their teachers, and their principals. A deeper understanding of the phenomenon of family literacy for parents, teachers, and principals produces themes that could be applied to the enhancement of family literacy programs and other parent and family engagement activities. As a result of reading this study, educators and policy makers will have the documented experience of parents, teachers, and principals in a comprehensive, four-component family literacy program. Analysis of the experience yields recommendations for the types of individual and institutional interactions that can precipitate positive family-school relationships. Emergent themes also illuminate practices that should be avoided and other practices that offer promising areas for future research.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

This review of literature is intended to provide context for this qualitative inquiry. Based on a review of literature about family literacy, the areas described below are repeatedly considered by researchers and practitioners studying or implementing comprehensive family literacy programs. The exploration includes literature from the following major areas: parent involvement and family engagement; parental self-efficacy; benefits of literacy; harms of limited English literacy; maternal and paternal parent involvement; culture and family literacy; families and digital engagement; and comprehensive family literacy as an intervention. Information gleaned from these topics is intended to wrap around the phenomenological study to provide information to frame this inquiry into the essence of the family literacy experience. The logical starting point is the overarching discussion of parent involvement and family engagement in education. At their core, comprehensive family literacy programs are intensive parent involvement and family engagement programs.

Benefits of Effective Parent Involvement and Family Engagement

An ever-growing pool of research supports the benefits of parent involvement in schools. Several meta-analyses indicate that when families are involved in school by attending parent-teacher conferences and parent meetings, visiting and volunteering in the classroom, and attending social events, that their children perform better academically than children whose families are less involved in the educational process (Dearing et al., 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005).

Findings like these regarding the positive impacts of parent involvement in schools have been reaffirmed by such organizations as the Harvard Family Research Project, The Parent Teacher Association of America, The National Center for Families Learning (formerly the National Center for Family Literacy), The United States Department of Education, state departments of education, and The National Education Association, among others. In John Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis of 716 studies of family involvement, he tabulated an effect size (d = .51) indicating a medium to high overall positive impact on student achievement (p. 68). Hattie's large meta-analysis also indicated that those practices engaging parents in deliberate educational strategies with their children had the strongest impact on student achievement (2009). There also have been some studies that have shown parent involvement may improve parental self-efficacy, which promotes literacy performance and augments the overall positive impacts such as increasing graduation rates (Dearing et al., 2006). In another meta-analysis of 31 studies, the importance of building parental self-efficacy was highlighted as a method of encouraging more family engagement (Ferguson, 2008). What is more is that the positive impacts of parent involvement have helped to specifically improve academic achievement for students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Henderson et al., 2007). Increased parent involvement in the home and at school has been particularly effective at promoting low-income student success in early childhood programs (Hindman et al., 2010). Robinson and Harris's study of parental involvement and student achievement concluded that the number of cases where parent involvement had a positive effect on student achievement was higher with younger students (2014). It is worth noting that these same authors questioned the effectiveness of parent involvement initiatives and

their effect on student achievement if initiatives do not carefully consider the appropriateness of different initiatives for different ethnic groups. The authors did, however, acknowledge the importance of parent involvement in "setting the stage for academic success" (Robinson & Harris, 2014, p. 199). Finally, teachers who involve parents and other volunteers report having more time to teach (Henderson et al., 2007). In other words, effective parent involvement is generally good for students, families, and school staff.

A meta-analysis of 31 family engagement studies conducted by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory reached six major conclusions about effective family engagement (Ferguson, 2008). First and foremost, educators who effectively engaged families created a welcoming environment that fostered positive relationships transcending context, culture, and language—with language being the newest addition to the list. It is an unfortunately common occurrence when educators send out a communication intended for families that is not in the families' language. Ferguson explained,

> Methods of fostering a culture of complementary or reciprocal learning (including several opportunities for public exchange about family perceptions and involvement) can be achieved by addressing feelings of unwelcome in the following areas: differences in language, family perception of the child's academic ability, educational support common to the home culture, and the ability to navigate educational systems and mitigate barriers to engagement. (2008, p. 10)

In a similar vein, Ferguson (2008) found it was important to identify misconceptions that staff may have about families that led to distrust. The third category identified in the meta-analysis was resource allocation to families with the greatest need. Fourth concerned understanding the home context and how it impacts student achievement. The fifth category in this analysis is that leadership should be informed by a working

knowledge of what it takes to create structures that encourage family engagement. The sixth category of findings from this study held that those practitioners hoping to effectively engage families should understand the effect of beliefs, self-efficacy, knowledge, perceived abilities, and previous experience on a family's ability to support their children's education (Ferguson, 2008). One consistent theme throughout these six categories is that the onus is on educators and educational systems to make the changes necessary to improve family engagement.

Parent involvement researcher Joyce Epstein has observed that "parent involvement is on everyone's list of practices to make schools more effective, to help families create more positive learning environments, to reduce the risk of student failure, and to increase student success" (1987, p. 4), but that it does not happen without deliberate efforts. She continued, "parent involvement is everybody's job but nobody's job until a structure is in place to support it" (p. 10). This sentiment was underscored in the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory meta-analysis that indicated systematic approaches to parent engagement were more successful than sporadic family engagement efforts (Ferguson, 2008). At their most basic level, family literacy programs are parent involvement programs. When implemented according to a research-based model, family literacy programs should involve parents deeply in their children's school experience. Indeed, comprehensive family literacy programs have been shown to increase parent involvement (Compton-Lilly & Greene, 2011; Dearing et al., 2006).

Comprehensive family literacy programs that follow a tight model like the one in this study could provide the structure necessary to move thoughts around parent involvement into action. The four component comprehensive family literacy model is a

structure that satisfies the challenge to make parent involvement and family engagement more deliberate.

Digital Parent Involvement and Family Engagement

As 21st century society continues to trend towards using technology for almost everything, educational organizations are simultaneously exploring the use of various forms of digital media strategies for communication and instructional purposes. The increase in media consumption by families is also changing the ways families interact with themselves and each other in social contexts. Comprehensive family literacy programs exist in these same educational organizations and serve families in this changing social landscape. It is important for an inquiry into comprehensive family literacy programs to consider the digital media context. The purpose of this section is to explore aspects of digital parent engagement.

The results of a 2013 poll of 39,000 parents of school-aged students conducted by Schoolwires & Project Tomorrow indicated that 89% of parents consider the effective use of technology as very important to their child's future success. Results from this same poll indicated that personal parent use of a smartphone or tablet computer has increased by 128% since 2008. In another poll of 2,300 parents, the results indicated that a majority of parents do not think new media technologies have made parenting any easier (Northwestern University, 2013). This poll indicated that parents may use media to manage daily life; however, they will still turn to family and friends for advice more often than websites, blogs, and social networks (Northwestern University, 2013). As parents increasingly orient themselves toward a digital lifestyle and expect their children

to be engaged accordingly, the discussion of digital parent engagement is taking on a more significant level of importance.

Discussions of equity permeate all facets of education, including digital parent engagement. Until recently, a digital divide in access and usage of technology has been described to exist between ethnic and culturally diverse parents. Pew research indicated that more Hispanic-Latino parents own smartphones as compared to their White and Black non-Hispanic counterparts (Vaala, Santa-Donato, & Morris, 2013). It has been reported that Hispanic-Latino parents are more likely to use their smartphones for activities other than as a phone (Vaala, 2013). African Americans only trail their White counterparts by 7% in terms of overall Internet access and only 12% when it comes to home broadband Internet access (Pew Research Center, 2013). While this information suggests equal or greater access to smartphone technology for African-American and Hispanic-Latino Americans in comparison to White Americans, in terms of broadband Internet access, 45% of Hispanic-Latino households report having access—this is compared to 65% of non-Hispanic White and 52% or non-Hispanic Black homes (Vaala et al., 2013). Hispanic-Latino families are using smart phones more than their White and Black non-Hispanic counterparts, but fall short in terms of broadband Internet access. There is also some indication that Internet usage among Hispanic-Latino and African-American communities increases with the level of education. For the 10% of Hispanic-Latino individuals with a college degree, 70% went online, whereas only 31% of those who dropped out of high school went online (Vaala et al., 2013, p. 31). African Americans who are young and college educated go online at an equal rate to White Americans (Pew Research Center, 2013). The overall story is that the digital divide by

ethnic group is closing; however, different ethnic groups are accessing the Internet using different devices.

The discussion about access to the Internet for different ethnic and cultural groups is multifaceted. As indicated by the information above, the simplistic understanding that there is a digital divide between ethnic and cultural groups along the traditional stratification lines is in need of constant qualification. In anther recent study, access to mobile devices along economic class lines was more clearly described,

> There is still a big gap between higher and lower income families in terms of access to new mobile devices. Among families earning $100,000 a year or more, two-thirds (65%) now own such a device, while among lower-income families (less than $25,000 a year), 19% do. Similarly, while a majority of lower-income homes now report having a smartphone (61%), it is still far fewer than among higher-income homes (80%). (Northwestern University, 2013, p. 5)

The Pew Research Center (2013) reports similar findings among African Americans: higher income African Americans are just as likely as White Americans to access the Internet, but the gap widens for lower-income African Americans. Although some kind of a digital divide may persist, it is more likely along class lines rather than ethnic divisions. As access to the Internet for all groups increases, it is important to explore the impact of Internet access and usage on family dynamics. Livingstone explained,

> The diffusion and appropriation of media into the practices of everyday life plays such a key role in defining the home, in spatial terms, and daily life, in temporal ones, that domestic media have become part of the infrastructure of family life. (as cited in Katz, 2010, p. 298)

The changing roles of children in contemporary digital family engagement activities have important implications. Vikki Katz (2010) used the term “media brokering” to describe immigrant children as they help to facilitate their parents’ usage of new communications technologies. In the findings from one study, Katz (2010) explained

that immigrant children identified primarily as their family's helpers and were likely to put the needs of their families above their own. Katz explained one conclusion based on study findings,

> The research presented here offers the possibility that intervening through children in such communities may lead to higher success rates in reaching families with resources and services that keep them healthy, since children are the primary connectors with media for community information. (2010, p. 310)

Many family literacy programs describe their approach as a comprehensive intervention for a target child. With children as the family's primary link to the digital world, comprehensive family literacy programs may find themselves in increasingly relevant roles if they include digital aspects of engagement.

The idea of approaching digital family engagement via the role of the child may have implications on the larger family engagement discussion. Some researchers, like Katz, have noted that children taking on media brokering roles may come at the cost of other aspects of a young person's life. One such aspect may be physical activity. In the study of 2,300 parents, a majority thought that engagement in new media came at the cost of a negative impact on children's physical activity (Northwestern University, 2013). The impact of engaging families through child media brokers begs further exploration. Nevertheless, comprehensive family literacy programs will be impacted by this changing social dynamic.

Benefits of Literacy

Literacy has been described as "the energy supply of the Information Age" (Brandt, 2001, p. 171). The reference to the Information Age indicates that perhaps the stakes are higher today for learning literacy than in previous decades. In their book *21st Century Skills,* Trilling and Fadel (2009) discussed the results of a survey of 400 hiring

executives from major corporations. Results revealed the following 7 categories of valuable skills determined by those who make hiring decisions: oral and written communication; critical thinking and problem solving; professionalism and work ethic; teamwork and collaboration; working in diverse teams; applying technology and leadership; and project management (p. 7). Each of these categories depends on various types of literacy. Without major societal shifts towards valuing multiple home languages other than English in the work place, the first category of oral and written communication will depend on proficient English language literacy skills. While the other 6 categories do not explicitly require English language literacy, in the U.S. proficiency in each category will depend on English proficiency for articulation to a predominately English-speaking audience. Trilling and Fadel contended that skills like these have become more necessary since a 1991 shift to a knowledge-based economy from the industrial-based economy (2009). A similar observation was supported by Braun et al. (2007) when they noted the systematic decrease in manufacturing jobs and a concurrent increase in jobs that require more literacy and numeracy skills. While the general benefits of literacy have been widely recognized in the past, the need for literacy skills in the 21st century is increasingly acute.

In terms of education, literacy is one of the strongest predictors of academic success (Werner & Smith, 1992; as cited in Carter et al., 2009). The acquisition of literacy skills has been seen by many as a way for individuals to fully participate in 21st century societies (Auerbach, 1989; Hirst et al., 2010). When literacy skills are gained early, longitudinal data have indicated that children and families increase their economic viability and increase their earning potential throughout their lifetime (Kirp, 2007). These

studies are commensurate with the above information about the importance of literacy in the 21st century workforce. The difference in lifetime earnings of males with bachelor's degrees in 1979 was 51% higher than their peers with high school diplomas, and by 2004 the difference had grown to 96% (Braun et al., 2007, p. 4). Gaining literacy skills early and extending them throughout life is important to success in school and life. Family literacy programs have been shown to increase the literacy rates of participating parents and students (Padak et al., 2002; Timmons, 2008). Wasik and Van Horn (2012) placed the importance of literacy in a global context, "On a broader level, the literacy skills of families are central to the literacy proficiency of neighborhoods and communities; viewed collectively, they determine the literacy levels of individual countries around the world" (p. 6). This grandiose statement accurately explains the importance of increasing family literacy in a global context.

Harms of Limited English Literacy

The harms of limited literacy in general and limited English literacy in particular are numerous and dire. The overarching concern for literacy challenges in the home is their generational impact (Timmons, 2008). Barbara Bush and her foundation that promotes family literacy have aptly observed that parents are a child's first and most important teacher (DeBruin-Parecki, 2009). As such, parents socialize their children to value or not to value literacy. Several research studies affirm the notion that the values, attitudes, and practices of parents in the home greatly influence a child's motivation to learn (Carter et al., 2009). If parents lack literacy skills or do not exhibit pro-literacy attitudes, their children may not perform as well academically (Wasik & Van Horn, 2012). When such children grow up to become parents themselves, there is a high

likelihood that the cycle will perpetuate itself. Sastry and Pebley (2010) explained that, "Inequalities in children's skills achievement—especially inequalities tied to socioeconomic status (SES)—are particularly important because of their potential role in the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage" (p. 777).

The mention of socioeconomic status as an aggravating factor for the harms of generational literacy inequality leads to a discussion of the economics of literacy for limited English proficient populations. In 2007 it was determined by the American Community Survey that 16% of all U.S. adults did not have a high school diploma and that 10% were deemed limited English proficient—that is 30 million adults that did not qualify for jobs in the knowledge-based U.S. economy because they lacked necessary education and literacy skills (Batalova & Fix, 2010, p. 512). Additionally, 22 million adults found difficulty communicating in English in the workplace and community (Batalova & Fix, 2010, p. 512). Difficulty communicating in the workplace decreases productivity. In general, adults with higher English skills were more likely to work in higher status occupations (Batalova & Fix, 2010). Limited literacy, when passed down from generation to generation, has a tendency to replicate negative economics especially for immigrant and refugee populations. The impacts of limited literacy are not good for anyone; however, impacts are disproportionate for those lacking English skills.

Maternal and Paternal Involvement

Mothers and fathers both have an important effect on the literacy performance of the family unit. However, there is strong evidence that maternal literacy rates have a significant impact on the literacy rates and academic achievement of their children. The study released by the National Institutes for Health referenced above resulted from an

analysis of neighborhood inequality in children's reading and mathematics using data from the 2000-2001 Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (Sastry & Pebley, 2010). Key findings from the study shed light on the importance of maternal reading cores. The analysis of data from 3,000 family surveys indicated that a mother's reading score accounts for the largest proportion of total inequality in children's achievement, and the largest variation in children's reading scores (Sastry & Pebley, 2010). The researchers also discovered that children in higher socioeconomic status families scored better on assessments because their mothers had better reading skills, more schooling, and lived in higher income neighborhoods (Sastry & Pebley, 2010). What is more is that a mother's reading scores accounted for more variation than median income levels, which accounted for the smallest variation (Sastry & Pebley, 2010). One implication of these findings is that maternal literacy skills may mediate the impacts of low socioeconomic status. Finally, the researchers found that when given equal opportunity, immigrants are more effective at learning reading and mathematics than their counterparts with U.S.-born parents (Sastry & Pebley, 2010). These are promising findings if programs that improve maternal reading rates are available.

Dearing et al. (2006) conducted a longitudinal study of 281 low income and ethnically diverse kindergarteners through fifth graders. One of the findings of this study was that the average gap in literacy performance between children of more educated and less educated mothers was nonexistent when family involvement levels were high. These findings suggested that, by increasing parent involvement, differences in maternal education rates can be mediated. This evidence supports the fact that maternal education rates are important for student achievement, and that involving the family in the

education of their children can mediate such differences. Given the facts that maternal literacy skills and education levels may be the number one predictor of student academic success and that family involvement can mediate differences in maternal literacy rates, one conclusion would be to increase the prevalence of high quality family literacy programs that improve maternal reading skill and increase parent involvement.

In addition to the benefits of maternal education and involvement on the academic achievement of their children, positive social-emotional relationships are very important to the regulation of emotions during early childhood development (Pianta, 2004). Pianta came to the following powerful conclusion about social-emotional development and family literacy programs,

> Thus, how the mother-child dyad functionally regulates the child's emotional experience through the toddler's preschool years can have important consequences for literacy development. Efforts to promote literacy development in family literacy programs must take seriously this emotion-regulation function of the relationship between child and parent at this age. (p. 181)

The four-component family literacy model includes parent time and Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time. These two components are designed to focus, at least in part, on what Pianta described above as the emotion-regulation function of the mother-child relationship. The conclusion that PACT Time is important for the meaningful social and emotional development of the parent and child was also supported by Jacobs (2004). The social and emotional connections to family literacy will be explained further in the description of the program to be studied.

The information about the importance of maternal reading skills is even more salient for immigrant women. In one survey, women made up slightly less than half (48%) of all immigrants, yet they comprised 54% of those immigrants who spoke English

poorly (Batalova & Fix, 2010). Among these women, those with higher oral English proficiency were more likely to be in the labor force and less likely to be unemployed (Batalova & Fix, 2010). While many of these women may be literate in their home language, without oral English proficiency skills they will struggle to be successful in the United States. Without the availability of family literacy programs and other programs that improve maternal English literacy skills and increase family involvement, immigrant women will be disproportionately harmed by a lack of English literacy skills.

Researchers have supported the notion that fathers are generally less involved than mothers in all types of school activities, and one study indicated that the involvement of fathers was only 53% of the time mothers spend (Timmons, 2008, p. 97). One caveat to grouping fathers and judging them as uninvolved or under-involved in their children's education is that perhaps studies about 'parents' have really only meant mothers (Morgan, Nutbrown, & Hannon, 2009). The information regarding fathers' rates of involvement in education and literacy development in the home may not be fully understood and programs may have an implicit or explicit bias towards working with mothers. Another issue with generalizing male involvement in family literacy programs is that there is a relatively small body of literature dedicated to the topic. What is clear—even from the relatively small amount of information available—is that fathers have a desire to be involved even if programs fail to win their engagement (Gadsden, 2012). There are an increasing number of studies supporting higher academic achievement and healthy social emotional development in students whose fathers are more involved (Morgan et al., 2009). These positive benefits are also amplified when two-parents including an involved father are involved in the life of their child (Gadsden, 2012). In the

study of 85 fathers conducted by Morgan et al. (2009), 93% of families reported some literacy activity between fathers and children, fathers with higher incomes were more likely to be involved in literacy activities with their children, and that home visitation was a better method of engaging fathers than center-based approaches. Given this and other information, it is worth exploring programs that focus on building both maternal and paternal literacy and family engagement.

Comprehensive Family Literacy Programs as an Intervention

According to Barbara Van Horn, former Co-Director of the Goodling Institute for Family Literacy, 20 years of solid research supports the fact that parent literacy is important to student success (2011). Her analysis is supported by researchers Carter et al. (2009) who have recommended early literacy programs that recognize children in the context of the unique family environment. Their recommendations are partially in response to what they refer to a rich-get-richer phenomenon for children who are in literacy-filled environments at home—the more children read and are encouraged to read by their parents, the higher the level of literacy they are likely to reach (Carter, et al., 2009). Four documented positive impacts of family literacy programs are school readiness, school success, economic gains, and quality of life advancements (Kirp, 2007; Swick, 2009). Swick's summary of the benefits of family literacy also indicated that child participants in family literacy programs had higher intellectual curiosity, remained on grade level and established a pattern of success, have higher graduation rates, have increased earning power over a life span, and are more likely to contribute to society (2009). The need for the benefits of family literacy among multilingual families has been found to be even more acute (Hirst et al., 2010).

One outcome of family literacy programs is that they increase the number of books read in the home. NCFL program data has indicated that adult participants in the family literacy program read to their children more often after participating in the family literacy program and that child participants read to their parents more often (2012). Several studies over several years have indicated that interactive reading in the home improves literacy and that early readers come from homes where adults read to them regularly (DeBruin-Parecki, 2009; Sénéchal, 2012). Pianta noted that researchers have identified the role of the caregiver in literacy development as important for providing "language stimulation and conversation; co-regulation of attention, arousal, interest, and emotional experience; and direct transmission of phonological information and content" for their children (2004, p. 175). Family literacy programs are especially effective at increasing the number and quality of home literacy activities. Benefits of such activity have yielded improved attendance and academic success.

In Padak et al.'s (2002) review of 10 years of family literacy program articles retrieved in the ERIC database, they found family literacy programs as effective interventions in several ways. In general, family literacy programs that focus on the entire family have been found to be more effective at improving student literacy than those that focus on only the parent or child separately (Padak et al., 2002). Another meta-analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles published between 1990 and 2010 found that family literacy programs made statistically significant contributions to children's literacy skills (Steensel, Herppich, McElvany, & Kurvers, 2012). When comparing family literacy programs with adult education only programs, 71% of adult participants in family literacy programs remained enrolled at the end of the year compared with only 55% of those

enrolled in adult education programs (National Center for Family Literacy; as cited in Padak et al., 2002, p. 32). The increased attendance for participants in family-centered approaches to literacy resulted in improved adult literacy, improved literacy interactions between parents and children, improved personal and social development growth for adults, and increased test scores and interest in literacy activities among participating children (Padak et al., 2002). In another study of 277 family literacy participants, literacy levels of adult participants improved at a statistically significant rate (Alamprese, 2004).

Adult participants in family literacy programs benefit economically from enhancements in English language literacy as well. One in five adults who participated in a well-structured family literacy program was able to find work at the end of a program year (Alamprese, 2004). The percentage of adult family literacy participants with jobs at the end of a program year was even higher (43%) for 200 families studied by the National Center for Family Literacy in 1996 (Alamprese, 2004). When parents are able to benefit from gainful employment, the entire family unit is built on a more stable foundation.

Another beneficial aspect of family literacy programs can also extend from the informal interactions that occur on a daily basis. "Indeed, Prins and colleagues' (2011) research reveals that informal conversations are a vital yet overlooked source of learning and informational and emotional support" (Prins & Van Horn, 2012, p. 174). The same authors encourage family literacy programs to recognize informational interactions as important as opposed to thinking of them as a "distraction from learning" (Prins & Van Horn, 2012, p. 174). It makes sense that parents would have the opportunity to engage in informal interactions as many such programs include childcare, thus giving parents—especially mothers—the ability to focus on their own interactions.

As illustrated in this preliminary review of literature, the benefits of family literacy are numerous and well documented. Comprehensive family literacy programs like the one to be studied here can be an effective method of improving parent engagement and literacy for both mothers and fathers. Programs have been successful at improving the academic achievement for the school-aged children of participating families. There appears to have been a direct relationship between the number and depth of parent-child interactions around literacy and the successful academic and emotional development of the child. Adults who participated in family literacy programs have also improved their education and were more likely to become gainfully employed. A deeper understanding of the phenomenon that produces these compelling results will be important to the implementation of family literacy programs in the future.

Culture and Family Literacy

Culture and its connection to education have been discussed in several different contexts. There are many definitions of culture that are variations on the theme of viewing it broadly as a way of life. Geneva Gay provided the following guidance via Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991), "As used here, culture refers to a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to own lives as well as the lives of others" (2000, p. 8). Terrell and Lindsey offered a similar definition but elaborated further by including the following domains of culture: class, race, national origin, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexual orientation, ableness, and language (2009). These same authors note that this list of nine domains is not exhaustive. Culture is complex and ever-changing, void of clean lines and clear-cut definitions; however, Terrell and Lindsay's broad list of domains, and the combinations

that can be formed therein, provides an adequate backdrop for a discussion of culture in family literacy programs. Over time, family literacy programs are serving an increasingly diverse audience. Since culture permeates all aspects of life including literacy and the ways in which it is accessed, it is important that family literacy programs take culture into consideration (Castro, Mendez, Garcia, & Westerberg, 2012).

Terrell and Lindsey's framework for understanding culture in education includes six stages on a cultural proficiency continuum: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency. These six stages and their relationship to each other are described as a continuous cycle (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Family literacy practitioners—like all educational practitioners—find themselves on different parts of this continuum as new elements of culture emerge over time. With regard to family literacy and family engagement programs, literature suggests that there are some distinct differences in how learners from different cultural groups engage in the process. While this discussion will revolve almost exclusively around the domains of race, ethnicity, and national origin, other domains of culture are certainly worth additional exploration. The cultural domain of gender in family literacy programs has, to some extent, been included in the above section about maternal and fraternal engagement.

Ogbu (2004) included African American and Native American cultural groups in a category he referred to as involuntary minorities. What distinguishes involuntary minority groups from Hispanic-Latino and other voluntary minority groups is their historical pathway to living in the United States of America (Ogbu, 2004). Involuntary groups did not choose to reside in the United States of America on their own accord. In

the case of African American or Native American groups, they were forced into their minority status by the actions of others. Voluntary groups arrived at their minority status through their own free will. This explanation implies that the different experiences and attitudes of involuntary and voluntary minority groups have resulted in a complex set of social exchanges that have precipitated different academic and life outcomes. This context has an impact on family literacy programs seeking to serve families from different cultural backgrounds.

Family literacy programs that serve African American, Latino-Hispanic American, and/or Native American populations would benefit from attempts to utilize culturally-appropriate strategies (Robinson & Harris, 2014; Scott, Brown, Jean-Baptiste, & Barbarin, 2012). This means utilizing strategies that are linked to the particular characteristics of each of the aforementioned cultural minority groups. It is important to note that culturally-specific strategies should be utilized for cultural groups beyond African American, Latino-Hispanic American, and Native American as well; however, this discussion will focus on the largest cultural groups served by family literacy programs.

In the context of family literacy programs, African Americans are thought to have "strong beliefs about spirituality, the value of education, and the primacy of nominal knowledge" (Scott et al., 2012, p. 243). Additional analysis from these authors recommends singing, storytelling, engagement in group activities, the use of oral expression, and emotional affirmation as important to the education of African American children (Scott et al., 2012). Many of these cultural characteristics are thought to be based on the forced use of contextualized information as a learning tool during slavery since

African Americans were not allowed to develop literacy skills (Scott et al., 2012). Family literacy programs seeking to serve African American audiences should consider designing strategies that take this information into consideration and design strategies accordingly.

According to the NAEP, only 21% of Native American eighth graders and 26% of Native American twelfth graders read at a proficient level, and this cultural group may experience the direst circumstances of any group (Faircloth & Thompson, 2012). These circumstances precipitated a 50% non-graduation rate for Native American families (Faircloth & Thompson, 2012). For many Native American families, school is associated with the historical trauma of schools in the past that were specifically designed strip them of their culture (Faircloth & Thompson, 2012). This view is commensurate with Ogbu's categorization of Native Americans as an involuntary minority group. Native Americans did not choose to be a minority group. European colonists came to the Americas and forced Native Americans into a disenfranchised minority status. Approaches to engaging Native American families in literacy programs would benefit from recognizing the cultural experience of Native Americans.

Hispanic-Latino Americans fall into Ogbu's voluntary minority group as their typical experience involves the choice to live in the United States. As mentioned earlier, this group comprises the largest minority group in the US. Nevertheless, the cultural experience of membership to this group includes the stigma of being legal or not legal as determined by the presence of immigration or citizenship papers. As a voluntary minority group, Hispanic-Latino families maintain a high level of motivation to reach their full potential. Hispanic-Latino families have assets associated with their cultural experience

that may orient the family unit towards success. “Familismo” is a sentiment used to described the high levels of “loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity” among Hispanic-Latino family members (Vega, 1995; as cited in Castro et al., 2012, p. 273). Such a family-centric orientation has created the following living situations: 59% live in a household headed by a married couple, 21.3% live in a household headed by a female, 10.1% live in a household headed by a male, and only 9.5% live in a household not headed by family (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008; as cited in Castro et al., 2012). According to the same authors, “The percentage of two-parent headed households among Latinos can serve as a protective factor for their children’s development and learning, especially if programs can involve both parents in complimentary ways” (2012, p. 274). Family literacy programs would benefit from building on the cultural assets of the Hispanic-Latino American family (Castro et al., 2012).

As observed above, the discussion of culture is complex and ever-changing. This literature review provides a snapshot of some of the more pervasive cultural issues for the largest minority groups as they relate to family literacy programs. The growing body of research about culture and family literacy programs generally supports utilizing culturally appropriate strategies where possible. This type of approach would require staff to stay abreast of the most recent information available and to ascribe to a constant process of learning about the new and unending variations of culture.

Limitations of Comprehensive Family Literacy Programs

Although there is a large body of research that generally supports comprehensive family literacy programs as capable of creating positive impacts for participating families, there are studies that have caused educators and policy makers to review some

of these claims. One study of a federally funded comprehensive family literacy program is known as the Even Start Classroom Literacy Interventions and Outcomes (CLIO) Study (Judkins, St.Pierre, Gutmann, Goodson, von Glatz, Hamilton, Webber, Troppe, & Rimdzius, 2008). The CLIO study included 120 Even Start funded family literacy programs that implemented a consistent curriculum across the country but did not show statistically significant effects on three of the five early literacy measures for preschool children. There were three areas where statistically significant impacts were not found for preschool instruction: support for oral language, support for phonological awareness, and support for print motivation (Judkins, et al., 2008). However, CLIO impact analysis did show statistically significant impacts on preschool instruction for the support of print knowledge and literacy resources in the classroom. Additionally, the CLIO study showed statistically significant growth in child social competence, parent interactive reading skills, and parent responsiveness to their child (CLIO, 2008).

Another meta-analysis of 30 family literacy programs found a small but significant mean effect on comprehension-related and code-related skills, which lead researchers to conclude that additional research into how family literacy activities are carried out by families is necessary (van Steensel, McElvany, Kurvers, & Herppich, 2010). These same authors made the following comment relative to the findings,

> This does not mean, however, that the [family literacy] programs should be abandoned. First of all, even small effects can be meaningful when viewed in light of the context in which they were obtained. Moreover, it remains to be determined how program activities are actually implemented by parents and children and how these activities interact with existing family (literacy) practices. (van Steensel et al., 2010, p. 89)

This quotation supports the significance of this and other studies that seek to deeply analyze what the actual experience of participating in a family literacy program is like.

From detailed inquiries into the individual experiences of families and educators, researchers may be able to calibrate future research to more adequately capture the full impact of comprehensive family literacy programs.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

Overview

This qualitative study was conducted following Creswell's (2007) guidelines for a phenomenological approach. This methodology was selected due to its focus on exploring the essence of an experience. The shared experience of immigrant parent participants, teachers, and principals in a family literacy program reveals promising practices for further consideration, caveats for principals and teachers, and other topics worthy of future exploration.

The researcher served as the Supervisor of Federal Programs in the Lincoln, Nebraska School District from 2007-2013 where he supervised the four-component family literacy program in the School District in addition to other educational programs. The family literacy program included funding and professional development from three large family literacy funders: United States Department of Education (Even Start), National Center for Families Learning (formerly National Center for Family Literacy), and the Barbara Bush Family Literacy Foundation. The researcher was hired in June 2013 as the Director of Family Engagement Initiatives at the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) in Louisville, Kentucky. During professional practice, the researcher has observed several interactions between family literacy participants, teachers, principals, and community members that have lead to a curiosity to more deeply understand the essence of the family literacy experience. This study attempts to capture that essence for potential application in the field.

Rationale for Qualitative Design

Functionalist sociologists such as Emile Durkheim have viewed educational systems in society as having the purpose to pass on societal norms, values, and structure and to foster active civic participation (Sadovnik, 2011). Political philosophers as early as Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) noted the importance of an educated electorate to the integrity and maintenance of a democratic system of government. The act of educating a student, when done effectively, is an individualized activity that depends on relationships and reciprocity between the educator and student. Over time, educational sociologists have broadened the analysis of education to include the family and the larger context within which it exists (Sadovnik, 2011). When the student-educator relationship is extended to purposefully include the family and its context—as is the case in a comprehensive family literacy program—it is important to include qualitative data analysis to help capture the essence of these interactions. Participants understand family literacy to include the shared experience and the creation of community (Padak et al., 2002); yet national discussions have focused on test scores for adults and children. The progression of democratic society in the United States is inextricably linked to the ability of educators to effectively educate individual students but it has become difficult to connect *experiences* in education with national conversations about effectiveness. In terms of comprehensive family literacy programs and their multifaceted impacts this may be due to a limited understanding of the phenomenon itself.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained the link between qualitative methods and the larger democratic society, “But now at the dawn of this new century we struggle to connect qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic

society" (p. 3). The struggle to connect the story of individual and familial experiences in education with the story of American democratic society has been stifled by a recent regression to a singular focus on quantitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained, "Bush science and its experimental, evidence-based methodologies represent a racialized, masculinist backlash to the proliferation of qualitative inquiry methods over the past two decades" (p. 9). These researchers have indicted the George W. Bush-era iteration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, as amended). Had Denzin and Lincoln been analyzing United States Department of Education policy in 2014, they would have found a Bush-Obama hybrid of education policy that is late for reauthorization and almost completely dominated by quantitative analysis for the purposes of evaluation. The Even Start Family Literacy Program was cut from the federal budget in part because quantitative success was difficult to "prove." Barbara Van Horn, Co-Director of the Goodling Center for Family Literacy, has claimed that questionable quantitative analysis of a select group of studies is partially to blame for the elimination of this important federal program (2011). Nevertheless, several studies reviewed for this project indicate quantitative success for comprehensive family literacy programs like Even Start. Instead of participating in a race to statistical significance, this study exists as an individual analysis of the phenomenon of family literacy as experienced by parents, educators, and principals. In commentary specific to research about family literacy programs, Timmons (2008) argued, "Interviews, surveys, and observations should be part of methodology used. Both quantitative and qualitative methods need to be undertaken when researching the evaluation of family literacy programs" (p. 100).

This inquiry into the phenomenon of family literacy lends itself well to a qualitative design. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined qualitative research as "an approach to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subjects point of view" (p. 274). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained further, "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). Pianta has observed family literacy programs by directly addressing the "phenomenon" of the transmission of literacy-relevant information (2004, p. 175). In the case of the parents, teachers, and principals who experience the phenomenon of participating in a family literacy program, it is important to understand their points of view and how they connect to larger issues like attitudes, beliefs, and culture in schools.

The individuality of the teacher-student-family relationship can be deeply understood through a qualitative approach. A quantitative approach may provide some guidance as to what teachers are thinking in general, it is only through deep, individual interactions and observations that insights will be understood in their full complexity. The need for both quantitative and qualitative study on this subject matter is apparent. However, individual insights will best be discovered through a qualitative design. Stake (2010) explained, "Two realities exist simultaneously and separately within every human activity. One is the reality of personal experience, and one is the reality of group and societal relationships. The two realities connect, they overlap, they merge, but they are recognizably different" (p. 18). This inquiry is focused on the experiences of parents, teachers, and principals participating in a family literacy program.

Design Approach

The qualitative design utilized in conducting this study was phenomenology. Researchers, philosophers, and theorists have attempted to provide a useful backdrop of information about this design type. For Creswell (2007), phenomenology is one of the five approaches to qualitative research (including additional options of narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study) that is recommended (p. 53). Creswell's five approaches, based on a lifetime of experience as a researcher, provide a useful and well-developed framework for the field. Merriam (2009) included the philosophy of phenomenology in her analysis of six approaches to qualitative research (including basic qualitative research, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative analysis, critical research, and case study). Her discussion of the philosophical underpinnings of this approach to qualitative research helped the researcher choose this design type. According to Creswell's (2007) analysis of phenomenology,

> The type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals' common or shared experiences of a phenomenon. It would be important to understand these common experiences in order to develop practices or policies or to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon. (p. 60)

In the case of parents, teachers, and principals who have participated in a comprehensive family literacy program, a deeper understanding of such an experience is important for future practices and policies (federal and state) in school districts and the larger community. The essence of the phenomenon of participating in a comprehensive family literacy program may provide helpful context for educational policy makers and leaders. Moustakas explained, "Essences are brought back into the world and enrich and clarify our knowledge and experience of everyday situations, events, and relationships" (1994,

p. 48). The essence of the family literacy experience similarly clarifies our knowledge of intensive family engagement practices and their impact on education.

Creswell (2007) explained that researchers should come away from the phenomenology with a feeling. This was an appealing reason to move forward with this approach. In the experience of the researcher with comprehensive family literacy programs, there have been consistent reminders of educators' emotional connections to the family as well as the family's emotional connection to their childrens' educators. Community stakeholders and funders of family literacy programs have also responded emotionally to programs. The permission for the researcher to invest in the feelings of those participating in a comprehensive family literacy program helped maintain realism throughout the data gathering process for this study. A phenomenological approach gives the researcher the additional freedom to explore his or her own experiences with the phenomenon to become aware of "personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25) so that they may be set aside or bracketed. Moustakas (1994) gave this process the label 'epoche,' "a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment. . . . In Epoche, the everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and the phenomena are revisited" (p. 33).

The researcher's former leadership role in a department that oversaw the implementation of federal and state educational policies—including family literacy programs—as well as in the role as the researcher for this qualitative project, underlie the importance of the bracketing process in terms of revisiting the phenomenon of family literacy. This admittedly difficult process may have been more symbolic than perfect. The conscious act of suspending personal beliefs and allowing the individual experience

to permeate understanding is at least refreshing, and perhaps essential. Prior to this process, the researcher was close to Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) criticism of federal education policy as a backlash against qualitative inquiry. The implied permission of the phenomenological approach for the researcher to reflect and write about personal experiences and context (Moustakas, 1994) was a powerful reason to adopt this approach. Not only did the bracketing process aid data analysis by providing a relatively fresh perspective, or what Merriam (2009) referred to as "heightened consciousness" (p. 25), it also had a positive impact on the researcher's professional practice.

Researcher Worldview

In addition to the bracketing of personal experiences as a past principal for family literacy programs in a mid-western school district, it is important to position oneself as the researcher in terms of a personal worldview. When the researcher thinks of himself as the human instrument at the center of a research project, he is on the continuum of paradigms between Neuman's (2006) interpretive social science perspective (ISS) and the critical social science perspective (CSS). The interpretive social science (ISS) paradigm is concerned "with how people interact and get along with each other" (Neuman, 2006, p. 88). Creswell (2007) noted that constructivism is often combined with the ISS perspective. Through this lens individuals develop subjective meanings of the world in which they live. Merriam (2009) has explained that this paradigm assumes reality is socially constructed. The critical social science (CSS) perspective is similar to the ISS paradigm in that it explains the world through the lens of the human experience (Merriam, 2009; Neuman, 2006). What makes the CSS paradigm different is its goal "to critique and challenge, to transform and empower" (Merriam, 2009, p. 10). These two

traditions give the researcher reflective freedom to criticize when it feels comfortable and interpret when professionalism demands a less engaging perspective.

Case and Site

The informants for this inquiry were parents, teachers, and school principals participating in the Jefferson County Public Schools Family Literacy Project (JCPS FLP). The JCPS FLP is a partnership between a JCPS program designed to "support literacy skills in students and families" (Rodosky, 2013). According to the evaluation report, the program served a population comprised of 76% Hispanic/Latino and 18% Black/African-American, the majority of whom are immigrants learning to speak English. The JCPS FLP is a four-component family literacy program comprised of the following: children's education, parent education, Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time, and adult education. The average parent participant in JCPS FLP logged almost 30 hours of Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time, over 30 hours of parent education, and over 200 hours of adult education. In the case of the JCPS program, PACT Time occurred in the child's classroom when the parents entered and joined their child during their class. The JCPS FLP serves between 150 and 200 children each year in three different "hub" locations (one community based organization, one elementary school, and one church). School-aged students whose parents participated in the program attended 63 different elementary schools (referred to as "spokes"), although 5 schools hosted the vast majority of FLP participants with data (Rodosky, 2013).

The case for this study included a total of 13 individual informants associated with the family literacy program: 7 immigrant parents, 4 teachers, and 2 principals. The parent informants were ethnically Hispanic/Latino, and 100% of the participants were

female. The total number interviewed for this study was 13 individuals. This number fits the recommended number range to meet the demands of a phenomenological study (Polkinghorne, 1989; as cited by Creswell, 2007).

Data Collection

Data collection strategies for this study followed the recommendations of Creswell (2007), which are largely based on Moustakas's (1994) approach. This systematic approach includes the recommendation to interview at least five to 25 participants and ask at least "two broad, general questions: What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?" (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological interviews can be a very interactive process including an initial list of questions that can change or be adapted during the interview (Moustakas, 1994). Additional questions were guided by those in the bank of interview questions collected in the appendix. In keeping with these parameters, proposed data collection included interviews with seven parent participants in the family literacy program up to two times during the 2013-2014 school year. Parent interviews were conducted with an interpreter present when necessary and transcribed into English by the researcher. At least two interviews were also conducted with the two school principals and four teachers who were responsible for the education of participating families. That was a total of 26 interviews with 13 participants. Interviews included the recommended questions as well as others designed by the researcher to help move the informants closer to the essence of the experience.

Data Analysis

The approach to data analysis proposed for this research proposal was based largely on the procedure put forward by Creswell (2007). Data were collected from the individuals described above who had experienced the phenomenon of comprehensive family literacy. Interviews were recorded and preliminary data analysis began during the interviews. The next level of data analysis occurred during the interpretation and transcription process. The researcher worked closely with the transcripts to capture the words spoken by each participant and listened for "significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). In keeping with Creswell's (2007) recommendations for phenomenological qualitative methods, additional data analysis steps were included:

1. "Significant statements, sentences, or quotations" gathered during interviews were highlighted.
2. Such statements were organized into clusters of meaning resulting in emerging themes.
3. Significant themes were then used to write a description of what participants experienced.
4. From this description and analysis, the researcher then wrote a description of the "essence" of the experience. (pp. 61-62)

It is important to note that transcriptions of interview data were analyzed using memos including multiple colors and symbols to decipher meaning. Merriam's (2009) suggestion to "Think of yourself having a conversation with the data, asking questions of it, making comments to it, and so on," (p. 178) was particularly helpful at this level of analysis. A visual recollection of the interviews was replayed during multiple reviews of transcripts and during the categorization process. The categories, or clusters of meaning (Creswell,

2007), were used to compose a textural description leading to the findings of the proposed study.

Delimitations and Limitations

The qualitative nature of this phenomenological inquiry limits its generalizability. It would not be appropriate to apply findings from this study to every family literacy program that works with immigrant families. It is appropriate, however, to consider the in-depth understanding of the individual relationships and interactions built through the family literacy program between the six to eight-targeted parents, their children's teachers, and the principal of their children's school. This attempt to capture the essence of the phenomenon provides categorical tips for those seeking to understand what actually happens between people in family literacy programs. Results paint a holistic picture that would not be possible through quantitative analysis alone. Such results serve to inform the field of family literacy and, in turn, parent and family engagement.

Researcher bias was a pitfall that needed constant attention. The researcher works in a field that supports family literacy programs. The process of "epoche," or suspending one's preconceptions about a topic in an effort to revisit it objectively, was a difficult task (Moustakas, 1994). The freedom of the phenomenological method allowed for constant reflection from a personal perspective in an effort to suspend prejudgments and reach new, deeper understandings. The positive was that the researcher had first-hand knowledge of what comprehensive family literacy programs looked like and, through this research project, was able to refresh and calculate observations of the deep interactions between participating parents, teachers, and principals.

The final recognized limitation of the research design is that the researcher did not speak the same home language as the participating families. Targeted families were selected due to their participation in a family literacy program that enrolls participants who are limited in their English proficiency. A necessary step for the completion of this study was the employment of a bilingual interpreter. This introduced a third party for the data collection process. While efforts were made to inform interpreters of objectivity during the process, the perception of the interpreter likely influenced the results to some extent.

In spite of limitations in generalizability, researcher bias, and interpretation during interviews with participating adults, the in-depth study of the phenomenon of family literacy for immigrant participants sheds light on the essence of the experience. Categories of information could pave the way for future studies or analysis that may ultimately strengthen the field.

Data Collection and Potential Ethical Issues

The methods of data collection utilized for this research project included interviews with participating informants that met the criterion of parents, teachers, or principals who are curious or have participated in the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Family Literacy Program. Throughout the remainder of this report, the words "participants" and "informants" will be used interchangeably to describe the parents, teachers, and principals interviewed for this project. Building trust between the researcher and informants is critical to a successful qualitative inquiry. The researcher's professional relationship with JCPS program leadership simplified the process of gaining the trust of

the informants. Once the participants were selected, interviews were conducted, data were analyzed, and data were reported relative to their experience of the phenomenon.

Potential ethical issues were considered and addressed during the methodological selection process. One issue that was considered was that of anonymity. Since participants were asked to respond honestly to the questions being asked of them, it was essential that they felt comfortable that their words would not harm their relationship with the family literacy program. There were several times during interviews conducted for this study that informants felt comfortable enough to say things that were not complimentary to the family literacy program or to admit that they had changed their minds from the first to the second interview. Had it felt like this type information, associated with their names, would make it to the program leader of their child's school, some level of honesty might have been lost. Steps taken to address this issue included the application of a pseudonym for each informant on all data collection and analysis documents and a plan was devised for the timely destruction of the sound files containing a their actual voices.

Another ethical issue addressed by the researcher was the heightened stress level of participants caused by exploring the phenomenon being studied. This was a particularly salient consideration for the parent participants. All of the parents interviewed speak English as a language in addition to their home language. Even though an interpreter was available for each interview, parents regularly expressed insecurities with their ability to use the English language. The researcher could tell that the language barrier increased the levels of stress felt by the participants. In addition to the provision of an interpreter for each interview, the researcher attempted to counter potential

increased stress by offering the participants the choice of where we would meet to conduct the interviews, offering free snacks, and by giving all participants the incentive of a $25 gift card to a local gas station in exchange for full participation in the study. In almost every case, parent participants took advantage of the snacks provided by the researcher and everyone looked forward to the gas card.

Ethical issues for teacher and principal participants were less numerous. With the exception of one teacher participant, all of the teachers and principals spoke English as their home language. Therefore any pressure that may have been caused by a language difference was non-existent. Although the snacks and gas cards were appreciated by the teacher and principal participants, they appeared to be more intrinsically motivated to do the interviews. For example, in more than one case teacher and principal participants opted not to take the gift card incentive. None of the parent participants mentioned not taking the gift card. This could have been due to higher levels of economic security among these participant groups. Ethical concerns for teacher and principal participants were less numerous and less severe than those experienced by parent participants.

Sampling

Informants were chosen through the criterion sampling method. Creswell (2007) explained, "Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (p. 128). The criterion designed and met for the study participants included the following:

1. Each participant had to have been a parent, teacher, or principal in the JCPS family literacy program

2. Each participant had to have been willing to complete up to two 45-minute interviews while being recorded.

Interviews

The methodology of the interview process followed what Merriam (2009) referred to as a semi-structured interview (p. 89). The researcher developed a list of interview questions that each participant was asked. During the course of interviews, questions were expanded upon based on the individual circumstances. The wording of each question for the different types of participants is provided in the appendix; however, different wording approaches were used based on the researcher's perspective of participant understanding and engagement during the interview process. Additional questions were also asked depending on the answers and context of each question. It was especially common to rephrase questions several times when working with the parent participants in order to insure that the correct meaning was conveyed. For the parent participants, this was due in part to communication differences between the researcher and the participants largely based on English language proficiency. The researcher also asked questions differently or included additional questions when nonverbal signals were present that suggested there may have been more to the story. The presence of a Spanish-English interpreter was also introduced to help alleviate some of the communication issues, but the changing of questions was another strategy used to mitigate the impacts of the language barrier. Merriam (2009) supported the dynamic elements of this method: "This [semi-structured interviewing] format allowed the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the

topic" (p. 90). The freedom to change questions or ask different contextual questions was of particular importance for the researcher's interviews with the informants.

Chapter 4

Findings

Three Experiences

The design of this research project included three distinct categories of participants: parents, teachers, and principals. Each of these groups presented their own uniqueness in terms of economic class, ethnic background, home language, and perspective of the phenomenon of family literacy. As such, the data analysis section is organized accordingly. There is a section of analysis based on the recommended phenomenological processes for each the three groups followed by a summative analysis of themes that cut through each of the three groups. Within this analysis, notable similarities and differences in the experiences of the three groups are also analyzed.

The Researcher's Experience

The professional experiences of the researcher included leadership roles for family literacy programs in one public school system and one national non-profit organization. In those leadership roles, it was the researcher's responsibility to implement family literacy programs according to best practices, to report outcomes based on program guidelines, and to raise funds necessary for the support of such programs. Those experiences complicated efforts to suspend preconceived ideas about family literacy. Conversely, the researcher's experiences with family literacy programs deepened his ability to understand program complexities that may be overlooked from a different perspective. One factor that helped the researcher view the family literacy experience with fresh eyes was that the site chosen for this study was at a program where he had no direct leadership responsibilities.

The researcher's data gathering experiences for this project included visits to a church that hosted the parents and non-school aged children participating in the family literacy program. The researcher also visited schools where classroom teachers hosted parents for Parents and Children Together (PACT) Time—which has been defined as parent-child interactions, including bringing children and parents together to work, play, read, and learn in the classroom, at home, or in the community (Jacobs, 2004). Principals in participating family literacy schools were visited by the researcher as well. In almost every case participants were happy to see the researcher and were willing to share their experiences participating in the family literacy program. For the researcher who has significant experience working in different family literacy programs, the environments were familiar but the individual stories were unique. The church in Louisville was reminiscent of a church that hosted a family literacy program in Lincoln: rooms uncomfortably set for a secular audience while donning religious paraphernalia, old coffee pots in the corners, and dust-covered linoleum floors. The schools were typical spaces for public education: walls covered with dated multicultural murals, teachers with glasses down their noses, and elementary students walking in lines to their next class or a bathroom break. The research felt natural in these settings.

In general, each interview lasted as long as it seemed like it should, usually between 20-45 minutes. The questions provided in the appendix of this study formed a framework from which to begin. As the researcher worked through the questions, he was sensitive to the time-limited schedules of the parents, teachers, and principals. Consequently, there was a constant feeling that there may have been more to the story if the informants spent additional time together. Nevertheless, interviews were completed

and, based on the data analysis, the essence of participating in a family literacy program was explored for the cases included here.

The researcher began to try and meet the informants by contacting the program director who put him in direct contact with the site leader at a church location in Louisville. She was more than willing to allow the researcher to interact with the participants in the program. The on-site research began with an introduction of the researcher to the mothers participating in the adult education class. After that initial meeting, the site leader (also a teacher) collaborated as an informant and she helped handle logistical affairs with the other participants. It was a great benefit to have met and developed a working relationship with Connie early in the research process. She worked with the participants in the family literacy program to find interested informants who met the criteria for this research study. Once participants were selected, a time was set up for them to meet with the researcher to discuss the terms and conditions of participation in the study.

The researcher found himself in front of a group of 15-17 female participants in the family literacy program. The desks they sat in were in a square formation with the researcher in the center on one of the sides. The reason a range of numbers is described above is because some of the participants started the meeting and then left during its course—indicating that they were not interested in or not able to meet the terms and conditions of the study. Those who remained listened as the consent forms and cover letters were passed out and the study was described. Due to the fact that none of the participants spoke English as their first language, there was an interpreter in the room to guarantee a thorough understanding of the information being shared. At first the room

was a little tense. The researcher began with a stiff academic tone and the informants strained to understand or connect in an effective way. Around 10 minutes into the conversation, the researcher opened up a container of cookies he had brought with him and began asking the women questions about their families. At that point the atmosphere became much more relaxed, jocular commentary was exchanged, and the informants became visibly more interested in the project.

One notable exchange during this early meeting with the potential informants occurred when one of the women commented, "You don't think we wear shoes do you?" The researcher, puzzled by this comment, looked confused. She quipped, "People from New York City don't think people in Kentucky wear shoes." The researcher chuckled and explained that he was a Nebraskan who had recently moved to Kentucky and that he knew that Kentuckians wore shoes. They all shared a hearty laugh, several of the consent forms and letters were left with the women, and the site coordinator told the researcher that she would be in touch with him about which parents would be interested in participating in the research study. Ultimately, seven of the women agreed to participate in the study.

The anecdote above about the participant's reaction to the researcher and the researcher's reaction to them was indicative of the work that would have to be done to connect cross-culturally with the informants. The most obvious differences between the two of them were ethnic and language-based differences. Additional differences included gender, a power differential between the researcher and the participating women, and preconceived notions that the informants had about each other. The researcher made a

sincere effort to work to build trust and mitigate these differences as potential barriers to the research study.

The recruitment of teachers and principals as informants was somewhat easier given that the cultural differences were less of a factor. At the time of this study, the researcher had worked in education for more than 12 years. He had many experiences that were similar to those of the teachers and principals who chose to participate. He was familiar with their personal and professional language and he was able to share in discussions about their work. All but one of the teacher and principal informants spoke English as their first language. English is also the first language of the researcher. It is worth mentioning that the teachers and principals were able to complete the interviews while they were getting paid—this was a different scenario than that of the parent participants who met during a time when they were not getting paid.

Parent Participant Experience

The data analysis procedures utilized by the researcher adhered to those outlined in the research methodology section of this dissertation. Through a careful process of interviewing, translating from Spanish to English when necessary, horizontalizing the data, identifying significant statements, color-coding significant statements, and carefully placing those significant statements into categories or clusters of meaning and then reconstructing the experience through the eyes of the informants (Creswell, 2007), the experience of the parent participant in a family literacy program is described here. The seven parent informants in this research study are all female and speak Spanish as their first language. Although the researcher did not ask them to describe their experiences as

immigrants, pieces of information gleaned from the interviews indicated that all of the informants had been through the process of immigrating to the United States.

Each parent participant had a child or children in the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) at the beginning of the study. By the end of the study, one parent had relocated to Indiana and subsequently enrolled her child in the local school district. Other parent participants also experienced job and life changes in between the first and second interviews. The JCPS four component family literacy model is described to have a "hub and spokes." There are three hubs in the JCPS program, including the church site where informants for this project were participants in adult education programs, and their children received childcare services. The word "spoke" is used to describe the 63 elementary schools where the children of participating parents attend. For the parent participants, this meant they attended adult education classes at the church while their children attend their designated school. For PACT Time, parents were expected to travel to their child's school. The JCPS "hub and spoke" model is unique among four component family literacy programs across the country. Most of the other programs known by the researcher hosted parent education at the school or community site where the child or children attended school.

Each participant in this study was assigned a pseudonym in an effort to protect their real identity and to encourage the most honest description of their experience in the family literacy program. Names were assigned to the parent informants that participated in this study: Abigail, Laticia, Magdalena, Mikala, Nikia, Jennifer, and Emily. What follows is a detailed description of each participant's experience as reported in their two interviews with the researcher, and a description of the overarching clusters of meaning

that emerged. The essences of each participant group are detailed in the following sections.

Abigail. Abigail had lived in Louisville for 12 years at the time of her first interview. Her family consisted of two children: one boy (11) and one girl (8). She observed that her son is lazy and that her daughter is less lazy and much better in school than he is. She has a self-described busy life working nights at a restaurant, going to family literacy during the day, and being a mother. She voluntarily brought up the fact that her father passed away from cancer 5 years prior to the interview. This was interpreted as a significant experience in her life given that she brought it up without a specific question from the researcher. As for the family literacy program, she explained in the first interview that she attended PACT Time at her child's school every Wednesday. By the second interview Abigail had relocated to Indiana and was no longer a participant in the family literacy program. It was during the second interview that the researcher realized her plight as a informant was unique in that she was the only participant in the study who was no longer able to attend the family literacy program due to moving to another school district. Her experience of having participated in a family literacy program and then not being able to participate in a family literacy program added perspective by comparing her experience participating in the program versus her non-participation in the program.

Abigail's experience with the family literacy program was based on her intense desire to learn English, help her kids with homework, and to get a better job in the future. When asked what it was like to participate in the family literacy program she mentioned that she did not think she was learning as fast as she would like to. When the researcher

prodded further in to this topic, she looked to the English interpreter to further articulate her experience, “I am very happy yes. I’m so excited for watching my son and that is very important.” She continued in Spanish, and through the interpreter, “She said that she realized that it is important for the parents to be at the children’s schools because she sees a lot of other Hispanic children that the parents do not go to school and she compares that and realizes how much of a difference it has made for her to be a part of that to go to school.”

One of the questions asked by the researcher was directed at the topic of where Abigail sits when she attended her child’s school. In Abigail’s case, the teacher had her sit in a student’s chair. Abigail did not attach any significance to that decision. She described good teachers and bad teachers in her experience with the family literacy program. When asked by the researcher during the first interview if she would go back to her child’s classroom, she said the program was good overall and that she would encourage others to attend. When asked what she thought her son felt like when she came into his class for PACT Time, she said he was happy and often introduced her to his friends. The other children in her son’s class were described as happy when she visited as well. She shared, “They’re [other kids] all very happy [when she comes in] and one of the children did not behave well when she was there so I told them, if you behave well, I’ll bring you a sweet. Then he started behaving.”

Another question the researcher asked of Abigail was whether or not her son had changed since he began participating in the program. She claimed he is participating more often in class and that she is helping him more with his homework—including strategies like learning by using “chunks, sounds, and pronunciations.” When Abigail

was asked what she thought about her child's school before participating in the family literacy program, she shared that she did not know anything about the program, the school system, grades, or school quality designations (based on local, state, and national measures). After participating in the family literacy program, she explained through the interpreter, "Because of the program she now understands how the school system and how the schools work."

During their second interview the researcher learned Abigail had relocated to Indiana. Since her relocation to Indiana, Abigail has not had the option to participate in a family literacy program with her son. When the researcher asked how she felt about this change, she shared that she missed PACT Time. She noted that her son had developed new behavior problems since leaving the family literacy program. Abigail directly attributed these new behavior problems to non-participation in a family literacy program and expressed that she would be willing to visit her son's classroom again if she had the option to do so. When asked if her son missed her coming to visit her class, she quoted him as saying, "Mom, why don't you go to my class?" When asked during the second interview what she had learned by participating in the family literacy program, she observed that she knew better what was going on in the school and that she had felt a stronger connection to her children.

Her goals for herself are to improve her writing and pronunciation and to prepare to take the GED. As for her children, she wants them to have good grades and accountability. Although she feels as though her English is not 100%, through her interpreter she explained that the program had made a difference, "because now for

example she makes appointments, before she would go in person because it was easier to understand, but now she feels comfortable to call and make [the] appointment."

Laticia. Laticia had been in Louisville for 11 years. She immigrated to the United States from Mexico. She had three children: two sons (11 and 5), and a daughter (8). As for her participation in the family literacy program, she attended PACT Time with her 5-year-old son. During her first interview, she said she had participated in the family literacy program for two years prior to earning her GED. At the time of the second interview she said she had spent four years in the English class and six months working on her GED. She did not reconcile the two differing descriptions, so the researcher concluded that the truth was somewhere in between the two estimates. This was the first instance where the language barrier may have been a factor. She found out about the program from her friend. Her role as an informant was unique in that she is the only person in this sample to have earned her GED.

In the initial interview, Laticia reported that learning English was the primary reason she joined the program, although she also described a desire to become more confident visiting her child's school. Indeed, after having participated in the program she felt much more confident and welcome in school. When asked how she felt when she walked into the class, she said simply with a smile, "Good, good." The researcher asked her to explore this feeling a little more and she indicated that when she first started the program that she did not like it as well as she does now because she did not feel like she spoke well and she actually developed a fear of being asked a question by the teacher or another student. Now that she speaks better she says she feels "good" being in the classroom with her son. During the second interview she specifically mentioned not

feeling “shy, embarrassed, or something” since having participated in the family literacy program.

At the time of the second interview, Laticia described continuing to attend the family literacy program (including PACT Time) for her own continued benefit. There were times that she did not attend because she thought she was taking the place of a participant who may have needed it more than she did since she had already received her GED. When the researcher asked her to clarify her participation in the program during the second interview, she explained, “Because I know I’m already not out of the program because I have my GED, so I don’t have to do it, but I choose to be there.” Her son’s expectation that she would attend PACT Time in his classroom was referenced as a reason for her continued participation.

The teacher of the class that Laticia attended was described as “very nice and happy.” This point was emphatically reiterated when she was asked in the second interview to describe the classroom teacher. Laticia described the teacher as making her “feel good” and “very welcome” when she visited. Laticia further explained that the feeling of being able to visit her child’s classroom whenever she wanted as something that increased her confidence that the teacher was “not hiding something bad. . . .” She continued, “Now I feel very confident being there.” She applied the same general feeling of increased confidence when the researcher asked what it felt like to have her GED in the second interview and she said she felt very proud of her accomplishment. She attributed her success to the teachers in the program who continually pushed her to finish the English class and then to finish the GED class. Laticia explained, “if it wasn’t for you

and for other teachers to keep asking, when are you going to do something, when are you going to do something, I'm pretty sure I'd still be on the English class."

Laticia began her PACT Time visits sitting in an adult-sized chair, but switched herself to a smaller chair later in the program because it made her feel closer to her child. During the second interview she said her son was shy in the beginning, but that now he feels better when she visits. When asked by the researcher if she felt differently toward the teacher (positive or negative) before and after the program, she said she did not. Laticia made this same point during the second interview, thus producing a clear explanation that the teacher was a nice person before and after her participation in the program. What has been different since she began participating in the family literacy program was that her son had an increased desire to participate when she was in his classroom. As far as participation in parent/teacher conferences was concerned, she reported attending them at the same rate before and after participating in the family literacy program; however, now she no longer relies on an interpreter due to her improved use of the English language.

Based on her success and generally positive experiences with the family literacy program, she had chosen to invite two of her friends to join the program. Part of the reason she had grown to appreciate the family literacy program is that she believes going to school with her child allows her to be a positive example. When asked to elaborate on why she chose the family literacy program over other programs that teach English, she said bluntly that it "made her feel good" that the program offered free daycare while she was in class. When she goes into the classroom, she has observed other kids "focusing very hard" on what the teacher is saying. In the second interview she elaborated on her

experience by expressing that the other children in the classroom were also happy to have her there to help them in addition to her own son. She expressed that some of the skills she has learned by attending PACT Time in math class with her child have been applied in her home since she began the program.

Although Laticia has had very positive interactions with the family literacy program, she explained that her feelings about her child's school were the same before and after her participation. She reported the same when asked about her feelings toward the school principal before and after participating in the program. It is important to note that she stated and restated the fact that she felt the same toward the school both before and after participating in the program. However, when asked to elaborate on her personal feelings toward the program, she explained, "It feels lucky and special. I can improve my life and help my kids have a better life."

Magdalena. Magdalena had been in Louisville for 17 years. At the time of the interviews she lived with her husband and her two boys (one high school-aged student and one elementary school student). She found out about the program from a friend. The primary reason she joined the program was to learn English and she reiterated the desire to learn English several times in both her first and second interviews. By the time the second interview occurred she explained that she no longer needed an interpreter to speak to her doctor. It is worth noting that in Magdalena's first interview there was a translator present and during the second interview there was not. Although this was worthy of celebration, this was significant because there were a few times during the second interview when there were communication difficulties between the two informants.

In addition to learning English, Magdalena joined the family literacy program to be with her son in school. At the time of the second interview, she described having attended PACT Time in her child's classroom once a week every Wednesday for "one or two hours." She described feeling more comfortable in the school since she started attending the program. In fact she described her son's teacher as "very, very nice." During the second interview Magdalena reiterated that the teacher was nice. Magdalena explained that the PACT Time teacher greeted her every day and told her good bye when she left. This year she has been given the choice between sitting on a big chair or a small chair—she chose the bigger chair. During the second interview Magdalena referenced sitting in the smaller chair so she could "partner with her son." She explained that she saw the teacher differently since she began participating in the program in general, and in the PACT Time component in particular. Other staff in the school was also described as being nice. Magdalena identified the "front door person, the principal, and the librarian" as especially nice to her. She disclosed that the other children in the classroom act very friendly towards her to the extent that they have asked to sit next to her. As for her own son, she described him as wanting to work more when she was in the classroom with him.

When asked if her feelings toward the school had changed since Magdalena started attending PACT Time, she explained that they had changed a lot. When the researcher asked follow up questions on this topic, she explained that the perception shift was due, in large part, to the fact that she now understood what her son was doing in school and how he was treated. During this discussion she explained that she could help her younger son better than her older son—a fact that she at least partially attributed to her attendance in the program. During PACT Time, she described learning from her son

as well. Magdalena was not always satisfied with how long it took her to progress in the program; however, she was described experiencing progress over time.

In terms of her engagement as a mother in her children's lives and in the school community, Magdalena described increasing her overall engagement since she started the program. Some of the skills she has learned in the family literacy program have been applied by Magdalena in their home. She cited the specific examples of technology—including using the computer more to access Google and YouTube, or even to search for a recipe. During the second interview Magdalena referenced learning about math and reading in the classroom; however, when asked directly if she had learned anything in the classroom she said she had not. As the second interview continued, she returned her focus to the fact that she had learned how to help her child with homework. The stark contrast between her reporting she had not learned anything new and her reporting that she had was attributed by the researcher to possible miscommunication in English. Overall she described the family literacy program as making her feel "good" and "happy" about learning English, participating in the school, and talking to teachers and other kids. When asked about what her son thinks about her involvement in the program, she said he was happy she participated in the program to learn better English.

Mikala. Mikala had been in Louisville for 17 years. She had two female children, one was 13 and one was 7. She heard about the program from her friend. The primary reason she joined the program was to become a citizen. After just one year of participation she was able to achieve this goal. At the time of the first interview with Mikala she was not attending PACT Time, but she anticipated starting that part of the program later in the year. During the second interview she reported having attended

PACT Time with her daughter five times. Mikala's first and second interviews were shorter than those of the other informants. She acted as though she wanted to answer questions briefly and end the discussion quickly.

The researcher began by asking her what she planned to do now that she had attained her citizenship. She explained that she wanted to learn the best English possible in order to attain a better job and maybe even a degree in the future. She described the family literacy program as having enabled her to help her daughter at home. When asked about what her daughter thought about her mom coming to class, Mikala shared that she was excited about it. She described it as a good feeling to participate in the program and that she felt very comfortable in the school. When asked to explain further, she attributed her positive feelings to the fact that she spoke English better and that people could now understand her better. She described her excitement by saying, "I'm excited because I stay with her and she going to be excited too and I can see how, what is the best way that she learns how the teachers work with the children." The importance of learning how to support her child came out through in the first interview even given Mikala's broken English.

During Mikala's second interview she expressed very clearly that she had not always felt comfortable going to visit her child for PACT Time. She described the teacher as not giving her the opportunity to speak with her daughter during her classroom visits. The experience of PACT Time for Mikala was very passive in the sense that she described it as simply watching the class with no invitation from the teacher for deeper engagement. When asked by the researcher to expand on this experience, Mikala explained that, although she felt like the teacher was nice, that the teacher was only

reachable during PACT Time and difficult to reach at other times. Overall she said that she felt comfortable with some visits and not comfortable with other visits. She did finally conclude during the second interview that she felt good about PACT Time overall.

This discussion of Mikala's PACT Time experience was complex for both the researcher and Mikala. She was very clear at one point in the second interview that PACT Time was not a good experience but she did conclude that PACT Time was an overall positive experience. The point in the discussion when Mikala finally concluded that PACT Time was a positive experience was when the researcher began asking her what her daughter felt like when she came in. In that context, Mikala clearly indicated at that point that PACT Time was a positive experience. It was also at this point in the second interview she described learning from her daughter and "feeling nice." However, when the second interview moved away from her child's reaction back to how Mikala felt relative to her relationship with the school, Mikala indicated that she did not feel like she was on the same team with the school and that she felt "alone." When asked why she felt alone Mikala explained that it would help if the teacher would recognized that she was meeting with her daughter. The researcher concluded that the experience with her child was positive, but not necessarily her experience with the teacher.

Toward the end of the second interview Mikala was asked what her goals were for continuing her participation in the program. Her response was that she hopes to be a restaurant manager someday. She ended the second interview with the following quotation, "If you live here in the USA you have to learn English and you can get a better job." Even though Mikala's reflections of participating in the family literacy program

were not overwhelmingly positive, she seemed to end on the point that participation in the program was important for her future development.

Nikia. Nikia started the program in 2010. As for children, she had one boy (age 5) and one girl (age 7). She found out about the program from a flyer she received. She reported having attended PACT Time two or three days every week in between the first interview and the second interview.

The first question the researcher asked of Nikia during the first interview encouraged her to reflect on what it was like to participate in the family literacy program. She said the program makes her want to educate her kids, volunteer at the school, help other children with their behavior, and to continue to learn. When asked why she goes to Parent Time she explained that it "is a time to help kids." The kids in the class think that she attends because she wants to learn English, and, she said they behave better when she is there. The importance of learning English for Nikia was reiterated in the second interview. By the time the second interview was conducted, Nikia perceived herself as knowing English well enough that she had begun the GED program. Nikia explained, "It is more easy now because it's the English class helping me to have a better communication." She also revealed at the time of the second interview that she had to leave the family literacy program because she had recently received a job. When the researcher asked if she thought the family literacy program had helped her get the job, she said it had due to the support of her English language development.

When asked during the first interview how she felt about the teacher whose class she visited during PACT Time, she was quick to describe the teacher as nice and welcoming. During the second interview Nikia supported this opinion by explaining that

the PACT Time teacher made her very comfortable and welcomed her to the classroom. When asked to elaborate on the PACT Time experience, Nikia said that the teacher gave her her own seat when she attended PACT Time in her classroom. During the second interview Nikia extended this idea that the PACT Time teacher was accommodating by explaining that she felt like she could go to her child's class whenever she wanted to. The teacher had given her the official designation as a classroom volunteer. She also indicated that she has had better communication with the PACT Time teacher than she did before she was visiting her classroom.

During the first interview when the researcher asked Nikia what it was like to go into her child's classroom, Nikia explained, "They feel happy. They feel happy. They are smiling when I go enter their classroom." Nikia continued to describe these positive feelings toward the program in the second interview. She referred several times to the help her son and daughter had received by participating in the program. When asked to describe the increased levels of academic achievement for her children that she had referenced, Nikia said that her son was doing better in math.

Nikia was already a walking advertisement for the program in her first interview. Her overarching positivity about the program extended through the second interview as well. She had enjoyed the program so much that she invited her niece to participate. The researcher asked her what she would tell other families about the program and she explained,

> About the literacy, it's a good program for the parents and kids. If I make to persuade other parents to come in, I'll do it because I come in an instant to this program when they're coming over here because this is helping their kids to be a better student.

When asked about her perception of the school since joining the family literacy program, she explained that it had improved. In the second interview she further explained that the principal makes all parents feel welcome. One of the skills she reported having obtained as a direct result of participation in the family literacy program was how to support her children in math. In terms of her goals for the program she mentioned wanting to earn more money as her first and foremost goal. She noted in the second interview that she felt proud of herself as a parent since she began participating in the family literacy program.

Emily. Emily moved from Mexico to Louisville 14 years ago. She had three children (a 14-year-old daughter, an 11-year-old son, and a 9-year-old daughter). She had been participating in the family literacy program for four years. When asked how she heard about the program, she said she had learned about it from a friend.

To begin the first interview with Emily, the researcher asked why she had signed up for the program. In rank order, she explained that she joined the program to learn English, to gain a GED, and to help her child with homework. When asked how she felt when she attended the family literacy program she said simply that it "felt good." During the second interview Emily cited her ability to help her children with their homework as a change that had occurred since the first interview. Emily also described situations where she had "gotten to know more people" and learned more about the culture of the school as a result of her participation in the family literacy program. Emily did say at one point in the first interview that she did not necessarily think things felt better since she began the family literacy program. However, in the second interview she said that the program had helped her, noting that in general she reported understanding more after participation in the program than before. In addition to supporting her child's education, she described

learning things like how to set up a doctor's appointment and how to go to the store. In her second interview Emily expanded on what she had learned. In this context she said she could speak more English and that her confidence in her English had increased. She again mentioned being able to contact her doctor by herself during the second interview. When she made this point she highlighted the fact that she now refuses an interpreter when visiting her doctor's office.

When the researcher asked if she applied what she had learned in the family literacy program in her home environment, the answer was a resounding yes. As far as how she applies what she learns in the family literacy program, she explained that she can now help her daughter with math homework because of what she has learned in the classroom. She reiterated her support of her daughter's math skills during the second interview as well. To this same end, she also alluded to studying with her daughter every day since joining the program and that she feels like she "understands better" what happens in the classroom. Whereas she used to feel intimidated by parent engagement like that explained above, after participating in the family literacy program she described feeling more confident. However, as far as participating in parent-teacher conferences was concerned, she has always attended—even before participating in the family literacy program. When asked if her opinion of the school had changed since she began participation in the family literacy program, she said no. Later she added that she thought the principal was a "wonderful lady" and that the staff treated her "very nice" when she was in the classroom. Other students in the classroom when she visits are described as "happy" and interested in having Emily help them—in addition to helping her own child.

In terms of how she would describe the program to other parents, she shared that it helped her become more educated everyday, which was something that may help her get another job. Emily again highlighted the importance of getting a job, speaking English, and helping her family again in her second interview.

Jennifer. Jennifer had been in Louisville for 13 years. She had two children, a son who is 10 and a daughter that is 17. Her son is who she visited for the PACT Time component of the program. She described herself as a long-time member of the family literacy program. Her participation at the time of the first interview spanned five years, and by the time the second interview was conducted she said she had been in the program for six years. During the first interview she expressed looking forward to visiting her son in PACT Time every Wednesday. During the second interview she reported having visited her son during PACT Time; however, she also reported dropping out of the program because she had attained a job. Jennifer partially attributed the success in getting a job to participation in the family literacy program.

When the researcher asked how she felt when visiting her son's classroom, she explained that at first she did not feel very welcome, but that she felt more comfortable as time progressed. In the second interview she expressed that she had not always felt comfortable visiting the classroom. Even though she did not always feel comfortable, she described the teacher as very nice. Jennifer explained, "I did not know the principal before the program and now I know her." She elaborated about her initial feelings of discomfort entering the classroom by explaining that she felt like the other kids did not know why she was there. She was embarrassed by the limited amount of English that she spoke. In addition to her nervousness, she felt like the teacher was nervous about her in

the classroom as well. As she improved her English skills and the other students got to know her better, she felt more comfortable. Now when she goes into her son's classroom, the children know her. Jennifer's son is described as very excited when she attends.

Jennifer's engagement in parent-teacher conferences improved after she began attending the family literacy program. She attributed her new found "comfort" in attending parent-teacher conferences to her increased learning of English. She explained very clearly, "Language is part of why I am comfortable enough now to go." During the second interview she described knowing English well enough to decline an interpreter when working with her doctor and helping her husband craft text messages in English to his boss. In addition to language, she has maintained a high level of motivation to continue in the program in order to work towards the attainment of her GED. When asked to explain what the programs meant to her, she said, "I feel good because I help my son." Although Jennifer had curtailed her participation in the family literacy program by the time the second interview was conducted, she mentioned that when she gives birth to her second child that she may reenroll in an effort to get her GED. She was pregnant at the time of the second interview.

Themes for Parents

Careful analysis of the "themes" or "clusters of meaning" (Creswell, 2007) that emerged from the transcribed parent interviews included the list depicted below. It should be noted that a theme's existence on this list does not mean every participant brought it up, but rather, based on the researcher's qualitative analysis, the theme was significant enough within the context of this study to be considered on a larger scale as a cluster of meaning.

Help—This refers to the times in the data analysis when parents described being helped by the information presented in the program or instances of parents explaining how participation in the program had enabled them to help their children.

English—The English theme was used by parents to reference their desire to learn English as an impetus for participating in the program.

Nice Teacher—This theme emerged from parent interviews to mark instances when parents described teachers as being "nice." Such a description could have included before, during, or after participation in the program.

Transfer Home—Informants brought up various skills they learned in the family literacy program that resulted in work being completed at home. This theme included homework and other strategies that extended learning into the home.

Appreciate Teacher More—This theme represents parent sentiments towards appreciating teachers more after participation in the family literacy program.

Job/Career—One of the questions the researcher asked of each participant was to describe why they were in the program. Many of the parents referred to the importance of participating in family literacy to their future pursuit of a job or a better job.

Parent Happiness—Happiness was used by parents to describe how the family literacy program made them feel several times throughout the interview.

From Friend—One of the questions asked by the researcher was how parents found out about the family literacy program. "From friend" is a theme that emerged due to the recurrence of instances when informants found out about the family literacy program from a friend.

School Choice—Several of the participants in this study talked about the importance of choosing the right school for their child as an important choice to make. This was most typically described as a revelation after participation in the family literacy program.

GED—Many parents indicated that their pursuit of a GED was an important reason for choosing to participate in the family literacy program.

Know More—Parents spoke in several different contexts about having "learned more" as a result of participation in the family literacy program. Such contexts included knowing more about: school, how to help their child, how to navigate the social services system, how American schools work, and more.

Confidence—Confidence was mentioned by parent participants several times. Some of the comments about confidence referred to confidence as a factor limiting parent engagement with the school or program. In other cases, parents referred to increased confidence after participation in the program.

Excited—Excitement was a theme that emerged based on the parent interviews. Parents described being excited to participate in the program and, in some instances, being excited to learn new information.

Good—The word "good" was used by parents many times to explain how they felt about participating in the family literacy program and the information gleaned from such participation.

Health Care—Among comments about family literacy and its impact on imparting knowledge about accessing social services, more ease in accessing health care was a theme that emerged in the data analysis.

No Interpreter—Several of the parent participants had an interpreter present at the time of the first interview and/or described inviting interpreters to other events. By the time of the second interview the parent participants no longer felt like they needed one. This theme indicates growth in the confidence level of parent participants in their abilities to speak English.

Teacher Participant Experience

The same data analysis methodology described by Creswell (2007) was applied by the researcher to the four teachers who were interviewed for this research project. Teachers were selected in collaboration with the JCPS Family Literacy Program's leadership team. Teachers identified as informants for this project included two elementary school teachers and two current family literacy adult educators who had been teachers in the K-12 classroom prior to their current roles. Interviews with teachers focused on the following areas: the teacher experience with engaging the entire family in the education process, teacher perception of the PK-12 student experience with family literacy, and teacher perception of the adult experience with the family literacy program. The two elementary school teachers described their experiences with the family literary program primarily through the lens of PACT Time when parents visited their classrooms. The two adult educators described their experiences with the family literacy program primarily from the perspective of teaching the adult directly with secondary experiences that included PK-12 students in the classroom.

Tatiana. Tatiana had been a teacher for 19 years. Her teaching experiences were couched in a familial context: her mother was a teacher and her sister is a teacher. Tatiana worked on her college education while her mother was working on her master's degree at

the same time. They graduated together. Tatiana' experience with family literacy began with her own life. Tatiana's teaching jobs have included working with low income, English Language Learner, and special education populations in schools with high mobility rates. When asked why she chose to teach in these classrooms she thought it was possible to see more educational progress, "more light bulbs," she explained.

In terms of Tatiana's perception of having parents in her classroom for PACT Time, she contextualized the experience with another parent engagement program that was popular at her school known as "Watchdogs." The Watchdogs are fathers of students who volunteer to work in the school community. In her first interview, she recalled feeling nervous when parents (family literacy participants or watchdogs) began showing up in her classroom. When the researcher prodded further into her feelings about having parents in the classroom, Tatiana explained that the phenomenon had changed the culture of her classroom. In her second interview, she again turned to the example of the Watchdogs explaining that many kids in her class calmed down when male figures started coming into the classroom. She also mentioned that mothers who had attended PACT Time in her classroom in the past brought a different perspective for the kids. The mention of the Watchdog program when asked about PACT Time is worthy of further discussion. This could have meant that Tatiana perceived fathers in her classroom as participants in the family literacy program or that to her any parents in the classroom were a part of PACT Time. Both scenarios provide applicable perspectives for an analysis of the teacher experience in a family literacy program. The male volunteers do not technically participate in the family literacy program, however, from the teacher's perspective they were participating in classroom-based PACT Time when they came into

the classroom to learn with their children. For Tatiana, it seemed as though the experience of having parents in her classroom included both the Watchdog dads and the mothers who came in during PACT Time as part of the four-component family literacy program.

When parents came into Tatiana's classroom, they were invited to sit next to their child. She described viewing parents as teachers and instructing her kids to interact with them accordingly. Her specific descriptions of two families that were involved in the family literacy program included one parent who did not speak English and another who may have been too nervous to attend. When asked if she thought the family literacy program had an impact on students, she described it as a way to relax parents who did not speak much English. When the researcher inquired about whether or not she thought participation in the family literacy program had an impact on the school's culture, she felt as though it helped the school improve family engagement efforts. Tatiana closed her first interview by explaining that the more the school can involve parents in the education of their child, the better chance of parents understanding the importance of education. She reiterated this point in her second interview when she stated that families benefit from parent engagement.

During Tatiana's second interview she explained one mother's experience who had attended PACT Time in her classroom and had recently gotten a job and stopped attending. The researcher's follow up questions about what her experience had been like as a teacher with parents in the classroom was met with the sentiment that it should be "mandatory" for every parent to come into the classroom at least once a month. Her

answer to a question about the value in having parents come into classrooms was as follows:

> I do [see the value] because they would see the rigor, the expectations of what their children are supposed to be doing especially towards the end of the year when they're getting ready for second grade. It's a good opportunity for them to see how their children have grown and what they can do over the summer to help them maintain what they've picked up.

Tatiana's recommendation that all parents come into the classroom at least once a month and the accompanying quotation was an explicit endorsement of PACT Time on some level. One other detail Tatiana shared was that the first time she had a parent in the classroom that she felt a little nervous "like being on the spot." However, due to her observation that the children "love it," those feelings were fleeting in light of what she ultimately described as a "good experience."

Connie. Connie had worked as an adult education teacher, an assistant teacher, and a substitute teacher prior to becoming a program site coordinator in the JCPS family literacy program. Although her current role is as a project coordinator, her interview focused mainly on her experiences as a teacher. She moved to Louisville from Brazil four years ago and had worked in various roles for the JCPS family literacy program for three years. When responding to questions about her background, she readily shared that she spoke three different languages including Spanish, English, and Portuguese. She also shared that her cultural background makes her feel like she can relate to the families served in the program. For those that share one or more of her languages, she explained that she feels a special connection to them. Connie's perspective was unique from the other three teachers, given the shared experience with the family literacy participants of moving from another country to the United States, the ability to speak different languages

(some of which included shared languages with family participants), and the experience of moving to another country and being forced to learn another language.

In response to the researcher's direct question about why she taught in the family literacy program, she harkened back to her experience teaching English at a school in Brazil. She recalled thinking that the entire family should have been engaged in the educational process at that time. When asked to explain the program she works for in JCPS, her description of the program began with, "I think PACT Time is the glue for everything we do." The researcher followed up with the question of whether or not she thought PACT Time could benefit all families, or if it was only important for families coming from other countries. She responded by noting that all families could benefit from PACT Time because it could help all families learn more about what is going on in their children's school. Her support of PACT Time was underscored when the researcher asked her what the best thing she ever did when she was an adult education teacher and she responded by saying, "PACT Time." During her second interview, Connie used the words "crucial" and "empowering" to describe PACT Time. When asked to explain her position in more detail, she said that the program assisted families with their ability to help their children with homework and reduce the stress of parenting. Connie linked PACT Time to English language acquisition by observing that it placed language in context as opposed to it being taught as a "standalone" topic. When asked what changes had occurred between her first and second interview, she celebrated the fact that PACT Time attendance doubled during the month prior to the last interview causing it to reach its highest level of the year.

Connie explained that planning for PACT Time had an impact on her preparations as an adult education teacher. When preparing for teachers in the classroom, she had to think about the entire family as opposed to only thinking about the individual student. Teaching with entire families in her classroom was great because it helped parents overcome, "the big monster of insecurity and the fear of the unknown." This point was extended during the second interview when she described how parents can be "shy" at the beginning of the program and that they "take charge" as time goes on and eventually prepare their own PACT Time activities. The researcher also asked Connie if she thought family literacy had an impact on the culture of the school where it took place. Her response was an unequivocal "yes." She added that in some schools it was reported that school participation levels for family literacy participants was sometimes higher than that of US-born parents at schools with a family literacy program. Although she admitted to not having much contact with the teachers of school-age students, she offered that principals "think it is great." During the interview, she continued down this line of thinking by directly linking participation in family literacy programs to participation in school events like parent-teacher conferences, volunteer activities, and literacy nights. At one point in the second interview she noted that teachers did a better job teaching when they included the needs of both the student and the family.

In addition to affecting the culture of the school, Connie shared that participation in the family literacy program had a positive impact on participating children. She isolated the idea that the family literacy program increased the confidence levels of her students. Her continued analysis linked these increases in student confidence to overcoming prejudice that was expressed towards the immigrant and refugee participants

in the family literacy program. She linked her opinion to her own experiences as an immigrant in the United States. In closing, the researcher asked her what it felt like to be a teacher and leader in the family literacy program. She explained that it made her feel great because she was "changing lives" and because she enables parents to "overcome fear and obstacles and that feels awesome." She also mentioned in this context that her leadership in the program was making her a better parent herself.

At the end of the final interview with Connie, she was asked the question: "Why do you do what you do?" She began her response,

> I will tell them of one parent that I have in the evening, that she had a very difficult child in the sense that he had a lot of learning disabilities. He was in third grade, but he was a first grade reader at most. At first when we started this program, we only served three schools. She moved, and her son went to another school. She came to me and said, please can I continue coming? She came in the evening, and we have the school age class in which we help them with homework. She said, I need this because I cannot do this on my own.

Connie concluded the answer to her final question by saying, "I do this because we actually help people here, in this program. That's really inspiring, personally."

Kristin. Kristin became a teacher following what she referred to as an "unusual path." She initially earned a biochemistry degree because she thought she would attend medical school. She abruptly interjected that she "ended up becoming a teacher." She is currently a fourth grade teacher who has taught for 15 years. When asked about the school she works in, she described it as being comprised of a 100% "at risk" population including students receiving free and reduced lunch. Within the student population, she also described many ELL students—some of which were identified ELL and some of whom were ELL in her estimation but did not receive formal ELL services. When the researcher asked what it meant to be an ELL student who does not receive ELL services,

she explained that this would include students born in the U.S. to a parent or parents who speak Spanish but do not choose to enroll their child(ren) in ELL.

Next the researcher began to ask questions about Kristin's experiences as a teacher with students who participate in the family literacy program. Kristin admitted to not knowing much about the family literacy programming even though she has parents who participate in PACT Time in her classroom. She knew they were there to learn English and she described the "bond of language" as strong. In the initial interview she described three parent participants and their children as "motivated and excited" learners. She recalled a comment from a participating student in her classroom as, "Mom's coming tomorrow. Mom's coming tomorrow and she's going to see my work. She's going to help me write my stories." When asked about her personal reaction to having parents in the classroom she quickly replied, "I love it, I really do!" One potential downside, she recalled, was that other students were sometimes observed feeling a little left out because their moms did not come to class. During the second interview she also mentioned that students do "get off task a little" when a parent came into the classroom. Based on this experience, she has made a concerted effort to create a welcoming classroom environment for all volunteers by preparing specific tasks for parents to do in her classroom. At this point in the discussion during the first interview she began talking about general parent engagement in the school. She gave the specific example of fathers who were engaged and reiterated the emphasis she places on creating a welcoming classroom.

When asked about how family literacy has affected the culture of the building she worked in, she reflected, and noted that it had "not come up much." She then talked about

an individual mother of a student who used to attend the family literacy program who now felt welcome coming back for more general parent engagement activities. She contrasted that experience with parents who had not had a positive experience in school—ELL students in particular—and made the link to standard events like parent-teacher conferences. Kristin then turned her comments to the plight of women in particular and commented how women from other countries do not have the same access to school as men. When the researcher asked a question to re-direct the conversation towards the culture of her school before and after the family literacy program, she mentioned how everyone was welcome and encouraged to learn. She explained, "If someone is struggling in my classroom and they see that their mom is struggling too then they don't feel so bad."

At one point in the first interview Kristin was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the reality that her students would be showing up in her classroom at any moment. The researcher tried to get in the remainder of the questions in a very short period of time. The next line of inquiry was about where the parents sat when they came to her class for PACT Time. Parents were given choices on where they could sit—which was usually next to their own child. Kristen responded to the researcher's inquiry about whether or not she recognized a difference between those students whose mothers participate in the family literacy program and those students whose mothers do not participate in the family literacy program, she emphatically said that she does "see a benefit" for those whose mother's participate. She couched this answer in a discussion of how women are treated in other countries. She referred to the girls in her classes and how it would make a "big difference" if their mothers came to class. Kristin recalled "some

dads" have even said their "wives don't need that [family literacy]." The researcher asked her to put her experience with family literacy into the context of her own life. She told the story of learning to read on her mother and father's lap. She also described a deep belief in getting children to love reading in the home. "If you're reading with your child they're going to love reading and I love reading as a result and I went to school reading!"

At the time of Kristin's second interview, she no longer had mothers attending her classroom for PACT Time. She redirected many questions the researcher had about her experience with the family literacy program to broader discussion about family engagement in her classroom in general. She touted having a "very open classroom" and an "open door policy" for parents who are interested in visiting. Kristin explained, "I feel like when students have parents who are interested in their school, they're going to be more successful in school." When the researcher asked if the role of parents in education had affected her professional experience as a teacher, she answered with the fact that she has "always been one to invite parents into the classroom." She underscored the importance of having positive communication with parents and the importance of male involvement as well—highlighting the Watchdogs program. It should be noted that Kristin and Tatiana's classrooms are in the same school building.

Jackie. Jackie was a former high school English teacher who was in her second year teaching in the family literacy program for JCPS at the time of this study. She described her decision to teach in the program as based, in part, on a "sense of community" she felt when she visited. Her choice to transition from teaching high school students to teaching adults was also based on her observation that adult learners were "interested in learning" as opposed to her contrasting experiences teaching high school

students. When asked what it was like to teach in the family literacy program, she said simply, “It feels really comprehensive.” Perhaps an appropriate adjective to describe a program commonly referred to as a comprehensive family literacy program. By the time the second interview occurred, Jackie was on a temporary leave of absence due to personal reasons. She mentioned that she “hates it to take a leave of absence . . . because this work to me is very worthwhile, I made a lot of connections with the women that I teach and built a lot of relationships and missed everybody.” It sounded like she will return to teaching family literacy as soon as she can.

The researcher then began to ask questions about how teaching in the family literacy programs impacted her preparation time as a teacher. Jackie explained that when she is teaching the whole family that she has to take the perspective of the whole family into account. When doing this, she described feeling mission-driven and referred to her work as having a “community aspect.” In her discussion about how being a family literacy teacher affected her teaching, she shared the following quotation, “I have two women who work third shift and literally will go splash some water on their face because they’re so eager to learn and want more and like being part of the community here.” This comment is an illustration of how motivated some of the attendees are to attend the program. She often encouraged her parents to maintain an open mind and a patient disposition. As for the school aged students, she would encourage them to “Cheer your mom on! She is working really hard!”

Jackie made a point of bringing up the connections with her women students she had built during her time working in the family literacy program during her second interview. While she had described many positive aspects of teaching in the family

literacy program during the first interview, it was during the second interview where she really focused in on her experiences building significant relationships with her female students. This included what she observed as "enormous" connections between mothers that allowed for personal discussions. She described helping mothers by extending her own network as a resource—including connections through her CPA husband. Jackie highlighted how rewarding it was to connect "women to women, mother to mother" and help teach English. She described her teaching as "wonderful" because it helped parents navigate school and understand the significance of test scores. When asked if she had seen any results extending from her role as a teacher in the family literacy program, she shared about two parents who had attained jobs and other students who had come to her with training manuals and other materials for their jobs they needed help with. She stopped short of taking full credit, but did claim "partial" responsibility for the economic advancement of some of her adult students.

The researcher next asked Jackie if she had learned anything as a family literacy teacher that would have informed her practice as a high school teacher. She replied by referencing a staff development she had attended for adult educators that immediately made her think how it could have helped her teach her high school students. The topic of PACT Time and how it may or may not have impacted her experience as a teacher revealed that while she had taught adults who have attended PACT Time, she did not have firsthand experienced with PACT Time in her own classroom. She did reveal that several parents had been overheard talking very positively about it. Jackie referenced a specific comment made by parents indicating that PACT Time made them happy to see their children learning. Parents described PACT Time as a method of learning about what

happens in the classroom as well. In terms of her preparation as a teacher, Jackie admitted that she has done some "role playing" with her adult students prior to parent-teacher conferences. Her goal with these activities was to alleviate some apprehension and nervousness surrounding conferences. During the second interview she shared that her "open door policy" in the classroom made many parents feel free to speak up.

The final questions asked by the researcher were designed to elicit what it was like for Jackie to teach in the family literacy program. She said it felt very "mission-driven." The researcher watched her literally straighten her back and sit up a little higher as she continued her explanation. She noted that she was helping people learn English and gain confidence. Jackie disclosed that she had to develop personal boundaries to limit her work from spilling over into her life. She recalled one of her classroom slogans as "lose the fear." At this point in the discussion she reflected on her own past experience traveling abroad and how nervous she had felt. She could not imagine going to the grocery store or doctor's office in a country where she did not speak the language. Jackie reminded the researcher that her job feels very purposeful. She closed the first interview by saying, "It's infused a passion for teaching again that I lost a little bit because I was always having to motivate [high school students]," as opposed to her experience teaching the adult students who were more self-motivated. When asked by the researcher why the parents kept coming, she said, "It's not bad, but this place has a heartbeat and I think it's palpable." In her closing comments of the second interview she said, "to tell those with decision-making power to fund it [the program]!"

Themes for Teachers

Careful analysis of the themes or clusters of meaning that emerged from the careful analysis of transcribed teacher interviews included the following list. It should be noted that just because a theme shows up on this list that it does not mean every participant brought it up, but rather that, based on the researcher's qualitative analysis, the theme was prevalent enough to be considered on a larger scale as a cluster of meaning.

Multiple roles—Most of the teachers in the sample had served in multiple roles prior to their current teaching position. These varied experiences added to the rich descriptions from the parent participants.

Personal connections—Participants in this research project expressed varying levels of personal connections to the family literacy program. Connections ranged from gender to family experience. Personal experiences were presented naturally during the interview process.

Importance of PACT Time—PACT Time is one part of the four component family literacy model and the JCPS model. PACT Time is the component that brings children and parents together in the classroom. PACT Time as an important part of the family literacy program was a theme that emerged several times in this qualitative analysis.

Insecurity—Insecurity was mentioned in several different contexts relative to the plight of parent participants in the study. It was often times spoken of in relation to parents understanding of the school culture or when referring to community services such as visiting a medical professional.

Fear—The concept of fear came up many times. Teacher participants typically discussed fear in the same context as the level of English language proficiency attained by parent participants. In other contexts, it was applied to feelings about the American education system in general.

Whole Family—Teachers brought up the importance of educating the whole family several times and in significant ways. This usually came up in discussions about PACT Time and other educational family literacy events that include more than one generation learning together.

School Culture—School culture was a concept raised by the teacher participants. The origin of this particular theme may have come from the researcher since it was a topic that the researcher asked about, although participants were quick to discuss the topic comprehensively.

Increased Parent Engagement—All teacher participants noted the importance of increased family engagement in education in general. Most attributed their positive attitudes about parent engagement to family literacy. A few of the parent participants noted they had positive attitudes about family engagement prior to the existence of the family literacy program.

Child Confidence—Teacher participants were interested in the confidence levels of children participating in the project. Child confidence was typically correlated with student performance in school. A direct relationship between child confidence and student achievement was described.

Change Lives—Teacher participants described teaching in the family literacy program as a life-changing event for themselves as parents.

Better Parent—Teachers interviewed for the research project spoke of parent participants in the context of seeking to be a better parent. Participants observed this theme regularly.

At Risk—The term "at risk" was used by teacher participants to describe the young people and families attending the schools served through the family literacy program. This phrase was utilized to indicate low income families as defined by participation in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. It was also applied to the English Language Learners population.

English—The theme of English language proficiency was regularly brought up by teachers as they described the different parents who participated in the family literacy program.

Welcome—Creating a welcoming environment was a theme teachers raised throughout the research project. The context included the act of trying to create a welcoming environment and also the fact that the family literacy program helped to create a welcoming environment by default.

Women—All of the teachers interviewed for this project were women. Two of the teachers in particular highlighted the family literacy experience as being primarily a female experience.

Principal Participant Experience

Two principals were interviewed for this research project. The first principal listed below as Bess was only interviewed once due to a promotion to a district office position shortly after her interview. The second principal interviewed for this project was interviewed twice in her role as principal for the same school. In both cases, the

principals painted a comprehensive picture of their experiences as leaders in elementary schools with family literacy programs.

Bess. When Bess was interviewed by the researcher, she was the principal of an elementary school in the Jefferson County Public Schools District. Prior to becoming to becoming an elementary school principal she worked in Illinois at a Department of Defense School, followed by work at the Kentucky Department of Education. Two weeks after this interview she moved to a district office position where she supports the teacher appraisal process. Overall, Bess described the family literacy program as beneficial for parents—even though she described numbers of participants at the time of the second interview as lower than usual. Bess's interview responses were more elaborate than the answers given by the parents or teachers. Consequently this section contains more complete quotations than the previous two. The researcher made the decision to include more complete quotations in an effort to most accurately capture the family literacy experience as it relates to the role of principal.

In response to the researcher's question about how long she had been the principal of a school with a family literacy program she did not answer it by noting a period of time. Instead she gave a more introspective response that traced her lack of knowledge of ELL programs when she first took the job and how she has watched her staff's knowledge increase over the course of her first five years as a principal. Another part of her answer to the researcher's questions indicated that her school was chosen to host family literacy because it was a "vibrant place" for ELL students. The researcher then asked her to give a little more context about the family literacy program. She talked about the "hub" concept where three schools have family literacy program participants that visit

on a regular basis, but that the parent education and early childhood programs were hosted at a center about 2.5 miles away in a church. Another aspect of the program described by Bess was that her program coordinator kept in regular touch with classroom teachers through emails and newsletters. Bess wrapped up her response to this line of questioning by describing the summer programs designed to prevent learning loss.

The next inquiry from the researcher referred to what it felt like for Bess to have parents in her building. She explained that it was "useful" for parents to spend time becoming "comfortable as themselves" in the school. She continued by explaining that she has witnessed parent language level and capacity for leadership improve during a family's time participating in the program. In terms of her staff, they have been very open to having parents in the school. Bess explained,

> Not to say there haven't been some situations to deal with . . . one mom was changing her little baby's diaper in the middle of the classroom, in the middle of reading. There have been things like that that we have to work through, but our staff has been wonderful about embracing family literacy and I think it has helped our staff in that sometimes, as a middle class, white, mainstream, you don't understand always the backgrounds and the experiences that all the children in your room have had and I think the family literacy has helped our teachers expand their thinking and their feeling of how I have to adapt to what I do because of where my children come from.

Bess's words here paint a real picture of having families in the school as full participants in the educational process. She also made a point to mention the divergent experiences between the staff and the families. One implication she made was that these different experiences might never be recognized by staff without families in the school. The researcher followed this quotation by prodding a little deeper into the topic of staff reaction to the family literacy program. As Bess reflected on what it was like when the family literacy program she first noted that some teachers did feel nervous due to a lack

of understanding of what was actually going to happen when the parents showed up at school. She described "varying degrees of teachers' willingness to make sure that parents were engaged," and that she and her team were willing to work through the experience together. It was clear by the end of her answer that Bess sets a tone of inclusion in her school when she laughed and said, "If you accept a position here, this is what will be happening at [this] Elementary School." This unequivocal comment was an indication of her support for the family literacy program and family engagement in general.

The next topic raised by the researcher was building culture before and after the family literacy program. Bess gave a very long answer detailing an evolution of the staff with the addition of an ELL program followed by the implementation of the family literacy program. Within her description she talked about how much the community had changed during this same time and commented, "I know that our teachers know this is a necessary component, because we have to have families involved in their children's education and then with common standards, if we don't have a family involved, then the fight is even bigger." Bess's quotation here indicated that engaging the family could help an education staff facilitate the change process.

When Bess observed parents in the classroom with their students she noticed the school-age students "bursting with pride." She believed that parents in the classroom make a difference for the child. The specific evidence she cited was a decrease in behavior issues when parents were present. Bess also observed students with parents in the classroom asking more questions. Teachers in the classroom were observed building more significant relationships with parents—this was attributed to teachers having more "background knowledge" about the students in their classroom. As for the other children

in the room, she has noticed a little jealousy coming through based on the realization that their parents were not in the classroom with them.

The researcher then moved to a question about whether or not Bess thought there was a connection between the family literacy program and family engagement in general. She commented that when there was a family event at her school in the past that the family literacy parents "show up in droves." She also explained seeing an increase in attendance at parent teacher conferences among the parents participating in the family literacy program. The researcher asked if those parent participants in the family literacy program had exhibited any differences since joining the program. She said that one of the participants was able to attain her GED in a matter of months. Bess has also seen parent participants take on leadership roles in explaining the Common Core State Standards.

Patsy. Patsy had served as a teacher for 12 years prior to getting her administrative degree, becoming a principal intern, and ultimately becoming the principal of her current elementary school. She described her school as being comprised of an ELL population that has risen from 27% to 34%. Her overall thoughts about the experience of having the family literacy program in her school included highlighting the importance of the family in education and describing the mother as a child's first and most important teacher. When the researcher asked Patsy to explain in more detail what it meant to view the family as important to the education process she talked about the experience of going to school as "intimidating" for various reasons including, but not limited to bad past relationships with school and logistical issues such as where to park when attending the school. One major change brought about by having the family literacy program at Patsy's school was the removal of 'visitor' parking signs in exchange for "family parking" signs.

Patsy elaborated on the changes she saw from having a family literacy program at her school, “It makes the school feel safe, it empowers the parents, and it really helps push those kids with their learning. That’s one I think really nice bonus that came from our work on the family literacy project.”

At the time of the first and second interviews, Patsy’s school had not yet had families participate in PACT Time during the current school year. Since she no longer had funding for all components of the family literacy program, she was offering several other family engagement efforts. She reflected on her experiences with family engagement since the family literacy program was active in the past, “The more I look around the building and there’s families in the building I feel it’s a healthy school.” She had also observed the pride expressed by children when their parents were in the classroom. Patsy attributed several important parts of her school’s improvement to the family literacy program. She specifically noted an improved reputation for the school, increased community involvement, and overall school improvement. Patsy highlighted kindergarten readiness data that showed more students were ready for kindergarten. She attributed this to increased family engagement efforts such as take-home kindergarten readiness “kits” and family events that had been initiated in the wake of the family literacy in her school.

The researcher asked Patsy why she thought people wanted to come to her school. She began her answer by admitting that she did not know if family literacy was a draw or not. She spoke of having an “open door” to family involvement and the “intentionality” that she and her staff used to engage families. This answer was an indication that Patsy viewed her school as having a welcoming environment for families. In her second

interview she directly attributed their success with family engagement to lessons learned from the family literacy program. When asked if maintaining the "family-friendly" environment was easy, she said it was difficult and challenging—particularly relative to the continuous translations necessary to communicate with every family. She reflected on the situation further and explained, "I think I need to learn how to speak Spanish."

Close to the end of Patsy's second interview, the researcher asked her what the school culture was like before and after the family literacy program. She described the staff that was there when she first became a principal as almost adversarial towards parents—literally "blaming parents." Since the family literacy program was in her building she no longer saw that. She explained,

> So I would contribute some of that to the intentionality that we are putting in place and that teachers during the time with the Toyota Grant, they did have the parents coming in so I think that sort of started breaking down barriers and kind of levels of awareness that we're all learners and these parents and that these children are not coming from the world that we come from, you know, our lives. So it's very subjective but it absolutely feels different in the building.

Another observation she made was that increased numbers of ELL students potentially meant lower test scores when the families had very low levels of English proficiency. The researcher followed up with the question of whether or not increasing family engagement—especially among ELL populations—truly made her job easier as a leader. She quipped, "It's my job to deal with the test scores." When asked by the researcher whether the changing demographics of her school due to its popularity caused, in part, by the family-friendly environment made her job easier or more difficult, she proudly said, "easier." The researcher sensed tension between the push for higher test scores and maintaining a family-friendly environment.

Another topic raised by the researcher was whether or not Patsy thought teachers were affected by the family literacy program in any way. Her response was that she thought any time another adult was in the classroom that teachers "upped" their game. She qualified that statement by explaining that she tries to create a building culture where teachers do not "freak out" when another adult walks into the room. She used the words "awesome opportunity" for a teacher to have family literacy participants in the classroom. As for other students, Patsy confidently said that she did not notice any differences when other adults came into the room. However, when asked about how a student whose mother comes into the room responded, she did note that they felt more welcome in spite of the language barrier. Students whose mothers attended classes were also seen as more likely to approach her as the principal.

The researcher next asked Patsy what she saw as the future of the family literacy program at her school. She described not having enough funding for the program next year. Her wish list included building an extra room for the family literacy program to be hosted right at her school. Even though the program had not yet been active at the time of the initial interview Patsy felt as though her staff had worked hard to keep the "door open" for families.

Themes for Principals

A number of themes emerged from a careful analysis of transcribed principal interviews. It should be noted that just because a theme emerged from the principal interviews that it does not necessarily mean every participant brought it up, but rather, based on qualitative analysis, the theme was prevalent enough to be considered on a larger scale as a significant theme.

School Improvement—The school improvement theme includes analysis of various efforts that schools make to improve the work of schools. In the context of this study, the theme related parent and family engagement to school improvement initiatives.

English—The importance of knowing the English language was a theme brought up by the two principals who participated in this study. Observations were made about the importance of learning English to a better understanding of the school culture. Additional comments relative to this theme included potential links to parent self-confidence and levels of comfort interacting with the school.

Teacher Improvement—Teachers were described by principals as improving due to the family literacy program and/or related parent and family engagement efforts. Reasons for this ranged from notions that parents in the classroom and school created a perceived additional level of accountability to the idea that parents participating in the classroom increased the likelihood that they will support their child's achievement.

Finances—The issue of funding came up in two different ways. The principals participating in this study noted the difficulty of funding comprehensive family literacy programs for long periods of time. Another perspective on the funding issue emerging from this study was the idea that leveraging different types of funding and program designs that include volunteers or other resources can sustain pieces of comprehensive family literacy programs.

Overall Family Engagement—The overall family engagement theme linked the broader concept of family or parent engagement to family literacy. Both of the principal informants for this project saw a link between their family literacy program parent and family engagement in general.

Parent leadership—Parent leadership in this study was a specific type of parent engagement that involved a parent taking on leadership in their school, home, or community. Principals interviewed for this study observed parent leadership and linked it directly and indirectly to parent participation in the family literacy program.

Culture Shift—The culture shift theme is used to describe the information brought forth by the principals that indicated the culture in their schools had changed with regard to school-family relationships. It is distinguished from the broader theme of "overall family engagement" due to the fact that it presents the much larger possibility that family literacy can shift the culture of an entire building towards a more parent-friendly environment.

The Essence of the Experience of Participating in the Family Literacy Program

Parents. Parents who participated in the family literacy program learned about it from a friend or at a school event. Their interest extended from a motivated and intense feeling of wanting to better their own plight and that of their family. Typical reasons for enrolling in the family literacy program included the desire to learn English, attain a GED, better themselves economically (usually involving a desire to attain a job, gain a promotion, or attain a better job), and/or to help support their child or children to excel in school. Another reason given in a minority of situations included the desire to take citizenship classes. Upon first visiting their child's classroom in fulfillment of the PACT Time requirement, parents felt some level of nervousness or insecurity. These feelings were rooted in a lack of confidence in their English-speaking abilities and a lack of understanding of the American education system. In addition to the initial lack of confidence, parents described their child's classroom teacher and their ability to create a

welcoming environment as an important factor to the overall quality of the family literacy experience. Teacher efforts to include parents in the classroom were perceived as positive, while teacher nonchalance or non-inclusion of the parents in the classroom was seen as negative. Participation in the family literacy program led to several positive benefits for parents. Parents described appreciating the teacher more when they saw them working with their child and other children in the classroom. Increased levels of self-confidence for the parents were realized as their English skills and understanding of the U.S. school system improved. As parent confidence improved, so did their ability to support their child's academic success in numerous ways. Parents described being able to assist their child with homework more effectively as a result of participating in the family literacy program. The ability to effectively advocate for their child's success in school was also enhanced—in some cases parents described making better school choices for their child by thoroughly evaluating perceived indicators of quality schools like state test scores. Additional benefits for parent participants included the attainment of a job or a promotion in an existing job, the ability to interact with health care providers without the aid of an interpreter, and general feelings of increased happiness.

Teachers. The family literacy teachers arrived in their role after having served in different teaching positions and, often times for personal and professional reasons, developed a mission to teach children who are at a higher risk of academic difficulty due to economic reasons and/or a lack of English language proficiency. These experienced teachers had come to the realization that family engagement in general is an important part of the educational process. They had also come to know family literacy as an effective method of engaging the entire family. For some this was a direct result of their

experience with the family literacy program, and for others this was a pre-existing quality. A deeper understanding that the inclusion of the whole family in the educational process as critically important is a common part of a teacher's motivation after having hosted parents in the classroom. In many cases, family literacy teachers described their own appreciation of the parents' commitment to education. When parents come into the classroom with their children or when children come into the adult classroom with their parents, efforts were made to make parents feel comfortable and confident in their important role as their child's first teacher. While some males do come into the classroom, family literacy teachers described PACT Time as disproportionately attended by female participants. Teachers have drawn a significant link to the female experience of the family literacy program. In both the case of the male or female visiting the classroom teachers described an overall positive impact on their classroom culture and the larger culture of their school. In classrooms where PACT Time was once common but attendance had trailed off, teachers made a point to include the whole family in the educational process as they moved forward in their careers. As a result of PACT Time experiences, teachers described being better prepared to engage the whole family. Family literacy teachers observed parent and student participants in family literacy programs as decreasing their levels of fear and insecurity during their participation in the program. Teachers observed positive impacts on both the students participating in the family literacy program and the students in classrooms where parents visited the program. The larger positive impacts of the family literacy program observed by teachers included increased English language skills, increased parent confidence, improved employment scenarios, and perceptions of improved student achievement.

Principals. Principals of an elementary school with a family literacy program were working in schools with a relatively high percentage of English Language Learners (ELL) and participants in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program compared to the rest of the school district. They actively made the choice to host the family literacy program as a part of their school-wide efforts to maximize the potential of every family by increasing their English language proficiency. Family literacy principals described the school culture before and after the family literacy program as having improved in its orientation towards the intentional engagement of parents. The decision to host a family literacy program was both a family engagement effort in and of itself and a catalyst for changing the culture of the building to an environment that includes the family as a central part of the school's educational efforts. Principals described family engagement (including family literacy) efforts as a part of a school improvement process that encouraged the parent leadership and the teacher improvement necessary to achieve these ends. Family literacy principals were motivated to hold teachers accountable for what they perceived as fundamental tenants of high quality family engagement. The experience of the family literacy principal included the plea for additional funding and space to run high quality programs.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

This study was a qualitative inquiry of the phenomenon of participating in a family literacy program for parents, teachers, and school principals. Due to the experiential nature of the family literacy experience, the research method chosen for this inquiry was phenomenology (Creswell, 2007). The case was the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Family Literacy Project in Louisville, Kentucky. JCPS had a total student population of more than 101,000 students during the 2013-2014 school year. This comprehensive family literacy program included four mandatory components for participating families: adult education, early childhood or school age education for the child, parenting education classes, and Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time. PACT Time is the component of the program where the parent and child learned together simultaneously. In the case of the JCPS program, PACT Time occurred in the child's classroom, although it could have technically occurred whenever a parent and child were learning together. Informants for this study included thirteen individuals who were directly involved with the family literacy program, including seven immigrant parents, four teachers, and two principals. The parent participants were ethnically Hispanic/Latino, spoke Spanish as their first language, and 100% of were female. Twelve of the 13 informants were interviewed twice for 30-60 minutes, and one principal was only interviewed once due to a career change.

After the interviews, emerging themes were used to construct the essence of the experience for each group, which is reported in Chapter 4. In a phenomenological study

the essence of the experience is the culmination of the findings section. One additional finding of this study was that informant motivation to participate in the program was based on a desire to help families reach their full potential—including, but not limited to, acquiring English language skills, attaining a GED, supporting children in school, and/or to improving academics. Parent, teacher, and principal informants described success in these same categories. Parents gained confidence, which led to more informed school-choice decisions based on assessment scores, parents reported strong feelings toward teachers, and parents experienced improved perceptions of teachers. Teachers used strategies to involve parents in the classroom such as offering volunteer roles, inviting parents to work with their children, encouraging the use of home language, and encouraging students to compliment their mothers. Teachers and principals described the importance of family engagement with education in general as a result of participation in the family literacy program. Teachers and parents contextualized the experience within their shared gender roles as women and mothers.

Findings from the principals included recognizing family literacy as a strategy for improving the success of English language learner families. Principals described motivations to host the program to include helping families understand school culture and to increase student engagement. Space and funding were mentioned as limitations for principal participation in family literacy programs. Principals raised issues linked to family literacy that provided areas for future research: family engagement as part of school improvement, Common Core State Standards and family engagement, family engagement and school safety, and family literacy and its impact on student achievement (including one principal that linked family literacy directly to kindergarten readiness).

The Literature Review and Areas for Future Research

The experience of participating in a family literacy program for parents, teachers, and principals as detailed above included several topics that are embedded within the context of the literature review. Such experiences also included family engagement efforts in general, which also connected to the literature review. Additionally, the described experiences present opportunities for additional research in some areas. The process of revisiting the literature review and considering potential areas of research for the future are recommended components of the phenomenological research methodology (Moustakas, 1994).

The parent participant experience in the family literacy program described in this study included the motivation to learn English, to attain a GED, to better themselves economically, and to support their child in school. Parent participants in this study described several positive outcomes of participants, including appreciating their children's teacher more, and experiencing increased levels of self-confidence. Many of these same benefits are affirmed by researchers such as Swick (2009) and Carter et al. (2009). Researchers Dearing et al. (2006) also correlated higher levels of parental self-efficacy with increased parent involvement. While many of the parent experiences with the family literacy program studied here were consistent with the benefits described in the literature review, there were a few areas that may warrant additional exploration. One example included the parent feeling that they could effectively advocate for their child's success in school in different ways—including making school choices based on the measures of school quality like test scores. The literature review included studies that affirmed increases in parent confidence as a result of family engagement in general and

family literacy specifically; however, the fact that some parents made school choices based on information gained by participating in the family literacy program was largely absent in the literature review. A more thorough understanding of whether or not parents make decisions about where their children attend school may add to the discussion about parent engagement and its potential impact on school choice. Another topic raised through the parent experience that warrants future research is whether or not participation in a family literacy program improves the parent perception of the teacher. Such a finding could help schools build additional trust between disenfranchised parents and their teachers.

The topic raised in the description of the parent experience of the phenomenon of family literacy serves both as an area of potential future research and a transition to the teacher experience and its connection to the literature review. Several of the parent participants described strong feelings (both positive and negative) associated with how teachers made them feel when they entered the classroom for PACT Time. When the researcher asked the participating parents to describe how teachers made them feel it was difficult to gain a clear understanding of the difference between those parents who had a positive experience and those who had a negative experience. In this study of family literacy, some of the lack of detail on this issue could have been related to a breakdown in communication between Spanish-speaking parents and an English-speaking researcher. However, given the clarity of discussion accorded to several other topics through the use of an interpreter, this should stand as a topic of future interest. The review of literature included research such as Ferguson's meta-analysis of 31 family engagement studies that found creating a welcoming environment that fosters positive relationships as one of six

major conclusions about effective family engagement (2008). What is lacking in the literature is a careful inquiry into those specific efforts teachers make or do not make that make parents feel welcome in the classroom within the context of a family literacy program. This should be researched more fully in the future in order to clarify what efforts should be made to make parents feel comfortable entering the classroom.

The teacher's experience with parents in their classroom included efforts to make parents feel comfortable and welcome. They described strategies such as including parents as volunteers, placing them in proximity to their child, supporting the use of their home language in the classroom, and encouraging the child participant to compliment their mothers for participating in the program. Due to the lack of clarity in the parent experience and the fact that some of the parents in this study did not describe feeling welcome in the classroom whereas others did, this is an area where further exploration is needed.

Teacher participants in this study described the importance of the family literacy program and family engagement in general. Some teachers said they would have made this observation prior to hosting family literacy participants in their classrooms and others increased their recognition of the benefits after having hosted family literacy participants. Teachers described the positive outcomes from participation in family literacy to include improved English language skills, increased parent confidence, improved employment scenarios, and the perception of improved student achievement. Family literacy and increased family engagement are supported by several authors in the literature review as methods to achieve the above outcomes. Future research should be conducted into the question of whether or not teachers change their attitudes about family engagement

following the experience of having parents enter their classrooms as a part of a family literacy program. Efforts to more fully understand this relationship could benefit the field by uncovering additional methods to improve teacher attitudes towards increasing family engagement.

All the family literacy teachers and all the parent participants in this study were female. One of the topics brought up several times by some of the family literacy teachers was the fact that having females in the program was significant. One teacher likened her experience as a woman to the plight of the participants in the family literacy program. This finding is important considering the critical nature of the mother-child relationship to the process of literacy development (Wasik & Herrmann, 2004) and the fact that a mother's education level has been shown as an important indicator of student academic success (Sastry & Pebley, 2010). Given that the parent participants in this study were all Hispanic/Latino Americans, the fact that women were engaged and that teachers were helping them successfully reach their goals is particularly important considering that female immigrants are disproportionately limited in their English proficiency, thus making them less likely to be employed (Batalova & Fix, 2010). Additional research should be conducted in the area of gender and its connection to the family literacy experience. Given the growing importance of engaging males in family literacy and family engagement programs (Morgan et al., 2009) and the fact fathers reported having a desire to be more involved (Gadsden, 2012), it would also be worthwhile for future studies to consider father involvement in family literacy programs. Perhaps larger gender roles in parenting should be considered as well. Two of the teachers in this study

described positive benefits when fathers visited the classroom—although those visits were not directly attributable to the JCPS family literacy program.

The principal experience with family literacy included the specific targeting of English Language Learner (ELL) families. Given the economic difficulties of attaining a job in United States without a command of the English language (Batalova & Fix, 2010) and the first hand descriptions by the parents in this study of the difficulties associated with understanding the U.S. educational system, targeting ELL families for participation in a family literacy program may be an appropriate choice. The principals in this study described the purpose of targeting ELL families for participation in the family literacy program as an effort to help ELL families reach their full potential. Closely related to this first purpose was the additional strategy of leveraging family literacy as an effort to orient the culture of the school towards family engagement in general. Increasing family engagement in general is well supported in the literature as a method of improving the likelihood of student success. This is especially true when considering it in a school wide context. Researchers Epstein (1987) and Ferguson (2008) underscored the importance of making family engagement efforts systematic and acclimated to changing the larger school culture. The principal experience described here is well supported in the literature review. Both principal informants in this study mentioned the limitations of resources including space and funding. These limitations have been found to be common across the country (Padak et al., 2002).

Topics raised by the principals that were not adequately informed by the literature review included utilizing family literacy and family engagement programming as part of a school improvement plan, learning about Common Core State Standards, learning about

school safety, and implementing family engagement programming as an effort that directly impacts student achievement. Since at least the passage of No Child Left Behind, and probably before, there have been discussions about the importance of family engagement (or parent involvement) to the school improvement process. A key area for future exploration to this end is the effectiveness of comprehensive family literacy programs to the school improvement process. Both principals in this study viewed the family literacy program as a viable school improvement strategy, but neither shared an abundance of empirical evidence to support their conclusions. One of the principals did quantitatively link family engagement to kindergarten readiness, but additional research is needed to fully understand this connection. The larger issue of academic achievement as directly related to family literacy or larger family engagement initiatives is an area that could benefit from additional research as well. Although the literature review includes several sources that directly link family engagement efforts to student achievement, Robinson and Harris (2014) claimed that this link was not as direct as researchers once thought. While this claim and research is not without controversy, one of their conclusions was that family engagement might have a more indirect impact on student achievement by setting the stage for student achievement. They claimed student achievement could be impacted through family engagement when parents communicate the importance of education and foster a home environment that maximizes student success (Robinson & Harris, 2014). While direct references to student achievement were difficult to discover in this study, the idea of stage setting through the family literacy program was reiterated by the parents, teachers, and principals interviewed in this study.

Common Core State Standards and its relationship with family engagement were raised in passing by one of the principal informants. Given the salience of this topic to educational discussions across the nation, it is recommended that future research should be dedicated to this topic. Additional topics of lesser focus raised by the participants in this study that may warrant additional exploration include the possible impact of parents in the classroom on teacher quality and whether or not there are over-arching school safety benefits when parents visit schools regularly. Comments were made in passing by the principal informants about these topics but they were not sufficiently investigated here.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The experience of participating in the Jefferson County Public Schools Family Literacy Program for parents, teachers, and principals is a phenomenon that yielded rich descriptions of themes and outcomes that informed discussions about family literacy programs specifically and the larger discussion of family engagement in the U.S. educational system. In addition to themes and outcomes, this study included thorough accounts of the individual and collective essences of the experience of participating in a family literacy program. In this study, parents, teachers, and principals painted a detailed picture that is valuable for a deeper understanding of participation in family literacy programs. Such descriptions help inform current and future educators and families as they seek the family literacy experience for themselves. These descriptions may also have a broader impact on educational leaders and policy makers who will not necessarily experience family literacy themselves, but may benefit from a detailed account.

The three categories of informants chosen for this study described overlapping experiences that included unique nuances warranting additional research in multiple areas. Such areas include, but are not limited to, the impact of family literacy on parent school choices, the impact of participation in family literacy on parent perception of teacher quality, an exploration of specific teaching strategies that effectively engage parents in the classroom during PACT Time, the impact of family literacy on teacher attitudes about family engagement, the further inclusion of gender as a focus for understanding family literacy programs, family engagement's impact on the school improvement process, the impact of family literacy on specific academic outcome measures, family engagement and its role in furthering an understanding of Common Core State Standards, and family engagement's potential impact on school safety. Individuals reviewing this study may also find additional parts of the family literacy experience described here that lead to future research as well. Each of these areas for further research presented themselves in ways that could be understood more deeply in an effort to inform educational policy and practices concerning family engagement in education.

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Appendix A

Parent, Teacher, and Principal Consent Letters

University of Nebraska Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

Dear administrator,

My name is Joshua Cramer. I am conducting a dissertation study of a comprehensive family literacy program that serves families with children at your school. If you are 19 years of age or older and are currently an administrator in a building with children participating in a family literacy program, you may participate in this research.

Participation in this study will require up to two interviews of 60 minutes each. You will be asked to respond to questions from the researcher during these interviews. Participation in an interview will take place in a public meeting area or another location chosen in collaboration with the researcher.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

The results of this study will be utilized for a doctoral dissertation and potentially for inclusion in public presentations and articles.

Your responses to these interviews will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated with any official publication of the interview results.

You may ask any questions concerning this research at any time by contacting Joshua Cramer, 402-436-1994, jrcramer@gmail.com. You may also contact Don Uerling, duerling1@unl.edu. If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By agreeing to participate in the interviews, you have given your consent to participate in this research. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

Joshua Cramer

University of Nebraska Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

Dear teacher participant,

My name is Joshua Cramer. I am conducting a dissertation study of a comprehensive family literacy program in your school. If you are 19 years of age or older and are currently working in a school where there are students participating in a family literacy program you may participate in this research.

Participation in this study will require up to two interviews of 60 minutes each. You will be asked to respond to questions from the researcher during these interviews. Participation in an interview will take place in a public meeting area or another location chosen in collaboration with the researcher.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.
The results of this study will be utilized for a doctoral dissertation and potentially for inclusion in public presentations and articles.

Your responses to these interviews will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated with any official publication of the interview results.

You may ask any questions concerning this research at any time by contacting Joshua Cramer, 402-436-1994, jrcramer@gmail.com. You may also contact Don Uerling, duerling1@unl.edu. If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By agreeing to participate in the interviews, you have given your consent to participate in this research. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

Joshua Cramer

University of Nebraska Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

Dear parent participant,

My name is Joshua Cramer. I am conducting a dissertation study of a comprehensive family literacy program in your child's school. If you are 19 years of age or older and are currently participating in a family literacy program or have participated in a family literacy program within the last year, you may participate in this research.

Participation in this study will require up to three interviews of 30-45 minutes each. You will be asked to respond to questions from the researcher during these interviews. Participation in an interview will take place in a public meeting area or another location chosen in collaboration with the researcher.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.
The results of this study will be utilized for a doctoral dissertation and potentially for inclusion in public presentations and articles.

Your responses to these interviews will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated with any official publication of the interview results.

You may ask any questions concerning this research at any time by contacting Joshua Cramer, 402-436-1994, jrcramer@gmail.com. You may also contact Don Uerling, duerling1@unl.edu. If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By agreeing to participate in the interviews, you have given your consent to participate in this research. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

Joshua Cramer

141 Teachers College Hall / P.O. Box 880360 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0360 / (42) 472-3726 / FAX (42) 472-4300

Appendix B

Interview Question Bank

Interview Question Bank

Possible Questions for Parents:

1. What has your experience as a parent participant in the family literacy program been like?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences with family literacy?
3. How would you describe your child's experience as a participant in the family literacy program?
4. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your child's experiences with family literacy?
5. Describe what it is like to go to school with your child?
6. Describe what it is like to sit next to your child in his/her classroom?
7. Has family literacy affected your opinion of the school?
8. Has family literacy affected your home literacy practices?

Possible Questions for Principals:

1. What has your experience as an principal of a school with a family literacy program been like?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences with family literacy?
3. Describe what it is like to have parents in your school building on a regular basis?
4. Describe what parent participants in the family literacy program are like.
5. What is your school culture like?

6. Has your school culture changed since you started a family literacy program?
7. Have the family literacy participants changed since the program began?
8.

Possible Questions for Teachers:

1. What has your experience as a teacher in a school with a family literacy program been like?
2. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences with family literacy?
3. Describe what it is like to have parents of students in your classroom?
4. Describe what parent participants in the family literacy program are like?
5. Describe elementary participants in the family literacy program?
6. How has family literacy affected your classroom culture?
7. Have you noticed anything different about students with parents in the family literacy program since they began the program?

Appendix C

IRB Approval Letter

University of Nebraska Lincoln

June 28, 2013

Joshua Cramer
Department of Educational Administration
5907 Apache Road Louisville, KY 40207

Donald Uerling
Department of Educational Administration
134 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20130613634 EX

Project ID: 13634

Project Title: The Essence of Participating in a Comprehensive Family Literacy Program

Dear Joshua:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Exemption Determination: 06/28/2013.

1. The stamped and approved informed consent documents have been uploaded to your form files (documents with Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use these documents to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the documents, please submit the revised documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to using them.

2. Once you have secured the permission letter from Jefferson County Public Schools, please email that letter to me.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;

* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;

* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;

* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or

* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP

for the IRB

Appendix D

Jefferson County Public Schools Approval for Research Letter

Approval from Jefferson County Public Schools was received via their online data system. It came as an email:

On Tue, Jul 16, 2013 at 1:50 PM, <Jcps_Cas@jefferson.kyschools.us> wrote:
A comment has been left for you on your data request. The contents are as followed:

JCPS Approval
Thank you for submitting IRB documentation from your higher education institution (Project ID: 13634). This research has been approved in JCPS. It is now up to the participants to decide if they are willing to participate, as established by our Human Subject Protection program.

Appendix E

External Audit Attestation

External Audit Attestation
By Jenny M. Powell, Ed.D.

Joshua Cramer requested that I complete an educational audit of his phenomenological dissertation titled: The Essence of Participating In A Comprehensive Family Literacy Program. This audit was conducted between July 31st, 2014 and August 25th, 2014. The purpose of this audit was to determine whether the researcher left a clear audit trail. In leaving a clear audit trail, the researcher must delineate a path that others could easily follow. The audit also attempts to determine whether the study is trustworthy. In his book Handling Qualitative Data , Richards equates the audit trail to a ship's log which details the journey and process of the ship. He argues that good qualitative research gets its claim to validity from the researcher's ability to show convincingly how they got there (2005).

According to Merriam in her book Qualitative Research, the audit trail describes, "In detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (2009, p. 223). Merriam also discusses the fact that the audit trail can be used to ensure "consistency and dependability" in the data. It is the auditor's job, "to authenticate the findings of the researchers by following the trail of the researcher" (2009, p.222). Creswell in his book Educational Research, suggests that the auditor answer several questions including the following:

> Are the findings grounded in the data?
> Are the themes appropriate?
> Can inquiry decisions and methodological shifts be justified?
> Are inferences logical (2002, p. 281)?

Stake reports in his book, Qualitative Research, Studying How Things Work, that when qualitative research is, "done well, it is also likely to be……well triangulated, with key evidence, assertions, and interpretations redundant (2010)." The researcher should therefore, document a clear audit trail, demonstrate triangulation of data, and show consistency and dependability with the data.

To meet the outlined purpose of this audit, numerous materials were reviewed. The following materials were submitted for this audit:

1) A final copy of the dissertation draft. The dissertation was 139 pages in length including appendices. The four appendices included the following: Consent Letter, Interview Question Bank, University of Nebraska IRB Approval Letter, and Research Letter for Jefferson County Public Schools.
2) Fifteen separate e-mail attachments. These attachments included the transcriptions of the interviews with notes. The transcriptions contained the following list of pseudonyms and page lengths: Abigail/Parent—12 pages, Bess/Principal—11 pages, Connie/Teacher—10 pages, Cramer Coding—4 pages with multiple colors and descriptions of abbreviations ie: TE—Testing, Emily/Parent—13 pages, Jackie/Teacher—5 pages, Jennifer/Parent—13

pages, Kirsten/Teacher—7 pages, Laticia/Parent—12 pages, Magdalena—18 pages, Mikala/Parent—8 pages, Nikia/Parent—10 pages, Patsy/Principal—26 pages, Tatiana/Parent—8 pages, and another dissertation draft.
3) A dissertation proposal dated August 13th, 2013. This proposal contained 49 pages.

The audit consisted of the following steps:

1) I reviewed all materials that were submitted for the audit as listed above.
2) I read the entire dissertation draft. I paid particular attention to the introduction, research questions, methodology, and findings. I wrote down key steps that were listed in the methodology chapter and later compared them to what the researcher actually did in the completed study.
3) I read through each of the interviews and paid particular attention to the notes which the researcher used to assist in his analysis of the raw data.

Summary of the audit findings:

After careful examination of both the process and product of this researcher's work, I believe that this study is trustworthy. This was determined based on the fact that the research procedure was sound and the findings were clearly grounded in the data. The researcher detailed the themes for each of the groups and explained how he arrived at his conclusions. The research questions were clear and concise and remained consistent throughout the proposal and the final draft of the dissertation. The researcher answered each of the questions clearly in the findings chapter.

This study's research plan was well defined in the purpose statement. The information presented for analysis was clear, clean, and organized. The materials submitted for the audit clearly supported the procedures that were outlined in the dissertation draft. The choice of phenomenological approach was explained by the researcher, as were his reasons for conducting the study. The researcher spent quite a bit of time discussing how he was involved in the study. This explanation provided a sound basis for selecting the phenomenological approach for this particular type of research. The close personal connection which the researcher had for the study provided further support for selecting this particular approach.

In conclusion, I believe the information provided to me by the researcher, as well as the descriptions in the dissertation draft, allow for an easy to follow audit trail. The study contains a level of trustworthiness, and the researcher has clearly outlined how he determined his conclusions. The information presented to the auditor was clear, easy to follow, and timely.

Based on all of the above, I believe other researchers could follow this audit trail.

Attested to by Jenny Powell this 25th day of August, 2014.
Jenny Powell, Ed.D.