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Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age Literacy Development in a Head Start Program

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Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age
Literacy Development in a Head Start Program

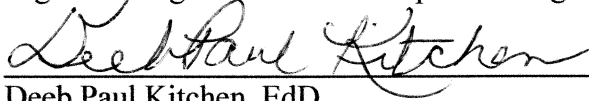
by
Dianna J. McCoy

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Speech Language Pathology

Nova Southeastern University
2017

Approval Page

We hereby certify that this dissertation, submitted by Dianna J. McCoy, conforms to acceptable standards and is fully adequate in scope and quality to fulfill the dissertation requirement for the degree of Degree of Doctor of Speech-Language Pathology.



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Chairperson of Dissertation Committee

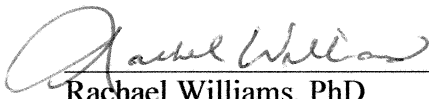
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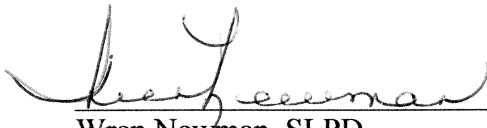
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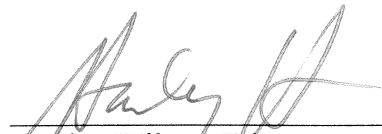
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I declare the following:

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This research is dedicated to my amazing parents who were passionate about learning, to my granddaughter whose hugs, kisses, and corny jokes sustained me throughout this journey; and to my daughter whose own journey inspires me to persevere.

Abstract

Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age Literacy Development in a Head Start Program, Dianna J. McCoy, 2017: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education, ERIC Descriptors: Early Literacy, Preschool Literacy, Low socioeconomic literacy development, Parental participation in preschool literacy development, At-risk child literacy development, Parent beliefs, attitudes and needs in at-risk child literacy development

The topic of this applied dissertation concerns parents from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds participation in support of literacy development of their preschool aged children. Evidence from the limited research on this topic suggested that some parents rely on the school to teach literacy to their children beginning in kindergarten. Consequently, little time and effort is dedicated to preschool narrative skills, letter knowledge (other than the ABC song), print awareness, phonological awareness, print motivation, and vocabulary.

Literacy development begins before children enter kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers expect children to be able to identify letters, their sounds, print their names. Children without these skills are at risk of falling behind in literacy learning and academic progress. Researchers have attempted to explain the relationship of speech sound correspondence, letter recognition, vocabulary, and the ability to read and communicate based on empirical and cognitive development research, but too little research has investigated the perspectives of economically disadvantaged parents of early learners about their own needs as they prepare their children to meet linguistic literacy challenges that lie ahead. Therefore, this applied hermeneutic phenomenological study will explore the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children in a Head Start program in a suburban elementary school develop literacy skills.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Parental participation in early literacy development prior to children entering kindergarten has been a topic of interest for educators, especially since the latter part of the 20th century. The home environment is recognized by researchers as the first and most important opportunity for overall child development (Rodriguez, Tamis-LeMonda, Spellmann, Pan, Raikes, Lugo-Gil, & Luze, 2009) in particular, when and how parents use language during the early years prepares the child for later learning. Researchers have more recently broadened their inquiries to explore income-related parental involvement in emergent literacy skills before children begin formal education. Undoubtedly, learning is a life-long endeavor, yet comprehending income-related differences in parents' beliefs and participation remains elusive. How parental beliefs effect the experiences they make available to their children needs to be understood in order to level the academic divide between the successful and unsuccessful students (Sonnenschein, Baker, Serpell, Scher, Truitt & Munsterman, 2014).

Researchers have demonstrated that learning begins at birth. Parents are at the forefront of exposing their children to the sights and sounds of the culture in which they live. Parents who appear to be detached from their children's early learning due to stress brought about, in part, by poverty-related circumstances; their own personal limitation, and view-points are believed to set their young children on a trajectory that most likely will result in academic struggles, social, and interpersonal failures (Rodriguez et al., 2009, Campbell et al., 1994, Kaufman et al., 2004, & McGill-Franzen, 1987). While some impoverished families manage to overcome economic strife to achieve literacy

skills, most of the research literature confirms the important roles of parent income, education, and community resources as mitigating factors in their ability to participate in guiding the development of literacy skills before the child enters kindergarten. Indeed, research into food insecurity indicated that the effects of poverty are not solely dependent on income and that not all people living below the poverty line experience food insecurity (Cook & Frank, 2008).

Parents provide the environment suitable for learning. Urie Bronfenbrenner, a 20th century psychologist, theorized human development and diagrammed the significant effect of environmental and social influences on a child's development. Thinkers who followed were better able to visualize the influences that shape a child's ideations, knowledge of words, speech, and language development. They proposed that skills that will be applied to learning to look at and understand the meaning of letters, words, and symbols are formed in the child's inner circle of influences. While this researcher reviewed a significant amount of data that pointed to the home environment (the inner circle of influence) as the starting point for early literacy development, few recent researchers examined those needs from the perspective of the parents. The problem examined in this applied dissertation endeavored to bridge the gap left by researchers on this topic of what parents from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds think they need to support literacy development in their children. Reading disability is a predictable outcome for those who failed to master basic reading skills early (Sukhram & Hsu, 2012).

Tabbado-Rungduin, Abulon, Fetalver, and Suatengco (2014) labeled parental involvement in early literacy development as essential for building motivation for developing literacy skills. Sonnenschein et al. (1997), DeBaryshe, Binder, and Buell

(2000); Baker and Scher (2002); and Evans, Fox, Cremaso, and McKinnon (2004) studied low SES parental participation in literacy development. These researchers who studied disadvantaged parental involvement in young children's early literacy development, found that some parents relied on the school to teach literacy skills beginning in kindergarten, an attitude actualized from the parents' own experience with literacy as preschoolers (Weigel, Martin, & Bennett, 2006). In separate studies Tabbado-Rungduin et al. (2014), Sonnenschein et al. (1997), DeBaryshe et al. (2000), Baker et al. (2002), and Evans et al. (2004), generally correlated the role of middle-income and low-income parents in literacy development. The research teams independently discovered that income affected the degree to which literacy developed in children. Low income was associated with parent beliefs that developing literacy is for entertainment or skills to be learned. Middle-income parents emphasized literacy development to be a source of entertainment. They tended to read more to and were more interactive with their children. Conversely, low-income parents, who stressed the importance of literacy skills, reported being directive in their approach to developing literacy in their children. Sonnenschein et al. (1997), stipulated that pre-kindergarten and kindergarten competency testing results were significant for recognizing literacy as entertainment, as an indicator of literacy knowledge, and that literacy, as a set of skills to be learned, was not indicative of literacy competency (Sonnenschein et al., 1997). In fact, persistent poverty and trauma can directly undermine brain development and the development of executive function (Crittenton Women's Union, 2014). To consider a generational relationship between parental and child literacy development makes this current research a feasible study to pursue because there has been little investigation into understanding the needs of low-

income parents who do not or cannot participate in their very young children's literacy development before their children enter kindergarten.

To affect a diverse and heterogeneous population, the setting for this hermeneutic phenomenological research, a suburban public-school district with an enrollment of just under 10,000 kindergarten-through 12th grade students was selected at the research population. The research site was within an entry level to affluent suburban city with a population of 53,000 people. The ethnic make-up of the setting was described as including 69.84% Caucasian, 3.94% African American, 17.39% Asian, and 5.92% Hispanic (U. S. Census, 2011). The elementary school where the research was conducted is the site of the city's only Head Start Program.

Phenomenon of Interest

The problem for this qualitative applied research was that little is known or understood about low SES parents' beliefs, attitudes, and needs as their children develop literacy skills in the Head Start preschool program in a suburban elementary school. Understanding the perspectives of these parents is a key element in developing programs and services to support these families. Relatively recent research reflects a growing interest in and awareness of home literacy to ensure that preschool age children of all economic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds enter kindergarten ready to learn. Children who lack the basic resources necessary for an equal position in society are less likely to have developed the language skills to ensure early success in school. The home environment is critical in exposing very young children to methods that allow them to acquire and master literacy skills (Clark, 2007; Senechal & LeFevre, 2002; Lonigan & Shanahan, 2010; Torgesen, 2004; Sticht, 2012; Hatcher, Nuner, & Paulsel, 2012;

Sukhram & Hsu, 2012; Hume et al., 2015; Manz, 2012; Wiseman, 2010; Houghton et al., 2014; Demircan & Erden, 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2009; Nichols, 2014; Baker & Scher, 2010; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Yet, researchers seemed not to have taken stock in the important issue of parental beliefs about their involvement in developing these skills. There is very little current literature to be found that addresses parents' perspectives in this area. Neuman and Celan (2006) found that children in economically depressed living circumstances fall significantly behind their middle and upper-income peers in being exposed to early literacy instruction. This is a perceived problem for low SES families in the United States with incomes below their designated poverty threshold.

Federal poverty is measured by poverty thresholds and is updated annually by the Census Bureau (U.S. Census, 2015). It is a statistical measurement used to estimate poverty in America. Poverty guidelines streamline statistical measurements reported to the public. Poverty thresholds are determined according to family types. Family types are defined according to the number of employed adults, unemployed adults, and children who live in the home. The 2015 Census report presented the most recent data on poverty levels. The poverty guidelines for the 48 continuous states and the District of Columbia fall within the range of \$11,770 for a single person to \$40,890 for a family of eight (United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2015). However, according to the National Center for Children in Poverty, families required incomes of about twice the federal poverty threshold to meet their basic needs (USDHHS, 2015).

The United States Census recently included the number of persons without health insurance in calculating the rate of poverty in the country. Less than 10%, or 29 million people were without health insurance in 2015 (USDHHS, 2015). The 2015 United States

Bureau of the Census identified the official poverty rate as 13.5%, counting 43.1 million people living in poverty. The report showed that number to be 3.5 million fewer people living in poverty than there were in 2014 or 1.2%. The number of people without health insurance also declined to 9.1% down from 10.4% in 2014, which was 29.0 million from 33.0 million. In 2015, the median household income was reported at \$56,516, which was an increase of 5.2% from the 2014 income (Semega, Rontenot, & Kollar, 2017).

Conversely, Washington State, where this proposed study would be conducted, was described as one of three states where poverty is increasing. In Washington State one in seven people or 14.1%, live below the poverty threshold (Washington State Budget & Policy Center, 2014). This number was described as an increase from 13.5% in 2012. Additionally, child poverty reportedly remained at 18% while median household incomes remained unchanged (Semega, Fontenot, & Kollar, 2017).

Background and justification. Weigel et al. (2016) reported that parents of preschool children from low SES environments are less likely to help their children develop literacy skills. However, the amount of research that specifically addresses what parents believe they need to support their efforts is limited. A smattering of early studies such as reported in this paper suggested that more investigation is warranted into parent needs related to preschool literacy development. Weigel et al. (2016) introduced differences in distinguishing belief constructs among low income and moderate-to upper-income parents. They defined “facilitative” and “conventional” beliefs among mothers of preschool aged children. From their research, they learned that “facilitative” mothers maintained the importance of their actively participated in supporting the development of literacy skills, while “conventional” mothers believed that the school was responsible for

developing their children's literacy skills. Along the same lines, Weigel et al. (2016) acknowledged the growing body of evidence showing the importance of a quality-rich home literacy environment and a direct link to income and the parents' own level of literacy development. This reiterated the important and influential research done more than a decade previously by Hart and Risley (1995) who determined that mature brain development depended on the experiences lived especially from birth through sixth grade (Hart & Risley, 1995). Rosenberg (2015) stated that other researchers have demonstrated that children from low economic homes have restrained developmental skills such as (a) long and short-term memory, (b) visual and spatial skills, (c) executive functions like self-control, and (d) an ability to learn from reward (Rosenberg, 2015).

Children's literacy development has been linked to that of their parent's. Sonnenschein et al. (1997) connected parents' beliefs to the parent's cultural backgrounds and histories, while DeBaryshe et al, (2000) reported that illiterate parents tended to highly value the use of workbooks and flashcards as toys for their preschool age children. Those parents, according to the researchers, believed basic reading and math skills must be mastered prior to entering a formal education setting. Baker et al., (2004) approached parent participation in literacy development from the perspective of encouraging parents to demonstrate to their children the value and pleasure of reading. Evans et al., (2004) attributed parents' views on literacy development to the parents understanding their own values.

Hart and Risley (1995) reported a significant difference of about 17,000 words between the listening vocabulary of low- and middle-income children. The Heart of America Foundation (2014) linked reading deficits to poverty, dependence on welfare,

unemployment and crime, and the National Center for Education Statistics Digest of Education (2010) reported that the gap between the highest and lowest-performing students is widening (NCES, 2010). Stich (2012) reported that a child from an economically secure home hears 215,000 words per week, while a child living in poverty hears 62,000 words per week. Neuman and Dwyer (2011) reported that over time, there is a 30 million-word gap for economically disadvantaged children based upon their language experiences and interactions in their family settings. Rosenberg (2015) stated that researchers who studied the effect of stress on brain development agreed that living circumstances created stress that releases the hormone cortisol, which triggers a fight or flight response throughout the body. Sustained cortisol production due to the chronic stress brought about by poverty has a harmful effect on the brain (Rosenberg, 2015).

Influence of poverty and stress on brain development. Economic status effects how a family might cope with daily living requirements particularly when preparing young children to enter formal education in kindergarten (Affenito, 2007; Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008; & Belsky et al., 2010). The correlation between poverty and brain development was discussed through a series of working papers sponsored by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, through the Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University. This collection of research led to discoveries in the effect of stress on brain structure, the effect of chronic fear and anxiety on learning and development, the influence of relationships on development, and how early experiences shape developing executive function (NSCDC, 2014; Figure 1). According to NSCDE, stress might be experienced on three levels. Positive stress, tolerable stress, and toxic stress influence

bodily systems and brain architecture depending on duration, intensity and when in a child's life the stressful event occurred (NSCDC, 2014).

Cortisol and other hormone levels, heart rate, and blood pressure elevate in response to novel or threatening situations (NSCDC, 2014). These physiological effects normalize when young children who experience stress have supportive relations with adults. The premise is that children living in extreme poverty or exposed to highly stressful living circumstances are prevented from receiving supportive relations. Moderate, short-term stress might be classified as positive stress, which is essential for developing a healthy response system (NSCDC, 2014). Positive stress resulting in moderate or brief elevations in heart rate is considered normal. Positive stressors might include meeting new people, dealing with frustration, entering a new childcare center, getting an immunization or overcoming a fear of animals (NSCDC, 2014). Positive stress benefits the brain by allowing it to adapt to adverse events. Parents and children living in extreme poverty are less likely to experience positive stress or to benefit from developing coping skills to manage and control its manifestations under stressful situations. The ability to adjust to positive stress is an essential element of healthy development.

Tolerable stress has the potential of affecting the architecture of the developing brain when it occurs over limited time to events such as the stress experienced because of parental strife, an accident involving a loved one, a contentious divorce, or persistent discrimination (NSCDC, 2014). Tolerable stress has the potential to become toxic under pervasive and extreme circumstances when supportive adult relationships are absent. Toxic stress results when the body's stress management system is triggered by strong, frequent or prolonged events (NSCDC, 2014). Severe, chronic abuse during early brain

development is an example that might produce toxic stress response. NSCDC (2014) reported that exposure to toxic stress triggers extreme and more frequent responses to mildly stressful situations that last for more extensive periods of time (NSCDC. 2014). Physical and mental illness later in life, impairments in learning, memory, and the ability to self-regulate are often the outcomes (NSCDC, 2014).

Recovery from stress includes loving, supportive relationships with adults (NSCDC, 2014). Chronic tension for which the child lacks support from caring adults has an adverse effect on the brain and has the potential to remap the architecture of the brain (NSCDC, 2014). They reported that fetal and early childhood periods are particularly vulnerable to the effects of stress. Chronic poverty is associated with toxic stress (Noble et al., 2015). They concluded that brain architecture influenced by toxic stress showed large differences when small income changes occurred, unlike what is evident by middle- and upper-income families under similar circumstances that displayed smaller changes in brain surface architecture (Noble et al., 2015).

Young children's healthy cognitive, emotional and behavioral development rely largely on the emotional wellbeing of the adults in that child's immediate environment. NSCDC (2004) presented evidence that the quality and stability of a child's human relationships in the early years are foundational to the child's well-being and their ability to develop self-confidence, and the necessary skills and cognitive preparedness to succeed academically and socially, develop problem solving skills and ultimately become a successful parent (NSCDC, 2004).

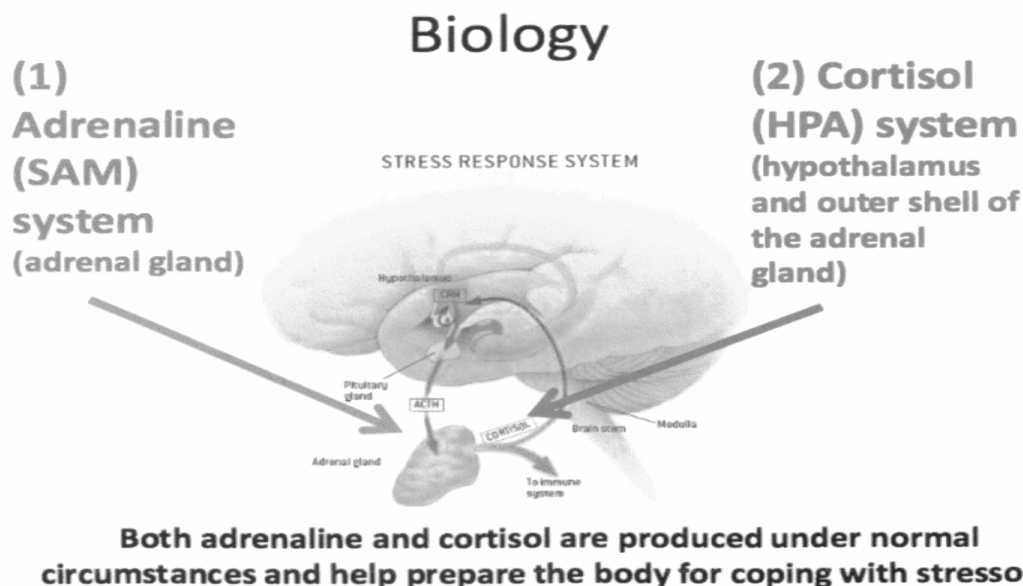


Figure 1. Stress response center of the brain. Adapted from “Effects of poverty on school success.” by M. D. Burns, 2015). Copyright 2016 by Science Learning Corporation. Reprinted with permission.

Hackman and Farah (2008) investigated the effect of poverty on the developing brain using neuroimaging. They located the areas of the brain most impacted by SES as the left perisylvian and prefrontal executive systems. They reported that children exposed to poverty for extended periods presented with deficits in neurocognitive performance that interfere with neural processing. The evidence showed decreases in working memory, self-regulation, and executive function when stimulated by words and facial expressions. Hackman and Farah (2008) attributed those differences to variations in life stress and neighborhood quality, physical and mental health and cognitive ability.

Affenito (2007); Rose-Jacobs, Black, Casey, Cook, Outts, Chilton et al. (2008); Belsky, Moffitt, Arseneault, Melchior and Caspi (2010) are several of a growing number of researchers who presented evidence that food insecurity and its effect on the developing brain, negatively contribute to intelligence quotients (IQ), appropriate behavior, and emotional development (Belsky et al., 2010). Affenito (2007), who attributed missing

breakfast as symbolic of a low SES existence, reported that children who miss breakfast are unable to compensate for that loss at other meals thereby depriving the developing brain of important nutrients that stimulate learning.

Childhood poverty in the United States continues to grow and was reported in the most recent 2015 Census report to be 16,087,000 according to Kids Count Data Center (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013).

Other researchers reported similar findings:

Children under 18 years represent 23% of the population, but they comprise 33% of all people in poverty. Among all children, 44% live in low-income families and approximately one in every five (22%) live in poor families. Our very youngest children—infants and toddlers under age 3 years appear to be particularly vulnerable with 47% living in low-income families, including 25% living in poor families. Being a child in a low-income or poor family does not happen by chance. Parental education and employment, race/ethnicity, and other factors are associated with children experiencing economic insecurity (Jiang, Ekono, & Skinner, 2015, para. 1)

The rate of childhood poverty varies by state and fluctuates each year. In Washington State, in which the population is nearly seven million, the number of children under 5 years of age in poverty was reported at 437,194, or 19% of the population (Anne E. Casey Foundation, 2013a). Fifty-nine percent of low-income children aged 3 to 4 years in this state were reportedly not attending any school. Anne E. Casey Foundation (2013) reported that 71% of 3-to 4-year olds not in preschool were below 200% poverty in 2013. This age cohort provided useful information about mother/child interactions for communities to better understand literacy development among the poor and the very poor.

Numerous researchers have attempted to explain key elements that contribute to literacy development. Snow (2004) concluded that children with low SES backgrounds

have less information to draw on due to their limited life (Snow, 2004). Torgesen (2002) related the harmful impact of delayed early literacy development to low vocabulary growth that inhibits the use of strategies to develop comprehension skills. Guhn and Goelman (2010) included the whole child when considering readiness for school. Guhn and Goelman (2010) concluded that the child's overall wellbeing, social/emotional development, cognitive development, communication skills, and general knowledge are necessary elements of literacy skills (Guhn & Goelman, 2010). Rodriguez et al. (2009) drew attention to quality and quantity of home literacy activities and experiences by age 3 (Figure 2).

Torgesen (2002) studied the effect of low socioeconomic status and connected deficits in general language and phonological skills to deficits in literacy development. Torgesen (2002) concluded that children from low SES backgrounds required intensive instruction prior to entering kindergarten. McLoyd (1998) showed the length of time spent in poverty and the age at which the child entered poverty influenced the long-term effect of poverty on the child. McLoyd (1998) showed that long-term or chronic poverty had a more damaging impact on literacy development than short-term or temporary poverty with a greater effect on younger children.

McKibbin (2007) described three information levels of learning a child needs to exhibit to successfully manage the academic load as actual experience, symbolic learning, and abstract learning. The most effective form for learning is concrete learning when the child has direct experience with an object or concept allowing for easier storage

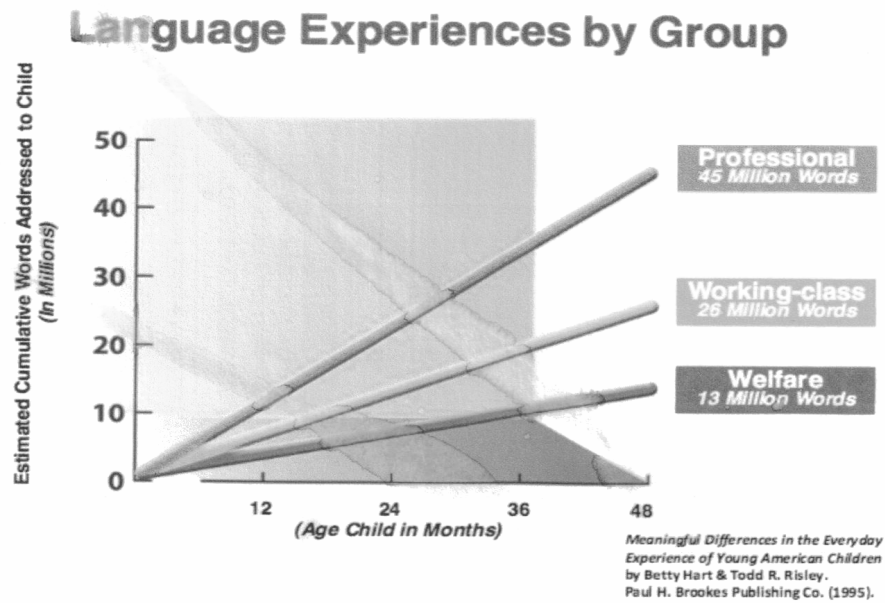


Figure 2. Language experiences by group. Adapted from “Effects of Poverty on School Success,” by M. D. Burns, 2015. Copyright 2016 by Science Learning Corporation. Reprinted with permission.

in the child’s memories. Symbolic learning allows the child to have exposure to symbols in pictures or objects that help the child learn the word or name of the object. Least effective is abstract learning that have abstract representations of the word presented to the child when the child has not had a frame of reference to rely on for characteristics of the object. McKibbin concluded that children with low SES backgrounds have less information to draw on due to their limited life experiences as a way of explaining the low literacy rate among children living in poverty (McKibbin, 2007).

O’Neil-Pirozzi (2009) reported that the development of child language relies heavily on the parent’s ability to engage children in enriched, meaningful interactions regardless of socioeconomic status. O’Neil-Perozzi examined literacy development among homeless children. Parents from low SES backgrounds used tended to minimize word usage with relatively less dimension, were less inquisitive, and more directive

during book reading activities, (O'Neil-Pirozzi, 2009). Leyva, Sparks and Reese (2015) made a similar discovery relating to language development while studying the relationship between phonological awareness of preschool age children and the quality of and how often parents' book reading and reminiscing practices occurred (Leyva et al., 2015). Burns (2015) reported a significant deficit in the number of words children raised in poverty is exposed to stating the negative effect of income level on cognitive functions (Burns, 2015; Figure 3).

Further evidence of the importance of parent participation in preschool literacy development came from the work accomplished by Robins (2012), who studied parent-child conversations and demonstrated that parent-speech was the key element in helping young children differentiate letters from pictures as they learned about letters. Robins (2012) suggested that parents from low SES backgrounds tended to emphasize alphabet order (the ABC song) while higher SES parent-child conversations provided information about how we use letters (Robins, 2012). Siegel and Bryson (2012) showed that children develop broad, rich cognitive linguistic skills when parents talk to them about their experiences and feelings.

Hindman and Morrison (2012) described attributes of parent-child interactions while reading that encouraged literacy development. Young children's knowledge of letter/sound correspondence, vocabulary and learning-related social skills improved significantly when their parents provide academically oriented materials and activities, demonstrate warmth and interest toward the child, and encourage autonomy, appropriate behaviors and discipline (Hindman & Morrison, 2012). In other words, the home

The Effects of Weaknesses in Oral Language on Reading Growth

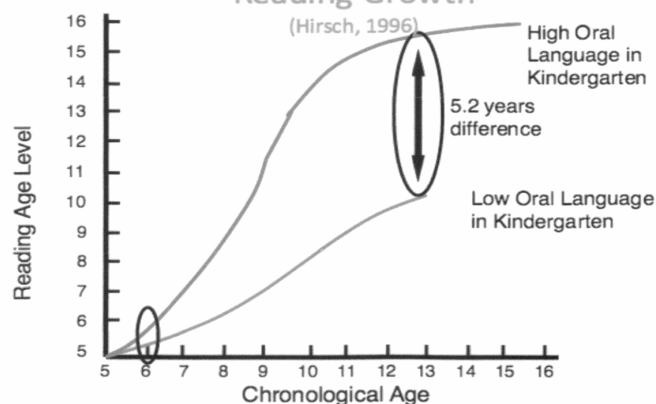


Figure 3. Effects of weaknesses in oral language on reading growth. Adapted from “Effects of poverty on school success,” by M. D. Burns, 2015. Copyright 2016 by Science Learning Corporation. Reprinted with permission.

environment is where children learn about novel experiences through the books read to them by their parents. Children from low SES environments are believed to experience few academic-broadening growth experiences and usually enter kindergarten far behind their middle- and upper-SES peers (Hindman & Morrison, 2012) reaffirming the role of SES in influencing literacy development and in developing vocabulary skills (Torgesen, 2002; Hindman & Morrison, 2012).

Torgesen (2002) reported on the importance of developing vocabulary to mitigate the achievement gap among low SES children and their more advantaged age peers.

Sticht (2012), focused on educating disadvantage parents to achieve long term and social outcomes of early childhood education. Heath et al. (2014) included family factors along with phonological awareness, letter knowledge, oral language and rapid automatic naming as predictors of literacy development. Delays or interruptions in these skills are not without consequences often expressed in increased school dropout rates, low wage

employment, up-ticks in crime rates and increases in prison populations (Child Health and Human Development [CHHD], 2009).

Dropout rates and literacy. The Anne Arundel Literacy Council reported that the United States dropout rate exceeded 1.2 million students and that 25% of high school freshmen failed to graduate on time. The council reported that the United States ranked 22 out of 27 developed nations in graduation rates. High school dropouts earned significantly less income over a lifetime than those who graduate. In addition, the council reported that high school dropouts committed 75% of crimes in the United States (Anne Arundel County Literacy Council, 2015). Researchers who studied this trend unanimously agreed that the remedy to later academic nonfeasance is early parental participation in developing literacy skills.

The Annie E. Foundation reported its own literacy-related statistics as follows:

(a) One in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that percent of these children drop out or fail to finish high school on time, compared to 9 percent of children with basic reading skills, and 4 percent graduate from high school, compared to 6 percent of those who have never been poor. This rises to 32 percent for students spending more than half of their childhood in poverty; (b) For children who were poor for at least a year and were not reading proficiently in third grade, the proportion that don't finish school rose to 26 percent. That's more than six times the rate for all proficient readers; (c) The rate was highest for poor Black and Hispanic students, at 31 and 33 percent respectively--or about eight times the rate for all proficient readers; (d) Even among poor children who were proficient readers in third grade, 11 percent still didn't finish high school. That compares to 9 percent of subpar third grade readers who have never been poor; (e) Among children who never lived in poverty, all but 2 percent of the best third-grade readers graduated from high school on time; and (f) Graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students who were not proficient readers in third grade lagged far behind those for White students with the same reading skills. (Hernandez, 2011, pp. 3-11)

Fry described a downward trend in U.S. dropout rates due to improved academic performances by Hispanic and African-American high school students (Fry, 2014). Fry reported that the dropout rate among African-American and Hispanic students might be attributed to improvements in academic performance within the two groups. Fry reported that the Hispanic dropout rate moved from 32% in 2000 to 14% in 2013 while the dropout rate for African-American youths decreased from 15% to 8% during the same period (Fry, 2014).

Gaps in the Literature

Deficiencies in the evidence refers to the lack of high quality research or the lack of consensus of extant research. The present study will address some deficiencies in the current literature on parent beliefs about literacy development in their prekindergarten children. First, there is a paucity of historical and current research available that specifically addresses the parent's perspective on literacy and their children. Parents' level of education, motivation and childhood experiences that influence how children develop as readers, are important indicators for later literacy development (Torgesen, 2002; Torgesen, 2004; Weigel et al., 2006; Senechal et al.; LeFevre, 2002; Sukhram; et al., 2012).

Second, early motivation for reading is reported to emanate from maternal parent's perspective that reading is valuable and brings great joy (Baker & Scher, 2002). Parents with limited resources and/or education might have difficulty achieving the pleasure factor in reading with unspecified stressors and living and environmental constraints. Baker and Scher (2002) reported that parents who demonstrated book-talk and enjoyment when reading to their children tended to display a direct relationship

between those beliefs and the child's interest in reading. Past research targeted attitudes about reading rather than motivation. Finally, researchers are divided on the importance of the number of reading materials available in the home and the effect of poverty on literacy development. A symbiotic relationship may exist considering a lack of resources may drive whether or not books and other reading materials are readily available in the home.

A lack of research literature emphasizing the parent perspective is apparent. Too few researchers considered the parent perspective when approaching deficits in gaining literacy skills among children disadvantaged by poverty. Additionally, evidence of available valid measures of literacy interest and the contribution to literacy interest by parents seemed to be unattainable (Hume et al., 2015). This present research filled the gap in the literature by discussing parent needs as a multi-dimensional construct that considers the needs of parents in a sample low SES environment as those needs related to their participation in their children's early literacy development.

Future research. The unique circumstances of each participant can continue to provide valuable data for communities and school districts to grow services that might support the needs of poor families in developing literacy skills. A quantitative study with a larger subject population might provide a broader range of data leading to information that qualitative research is unable to discover. An example of outcomes of a more comprehensive study might include introducing additional services during a mother's pregnancy that might prepare parents to plan for and introduce literacy to their newborns. Additionally, this present research might generate ideas for further research into

removing income status as an inhibitor to parents' participation in early childhood literacy development.

The Unique Contributions of This Research

This hermeneutic phenomenological research study added currency to the body of literature that addresses low SES literacy development. An important perspective from parents, which appears to have been overlooked throughout the growing library of research literature, may inform legislators to dedicate funds and programs to support parents' efforts to participate in their children's early literacy development. Additionally, results of this study guided educators to consider alternatives to disciplinary actions towards children who struggle with classroom behavior problems, and encouraged more community resources for parents who needed support not readily available to them. Researchers agree on the importance of teaching children before formal academic programs in the area of reading competency. They also agree that early parental participation in preparing young children for literacy development is essential to children's successful navigation through the learning process. This research extends into the preparatory stages of early learning by asking parents to express their needs and the obstacles they feel impede their ability to help their children gain literacy skills as well as the support mechanisms they wish were in place and available in spite of their economic status.

Audience. Audience refers to those individuals and groups who will read and possibly benefit from the information provided in this study. The make-up of the audience depends upon the nature of the study and varies greatly from study to study (Creswell, 2008). This study is directed to educators, speech language pathologist of all

settings, administrators and practitioners in the field of early literacy development because they play an important role in preparing preschool age curriculum for the school setting and are in a better position to identify 3- to 5-year olds who demonstrate deficits in their literacy development. Children who present with delays in literacy development upon entering kindergarten are said to be unable to catch up unless intensive, early intervention is provided to them. This study is of particular value to parents of young children who will enter the public-school system. Parents who live in poverty have a unique opportunity to stimulate language development in their children provided they have the necessary tools and support from the community. Understanding the needs of parents who will benefit from this research might allow communities to direct resources when and where needed. Early education teachers and care providers will find the data gathered during this research helpful in planning and structuring programs to include, stimulate and improve parent involvement in their children's literacy development.

Definition of Terms

This list of terms and major concepts are defined here to allow for clarity of this study:

Applied research. Applied research gathers specific information related to a topic and potentially of generates actionable outcomes (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).

At-risk. At risk is determined based on outcomes of Developmental Indicators for Assessment for Learning-3 (DIAL-3), Phonological Screening section of the Hodson Assessment of Phonological Patterns-3 (HAPP-3). Common risk factors include a child's exposure to drugs and/or alcohol in utero, premature birth, dysfunctional home environment, and family income status. At-risk children tend to struggle academically

and have standardized test scores significantly below the norm in at least two domains of the DIAL-3, or one standard deviation below the norm and four or more risk factors on the Preschool Phonological Screening of the HAPP-3 (Meadan, Stoner, & Parette, 2008).

Early literacy. Invernizzi, Justice et al. (2004, p. 482) stated, “attainment of early literacy spans the preschool through kindergarten years.”

Environmental print. Environmental print is print that is found in everyday life such as what one might find on food packages, bills, and signs. It may be useful in the support of a child’s letter knowledge development by helping them learn the letters in their names (Lopez, 2013).

Emergent literacy. Emergent literacy is a function of “experience rather than development and is not linked to any particular age or level of cognitive or linguistic skill” (Erickson & Clendon, 2009, p. 197). Reportedly, there is an overlap between emergent literacy and pre-reading. In addition, they describe conventional literacy as reading and writing skills evidenced by experience and beginning readers as older children, adolescents and adults who demonstrate emergent literacy understandings. Emergent and conventional literacy occur on a continuum that includes pre-reading, “learning to read and reading to learn” (Erickson & Clendon, 2009, p. 197). Justice, Chow, Capellini et al. (2003, p. 320) define emergent literacy as the “foundation upon which children’s conventional reading and writing abilities are built” (Justice et al., 2003, p. 320) and that the “term is used to describe the behaviors, skills and concepts of young children that develop into and precede conventional literacy. For most children, the period of acquisition is birth to about 6 years old.”

Food insecurity. Food insecurity is “Material hardship, shortages of physical resources needed for healthy development; food insecurity, food insufficiency, and hunger” (Belsky et al., 2012, p. 809).

Home literacy environment. The home literacy environment is identified by the presence of a variety of reading materials for all ages and how often public library visits occurred. Parents can enhance the literacy environment by displaying literacy-related behaviors such as reading to themselves and frequently reading to their children (Griffin and Morrison, 1997).

Literacy. Literacy is defined as “reading and writing to convey meaning such as what occurs when you read the newspaper, write a letter to a friend or use initial letter cuing to support unintelligible speech in face-to-face communication as well as listening and viewing” (Soto & Zangari, 2009, p. 197).

Methodology. Methodology is the theory and analysis of how research should proceed (Harding, 1987 as cited in Carter & Little, 2007, p.1317).

Poverty. Poverty in the United States is defined by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016), as a family of four with an annual income below \$23,624. It represents an inability to meet basic living needs such as an adequate living space, nutritious food and clean clothing U. S. Census, 2016).

Pre-reading skills. Pre-reading skills include letter naming as a key component (Soden-Hensler, Taylor & Schatschneider 2012, p. 458). Print awareness and phonological awareness along with letter naming develop into word reading, phonological awareness and letter identification (Nelson, Benner & Gonzalez, 2005, p. 3). It does not include “words reading skills such as letter-sound correspondence”

(Nelson et al., 2005, p. 3). Lopez (2013) referred to pre-literacy skills as those that “encompass print awareness, letter knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary and comprehension skills” (2013, p. 1).

Socioeconomic status. Refers to material wealth, social prestige and education. There is a direct correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and predictable and unpredictable life stresses, neighborhood quality, physical and mental health and cognitive skills (Hackman & Farah, 2008, p. 6).

Title 1. Title 1 is a federal grant program enacted in 1965 and reauthorized in 2001 as the No Child Left Behind Act to provide educational assistance to students living in poverty. No Child Left Behind Act required state and federal guidelines for Title I programs to include learning initiatives, parent education, achievement analysis on standardized tests, and staff development opportunities (Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000).

Toxic stress. Toxic stress refers to a strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body’s stress management system. Stressful events that are chronic, uncontrollable, and/or experienced without children having access to support from caring adults fit this category of stress (NSCDC, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children in a Head Start program in a suburban elementary school develop literacy skills. Income status and early literacy success predominates research even while there is an unfortunate lack of understanding in the needs that low income, and/or undereducated parents feel inhibit their ability to provide the necessary experiences that will nurture their children’s literacy

development before they enter kindergarten. The focus of this research adds clarity to the low-income parent perspective and allows local educational services to direct necessary resources to better instruct and equip home literacy practices. Past interest has been focused on socioeconomic factors affecting families with small children. Studies that concentrate on development in pre-school age children have grown exponentially over the years. The emphasis in previous research related to this topic has been to consider living and life-style situations at home. Some researchers focused on literacy development in the classroom beginning in kindergarten. An insignificant amount of attention had been directed to those struggling parents who seemed ill-equipped to ensure their children entered kindergarten with the necessary literacy skills to foster academic success. The rationale for conducting this study was for cases in which parents were not aware of early intervention services; this study endeavors to understand the parents' thinking about how their children learn to read.

Chapter summary. Chapter 1 introduced the topic of the study as parent participation in literacy development in their preschool age children and detailed the need for this research. The purpose of this phenomenological hermeneutic was to describe the beliefs, attitudes and needs expressed by low socioeconomic parents as they help their preschool age children develop literacy skills. The foundation for this research is rooted in constructivism philosophical and ecological dogma. Three information levels of learning were described as concrete experience, representational or symbolic learning, and abstract learning. Concrete learning is the most successful experience and abstract learning is described as the least effective. Children from low SES backgrounds have less information to draw on due to their limited life experiences as a way of explaining the

low literacy rate among children living in poverty. Researchers cited in this chapter related the effects of chronic stress on the development of the brain as a factor in low literacy development in the young child. Future research might include a broader investigation to eliminate poverty as a mitigating factor in parents' participation in their children's literacy development. This present study allowed parents to express their perspectives on literacy development, which will help direct public resources to support their efforts. Chapter 2 will provide a review of the relevant literature related to this topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 1 provided a comprehensive review of this research topic by addressing developmental norms and influences on the emergence of literacy skills in children. The purpose statement highlights the major intent or objective for this present study (Creswell, 2008). The purpose of study was to explore the central question regarding the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children in a Head Start program in a suburban elementary school develop literacy skills. To further refine the central question, this study explored the essence of the participants' lived experiences by the use of sub-questions. This chapter will present a comprehensive review of documentary and available current literature related to low SES parent participation in emergent literacy development in their children.

A literature review is relevant to a research project to describe discoveries through research on a particular topic (Creswell, 2008). It shows evidence of a need for a proposed study. The review encompasses scholarly writings from journal articles, books, published and unpublished manuscripts, technical and research reports, audiovisual media, meetings, symposiums, and other documents. Furthermore, by first conducting a literature review, the researcher is guided to establish the contribution to be made by the research (Creswell, 2008). There has been little research focused on the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children prepare to enter kindergarten. This chapter incorporates an exhaustive summary of peer-reviewed articles related to the study's problem, purpose, research questions, theoretical foundation, and research design. While conducting this review, there was substantial evidence of the lack

of research, historical or current, which specifically asked parents to describe their needs and the obstacles that prevent them from supporting literacy development in their children. As a written summary of articles and other documents that describe the current state of knowledge about this topic, aspects of literacy development in families who met the federal guidelines for poor or impoverished were of interest to this literature review.

In qualitative research, the literature review serves to justify the importance of studying the research problem (Creswell, 2008). Similar to a literature review for a quantitative study, the qualitative literature review is mentioned at the beginning of the study for that purpose. However, unlike a quantitative study, the qualitative literature review is somewhat more restrained in the beginning to allow the views of the participants to emerge, uninfluenced by any perspectives expressed in the literature (Creswell, 2008). To write a literature review that summarizes the literature for inclusion in the research paper, this researcher identified the key terms to be used in search of appropriate, timely literature. Once located, the researcher evaluated and selected those to be organized and reviewed (Creswell, 2008). The literature review for this study used title search, journal articles, documents and relevant electronic media to align with prescribed research literature reviews.

Title Search, Articles, Research Documents, and Journals

The initial search for articles related to the proposed topic began with a telephone conference with the Alvin Sherman librarian who provided clarity on the genre of peer-reviewed articles. This conversation led to a search through databases using the Sherman online databases NovaCat, ERIC database, and ProQuest. The search led to topic-related articles from a variety of sources in education; nursing; psychology and behavior; social

and human services; social sciences; speech, language and hearing; early literacy; child development; life sciences; and diet and nutrition. Electronic sources outside of the Sherman Library System supplemented the scholarly publications. Guides helpful in scientific writing came from the *Publication Manual, Sixth Edition*. Additionally, useful formatting and scientific writing style guidance was drawn from reviewing other successful, completed dissertations. Other resources provided helpful information to support this proposed research topic.

University and off-campus resources. As a researcher who is geographically separated from the university campus, the Sherman Library staff and investigative modalities were heavily relied upon as the sole academic library because there was no local agreement in place between Nova Southeastern University and the University of Washington or other local universities. A wide variety of reference materials, abstracts and journal articles, and primary and secondary sources were available to collect the necessary related literature relevant to this study. Primary source literature, literature and reported by the researchers provided the preponderance of the evidence for this present research topic. Secondary source literature, or literature that summarized primary sources, provided important bibliographical information that led to additional relevant sources for this topic.

In addition to outside electronic sources mentioned earlier in this section, other outside sources included Google Scholar; government databases; textbooks for data collection and analysis reviews; webinar participation; and non-profit organizations websites. Key word searches included parental involvement; literacy development; low SES literacy; food insecurity; and the relationship between stress and brain development.

With the relevant research information selected, the next phase of the literature review was to organize the literature.

The Structure and Organization of the Literature Review

A literature review requires the researcher to collect information in an article on a topic to summarize or abstract its content (Creswell, 2008). This section of Chapter 2 describes how the information is organized according to subtopics that deliberate the topic. Several theoretical frameworks provided foundational relevance to this present research topic. A historical context of the study indicated the course of research that raised this researcher's consciousness around literacy development. The slight evidence that reviews the effect of Parental Gender as a factor in parent participation in their children's literacy development follows. Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) in literacy development reviewed the divergence of parental thoughts on when literacy should be taught and who is responsible for teaching it. A narrow review of Low-Income Mothers' Perspective of Educationally Relevant Practices follows the discussion about DAP. This literature review includes a summary of parental beliefs regarding Barriers to Participation, Technology Influences on Literacy Skills, Elements of Literacy, In-Home Literacy Development, Cultural Capital in Home Literacy, Nutrition and Brain Development related to Food Insecurity, and Acquisition of Literacy Skills During the Pre-school Years. Later in this chapter, this researcher will discuss the State of Knowledge, Gaps in the Literature, Future Research, and Unique Contributions of this Research. The research questions are included at the end of this literature review.

One of the most significant current discussions in early learning involves parental participation in early literacy development and later academic success. Children whose

parents are directly involved in literacy activities are said to perform better in academic environments that increase cognitive capabilities, greater problem-solving skills, better attendance, greater enjoyment in school, and fewer behavior problems, (National Literacy Trust, 2007). The basis of modern thinking on the development of literacy skills may be traced back to early constructivism philosophical framework.

Theoretical Framework

A research topic is often associated with certain and specific theories. The theories might be derived from or advanced by earlier researchers. A research framework based on theory is called a theoretical framework and consist of an interrelated coherent set of ideas and models (McCaslin, M. L. & Scott, K. W., 2003). It established the vantage point or perspective through which the researcher views the problem (Gale et al., 2013). In a qualitative study, the intention is to interrelate the basis of the framework with the problem, research questions data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). Philosophers embed scientific assumptions within interpretive frameworks (Creswell, 2013). Philosophical assumptions described by Creswell (2013) included (a) ontological (issues associated with the nature of reality and its characteristics), (b) epistemological (subjective evidence is assembled based on individual views), (c) axiological (how the researcher interjects his or her values into the study), and (d) methodology (the procedures of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). The theoretical framework for this study explains the main ideas that explore the phenomenon of the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children in a Head Start program in a suburban elementary school develop literacy skills and is, therefore from the perspective of epistemological theory. This present study is based

upon three educational learning theories by constructivists, social learning theorists, and ecological systems theorist.

Constructivists, such as Jean Piaget, social learning theorists such as Vygotsky and Albert Bandura; and ecological systems theorists such as Bronfenbrenner influenced present day theorists Epstein and Eamon to shape current thinking on their philosophies of education and early learning. Constructivism theory was chosen for this study because it generally focused on how humans make meaning in relation to the interaction between their experiences and their ideas. For example, Piaget's epistemology related this interaction in relation to how humans' intellectual development is established by their genetic makeup (Wikipedia, n. d.). The research for this present hermeneutic phenomenological study associated the remapping of the brain architecture due to toxic stress. The resulting learning disabilities, behavioral deficits, and impaired executive functions of children living in poverty might be better understood.

Social learning theory was relevant for this study because of its emphasis on expressed that learning takes place within learning environments through peer interactions. Vygotsky contended that the role of language is to prompt thinking, develop reasoning, and support literacy development (Hausfather, 1996). He promoted the idea that learning is a continuous process that cannot be separated from a social context (Hausfather, 1996; Vygotsky, 1962). Bandura stipulated that children learn from each other. Ecological theory that childhood development was directly related to the environment in which the child experienced. Together, the three theoretical approaches to educational learning lay the foundation for this present study.

Constructivism theorist Jean Piaget discovered, through years of research, children learn by example through hands-on exploratory play up to about age 11 when they begin to form logic and abstract thinking (Doyle, 2012). His social constructivism theory of cognitive development included five distinct stages starting at birth to age 2 years with practice play; symbolic play at age 2 to 7 years; concrete operational stage, approximately 7 to 11 years; and formal operations approximately 11 years and beyond. At the preoperational stage, between ages 2 to 7, children begin to use symbols. The child begins in solitary play at infancy and matures through parallel play, associative play and finally, cooperative play (Doyle, 2012). Social constructivism from an epistemological perspective believed that the researcher and the subject of the research participate equally in constructing the quality or state of being real according to each person's experiences (Creswell, 2008).

During Piaget's time in the early 1900s, followers of the social learning theory, of which Albert Bandura was prominent, attributed learning to personal factors, behavior and the environment (Doyle, 2012.). He theorized that learning results from modeling environmental observations and that people respond to negative and positive aftereffects, identify with other people, and are ultimately inclined to model them. Piaget believed learning involved attention, retention, motivation, and motor reproduction (Doyle, 2012.).

Vygotsky, most notably associated with his zone of proximal development (ZPD), linked the individual to the environment, stating that the social environment was responsible for the child's development (Hausfather, 1996). The ZAD is that place in a child's cognition in which the child can demonstrate mastery of a skill or task (Johnson & Keier, 2010). According to Vygotsky's theory, learning flows from the outer sphere in

which completion of a skill or task is outside of the range of the child's ability whether the child has help or not, to the ZPD in which the child is able to accomplish a task or skill with the help of a knowledgeable person. His theory supposed that new knowledge is acquired building on the platform of already acquired skills along with instruction. In phonological development, a 7-year-old child who might produce vocalic /r/ in the final position of words after a model or visual cue might be considered in his/her upper limit level of ZPD. The lower limit of the ZPD is the ability to spontaneously produce the target phoneme /r/ during conversation (Johnson & Keier, 2010).

Language development is an integral component in meeting the individual learning needs in the Vygotskian theory of development. He believed it allowed for restructuring the mind and self-regulation (Johnson & Keier, 2010). Observers might witness the development of skills as children engage in the term Vygotsky used as social speech (Johnson & Keier, 2010). Social speech develops because of the language parents and teacher use to guide learning. Children adopt the language that goes along with the task as they become more independent in performing the task (Johnson & Keier, 2010). Their social speech progresses to private speech as they gain partial control over the skill. Inner speech results when the child is able to self-direct the completion of a task. The ability to automatically accomplish task reflects the use of inner thoughts (Johnson & Keier, 2010).

Vygotsky's theory of learning deviated from the thinking of his constructivist contemporary Jean Piaget, who expected a level of maturity in the child before learning could take place (Johnson & Keier, 2010) Ecological theorists elaborated on Vygotsky's thinking. The modern-day practice of scaffolding evolved from the Vygotsky's theory of

learning. Scaffolding allowed the user to adjust the level of support according to the cognitive potential the child demonstrated (Johnson & Keier, 2010).

The human ecology theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, highlighted the development of the child from an environmental perspective. He theorized that the only way to understand human development was to consider the entire ecological system of the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). According to his theory, a specific path of development was influenced by the person's surroundings; their parents, friends, school, work, and culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The small, immediate environment the child lives in is the microsystem. The child interacts with family, caregivers, school, and daycare within the microsystem. The microsystem interacts with the child's mesosystem to ensure overall growth and well-being of the child. The more encouraging and nurturing these relationships and places are, the more beneficial to the child's growth and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Bronfenbrenner further described the circle of influence around the child outside of the immediate family as the system where social services, neighbors, local politics, media, and industry have an effect to the macro-system where cultural attitudes and ideologies have an effect (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Time-specific events, predictable and unpredictable changes influence the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The evidence supporting Bronfenbrenner's theory is further implicated in research showing deficits in a child's executive functions, which includes working memory, inhibitory control and cognitive or mental flexibility (NSCDC, 2011). The children were less successful in test-taking activities.

Epstein's spheres of internal and external influence mirrored Bronfenbrenner's circle of influence (Epstein, 1995). Internal and external spheres of influence involve the collaboration between parent, school, and community interacting jointly or independently to ensure student learning (Epstein, 1995). Epstein's internal model refers to interpersonal relations and patterns of influence that take place between individual at home, at school, and in the community (Epstein, 1995). Separate spheres of influence occur when schools abdicate their responsibility to the whole child and when families delegate the responsibility for educating the child solely to the schools (Epstein, 1995). Epstein described spheres of influence emanating from close proximity to the child to those influences that are farther removed from the child (Epstein, 1995).

Each of Epstein's framework of six types of involvement can be seen by this present researcher as an instrument to inspire low SES parents to expressing their needs as they relate to their participation in supporting their children's developing literacy skills. Epstein advocated for developing effective parenting skills as the essential element to supporting student learning. Next, Epstein advocated for developing effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication to inform parents about school programs and children's progress, followed by actively encouraging and organizing parent groups (Epstein, 1995). Epstein encouraged parent-led homework and curriculum-related activities support groups, developing parent leaders through school decision making as well as collaborating and community involvement with the expectation of identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to build up school programs (Epstein, 1995). Each parent involvement included a variety of different practices, challenges, and redefinitions where needed that resulted in variations in outcomes

directly related to the practice that was implemented. Further evidence of the application of ecological environment structure was presented by contemporary philosophical theorist Mary Eamon (2001).

Eamon (2001) used the theory of ecology in her research to relate how chronic stress, such as what may be experienced by severe economic depression, effect a child's societal adjustment and peer relationships. Piaget (Doyle, 2012) infused psychology, biology, philosophy and logic to define the emergence of knowledge in the child. Vygotsky followed Piaget in developing a theory of cognitive development that heightened credibility in the influence of the environment on language emergence in the child (Doyle, 2012). Likewise, Bloom determined that a child's environment weighted prominently in intellectual development during the first five years of life (Doyle, 2012). The early learning framework adopted by this study arises from the belief that early literacy prepares children for later, more challenging literacy development. This present study, by focusing on the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents, acknowledged the importance of the environment in which young child developed and the support parents were able to provide given their awareness of and ability to access needed resources.

Summary of theoretical framework. The basis for this research study was grounded in the early and contemporary philosophies of three noted philosophies including constructivism, social learning theory and ecological theories. These theories connect environment to child learning while distinguishing certain aspects of the influence on the child. Constructivist thinking, from Jean Piaget's perspective as a genetic epistemologist, was that one's genetic make-up influences experiences and

ideations. His thinking encapsulated that of psychologist Lev Vygotsky whose philosophy focused on human development in a social world realm (Hausfather, 1996). Vygotsky's primary emphasis was on language development as the instrument that advances thinking, develops reasoning, and supports cultural activities of reading and writing (Vygotsky, 1962). The ecological theory developed by Uri Bronfenbrenner is the foundation on which the Head Start program developed its family support services, home visits, and parenting education. Similar to constructivist thinking, he believed that human development was shaped by the interaction between person and environment. Unlike the constructivist philosophy the ecological systems theory showed that there are varied and multiple levels of environmental influences on a child's development. Contemporary thinkers Epstein (1995) and Eamon (2001) elaborated further on the levels of environmental influences that affect a child's development.

Historical context of the study. Historically, the collective research on this topic supported parent participation in early learning as significant for positive outcomes in child cognitive development, executive functioning, school attendance, and behavior management. Developmental scientists acclaim relationships to be foundational to learning. Play and conversation are especially important to strengthened relationships for the very young. A large body of published studies described the benefits of parental involvement in their children's early childhood literacy development. Some key studies cited in this paper by Senechal and Lefevre (2001); Snow (2004); DeBaryshe et al., (2006); Lonigan and Shanahan (2010); Tabbada-Rungduin et al., (2014); and Sonnenschein et al., (2014) indicated how mothers' beliefs affected the purpose for families' involvement in literacy acquisition. Houghton et al., (2015) showed the benefits

of fathers' involvement with their children. However, there appears to be very little data that addresses what parents from low socioeconomic backgrounds believe, know, or understand they need, to participate in literacy development in their children. Parent knowledge about literacy development and what society is prepared to offer in support of parent participation might be pivotal in preparing children from low socioeconomic backgrounds to achieve the literacy skills to enter kindergarten on the same footing as their better endowed peers.

The experience of shared book reading with their children captured the attention of Senechal and LeFevre (2001). They defined shared book reading within the home setting as a way to facilitate positive attitudes toward literacy, and as an opportunity for small children to gain exposure to print, develop vocabulary, improve phonemic skills, and print concept knowledge. DeBaryshe et al. (2006), highlighted the direct relationship between the time parents spent reading to their preschool children and language growth, emergent literacy, and reading skills. Rodriguez et al. (2009) determined that shared book reading and positive child outcomes might have a closer relationship with how often literacy activities take place in the home. Rodriguez et al. (2006) believed engaging in book reading activities was not necessarily a positive indication of participation in all other literacy activities which is why the researchers investigated the quality of those engagements and the availability of learning materials (Rodriguez et al., 2006).

To summarize, there is mounting evidence of the importance of parent participation in early literacy development at home (Senechal & Fevre, 2006). Shared book reading is an at-home method of stimulating positive attitudes towards literacy, introduce children to print, and improve vocabulary development Senechal & Fevre,

2006). The quality of the interactions with parents as well as the availability of meaningful reading materials were determined to improve literacy in children (DeBaryshe et al., 2006; & Rodriguez et al., 2006). Increasing parental awareness of the significant contribution they can make to their children's learning years led researchers to investigate the influence of parental gender on literacy development (Houghton et al., 2015)). However abundant the evidence for parent participation in early childhood literacy development, parents believe they need to become more involved in their children's literacy development have not been extensively researched.

Elements of Literacy

According to the National Research Council (NRC) 2017, children need a variety of skills to become successful readers. Parents who talk with their children; read books and magazines with them; and encourage play activities that involve language, prepare their children to learn to read when they start school (NCR, 2017). Sylva (2014) reported that underperforming children demonstrated three basic characteristics of decreased language skills, executive function and aspirations. Bruner's groundbreaking discovery 40 years earlier proved that economically disadvantaged families and families with financial security raised their children differently, a difference that translated into a significant gap in vocabulary development (Sylva, 2014). Vocabulary development, print motivation, print awareness, narrative skills, letter knowledge, and phonological awareness are the six elements of literacy recommended by the NRC as essential for learning to read (NCR, 2017). The NRC recommended that children enter school with six early literacy skills as essential elements for learning to read and write. Accordingly, children who entered school with these skills were able to benefit from the reading

instruction they received when they began early formal education. The majority of research on this topic agreed that the components of literacy include (a) vocabulary, (b) print motivation, (c) print awareness, (d) narrative skills, (e) letter knowledge, and (f) phonological awareness. A description of each follows.

Vocabulary. Vocabulary skill refers to knowledge of the names of things (Senechal et al., 1996). When parents teach small children specific names of things, such as the names of produce at the grocery store, they are stimulating vocabulary development. Senechal et al., (1996) advocated shared reading as a technique to stimulate vocabulary development with 3 to 6-year-olds from the perspective of parent knowledge of books and from the perspective of the child. The acquisition of a large vocabulary is a key element to reading success (Torgesen, 2002). A meaningful reading vocabulary often begins with building a sight word list. Torgesen reported the need for multiple rehearsals to consider a word recognizable and read fluently. A large oral language vocabulary is associated with comprehension. Early vocabulary knowledge emerges from interactions within the child/parent relationship during activities of play, storytelling, and activities of daily living. Torgesen showed that parents living in economically disadvantaged circumstances are less likely to use expanded dialog when interacting with their preschool aged children (Torgesen, 2002).

Print motivation. A child's interest in and enjoyment of books is reflective of print motivation (Torgesen, 2002). Sharing books that match the child's interest stimulates motivation (Torgesen, 2002).

Print awareness. Print awareness is evident in the child's ability to notice print everywhere, how to handle books, and how to follow the words on a page (Hume et al.,

2011; Jordan et al., 2000; & Senechal et al., 2002). Print awareness develops when parents help children discover how to hold a book and turn the pages. Print knowledge emerges as children gain knowledge of the alphabet and develops over time during early childhood (Senechal et al., 2002).

Narrative skills. Children with narrative skills are able to describe things and events and tell stories. This skill develops when parents and children tell stories together. Parents support this development by encouraging pretend play and allowing the children to be the storyteller. The strength of narrative skills comes from deficits in children's word reading skill and ability to understand the meanings of printed materials (Torgesen, 2002).

Letter knowledge. The child needs to know that letters have names and are different from each other (Snow, 2004). This knowledge includes an understanding that specific sounds go with specific letters. Parents help children identify the first letter in the child's name and then find it in books, streets signs and package labels. Correctly naming letters and knowing that letters represent specific sounds in words are skills that relate to developmental literacy (Snow, 2004).

Phonological awareness. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to hear and play with or manipulate the smaller sounds in words (Yop & Yopp, 2009). Phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabet at the time they enter kindergarten are important predictors of eventual reading achievement. Phonological awareness, distinct from phonics, is a spoken language skill that develops through exposure to talk (Yopp & Yopp, 2009). Phonics is a method of teaching the connection between sounds and letters to help children read words. Phonological awareness develops as children sing songs,

play games, share rhymes. It includes matching, synthesizing, analyzing spoken sounds (Yopp & Yopp, 2009). Whitehurst and Lonigan (2002) identified a relationship between vocabulary size and phonological awareness stating that children with large vocabularies understand that words are made up of different sounds Whitehurst et al., 2002).

Snow (2004) described the progression of literacy up through 3rd grade as foundational for later skills in reading. Snow argued that there exists a wide and varied understanding of literacy. From Snow's perspective, literacy development is on a continuum from a holistic social, community-based milieu to a learned skill gleaned from instruction or componential context (Snow, 2004). Differing perspectives and viewpoints in the understanding of literacy development are evident in the componential thinkers who emphasize phonological awareness and phonological analysis skills and the holistic thinkers who emphasize a whole language approach to literacy development which allows for providing formal definitions or telling coherent narratives (Snow, 2004). Not to be overlooked is the devastating effect on literacy development caused by intrinsic or extrinsic risk factors such as chronic childhood poverty (Snow, 2004).

On the other hand, some indicators of the long-term effect of literacy skills may be of less importance than other skills (Snow, 2004). Letter naming is a precursor to literacy development. Snow argued that while some place high value on this skill, it has the potential of interfering with the more valuable skill of phonological, phonemic awareness. Sound-letter correspondence is useful only if the letter is homophonic with the word in which it appears: the letter *bee* in the word *beet* as different from the *B* in the word *boat*. Unlike sound-letter correspondence, vocabulary knowledge is reportedly a stronger, more reliable indicator of later literacy skills.

To summarize, literacy consists of an integration of developing skills in phonological awareness, letter knowledge, using extensive vocabulary to establish reading and narrative adeptness. Vocabulary knowledge is recognized as the hallmark of a developed literacy skill. However, early word reading skills relies exclusively on the knowledge of and ability to manipulate phonemes in words as well as the ability to accurately identify them within words. While some scholars deem phonemic awareness as an all-inclusive learning experience, Snow referred to it as the beginnings of literacy learning (Snow, 2004). Phonemic awareness begins with letter recognition that cannot take hold without the child's print motivation and awareness. Children whose parents read to them engage in word play, rhyming games, self-talk and are descriptive communicators, stimulate literacy skills in home settings well before their children enter kindergarten. These essential developmental skills are often underdeveloped or missing in communication within families under socioeconomic duress, (Rescorla, 1990).

Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Literacy Development

Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) is a term used to describe programs at the nexus of knowledge affiliated with child development and learning (Demircan & Erden, 2014). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, David Elkind and a small body of researchers (Rescorla and colleagues not being among those) condemned elevating academic expectations applied to preschool children (Rescorla et al., 1990). That group of researchers argued that there was not benefit to the child to fast-track developmentally inappropriate practices (DIP) academic curricula to preschool age children. Their point was that doing so would interfere with the natural motivation that inclines children to seek and discover (Rescorla et al., 1990). According to Rescorla et

al., Elkind and those researchers fueled some parent beliefs, particularly those from low SES families, to seek out programs that adhered to teaching theories that follow DIP. Most present-day researchers have debunked the views maintained by followers of David Elkind evidenced by the large cache of data showing the benefits of preparing preschoolers for kindergarten and beyond.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is a child-centered approach to instruction that recognizes the child as the primary source of the curriculum and identifies young children's unique attributes. DAP provides children with choices that permit individual differences and ensures their success regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and education level of parents (Charlesworth, 2012). Charlesworth further described DAP as a guideline to approach a child's educational needs and learning style by gestalt, gender, culture, disabilities, and other family factors. Allowing children to exercise their natural inclination to explore using concrete, hands-on activities stimulates the child's ability to understand the environment around them, according to the vast majority of researchers on this topic.

By contrast, Developmentally Inappropriate Practice (DIP) offered lecture, drill-and-practice, workbooks and worksheet activities approach to meeting the child's educational needs. A cadre of researchers report increased levels of maladaptive behaviors associated with stress emanating from preschool and kindergarten children enrolled in DIP (Charlesworth, 2012). These same children were said to display poor academic performance, increased inappropriate behaviors and are identified as less motivated when compared to children from DAP (2012). Conversational skills, singing

songs, and rhyming are important activities during preschool years are well-researched interventions (Charlesworth et al., 2012).

Charlesworth et al., and the research team of Demircan and Erden (2014) defined developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) from a research project involving 279 teachers and 589 parents of preschool children from a middle class Turkish community respectively. They recognized DAP as a consideration of the age, the child and the cultural and social appropriateness of the programs designed to educate children and are child-centered. Children instructed using DAP were less anxious about test taking, were confident, enjoyed peer acceptance and showed highly developed social skills. Developmentally inappropriate practices (DIP) are those practices that allow for teacher-centered training and involve lectures, drill-and-practice, workbooks, and worksheet activities (Demircan & Erden., 2014). Parent collaboration was not included as part of the program and DIP accepts punishment for unacceptable behaviors. The purpose of their study was to investigate the relationship between DAP and parental involvement beliefs of preschool teachers and the parents of preschool children. They learned that there was a difference in the perception of parental involvement. The parent perspective was that their role was to keep their children safe and ensure they go to school. The perspective of the teachers was that parents volunteered in the classroom. (Demircan & Erden, 2014). They also discovered that teachers felt the greatest barrier to implementing DAP was the low rate of parental involvement.

To conduct their research, Demircan and Erden (2014) administered a composite demographic information questionnaire to parents and a modified demographic questionnaire to teachers. A teachers' beliefs scale (TBS) was a 36-item Likert-type

questionnaire translated and adapted to Turkish language with internal reliability scores of .33 to .78. A newer, restructured scale was found to be more appropriate for the study. The TBS used three categories: DAP beliefs (internal reliability, .85), DIP beliefs (internal reliability, .82) and attitudes about family, culture and inclusion (internal reliability, .81). The Parents Beliefs Scale (PBS) used a modified, translated and peer reviewed version of the TBS that was pilot-tested with 122 parents. The reliability score of the PBS was .65.

Demircan and Erden reversed the scores for the DIP so that the higher scores represented lower DIP beliefs. The highest scores from parents' questionnaires were in response to teachers talking to the whole group and making children do the same things at the same time. Next, was the teachers' use of workbooks and ditto sheets, grapheme and word recognition, coloring accuracy, providing the same curriculum and environment for each group of children in the program, focusing on teaching children isolated skills and using repetition and recitation.

A high level of parental participation existed between both study groups although the teachers believed not involving in a useful way. The lowest mean score from the parents' perspective was their knowledge about how to help their children with their schoolwork while their willingness to learn how to assist their children with schoolwork ranked the highest. The researchers then looked at parental involvement barriers and discovered that the greatest barriers teachers experienced were about communication and the lack of available childcare options for other children in the family so that parents were unable to participate in school activities. The lowest scores were reflections of the teachers' perceptions about informing parents about school policies and procedures.

From the parents' point of view, the highest scale scores involved the unavailability of care for other children in the home and demands placed on them by their employers. The lowest mean score reflected the parents' perceptions that they are capable of helping their children with schoolwork (Demircan & Erden, 2014). Their research showed clear evidence of the link between parental involvement, parental involvement barriers and developmentally appropriate practices.

The findings by Demircan and Erden (2014) suggested that while both parents and teachers are aware of the importance of providing DAP practices for children, neither group valued emergent literacy skills (letter recognition, for example) as highly as other DAP items on the scale. The authors rationalized that this outcome may be the result of the position learning about letters and words holds in the elementary school education curriculum. The DAP guidelines establish scaffolding literacy activities while young children try to read environmental prints and a major mechanism to develop cognitive, reading and writing skills (Demircan & Erden, 2014). Demircan and Erden concluded that parents who were educated in a teacher-centered educational system might expect their children to also receive the same system of education. However, they expressed some limitations to their study. Their study with a Turkish population might have a different outcome with an American population. In addition, while the academic objectives of the study group seemed to mirror those of most American families. The cultural differences might influence different outcomes with an American population. Demircan and Erden found American parents preferred to focus on social development over early achievement in sound-letter correspondence. Economic status did not appear to be a factor in determining DAP and DIP, although the authors reported an apparent link

between parental involvement and barriers as a contributing factor in parental DAP and DIP beliefs. Other research considered the effect of the gender of the caregiver as an influence on preschool literacy development.

Parent gender as a factor in early literacy development. It is a common practice for mothers to guide their children through developmental learning stages. Mothers are recognized as primary nurturers and teachers for their preschool age children. Recent research considered the importance of fathers' participation in developing literacy skills in their preschool age children. Project Dads as Developmental Specialists (DADS, Ortiz & Stile, 2002) is a community-university affiliated training program for fathers and other male caregivers interested in participating in early literacy activities with their young children. Project DADS, emerged from a desire on the part of fathers to create a level of intimacy between them and their children that they did not enjoy with their own fathers as infants and toddlers. Operating in New Mexico and parts of California, its goal was to assist fathers in developing an understanding of their role in their children's education and literacy development. The participants viewed video seminars in early social interaction, school home involvement, reading books, pre-writing and writing skills, environmental print, storytelling and technology (Ortiz & Stile, 2002).

Fathers' participation in their children's literacy development was trending upward according to Ortiz and Stile study in 2002. Reasons for the increase, and therefore the need for training programs targeting male caregivers such as Project DADS, may be the reason for the increased number of women in the workplace and the growing number of single fathers. Stiles and Ortiz studied 47 father/child pairs in Southern New Mexico to discover fathers were engaged in a number of literacy activities. According to

their investigation, fathers reported engaging with their children in environmental print, reading TV ads, newspapers, magazines, dictionaries, maps, telephone directories or technical manuals. A larger study looking at the gender of the parent who participated in literacy development came from the National Child Development Study and presented conflicting data on the importance of gender as a relevant factor in early literacy development.

Flouri and Buchanan (2004) connected father participation to the successful development of literacy skills in small children. This research team studied the effect of fathers' involvement and children's later educational outcomes. They analyzed the longitudinal data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS) for 3,303 of the 7,259 seven-year olds followed by the NCDS. Their focus, as it related to fathers, included father/child outings, father's management of the child, father reads to child, and father's interest in the child's education. Their analysis showed father involvement when the child reached age 7 was related to academic motivation when the child reached age 16 affirming a noteworthy relationship between a father and the academic success of a child. Moreover, an increase in fathers' involvement in in-home literacy activities is a positive development. Efforts to associate the presence of a father and the economic status of the family proved to affect the literacy development of the child, according to Flouri and Buchanan (2004). This finding was in concert with other research that indicated that father absence remained associated with an increased risk of a number of child problems. In essence, low SES is a trigger for stress related reactions secondary only to inadequate father involvement.

An analysis of Flouri and Buchanan's study through hierarchical regression analysis allowed them to make early predictions of educational attainment. They discovered the amount of variance in educational attainment by age 20 as explained by the control variables (gender, parental SES, birth weight, and parental education) was 17%. When the structural variables (structure of parental family, size of the family) were entered in the regression equation the amount of variance in later attainment explained increased to 24%. When the internal variables (general ability, mental health, and academic motivation) were entered into the equation, the amount of variance in educational attainment explained was 52% (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Flouri and Buchanan (2004) also determined that there was no evidence to associate the father's impact on the level of the mother's involvement nor was there an effect of either parent's involvement based on the gender of the child related to later educational outcomes. In addition, children who were not raised within an intact family structure were no less able to be successful academically. This research assigned father and mother interest as one of the major influences on the children's educational performance. Like Houghton, et al., Flouri and colleague found that parental quality of time spent with the child correlated highly with parental interest in the child's education performance. Flouri and Buchanan (2004) described limitations of this study based on the nature of longitudinal studies. They discerned that they might have underestimated the long-term impact on the disadvantaged since most of the lost subjects represented the disadvantaged (Flouri and Buchanan 2004).

After Flouri and Buchanan (2004), Rodriguez et al. (2009) conducted a more comprehensive study to understand child literacy related to how often the child

experienced early literacy activities and the relationship of those experiences within a family dynamic. Rodriguez et al. concentrated on literacy activities, quality of engagement and learning materials. Literacy activities involved shared book reading, storytelling, and learning about letters and numbers. These activities are foundational in expanding receptive and expressive vocabularies. Additionally, children form conceptual knowledge and language based on developing these skills. It was theorized that children might use the development of these skills to build scripts or to generalize event representations of their experiences (Rodriguez et al., 2009).

The participants were recruited from multiple cultural backgrounds within the United States. This longitudinal investigation followed more than 1000 children who met the criteria of low SES backgrounds in Anglo-American, African-American, English-speaking Hispanic and Spanish-speaking Hispanic 14-, 24-, and 36-month old populations. Rodriguez, et al., posited that disadvantaged children begin to show language and cognitive delays by the age of 3 years. Based on their study, there is just cause to explore the beliefs, attitudes and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children develop literacy skills because Rodriguez et al. showed the relationship between the economic status of the family and the growth of young children's vocabulary was impacted by income level. Among the economically disadvantaged participants in the Rodriguez et al., 2009 study, the subjects substantiated that there is a range of rates of vocabulary growth and that children from poor backgrounds typically entered kindergarten with a vocabulary of 5,000 words compared to 20,000 words demonstrated by children from homes of higher financial means (Rodriguez et al., 2009).

By comparison, the quality of the mother's engagement was measured by the extent to which she responded to the child's attempts at verbal, non-verbal, and vocal communication (Rodriguez, et al., 2009). Quality and style of speech the participating mothers used when interacting with their children were predictors of early language and cognitive development (Rodriguez, et al., 2009). Communication becomes richer and more varied with age-appropriate learning materials (Rodriguez et al., 2009). The availability of toys and books in the home allow children to express curiosity, provide opportunities for exploration and have the potential to stimulate their motivation (Rodriguez, et al., 2009). The mother's age, years of education, and employment status were reported to be reliable predictors of literacy experiences and child language and cognitive development whether or not a male parent was present, and regardless of the race/ethnicity of the mother, the gender of the child, and the child's birth order (Rodriguez et al., 2009). The scientists reported that there appeared to be a negative impact on boys, more so than on girls, when mothers worked full time during the children's first year (Rodriguez et al, 2009). In addition, Hispanic and African American mothers differed in their reading practices with their children.

Participants in the Rodriguez et al., (2009) Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project consisted of nearly one third of the 3001 families recruited from a larger study. In all, 1046 English-speaking mothers of 14-, 20-, and 36-months old children completed the home literacy experiences data collection survey. Over one third of the participants were teens when their children were born. Twenty-nine percent of the mothers were married and living with their spouses and 53% of the families were receiving Early Head Start services. Approximately 62% of the children were firstborn

(Rodriguez et al., 2009). The ethnic breakdown of the study participants included 43% Anglo-American, 29% African American, 18% non-English speaking Hispanic, 6% English-speaking Hispanic and 4% from other racial or ethnic groups. Educationally, more than half of the mothers of the 14-month old children had at least a GED or high school diploma while 64% of the 24-month olds and 67% of the 36-month olds mothers met the same criteria. In terms of employment, approximately 50% of the mothers of 14-month old, 54% of the mothers of 24-month old and 59% of the mothers of 36-month old subjects had at least part-time jobs during the study, according to Rodriguez et al., (2009).

Mothers were interviewed at the time they applied for participation in the study to establish a baseline. Home visit data was collected by way of a 45-minute interview that included individual assessment of participating children's language and cognitive abilities as well as a 10-minute semi-structured videotaped session of the mother-child play provided data on literacy activities, quality of engagement and the availability and use of learning materials. Study outcomes were significant for parent participation literacy development. At each age in the study, literacy activities were classified as low, moderate, and high according to the amount of time per week spent reading and telling stories to their children. Mothers were less involved in a bedtime story routine, but were rated as very involved in reading stories, telling stories and singing nursery rhymes to their children at least a few times a week. Mothers were moderately engaged in spontaneous interactions or with verbally responding to their children (Rodriguez, et al., 2009).

Children in the study had access to at least five books at 14- and 24-months and 10 books at 36-months. At 14- and 24-months, 26% and 38% respectively had access to toys that supported complex eye-hand coordination. Nearly all of the children had learning equipment appropriate to their age and more than half had toys for music. Less than half of the 36-month old children had access to materials for play and leisure, as well as access to a record player, tape deck or CD player. Half of the children received scores in the low range for the quality of maternal engagement, with the fewest children falling into the high category for literacy environment. The researchers determined that being the firstborn held a small, positive effect associated with literacy activities at 14- and 36-months and a small, inverse relationship to the quality of engagement at 24 months. There was a weak association between child gender and literacy experiences with boys at a slight disadvantage at 36 months. In addition, mothers who were teens when their children were born lacked a quality of engagement at each of the study ages (Rodriguez et al., 2009). In addition, the presence of a father in the home was positively associated with the quality of maternal engagement at 14- and 24-months and with learning materials at 24- and 36-months. The researchers found a statistical significance in the interaction between mother engagement and learning materials. A closer review of this interaction showed that the effect of learning materials on the children's standardized receptive vocabulary scores was strongest where the quality of maternal engagement was high.

Rodriguez et al. (2009) described several limitations related to their research. First, they relied on the historic accounts of frequency of literacy activities provided by the mother. Second, it was unclear from their multidimensional approach to assessing the

literacy environment that the desired effect of the shared reading activity had the intended effect of predicting language and cognitive development or whether other aspects of the environment were more meaningful. Third, although the subjects of the research were representative of the overall population of low income families, a greater number of mothers who participated were educated, married, employed and/or in school. Fourth, the correlational design of the study limited the ability to determine if the literacy experiences caused the children's outcomes or related to unmeasured variables. Fifth, the method of scoring may have skewed the findings suggesting they may represent lower bounds of prediction. Finally, focusing the study was on mothers possibly obliquely effected children's development since other stakeholders including older siblings, extended family members, childcare providers, and fathers were said to influence language and cognitive development of preschool age children (Rodriguez et al., 2009).

In essence, the study concluded that focusing on all aspects of the literacy environment as early as the first year of life allowed for improved cultivation of literacy development of low income children based on literacy experiences provided by mothers. Members of the children's extended family, including fathers, cousins, older siblings and childcare providers were suggested by the researchers to be imported adjuncts in influencing the language and cognitive development of young children (Rodriguez et al., 2009).

Rodriguez et al concluded that an early literacy-rich environment in a low income setting plac3d children on equal footing with peers who are at an economic advantage. This proposed phenomenological study desires to understand from parents who are economically challenged their beliefs, attitudes and needs as their preschool age children develop literacy skills, knowledge of which might help low income families help their

children enter formal education on equal footing with their age peers from adequate economic backgrounds.

To summarize, Rodriguez et al. conducted a multiethnic study to determine the impact of child literacy experiences with their mothers. Their longitudinal investigation of more than 1,000 preschool age children led them to conclude that frequency, quality, and style of the mother's interactions during the first three years of life were positively indicated for low income preschoolers to enter kindergarten with literacy skills on par with their economically secure age peers. On the other hand, preschool age children who experienced consistently low literacy activities exposure were at risk for subsequent learning difficulties (Rodriguez et al, 2009). The researchers identified a number of limitations to their study. They believed that parent reporting was unreliable. They questioned the effect of the literacy environment on their reported outcomes. They attributed the large number of educated, married and employed participants to the flawed study design and methodology. Finally, the researchers did not account for the influence of siblings, fathers, and other relatives, friends, and community on the children's literacy experiences. Other, more recent research reported similar findings as noted in research by Nichols.

Less comprehensive yet yielding corresponding outcomes as Rodriguez et al. in 2009, was a transcontinental research project in 2014 by Nichols that involved the United States and Australia. Nichols (2014) discovered similarities as well as some differences between genders in parental awareness and use of sources and resources to support literacy development in preschool age children. Nichols conducted extensive, semi-structured interviews with 33 parents in a medium-sized city in the United States, an

Australian rural town, and a large Australian metropolitan suburb to determine parental awareness of and access to resources they believed to be relevant to their children's early learning and development. The author drew upon a larger study (of which the author's research was a part) to discover that fathers in the larger study showed a significantly low level of awareness and often reported feelings of disenfranchisement from the communication that largely targeted mothers. This qualitative investigation considered the availability, location, nature and uptake of early learning resources targeted at parents by gender. In this study, there were 25 mothers and eight fathers in the three locations. The low number of male participants was a reflection of the difficulty the researcher experienced in recruiting fathers. The researcher recruited participants through social networking and through a sporting association (Nichols, 2014). One-on-one interviews allowed the male participants to express their experiences interacting with their children.

Nichols conducted 20- to 75- minute interviews in locations selected by the participants. During the interviews, the participants identified the resources and activities they used to engage their children. Some likely resources included parenting books, magazines, and pamphlets, educational toys, and media products. After the interviews, the researchers ranked the levels of awareness according to high, moderate or low. Mothers' responses were rated separately from fathers. There was nearly universal consensus between genders about what parents felt were important including parenting books, parenting magazines, pamphlets and websites. Both parents mentioned educational toys, non-educational toys, books, CDs, DVDs, computer games, sport activities and trips (Nichols, 2014). Mothers presented a greater number of ideas about

where and how resources were accessed measured against fathers' ideas. In addition, mothers were far ahead of fathers in identifying sources such as family members, and general health service as sources of developmental information while fathers listed their child's school or preschool (Nichols, 2014).

Nichols proclaimed that the lack of father's participation in literacy development triggered the need for more intensive research in father and mother awareness in accessibility of resources to support literacy development. Historically, not much had been written about the effect of father participation in the preschool child's development. Limitations of this study raised many questions affecting outcomes besides the small sample size (25 mothers, 8 fathers) on two continents. A study sample of diverse ethnicity and income levels might have informed a wider audience. In addition, it might have been useful for Nichols to discuss possible changes in the outcomes based on economic status of participating families, and the relevancy of cultural differences between rural families, metropolitan participants and suburban families locally and abroad. A somewhat different approach to father participation in early literacy development was administered by Houghton, O'Dwyer, Fowweather, Watson, Alfor and Knowles in 2014 to encourage fathers to become more interactive with their preschool age children.

Houghton et al. (2014) explored the feasibility and impact of a 9-hour activity play intervention to encourage United Kingdom fathers to engage with their preschool children. They described aspects of positive parenting as nurturing behaviors to support emotional security, structure to set boundaries and guide behaviors, recognition to show that child respect and empowerment offering a sense of personal control with the ability

to affect the behavior of others. Houghton et al. (2014) indicated that these character traits showed parents to be endowed with vigorous and steady yet equitable parenting skills that ultimately led to assertive, well-adjusted and socially responsible, self-regulated and cooperative children (Houghton et al., 2014). Physical activities appeared to be more the purview of fathers compared to mothers who were inclined to indulge in academic pursuits.

The idea behind engaging fathers in physical activities with their children as a way of improving parenting self-efficacy was that fathers are more inclined to indulge in leisure activities with their children than mothers who lean towards academic activities as entertainment. According to the researchers, parental attitudes about physical activities during preschool years influence how likely their children are to engage in physical activities. The investigators set out to determine how play activities influenced fathers; quantity and quality of time spent with their children, during the week and during weekends, the emotion and affection, play and enjoyment, empathy and understanding, control and learning and knowledge gained or experienced during play.

Participants were 94 fathers of 3-5 year olds living in a high poverty northwestern Great Britain city (Houghton et al., 2014). Their mixed method research design included a Likert-like questionnaire seeking data on fathers' attitude towards their children's physically active play, fathers' time spent with their children and parenting self-efficacy before and after treatments allowing them to collect data on the impact of the intervention of father engagement. A qualitative focus group approach allowed Houghton et al. to understand the impact of the intervention on father engagement as well as the feasibility of the intervention from the perspective of the fathers and the staff of the research site.

Houghton's team of researchers discovered that there was no impact on the amount of time fathers spent with their children and there was a significant impact on the fathers' awareness of their function in their children's play as well as the way they think about parental control from pre- to post-intervention. Additionally, Houghton et al. learned that mothers and fathers had different views on whether to fast track their young children in academic areas (Houghton, et al., 2014).

There were some limitations to this study. While the investigators recruited participants living in extreme poverty, there was no clear understanding of what that meant in terms of the socioeconomic status of the participants or that there might have been a difference in outcomes based on SES. The small sample and the potential for cultural differences that make it unreasonable to generalize the outcomes to an American population may limit the reliability of the findings. In addition, the effect of the intervention was based on self-reported amount of time spent with their children on weekends both before the intervention and after fathers were trained. Houghton et al. acknowledged that the fathers who were most in need of the intervention training were the ones most difficult to reach or to commit to participating in the study and that those who did participate were likely fathers who already engaged with their children giving both high quality and quantity of interactions. Participating fathers tended to spend more quality time during weekends and that fathers' views regarding their roles as key elements in their children's literacy development did not deviate from the traditional tendency to be self-sufficient and independent rather than accept help and parenting services (Houghton et al., 2014).

Low-Income Mothers' Perspective on Educational Relevance

Children's social development was reported to be influenced by DAP and DIP in relation to income status. Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller and Eggers-Pierola (2014) found that low-income, single mothers considered it developmentally appropriate to concentrate early learning efforts on socialization goals for their preschool aged children and their role in achieving those goals. The subjects of their research expected teacher-centered instruction directed towards literacy and number skills. There was no association between play and learning according to the mothers involved in this research. The subjects' ideas about preschool centered around cultural expectations, family and community involvement, and ascribing teaching responsibilities to parents or teachers. To discover these findings, Holloway, et al. (2014) paid \$25 each to 14 single mothers from a low-income east coast metropolis. Thirteen of the 14 participants worked or attended school during data the collection period. The sample was ethnically diverse with four Latina, 6 African Americans and four Anglo American separated, divorced or never married. One participant lived with her spouse. The mothers had from 11 to 14 years of education. They had at least one child between the ages of two and four.

Holloway et al. (2014) conducted semi-structured interviews over a 3-year period at 9-month intervals. The results of their inquiry revealed that working-class mothers with high school education and low income placed an emphasis on didactic school preparation, contrary to the findings and recommendations of most early childhood educators. One mother wanted her son to do well in preschool and grade school, but had no idea of what he should know at any particular stage in his development. Her concerns make this proposed phenomenological study relevant and timely. It also suggests that

there may be other parents with this concern without the platform or ability to give voice to their thoughts. A valuable outcome to this proposed study may be to understand if parents support a didactic instruction model due to their own underdeveloped knowledge about preschool age learning dynamics. The participants in the Holloway et al. study also believed schools are tasked with readying children for school and advising parents on acquiring the necessary support to ensure academic success.

Holloway et al. (2014) showed that parent participants did not consider play educational but rather as a tactic for social developmental skills. A recurring theme throughout the study was the role of preschool as a conduit to learning respect for adults and developing community consciousness. In general, mothers in the study viewed educating their children as a serious endeavor necessary to achieve career success rather than personal satisfaction and creativity (Holloway et al., 2014). By contrast, the researchers described middle class parents as seeing both the home and school as places where children can freely and openly express the joy of learning.

Holloway et al. explored two styles used by parents to facilitate children's learning. They describe a traditional community approach held by uneducated or under educated parents in which learning is implied based on observing adults engaging in their daily routines. The model assigned school-related learning to the teacher (Holloway et al., 2014). More educated, affluent parenting allowed verbal interchanges to be fun and enjoyable learning experience to impel children's desires for learning. Parent and family factors that stimulated enthusiasm for learning were also important elements that were the same as those that came from parental involvement in early literacy development. Claims of parental involvement were reported to be contrary to their actual participation,

according to a growing number of researchers. Those claims may have inspired Fantuzzo (2000) to investigate in-home activities for at risk children.

In-Home Literacy Development

Home-based parental involvement in early literacy development involves parental behaviors that actively promote an in-home learning environment (NSCDC, 2009).

Learning is enhanced when parents set aside space in the home for learning materials, actively initiate and engage in in-home learning activities, and create community-based learning experiences (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). The point of this section is to highlight some in-home instruction for at-risk children services for underprivileged families that are available in communities where they live. Whether or not under privileged families are aware of the diversity of services at their disposal is an unstated concern this proposed study hopes to address. Asking parents to describe their needs about services they do not know exist may seem counter intuitive since it is impossible for anyone to share or express thoughts and opinions about an entity unfamiliar to them. This proposed research intends to understand what, in addition to these in-home early intervention services, would inspire low SES parents to focus on literacy development in their children.

Head Start Early Literacy Program. Title I and Head Start are compensatory education programs with in-home components designed to help poor families bridge the gap that exists in literacy development between the disadvantaged child and others. Both programs lack sufficient funding to provide services to all eligible children. The Head Start program was originally intended to support child learning and ultimately evolved into a year-round program focused on family health and nutrition, parent and community involvement and education with in-home education and visits (Snow, 2002). At times

Head Start's popularity diminished due to the lack of success attributed to the practice of hiring Head Start parents to implement education programs rather than experienced, certified professionals removing the likelihood of an enriched, professional program lead by experienced, certificated professionals (Snow, 2002). Head Start services improved in 2003 under the Bush administration. Improvements in in-home training for underprivileged parents included better health, nutrition and literacy instruction.

Early Head Start emerged from Head Start in 1995 as a program for underserved families of infants and toddlers up to age 3. The program initially provided an array of essential in-home services to low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers, at Head Start centers, or the two settings in combination (Love, 2002). Center-based services provide child-care and education, parent education and at least two home visits per year for each qualifying family. Home-based services provide weekly support through home visits designed to teach parents ways to improve children's pre-academic skills and at least two group socializations per month. The mixed approach offers a mixture of center- and home-based services to families. Parents who receive home visits receive instruction in ways to improve children's pre-academic skills and overall school readiness (Manz, 2012).

Head Start came into existence to fill a need created by an economic disadvantage that placed some children at social and academic risk by strengthening family involvement during a child's formative years (Manz, 2012). Stressful living circumstances compound the parent's ability to any but the most basic needs of the children, (Manz, 2012). In an exploratory study to evaluate the effectiveness of three Head Start programs to improve parental involvement: home-based, early childhood

center-based and school-oriented, Manz (2012) reported that there was no correlation between frequency of visits to the home and families' report of their involvement with their child at home or preschool or their communication with classroom teachers.

However, the home-based program showed merit in improving parent outcomes while the center-based program bore no significant findings in relation to parent or child outcomes.

Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPOY) enables mothers to perform as teachers for their preschool aged children and in a like manner Project EASE focused on parents of kindergarten-age children. In recent years, both programs have expanded to overlap one another to train parents in ways to teach parents to engage in increasingly longer, grammatically correct conversations, (Snow, 2002).

Most researchers agree that birth to 5 years are critical for children to develop foundational capabilities in language and reading. Early reading experiences with their parents are said to prepare children for the later literacy instruction and is considered the most important determinant of language, oral narrative skills and emergent literacy (Clark, 2002). Early reading experiences more so than other family background variables such as social class, family size and level of parental education set the foundation for later academic and career success (Clark, 2002). Likewise, three critical elements to ensure success in literacy development in later years are (a) skillful classroom instruction focused on reading comprehension, (b) accurately identifying children who fall behind in early reading growth, (c) and intensive, explicit reading instruction for at-risk children (Torgesen, 2002).

While necessary and appropriate, Clark's approach failed to include the preparation for reading readiness that comes from parent involvement in literacy

development skills before children enter kindergarten. This may mean that some thinkers and researchers placed a high value on the school setting and the primary enforcers of literacy development at the expense of possible challenges faced by parents who are at an economic disadvantage and had not participated in preschool literacy with their children. Children from low-income backgrounds benefit greatly from more teaching/learning opportunities per day beyond what is experienced in a classroom (Torgensen, 2002). Snow (2004) concurred that economically disadvantaged, at-risk preschool children acquire literacy skills when home, preschool, and primary grade environments work together (Snow, 2004). Consider, for example, the Jordan, Snow and Porche (2000) investigation into Project EASE (Early Access to Success in Education) to prove their theory that early intervention sets children up for later reading success.

Project EASE literacy program. Project EASE offered the opportunity to increase the frequency and quality of language interactions by guiding parents in ways to build up their children's vocabulary, letter recognition, letter sound awareness, and listening and reading narrative understanding (Jordan, et al., 2000). The program focused on providing parents with an understanding of how to be involved in their children's early literacy development. The researchers selected 248 kindergarten students and their families from 4 schools in suburban Minnesota school district serving a population of more than 4,200 students from families with a median income of \$41,731. Seventy-one percent of the participants from eight classrooms received the intervention and 29% of the participants in three classrooms made up the control group. The school district allocated \$5,783 per student per year. Minority population in the district was estimated to

be less than 5% and the population of English Language Learners (ELL) was 1%. All of the students who were designated as ELL participants identified as Hmong.

The study schools were chosen because of their high poverty compared to the other schools in that district. At the time of the Jordan, et al study, the poverty rate for the schools involved was 18- to 21% compared to the district average of 15%. Prior to the intervention, parents were trained in five, 30-day sessions of parent coaching led by a trained parent educator. Training included a take-home guide, immediate opportunities to participate in structured parent-child activities as practice sessions, and a set of scripted activities incorporating the principles that were the focus for that month (Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000)

Home literacy practices were determined using parent survey questionnaires. Prior to, and after receiving interventions, participating children were administered standardized tests to measure receptive vocabulary and comprehensive language skills. Comprehensive language skills measured story comprehension, sequencing in story production, letter recognition for upper- and lowercase letters, sound awareness for the beginning and ending of words, concepts of print, environmental print in and out of context and forming words by invented spelling. This research controlled for home literacy environment and home literacy activities. Parental participation and attendance were recorded as well (Jordan et al., 2000).

Outcomes from the Jordan et al. study was derived from repeated measures analysis of variation (ANOVA) tests for the literacy tests individually and then for the three composites (language, sound and print), along with the influence of the home support variables, home literacy environment and home literacy activities that were

examined. Regression analysis was used to examine the extent to which attendance and scripted, at-home book activities were related to outcomes for the experimental group. Tukey's multiple comparison test was used to determine that no classroom assignment to any of the six teachers had undue influence on the residual gain scores for the three composites. The impact of Project EASE on Language scores due to age or gender was determined, using simple regression, to be non-existent (Jordan et al., 2000). More than 60% of the families who participated in Project EASE attended all five sessions. Jordan et al. found a weak but statistically significant relationship for language, sound and print using a pretest. Outcomes for home literacy activities were significant for sound and print with less of a difference displayed for language evidenced by the posttest results (Jordan, et al., 2000). Jordan et al summarized that large gains in language skills in the Project EASE intervention was directly associated with the amount of parent participation (Jordan et al., 2000). The researchers satisfied their aim to demonstrate a strong relationship between a well-constructed home literacy program and the sample population showed significant overall improvements in three domains. However, the outcomes may not appeal to a diverse study population.

The most readily identified limitation to the study was the homogeneity of the sample. The absence of a diverse sample calls into question the feasibility of generalizing the study for low-income families as well as families whose first language are not English. Additionally, useful information might have been acquired had Jordan et al. (2000) included data from actual observations of the interactions between parent and child since the self-reported Literacy Activities provided by the parents could very easily have been inflated. The researchers noted that their data was a reflection of an immediate

outcome suggesting that a longitudinal study would be more revealing. Jordan et al. pointed out that there was no discussion on the topic of relative costs and benefits assigned to the In-Home Language Activities. In addition, the participants in the study attended what the researchers described as high-quality schools with experienced, certificated teachers. By contrast, at-risk, low-income families often live in low-income neighborhoods where schools might not be able to meet the specific needs of poor families beyond basic classroom instruction.

Barriers to Participation

Parental involvement in their children's education attracted Hornby and Lafaele (2011) to investigate the systems that act as barriers to the development of effective parental involvement. They categorized those barriers into five distinct levels of interaction with children: (a) individual parent, (b) family factors, (c) child factors, (d) parent-teacher factors and (e) societal factors. Barriers stemming from individual parent and family factors emerge out of the parent's beliefs about parental involvement, perceptions of invitations for their involvement, the parents' perceptions as to whether they have the knowledge or skills to participate, and class, ethnicity and gender issues. Evidence showed that high achieving, low income African American children, for example, were academically successful because parents believed that they should actively participate in their children's education in ways that supported home learning and bidirectional interactions with schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Parents with the ability to help their children were more likely to interact with schools expecting that contact would inspire positive outcomes for their children. Parents' beliefs that their children's intelligence was entrenched and programmed from

birth to achieve a certain level of academic success believed that their involvement in their children's achievement would have no affect saw no need to become involved in their children's education (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). They claimed that the parents' perceived a lack of teacher interest to involve parents inhibited parental involvement. In a like manner, parents with less than a high school education were said to feel less competent to help with homework and other school assignments than parents who were better educated. Finally, Hornby and LaFaele (2011) stipulated that class, ethnicity, and gender suggest particular sensitivities around parental participation. Hornby and Lafaele indicated that when taken into account, these potential barriers are considered without regard for diversity.

Hornby and Lafaele argued that:

Minorities are less involved, less represented and less informed, and are less likely to have access to resources, as well as more likely to have problems associated with language, transport, communication and child care. They have substantially different relationships with teachers, who most often share white middle-class cultural capital. In comparison, white middle-class parents face no such obstacles in becoming involved at school. They have the resources and power to enable them to continue to seek advantages for their own children, for example, by engaging home help to free up time for greater involvement at school. (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011, p. 41)

Child factors offer some barriers to parental involvement. Hornby and colleague reported that as children age, parental participation decreases. Although it is considered beneficial to maintain parental participation in the education of secondary education, the misperception by some, including parents and teachers, is that older children desire independence (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Alternatively, when children display learning disabilities, parents become more actively involved in school activities. This may be so because parent approval is required to initiate services to support learning for struggling

students. On the other hand, children who excel garner a sense of pride and enjoyment and the family is more willing to participate. Only when parents have a sense of their children's giftedness that the teachers do not share might, parents lose confidence in the school and become less inclined to participate (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Likewise, barriers to participation might also arise when children are known behavior challenges. Hornby and Lafaele reported that the more disruptive the behavior, the less likely the parent will be involved with the school, wishing to avoid inevitable negative reports from school and teachers.

Parent-teacher barriers might be fueled by differences in goals, attitudes and language used, according to Hornby and Lafaele (2011). In other words, the school, guided by governmental mandates, might focus on parent involvement as a reflection of accountability while the parents may be more focused on children's academic performance or improvement which may cause conflicts between the families and schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parent and teacher attitudes are at the core of the barrier constructs. The looming question remains as to whether or not parents lead in educating their children while schools supplement or if teachers are at the helm while parents support the schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Language usage is said to, more often than not, generate confusion and contradictions about parental involvement that create barriers. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) argue that terms like partnership, sharing, mutuality, collaboration, reciprocity, participation, and partnership are not as benign as they appear on the surface. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) remarked that 'partnership,' for example, which suggests a collaborative relationship between home and school, masked a more adversarial relationship (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Societal factors contribute to barriers to parental involvement in education, according to the Hornby research team. Everyday life factors, historical influences, politics, and personal and local economics might be unacknowledged barriers to parent participation in preschool literacy development. Legislation aimed at school outreach and families showing discomfort with and/or lack of knowledge of the education system are hindrances to affecting suitable changes to their efforts to find solutions that target the specific needs of low income families. Added to that, there exists a preponderance of disparate family structures, religious practices and social pressures for individuality, parents showed higher levels of stress, less money, and less time impeding opportunities for participation in literacy activities with their children. Economic factors have an impact regardless of the program and the effectiveness of the program. Government-funded programs affected by budgetary cuts typically impact the disadvantaged first and hardest, leaving those who rely on them without social programs that benefitted school-parent relationships (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Adjacent to barriers to parental participation in early literacy development was the influence of cultural capital and the disadvantage it places children from low-income backgrounds.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital refers to the influence parental education, social status, and ethnicity projects onto the lives of their children, particularly in Western countries (Becker, 2011). The impact of social/cultural capital as a potential barrier to parent participation in early childhood literacy development is appreciated through Becker's research on social capital. Becker (2014) analyzed data collected from 627 German and 610 Turkish (in part one) and then 579 German and 559 Turkish (in part two), randomly

selected families with 3- to 4-year old children in 30 cities and communities in a southwestern German region. This approach to research allowed Becker to investigate the frequency of familial activities (as the dependent variable), social background, ethnic background, and parental cultural capital to determine the role of parents' cultural capital as a mediating factor between families' social and ethnic background and the frequency of stimulating familial activities in early childhood. This quantitative study controlled for the number of children and their ages in months, their gender, number of parents, the mother's employment.

Becker's study measuring how often parents engaged in family activities was rated on a 7-point Likert-like scale that covered the full range of literacy activities, the mother's educational background, parents' and grandparents' birth places were also rated. In addition, the parent's cultural capital measurement considered activities such as reading books and newspapers, logging on to the Internet, volunteering, and artistic pursuits (Becker, 2014).

The empirical data from Becker's research was significant for social and ethnic differences related to the frequency of stimulating family activities occurring in early childhood. Higher educated, native parents were more likely to read to their children over lower educated, non-native parents (Becker, 2014). In conclusion, Becker found that parents with higher levels of cultural capital behaviors stimulated familial compared to parents with lower levels of cultural capital. Additionally, Becker answered the question of differences between natives and non-natives by recognizing influence of cultural capital within each group (Becker, 2014).

Cultural capital in in-home literacy development. Becker expanded on the relevance of cultural capital emphasizing the importance of parents' ability to participate in literacy activities at home. Parenting behaviors had the greatest impact on a child's literacy development and the parent's cultural capital was an important influence on the frequency and quality of stimulating home activities (Becker, 2014). Becker's viewpoint emphasized attaining cultural capital to stimulate literacy early. Cultural capital is that quality of knowledge of and expertise in using the dominant culture's codes and practices (Becker, 2014). Possessing cultural capital was required for successfully navigating the educational system. Children entering the education system needed to have acquired basic knowledge of the dominant culture to improve cultural capital. Becker surmised that the child's cultural capital drew from the parents own capacity, power or ability with cultural capital and social beginnings (Becker, 2014). An association between ethnic origin and domestic activities was embedded within cultural capital which suggested differences in parenting behaviors and ethnic groups (Becker, 2014).

Becker measured cultural capital according to the number of times parents read books, read newspapers, used the Internet/reading or writing emails, did voluntary work in an organization, engaged in artistic activities to discover that cultural capital had a significant positive influence on the frequency of familial activities. Becker determined that parents with more cultural capital conducted stimulating, family activities frequently compared to parents with lower levels of cultural capital (Becker, 2014) It appeared to Becker that cultural capital was an equalizer between the mother's educational level and the frequency of family activities (Becker, 2014). Becker recommended intervening at an

early age to off-set the debilitating penalty on academic success experienced by economically disadvantaged and poverty-stricken children (Becker, 2014).

One of the most significant current discussions in in-home literacy came from the research accomplished by Tabbada-Rungduin et al. (2014). Their research suggested further inquiry in the area of low SES parental involvement in early literacy development. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) identified child factors, parent-teacher factors, and societal factors as barriers that imposed challenges on low SES parents as they prepared their preschool age children for formal literacy education.

To understand the magnitude of this problem faced by economically disadvantaged families and the justification for Hornby and Lafaele's research, it is necessary to understand the nature of poverty in the family. However, poverty alone is not the only consideration when discussing developing literacy skills. Conditions of poverty are generated from the confluence of the education of primary caregivers and the communication style used by the caregivers when interacting with their children. Research on the topic has linked nutrition to academic performance in a number of studies. The availability of age-appropriate reading material in the home, stress, trauma as well as other environmental factors, contribute to the preschool-age child's ability to develop the necessary literacy skills researchers have discovered promote academic success. Poverty and components of it, such as stress-related economic struggles, maternal depression, and the absence of supportive relationships represent several characteristics that may inhibit families in their efforts to participate in developing childhood literacy. These are all considerations in cultural capital.

To summarize, researchers found that barriers to parental participation in their children's preschool literacy development was influenced by cultural capital obtained by the parents. Parents were aware of their responsibilities to provide literacy activities at home in accordance with their own beliefs and how that would positively influence their children's education (Tabbada-Rungduin et al., 2014). Likewise, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) cited the benefits of parent and family involvement, the children's own gifts and talents and historical and demographic factors as potential barriers to parental participation. Finally, Becker defined cultural capital as central to the families social and ethnic background and the frequency of engaging in literacy activities during preschool years. Another aspect of equal significance to social and cultural capital in stimulating literacy development in the very young was the use of technology at an early age, according to contemporary researchers.

Technology Influences on Literacy Skills

Some researchers tout the advantages of early acquisition of computer skills as an essential component of early literacy development. Ortiz and Stiles (2002) reported literacy activities with fathers and their children included reading interactive children's stories on the Internet. The 2011 United States Census Bureau reported 75.6% of households had computers, an increase from 61.8% in 2003. That same census report revealed 71.7% of households reported accessing the Internet, an increase from 54.7% in 2003. In 2011, 76.02% of non-Hispanic White households, 82.7% Asian households, 58.3% Hispanic household and 56.9% African American households reported accessing the Internet. The 2011 U.S. Census also reported that children 3 years and older (N=293,414) reportedly had computer access. Eighty-point one percent (N=235,066)

lived in a home with at least one computer, while 69.7% accessed the Internet from some location. Households with incomes less than \$25,000 or 56.7% reported at least one computer in the home while 49.8% reported access to the Internet from some location. Li and Atkins concurred with these findings.

Li and Atkins (2004) researched the association between early computer experience and cognitive and psychomotor development among young children compared to electronic or video games. Their participants included 122 preschool children enrolled in a rural county Head Start program from 38 to 61 months of age. They suggested that preschool years afforded an opportunity to gain greater access to technology not otherwise available due to their socioeconomic status (Li & Atkins, 2004). Fifty-six percent of the participants had access to computer technology either at home or elsewhere and 24% were able to choose sites where technology could be accessed. For this study 25% of participants reported daily use, 43% reported weekly use, and one third reporting monthly or less use. Girls were more likely than boys to access computers outside home and boys tended to use computers more frequently than girls did.

Children who had access to a computer distinguished themselves in school readiness activities, which led Li and Atkins to report a clear relationship between early literacy development and access to relevant forms of technology (LI & Atkins, 2004). Media platforms that helped children learn mathematics, reading or writing such as television programs, tape, DVD or the computer were generally considered relevant while platforms that allowed for listening to music, or playing games were ranked low in relevance according to a 2011 report to the CPB-PBS Ready to Learn initiative. However, Haugland (in Li & Atkins, 2004) suggested that computers can reduce

children's creativity with DIP software, and Lehere (in Li & Atkins, 2004) suggested that cognitive improvement resulting from computer use in classrooms was directly related to the type of software employed (Li and Atkins, 2004). One preschool curriculum, Ready, Set, Leap! focused on early reading skills including phonemic awareness, letter knowledge and letter-sound correspondence using multisensory technology that incorporates touch sight and sound. The U.S. Department of Education rated its effectiveness and found that it had no discernable effects on oral language, print knowledge, phonological process, early reading/writing skills and math (WWC Intervention Report, 2008).

Li and Atkins reported a major potential limitation of their study as not having sufficient details on the software available on each computer. Additionally, the amount of parental guidance was not clearly associated with successful literacy skills demonstrated by children who had access to and used computers. However, Li and Atkins (2004) concluded that computer access among poor, rural families may not prove to be beneficial for some family's due to the lack of necessary infrastructure and that computer access more so than other electronic/video games, can support literacy development given the availability of computers in the classroom (Li & Atkins, 2004). The multifaceted literacy skills best suited for enhancement using computers were described by the National Research Council and were significantly undermined by economically disadvantaged families.

Child motivation. There is scant mention of child motivation to read throughout the literature even though many researchers recognize motivation to be a major factor in reading success. NSCDC (2004) related motivation to learn to a consortium of

developmental skills reflective of a high quality, stable relationship with adults in the child's immediate environment. Baker and Scher (2002) determined that this lapse occurred possibly since appropriate, reliable measurement instruments for motivation had not yet been developed. Previously, researchers focused on the child's interests in books as reported by their parents (Baker & Scher, 2002). Past measurements of child motivation were specific to attitudes associated with pre-reading feelings when read to at school, feelings when looking at pictures when not at school, feelings when visiting a library and feelings when reading with others (Baker et al., 2002). Baker and Scher (2002) research attributed three characteristics to motivation as a) the importance of reading, b) the usefulness of reading, and c) the competency beliefs and expectations related to motivation to read (Baker & Scher, 2002).

Baker and Scher's studied children's motivation to read to understand if motivation was influenced by gender or sociocultural background. Their measurement scale distinguished between children's enjoyment of reading, the value they placed on reading, and their perceived competency in reading. The research investigated if motivation for reading was connected to home experiences with print and the beliefs their parents held. Like almost every other researcher on this topic, Baker and Scher (2002) acknowledged the importance of parents in nurturing childhood literacy motivation. Baker and Scher (2002) recruited 33 children from six different public schools in a major urban east coast city including low income African American and European American subjects. An additional 32 children were recruited from three area private schools designated as two sectarian and one nonsectarian school for their middle-income representation. For this study, middle income was determined based on the neighborhood

in which they lived and the ability to pay full fee for school lunch. The private school recruits were considered middle income based on the ability to pay tuition without the benefit of federal aid, (Baker & Scher, 2002). Consequently, they found that motivation for reading during a home reading activity was based on a complex system of available recurrent activities related to literacy. Baker and Scher (2002) recruited a female African American research assistant to assess the low-income African American children and a female European American to assess all other participants in the study speculating that homogeneity in conducting assessments improved reliable outcomes (Baker & Scher, 2002).

Inter-rater reliability was determined by having one additional researcher code a stratified random sample of the responses to questions related to reason for reading. Agreement was 100%. Inter-rater reliability for questions related to children's interest in reading was 100% except in the area of pretends which was at 80% (Baker & Scher, 2002). Necessity ranked highest in both low-income and middle-income parent responses as to why reading was important and how the ability to read had future implications for their children's successes. In this regard, low income European American mothers placed a higher value than low income African American mothers and middle-income African American mothers placed a slightly higher value than middle income European American mothers. Social reasons ranked lowest with low-income European mothers and middle-income European mothers placing a higher value on it than low-income and middle-income African American mothers. The other reasons for reading listed in descending order of importance included learning, education, skills, self-esteem, pleasure, empowerment and employment (Baker & Scher, 2002). To summarize, outcomes from

this research showed that all children in the study, regardless of income level, were highly motivated to read and ranked high in their views of and beliefs about their reading success. Prior to this study, investigators were able to only rely on the theoretical dimensions of reading motivation. With the results of this study pointing strongly towards positive empirical data, further research, with a larger sample size might better inform the community of researchers on this topic. The small sample size guided Baker and Scher to use a mixed factorial validity measurement of the subscales that they acknowledged was a limitation of their study (Baker & Scher, 2002).

Hume, Lonigan and McQueen (2015) sampled nearly 1,000 preschool age children to investigate motivation to develop literacy skills. Acknowledging, as did the Baker and Scher, (2002) study, the complex nature of measuring motivation for reading, Hume and colleagues investigated the relationship between parent literacy practices and child motivation as a bidirectional experience. They created the Child Activities Preference Checklist (CAPC) to measure parent literacy practices compared to child interest among racially and socioeconomically eclectic groups of preschool children (Hume et al., 2015). The 909 participants were recruited from 15 pre-schools and Head Start centers in northern Florida. The children in the study were between the ages of 24 and 84 months. Fifty-two percent of the participants were European American, 42% were African American. Ethnicity for 6% of the participants was unidentified. The annual income of the participants ranged from \$1,000 to \$650,000 with a median income of \$45,000. Descriptive statistics were used to determine child activities preference, literacy activities, physical activities and toys language and reading, print interest and parent literacy practices. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the influence

of initial parent practices on later child interest and the influence of initial child interest on later parent practices while controlling for children's age (Hume et al., 2015).

Hume et al. revealed that exposure to literacy was important to the growth of literacy interests in the absence of the influences of parent-teaching practices and that children's reading interest effects their parents' teaching practices. Results of the Language and Reading Survey (LRS) and CAPC overlapped suggesting only a moderate relationship in literacy interest, but it also showed different measures for the same construct yielded different results. They found that reading and print interest did not correlate with each other concurrently or across time (Hume et al., 2015). However, significant connections were discovered between children's literacy interest and parent literacy-promoting practices concurrently and over time. According to the concurrent and longitudinal data collected, parent exposure was important in the development of child literacy interest but parent-teaching practices seemed inconsequential (Hume et al., 2015). Initial parent exposure, but not teaching, was related to children's later literacy interest (Hume et al., 2015). When children's high interest in literacy activities was considered, Hume et al. discovered parents engaged children in literacy activities when they were very young. Alternatively, children who demonstrated low literacy interest were not impacted by the parent's high literacy prompting practices. The research outcomes did not make a connection between initial child interest and the effect on later parent practices. There was only a slight relationship between initial parent reports of literacy activities their children engaged in and later parent teaching practices, suggesting parents might spend more time engaging in literacy teaching practices if their children engaged in more literacy activities. For Hume et al., this was evidence of a bidirectional relationship

between parent practices and children's interest (Hume et al., 2015). On the other hand, research of this design has an inherent limitation since it relies on self-reporting by the subjects. When subjects reported promoting literacy, it was suggested by Hume et al. that the subjects' recollections might have been embellished or over exaggerated thereby, making over-reporting children's interest in literacy or their own literacy-promoting practices likely (Hume et al., 2015). Additionally, not all participants met the definition of living in poverty as defined by the United States 2014 Census.

Poverty. The United States 2014 definition of poverty included families living with incomes below the poverty threshold. The number of family members who live together determines the poverty threshold. Jiang, Ekono, and Skinner (2015) reported that a family of four with two children and an annual income of \$23,624, a family of three with one child and an annual income of 18,751, and a family of two with one child and an annual income of \$16,057 meet the federal poverty threshold. Jiang, et al. (2015) also reported that 47% of children 3 years old and younger live in low-income families and 25% live in poor families.

According to Jiang et al. (2015), 88% of infants and toddlers with parents who have less than a high school diploma lives with low-income families. Seventy-two percent of infants and toddlers with parents who had only a high school diploma lived in low-income families, and 34% of infants and toddlers with at least one parent with some college or additional education lived in low-income families. Higher education often leads to reliable employment, yet many employed parents are also among the low-income and poor families (Jiang et al., 2015). Thirty-two percent of infants and toddlers with at least one parent who works full time throughout the year live in *low-income* families

while 9% of infants and toddlers with at least one parent who works full time throughout the year live in poor families. This same report indicated that 74% of infants and toddlers with no parent who works full time, but at least one parent who works part time or part year, live in low income families. Forty-nine percent of infants and toddlers with no parent who works full time, but at least one parent who works part time of part year live in poor families.

In the category of infants and toddlers with no employed parents, 86% live in poor families (Jiang et al., 2015). Limited income has been directly linked to nutritious food choices. The proposed sample for this phenomenological study will be selected based on their self-identification as living at or below the definition of poverty. Poverty has been cited by some researchers as a mitigating factor relating to delays in early literacy development. This proposed phenomenological study would explore the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children in a Head Start program in a suburban elementary school develop literacy skills. One element for consideration is the nutritional state of families with very young children.

Nutrition and Food Insecurity

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2016) defined food insecurity as an inability of households financially stretched to the point where they cannot be certain that not all household members will have sufficient food. Very low food security describes a household where at least one family member will, periodically go hungry because there is not enough money for food. In the state of Washington, where this proposed study will take place, the rate of hunger in 2013 dropped from 6.1 percent to 5.6 percent. Food insecurity on the national level and in Washington State in 2014 was

measured at 14.3 percent of total households. Nationally, 15.8 million children live in households that experience food insecurity compared to an estimated 305,000 children in the state of Washington (USDA, 2016). This data is relevant to the cause for stress and how that stress interferes with brain development in the young child.

Recent studies of the brain and the effect of stress on architecture of the developing brain were reported on by NSCDC (2014). Their research delineated positive stress, tolerable stress, and toxic stress. Positive stress may be experienced because of normal daily living and is necessary for healthy development (NSCDC, 2014). Tolerable stress responses may be the byproduct of trauma surrounding the illness of a loved one or a terrifying accident. Tolerable stress may be mitigated by the presence of quality, reliable, supportive adults who create safe environments that help children learn to cope with and recover from major adverse experiences. According to NSCDC (2014), without this element, tolerable stress may convert to toxic stress.

Food insecurity and poverty are examples of the living conditions that likely create toxic stress and might be experienced by families that are the focus of this study (NSCDC, 2014). Because children's early human relationships are foundational pillars for their ability to cope, including self-confidence, motivation to learn, and the ability to self-regulate, the emotional state of the adults in their lives are important. Care-providers who are depressed, environments that are chaotic and unstable interfere with the child's ability to develop self-regulatory skills and executive functions (NSCDC, 2004). A considerable amount of research has been published on the effect of nutrition on brain and cognitive development. For example, Jensen (2013) listed health and nutrition as the first of seven differences between middle-class and low-income families. The researcher

described the link between health and intelligence citing the high incidence of undiagnosed ear, infections, asthma and exposure to lead among poor and low-income families.

Families with limited resources reportedly compromise food choices and quality. The difficulty in meeting all financial obligations forces some parents to make food choices based on quantity rather than quality thereby depriving young, developing minds and bodies of healthy, sustaining meals. The research clearly related the deleterious impact of food insecurity on academic, cognitive health and mental health functioning when breakfast is skipped (Belsky et al., 2010). In addition, the evidence showed that a diet rich in high fat, sugar and processed food in early childhood might cause reductions in IQ scores in later childhood (Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008). Rose-Jacobs et al. demonstrated in their research the association between food insecurity in addition to conditions of poverty and the risks to young children's development. Germaine to this present research, O'Dea and Caputi (2001); and Delva, O'Malley and Johnson (2006) showed that missing breakfast was associated with lower SES. Research related to development indicate that the first 3 years of a child's life are critical for cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development essential for school readiness.

Rose-Jacobs et al. (2008) investigated the relationship between household food insecurity and infant and toddler development for 4- to 36-month old children. These first 3 years of a child's life are critical for cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional development. Food insecurity was defined by this study as households where providers reported an inability to afford enough nutritious, healthy food to maintain a wholesome family lifestyle. Food insecurity with hunger reflected households where providers

reduced their food intake in three of the past 12 months (Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008).

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and that it is the meal most often missed (Affenito, 2007). The micronutrients contained in the first meal of the day is higher than in other meals and said to sustain cognitive function which researchers have linked to improvements in academic and psychosocial performance (Affenito, 2007).

Rose-Jacobs et al. (2008) hypothesized that children in food-insecure households are more likely to be at risk for developmental problems compared to children from food-secure households. For this inquiry, they controlled for indicators associated with poverty and/or known to influence early development. The 2,010 ethnically diverse study subjects were recruited from primary care clinics and hospital emergency departments in five major urban cities along the east coast and southeastern United States. Interviewers stationed at each site during times of peak patient flow approached caregivers who met the eligibility criteria for the study, except those caregivers for critically ill or injured children (Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008). The research team weighed and measured children participants prior to the start of the study. Underweight was defined as a score 2 standard deviations below the mean weight for age value, and overweight was defined as 2 standard deviations above the mean weight for age value based on Center for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines (Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008). They used a screening instrument for children from birth to 7 years to determine developmental risk. The respondents reported any concerns by answering 'yes,' 'no,' or 'a little' to the 10-question survey in all developmental areas including language, motor, and behavior.

Rose-Jacobs et al. revealed that 21% reported food insecurity and 6% food insecurity with hunger. Similarly, caregivers who reported food insecurity were less

educated less likely to be employed, and had children who were more likely to be enrolled in public health insurance programs when compared to parents who reported food security (Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008). The research team found a significant relationship between food insecurity and developmental risk among children 36 months of age from low-income households even after controlling for theoretically chosen and statistically identified confounding variable such as previous hospitalizations, low birth weight and current weight for age z score (Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008). The evidence that the subjects of the study were in the high-risk category for poor or diminished health due to their low-income status might be a limitation to this study. Furthermore, the researchers were unable to identify and statistically control for every confounding factor such as the quality of home environment. Finally, the authors suggested that the preponderance of food insecurity was recognized only as an adjunct to caregivers' overall concern about the child's family (Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008). Other researchers attributed deficits in cognitive development unrelated to food availability.

Belsky et al. (2010) were less convinced that there existed a link to food insecurity and cognitive development and mental health problems although most researchers make a case for neurodevelopmental processes and early childhood malnutrition to low IQ in middle childhood and behavioral problems during adolescence. In an attempt to make a connection, they conducted a quantitative, longitudinal, twin study to test the theory that food insecurity contributed to cognitive, behavioral and emotional problems among school aged children independent of the personality of the mother and the amount of attention bestowed upon the children by the parents at home. The study involved 1,116 United Kingdom families with twins. Cultural differences

might render this study of questionable reliability if efforts to generalize to an American population were attempted. Additionally, one might wonder if there was, a distinction made between results from fraternal and maternal twins or whether the results could have been the same for both male and female (Belsky et al., 2010). However, the link between nutrition, poverty, and cognitive development was viewed differently by Sylva who made an argument for the relationship between poverty and underachievement by emphasizing the importance of the development of executive function during the preschool years (Belsky et al., 2010).

Sylva (2014) referred to Jerome Bruner's work titled 'Poverty and Childhood' as groundbreaking at the time it was written. According to Sylva, the academic success of young children was significantly hampered by the effects of poverty, which included food insecurity. Woolfolk (2004); Turnbull and Justice (2012); Roseberry-McKibbin, (2014) were pessimistic about the impact of low SES on literacy development. Turnbull and Justice (2012) compared affluent Anglo-European Americans, African Americans and Hispanic Americans with lower-class individuals from their respective same ethnic groups (Turnbull & Justice, 2012). Turnbull and Justice (2012) found major differences between the privileged and the underprivileged families. Inasmuch, for the purpose of this present study parents were selected based on their wiliness to share their beliefs, attitudes, and needs that affected their participation in their children's literacy development. In essence, nutrition and food insecurity has a fundamental impact on literacy development among poor especially among infants and toddlers. Cook and Frank (2008) attribute abundance and quality to promoting growth, health, cognitive, and behavioral development. This leads to a discussion of the state of knowledge in the area

of the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children in a Head Start program in a suburban elementary school develop literacy skills

State of Knowledge

This section will discuss the current state of knowledge of parent beliefs, attitudes, and needs in helping their preschool age children develop literacy skills as expressed by low SES parents. While research related to early language development has and continues to grow exponential, direct input from parents of children living in poverty has gained little attention. Investigators agree about the value and the need for parental involvement in emerging literacy skills for the very young. A small number of investigation, however, approached the topic from the perspective of parents who seemed disengaged from the educational process as might be the case of a mother who suffered from maternal depression (CDC, 2009). Early developmental communication between the mother and child takes on a mutual responsiveness pattern in which the infant or child babbles and the mother responds by looking, smiling, making a verbal response. This communication exchange allows for the development and growth of the architecture of the child's brain that supports the evolution of communication and social skills (NSCDC, 2009). In addition, Clark (2007) recognized the significant positive influence of early parental engagement in their children's literacy development lasting well into the children's teen years. The implication was that disengagement in early literacy development provided the opposite effect (Clark, 2007).

The CDC (2014) described neglected or abused children as having abnormal patterns of cortisol production that impairs children's normal executive function (CDC, 2005/2014). Fantuzzo et al., (2000) acknowledged the then current thinking on research's

ability to reliably capture and accurately measure parental involvement was inadequate even while realizing the strong correlation between parent participation in the academic life of their children and the high motivation, social competence and school readiness demonstrated by the children. Three themes emerged from their investigations: (a) empirical research is ineffective in defining what is meant by parent involvement, (b) there appears to be no correlation between developmental issues and what the scientific world understands parental involvement to be, and (c) the transactional relationship between home and school is often overlooked. Instead, the definition of parental involvement fails to capture the interrelationship between teachers and parents (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Further research should extend, differ from, or replicate past studies.

Research Questions

The purpose of the research question is to limit in size and scope the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2008, 2013) while remaining distinct from the purpose statement. It seeks to disclose the breadth and depth of the lived human experience (Moustakas, 1994). The central research question is elucidated through the detailed and comprehensive portrayal of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). The central research question for this phenomenological study is “What do low SES parents understand is their role in introducing literacy to their preschool age children and the resources they believe will support their efforts?” The related sub-questions further explored the perceived needs of low SES parents as they prepare their preschool aged children for formal education:

R1. What importance do low SES parents place on literacy development before their children enter kindergarten?

R2. What do low SES parents say about the best time to begin helping their children develop literacy skills?

R3. What obstacles do parents feel impede their ability to help their children gain literacy skills?

Responses to the central research question and sub-questions provided information about what low socioeconomic parents believe about their needs attitudes and beliefs as their preschool-aged children develop literacy skills prior to entering kindergarten and the obstacles they feel interfere with their ability to teach literacy skills to their preschool age children. Program planners, educators and other parents whose voices have not yet been heard may benefit greatly by this knowledge. This chapter described the properties of this proposed research study, that included the study population, sampling frame, informed consent and confidentiality, geographic location, procedures for data saturation, credibility, data collection and analysis process, instrumentation, reliability, and study limitations.

Chapter Summary

The Chapter Summary is a concluding statement of the literature review that serves to summarize the major themes found in the literature and provides a rationale for the need for this proposed study or the importance of the research problem (Creswell, 2008). To that end, this literature review provided evidence that children who have underdeveloped skills in literacy development by the time they enter kindergarten have a difficult time gaining the skills to be academically on par with their peers (Rose-Jacobs et al., 2008). Developmental and environmental factors contribute to the deficit in literacy development (Cook & Frank, 2008). Recent research concentrates on home literacy

without asking pertinent questions of the primary care provider that may shed light on their specific needs as they prepare preschool aged children for formal education (Griffin et al., 2014). The home environment is influential in early literacy development possibly because parent beliefs about how their children learn and develop are informed by their own early literacy development experiences (Griffin, 2014). Environmental factors are relevant to the development of the brain (Affenito, 2007).

Investigations into the influence of food insecurity along with major research findings of the influence of parental participation in the development of literacy skills has grown in prominence exposing three themes. The most likely themes to emerge from the review of the literature are: (a) early involvement is essential, (b) literacy development begins at home, before entry into formal education, and (c) children from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to enter formal education with literacy skills far behind their peers. In fact, more researchers directly link poverty and neurocognitive development to poor reading ability among young children. These factors, although important, do not address the fundamental question of what do parents feel they need to become intimately involved in early literacy development in their children. When parents have the necessary understanding of what is needed to support literacy development, it increases their participation, improves their confidence to seek more information and resources to improve children's academic success. Home literacy programs for disadvantaged children need to begin at an early age to mitigate advantages resulting from parents' cultural capital (Griffin et al., 2014).

There is a general awareness and acknowledgment that a small amount of research involving the direct and specific perceptions from the parent's perspective has

surfaced. This present study will contribute uniquely to the body of research that addresses literacy development by collecting data on the perspective of parents of preschool age children. In addition, it is possible that when investigating this topic, researchers will look for cognitive evidence of the problem predominantly since empirical measurement instruments on how best to measure a child's interest in emergent literacy that leads to their participation in literacy activities. Parent practice of exposing children to literacy and teaching them literacy concepts are important in the growth of literacy interest in the child. This research will point the way to the specific support parents feel they need to better support their children's literacy development.

Chapter 3 will detail the research method for this proposed qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study of low SES parent beliefs, attitudes and needs as their preschool age children develop literacy skills in a suburban, Pacific Northwest Head Start program. The appropriateness of this particular design, research questions, population, sampling and informed consent will also be discussed. Chapter 3 will also cover the collection and analysis of data, ethical issues, trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, potential research bias, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 1 discussed the problem and purpose statements, research questions, and significance of the study were presented. In Chapter 2, theoretical framework was delineated as part of the relevant literatures that were reviewed. The literature review showed evidence of a deficit in research about beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children develop literacy skills. Chapter 3 focuses on research methodology used in this present study by first discussing the aim of the study. This chapter identifies and discusses the design appropriateness, and related qualitative research procedures applied to complete this study. This chapter also details characteristics of the target population, the geographical location, sampling, in-depth interview protocol, field-testing protocol, data collection and analysis procedures. Ethical considerations are included in this chapter. This chapter clarifies the process of completing this qualitative research study through describing how this present study posed central and sub questions, collect the data and finally, present participant responses to the research questions and a discussion of the limitations of this present study.

Aim of the Study

This research is a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study to explore early parental participation in the literacy development of their preschool age children from birth through age 5 years. In this context, this hermeneutic phenomenological study allowed evidence for an interpretation of the participants to share their stories about a state of being in a manner that suggests a capacity to understand one's own existence (Cohen et al., 2000). This study provided the essence and meaning of the lived

experiences of a select group of parents by collecting their thoughts, impressions and passionate experiences in narrative format. In doing so, the careful, comprehensive descriptions, brought to light graphic and accurate details of the experiences captured in this study (Mousakas, 1994).

The literature is replete with documented evidence that the first 6 months of life are critical for infant linguistic and cognitive stimulation. For example, Roseberry-McKibbin (2014) showed that among low socioeconomic households, many parents do not look at books or imitate sounds with their small children. The result, according to her research, was that those children missed important speech and language developmental time that has been demonstrated to improve literacy development (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2014). The findings justified the present study that asks parents their perspective on their children's literacy development. Parental responsiveness to early vocalizations by the child was reported by Roseberry-McKibbin to be a major indicator of the child developing his/her first 50 words and using two-word sentences (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2014). Mothers who experience the effects of poverty are reported to be less responsive and thereby inhibit the literacy growth that may take place (Roseberry-McKibbin, 2014). Therefore, the present study led to an understanding of the phenomenon by using a qualitative hermeneutical phenomenological approach.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative methodologies give credence to the methods used in qualitative research (Carter & Little, 2007). Qualitative research is used to explore an issue or question (Creswell, 2013). Exploration of a topic is a qualitative action that allows the researcher to give voice to those in the population who previously had no voice, to study

a group, or to identify variables that cannot be easily measured (Creswell, 2013). Justified methods of inquiry in qualitative research include grounded theory, narrative, life history, biographical, ethnographic, participatory action research, phenomenological and case study. Each methodology includes data collection from a study population. For the study to maintain its viability, data management, analysis and reporting must take place as part of the study (Carter & Little, 2007).

The research design outlined the specific procedures the research used to address the central phenomenon. The design includes the data collection, analysis and writing the report. The appropriate design to explore the beliefs, attitudes and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children in a Head Start program develop literacy skills was a phenomenological qualitative research design. Phenomenological research allowed this researcher to trace to the core of the phenomenon, descriptions of the way the study subject experiences things in her own mind, and the facts of the lived experiences of the participants, in order to reach the essence or deepest understanding of the phenomenon (Giorgi, 1997; Lichtman, 2009).

Appropriateness of the Qualitative Research Design

The inductive nature of qualitative research sets it apart from the deductive features of quantitative research. Quantitative research is a formal, objective systematic process governed by numbers as the modality for collecting information about the subject. Qualitative research, on the other hand, attempts to understand a social or human condition by creating a holistic word picture (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research method allows researchers to measure data in sociology related research. Social constructivism, as Creswell defined it, is a subjective understanding of the experiences of

others, relevant from the perspective of the participants because of the interactions shared within the social construct (Creswell, 2013). Researchers began using qualitative research prominently for education research in the late 1970s, initially to address philosophical ideas. Later, it was used to address procedural developments and still later, in the 1990s, to measure participatory and advocacy practices (Creswell, 2008). While quantitative research looks at trends and relies on statistical analysis to interpret findings, qualitative research explores problems for which little is known based on a central phenomenon. Data collection for qualitative research relies on narrative and descriptive analysis of an emergent theme (Creswell, 2008). This present study is appropriate for a qualitative methodology, because it involved interviewing six mothers who meet the federal guidelines for eligibility for enrollment in a Head Start program in a suburban residential area in Washington State and allowed for the collection of their personal experiences in narrative form about the research question.

Three components of qualitative research are epistemology, methodology, and method. Epistemology gives clarity to qualitative research (Carter & Little, 2007). Research methodology was chosen through the process of epistemology. Methodology forms and is formed by research purpose, questions, and study design (Carter & Little, 2007). Method might be viewed as a way the researcher gathers evidence. Phenomenological methodology was chosen for this study. Early in the history of qualitative research, investigators disregarded phenomenology as a viable method for data collection and analysis for non-educational research. Then, in the late 20th century it became recognized as a contemporary approach to analyze rationale with human subjectivity, conditions and consciousness, (Creswell, 2008). Therefore, using a

qualitative approach to understand the phenomenon of low SES parent needs as their preschool age children develop literacy skills allowed the research participants to provide unrestricted accounts of their beliefs, needs, and attitudes based on the seven-open-ended research questions this researcher presented to each parent participant in this study.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative research design that allows researchers to develop a deeper understanding about a phenomenon. The introduction of phenomenology as an education research method represented a 20th century approach to scientific methodology employed to analyze the human condition. It is set apart from other scientific traditions in that it allows for the gestalt of human experiences rather than isolated aspects to consider meanings and the core of experiences rather than measurement and commentary. Phenomenological methodology acknowledges the interrelationship between human behavior and experiences allowing the subjects to reflect on the phenomenon as it related to their life experiences (Creswell, 2013). The research method determined whether this study was qualitative or quantitative. The study's research design and method described the technique or process that was used to investigate the problem, collect data, analyze, and interpret the findings (Methodology Sample from Leedy, 2010). Primarily, quantitative research relies on statistical data to answer the question while qualitative research identifies a key concept or central phenomenon to study and then relies on the views of the participants to answer the question being studied (Creswell. 2008).

To date, a multiplicity of methods has been utilized to measure literacy development in different populations and settings. This research employed hermeneutic phenomenological study to answer the questions about a particular human condition of

poverty and literacy development among preschool age children. Qualitative research was only recently used as an alternative method to the quantitative research method in the field of education. It is exploratory in nature and allows for a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2008). Unlike a quantitative study in which data collection requires measurement tools with predetermined queries and answers, a large number of questions with a multiplicity of respondents, numeric data and large sample sizes, data collection for a qualitative research relies on questions and answers of a generalized and broad nature from a much smaller population (Creswell, 2008). This format allowed the participants to provide personalized responses drawn from their own experiences and in their own words. Investigators may gather narrative and/or image data and information to make a point (Creswell, 2008). The qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological approach allowed this researcher to explore the essence and meaning of the phenomenon using descriptive narratives collected during the interview (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology focuses on describing commonalities among participants. Phenomenology seeks to diminish individual experiences with a phenomenon in favor of the global quintessence, or the soul of that which is being studied (Creswell, 2013). The researcher must first remove self from the topic to be researched to allow for transparency and honesty, utilize bracketing and open coding to minimize the potential for bias and triangulate data captured from interviews and other sources related to the topic. Bracketing is a mathematical figure of speech to signify bracketing out one's own prejudices and biases to for individual clarity and understanding (Cohen, et al., 2000). Moustakas (1994) and Cohen et al. (2000) described, in detail, this aspect of

phenomenological research as epoch. Epoch originated with the philosopher Husserl in 1931 and refers to the letting go of one's own preconceived ideas, ideologies, and suppositions (Cohen, et al., 2000) and elevating knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). The aspects of the lived experiences of the participants might become evident when research questions allow the participants to reflect candidly on their lived experiences in their particular socioeconomic status. The open-ended questions allowed this researcher access to the essence of the participant's lived experience. A discussion of the aim of this proposed hermeneutic phenomenological study follows.

Hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic science uniquely delves beyond the obvious in order that the intended meanings might be fully revealed and understood (Moustakas, 1994). It allows text to be read and understood accurately. It also allows the lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon to be accurately interpreted (Creswell, 2013). Hermeneutic phenomenology is distinguishable from phenomenology in that hermeneutic phenomenology is a direct meaning and understanding of that individual's experience while phenomenology is an understanding of the experiences that reveal the nature of the individual life (Moustakas, 1994). Stated another way, it is the study of the meaning of the experience (Cohen et al., 2013). The intentionality of consciousness in hermeneutic phenomenology is directed towards the lived experiences of the particular subject or group of interest (Cohen et al., 2013). For the purpose of this study, the group of interest is low socioeconomic families with preschool age children. Creswell referred to the intentionality of consciousness as one of four philosophical perspectives in phenomenology. It is derived from an awareness of an object (Creswell, 2013) while Cohen et al., suggested that consciousness is awareness and that it is in the world and is

always intentional. This means that it is always consciousness of something, that the act of studying an experience indicates consciousness and the study of experience indicates consciousness (Cohen et al., 2013).

The qualitative hermeneutic phenomenology method of research was selected for this study because the method of research involved exploring the lived experiences of low SES parents of preschool aged children as their children develop literacy skills before they enter kindergarten. This approach allowed the researcher for this study to formulate questions that seek (a) To place value on the gestalt human experience in text format rather than numerical values... (b) To use text data to provide meaning and the essence of the experience... (c) Use the descriptions of the experience from first-person accounts in formal and informal conversations and interviews... (d) To recognize that experience and behavior are integrated and inseparable.

A qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study allows for the exploration of a process, event or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2008; Cohen et al., 2013). Introduced in the late 19th Century by German researchers Edmund Husserl and his student Martin Heidegger as an alternative to quantitative research, this method of qualitative research initially sought to understand a central phenomenon or explore a topic of interest for which little was known. Phenomenology, according to Creswell (2008), is a scientific system involving the analysis of phenomena and human behavior to gain an understanding of human experiences and situations. Likewise, Cohn et al. (2013) described phenomenological research as a method used to answer questions from the perspective of those who live in the experience (Cohen et al. 2013). Cohen further defined hermeneutics as: (a) The attempt to understand the phenomena of the world as

they are presented to the researcher; (b) The attempt to understand how it is we attempt to understand the world as it is presented to the researcher; and (c) The attempt to understand 'being' (Cohen et al, 2013).

Procedures for This Research

Methodology for conducting phenomenological research was detailed by Moustakas (1994). The methodological process was sub-headed Methods of Preparation, Methods of Collecting Data and Methods of Organizing and Analyzing Data (Moustakas, 1994). This current study held to the guidelines established by experts in the field of conducting qualitative research. Inasmuch, in Chapter 1 of this study, the topic and research questions that are rooted in autobiographical meanings and values, and involve social meanings and significance are categorized as Method of Preparation in keeping with Moustakas' process. Chapter 2 presented a comprehensive, exhaustive review of professional and research literature. Moustakas included developing a set of questions or topics to guide the interview, conduct and record a lengthy person-to-person interview that focuses on a bracketed topic and question and organizing and analyzing the data as final components in the qualitative research process (Moustakas, 1994).

Formulating the research question. The first requirement in preparing this phenomenological study was to decide the topic and develop the socially meaningful and personally significant research questions (Moustakas, 1994). Research questions are unambiguous and concrete. The questions developed for this proposed study signified the type of data to be collected will be words, and/or pictures to form a narrative description of the lived experiences of the study subjects. The central question described the direction of the study (Creswell, 2008). Additionally, the topic of the study guided the

development of the central question. The topic for this study emerged from the inherent curiosity and passion of this researcher and demonstrated a particular problem the researcher recognized as not being addressed. Therefore, this researcher sought to understand the essence of low socioeconomic status parent participation in literacy development of their preschool age children. To present a research question that is clear of purpose, research questions should be well defined and deliberative and would further define the central question (Moustakas, 1994). The topic led to the development of the central question. The central question, “What do low SES parents understand is their role in introducing literacy to their preschool age children and the resources they believe will support their efforts,” sought to understand the impact socioeconomic status had on parents and their participation in their children’s early literacy development. Defining this focus of the study determined what is primary in pursuing the topic and what data was to be collected (Moustakas, 1994).

Conducting a comprehensive literature review. The literature review was discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Moustakas identified four major types of reviews for formal and informal research methods that remain a significant influence in current research literature reviews as integrative, theoretical, methodological and thematic. Integrative review defines the problem and outlines the method of data collection, evaluates the data for analysis, interpretations and to present the findings. Theoretical review analyzes the theories that account for the existence of the phenomenon. The methodological review examines the research methods developed and used in the published words. The thematic review organizes the core themes presented in the studies and presents their findings within the core themes (Moustakas, 2014). The integrative

review is appropriate for this current epistemological hermeneutic phenomenological study because the literature summarized in Chapter 2 represented what was understood through the research data collected relative to current knowledge about the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children develop literacy skills. The central question informed the selection of the Head Start Program where the intended population is located.

Selecting the study research site. The research site was selected based on the question the researcher endeavors to answer (Cohen, et al., 2014). Early researchers' beliefs that scientific studies should begin in places of unknown value or relevance were debunked as false doctrine and inappropriate for use in modern research (Cohen, et al., 2013). The research site for this qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study will be the Head Start Program in a suburban neighborhood in the Pacific Northwest. It was selected based on the perceived availability of potential subjects with lived experiences to address the central question for this proposed study. Proximity to public services, population diversity, and accessibility to the facility were also factors in selecting the site for this research. In addition, it is the location for the district's only Head Start program.

Study research community. The proposed study community is headed by a superintendent who reports directly to a board of directors. The superintendent oversees the operation of two high schools, two middle schools, a K-8 community school, nine elementary schools, and a home education network totaling more than 9,000 public school children. The School District Superintendent reported in a monthly newsletter mailed to city residents the results of a recent demographic study reflecting an upward trend in enrollment based on the projection of new births in the city (*Flagship, Summer,*

2015). According to the School District's 2015-2016 Annual Report to the Community, the district's enrollment population of 9,280 is divided according to the following ethnic make-up: 54.7% Caucasian, 13.9% Asian, 12.5% Hispanic/Latino, 11.2% claimed two or more races, 6.9% Black/African American, 0.5% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native. The graduation rate in 2015 was 88.2%. Nearly 28% of students qualified to receive free and reduced lunches. In addition, 11.8% of students received special education services and 7.3% of student were identified as transitional bilingual. Three hundred and fifty-six students were classified as homeless.

The kindergarten cohort for the 2015-16 school years was 546 with 33.3% eligible for free and reduced meals, 8.4% receiving special education services and 16.5% identified as transitional bilingual. To qualify for free and/or reduced meals the recipient must be identified as living at or below the poverty level. The 2017-2018 school year kindergarten cohorts were projected to be 657. The growth trend is expected to continue at a slightly faster rate than the county's kindergarten through grade 12 populations over the next five years (Flagship Summer, 2015). When this data was collected, the city committed thirty-seven cents of each property tax dollar to the school district (City of Shoreline Currents, November, 2015).

Family incomes and education within the study research site community.

The study site community where this proposed research will take place is described as an entry level to affluent suburban city with a population of 53,000 people. The combination of occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence are factors that define socioeconomic status (Rodgers, 2010). Parents with at least some college education are heads-of-household in many low-income and poor families (NCCP, 2012).

Approximately 17% of the residents attained less than a ninth-grade education while 26.82% achieved undergraduate or higher degrees. Incomes ranged from 8.28% earning less than \$15,000 to 3.84% earning more than \$200,000. The number of families with children listed at or above poverty was reported to be 44.23% (U. S. Census, 2016). The number of families with children listed below poverty was 3.07%. Nearly forty-five percent of the families with children are at or above poverty while 3.07% of families with children are below poverty, compared to the 2012 national rate of children under 6 years of 52% above low income, 25% poor and 23% near poor, (Jiang et al., 2014).

Study research site. The study research site for this research was Meridian Park Elementary School, a public elementary school serving grades pre-kindergarten through sixth grade and is located in an easily assessable section of the city at a major intersection less than half a mile from a busy interstate highway entry point. The 2015 school year enrollment of 546 students made it the second largest of three elementary schools in the school district. Of that number, 33% were eligible for free/reduced meals. The school earned the 2015 Great Schools rating of 9+, a school quality rating based on how well students in all grades perform on standardized tests using a rating from one (below average) to 10 (above average). Students who were eligible for special education services were 8.4% of the school population. The school's ethnic profile is 46% white (non-Hispanic) compared to 55% district-wide; 21% Asian, 20% Asian/Pacific Islander, 13% Hispanic, 11% multiracial, 10% African American, non-Hispanic, and 0.2% Native American, non-Hispanic or Native Alaskan. The school district's only Head Start program operates within the Meridian Park Elementary School. Permission to conduct the

study at the site was obtained from the Director of Assessment and Student Learning of the Shoreline School District (see Appendix A).

Participants

Qualitative research generates detailed data about a smaller population sample than quantitative research, allowing for understanding of the participants' lived experience. The intent was to study individuals to enable this researcher to collect exhaustive details about each individual participant. Of the several qualitative sampling strategies from which to choose, this current study utilized purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a qualitative research investigative strategy that allowed this researcher to intentionally single out persons and locations because they have knowledge and understanding of the central phenomenon. With this strategy, this researcher was able to predetermine the criteria that would differentiate the participants. Specifically, the Head Start program serves families with young children who qualify for free and reduced lunch in a public-school setting, making this a target rich site selected to best understand the central phenomenon.

This researcher began recruiting participants for this study immediately after the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approves the study proposal (see Appendix B). An Invitation to Participate (see Appendix C) was posted in high traffic areas where parents were likely to see the invitation. Additionally, the printed invitation was published in the Head Start Program's weekly newsletter. The newsletter announcement was crafted for the widest possible dissemination taking into account ease of understanding for parents whose first language is not English. The invitation included a detailed description of the purpose of the study. Parents also found an announcement

posted in their children's classrooms. As stated in his approval letter, the Director of Assessment and Student Learning (Appendix A) the classroom teachers played an active role in insuring parents were advised of the study. Other options for announcing the study to parents who may not read the newsletter or classroom bulletin were coordinated with the teachers and included posting an announcement on the parent information board located next to the classroom entrance. Coordinating parent contact with the teachers rather than making direct contact to announce this study represented this researcher's attempt to preserve respect and privacy for the parents who might not commit to participating in the study. Research participants were selected from the pool of volunteers who completed, signed, and returned consent forms by the posted due date. Their selection for this study was based on their willingness to participate in this study.

Information meeting. Teachers were informed about the pending research study by the Director of Assessment and Student Learning during the approval process. After receiving IRB approval (Appendix B), this researcher contacted the Director of the Meridian Park Elementary School Head Start program to schedule an information meeting. The purpose of the on-site information meeting (see Appendix D) was to present a 5- to 10-minute description of the proposed research and it allowed for an open dialogue between the researcher and the study population. The invitation to attend this meeting included all potential participants, stakeholders and gatekeepers. Notification of this meeting was posted alongside the posted study announcement (Appendix A). Head Start teachers reminded parents of the information meeting, as well as published it in the weekly newsletter, posted it on parent information boards, and sent it by way of emails as appropriate. In addition, teachers and administrators in the program mentioned the study

to parents as they entered or departed classrooms when dropping off or picking up their children and when the parent volunteered in the classroom. Parents of preschool age children (ages 3-5 years) were the focus of this study. Parents were allowed to bring other children as young as newborn to 5 years or older to the information meeting. However, parents were discouraged from bringing them into the meeting room. Therefore, childcare services were offered free of charge to the parents.

The information meeting was conducted off-campus at a local public library. The venue decision was at the discretion of the school district. The meeting was on a weekday afterschool. A light repast was offered without cost to the parents 30 minutes before the information program began. The meeting was advertised as a “pizza and a pop event” to attract as many potential participants as possible. The researcher made all food and childcare arrangements. Set-up before and cleanup after the meeting as well as available space to hold the meeting, and a suitable childcare room was the responsibility of this researcher who coordinated the event with the public library staff. The library provided the room, tables, chairs, and a screen on which to project slides. All other materials and childcare providers were the responsibility of and brought to the library by this researcher 30 minutes before the event.

The power point presentation lasted 10 to 15 minutes and described the researcher and the research study followed by a question and answer period. During the meeting, attendees were offered the Introductory Letter and Informed Consent (see Appendix D) and the Initial Screening Survey (see Appendix E). Respondents were advised that they might complete the forms and submit them at the meeting or submit them later by depositing them in the secure locked box located at Head Start within eight school days

of the meeting. Additional blank Introductory Letters and Screening forms were available at the locked box location in a manila envelope. Parents who were unable to attend the Information Meeting and who wanted to participate in the study were respectfully asked to complete the Invitation to Participate and Informed Consent Letter (Appendix D), Initial Screening Form (See Appendix E), and deposited them in the secure lock box located near the envelope marked "Research Letter of Information." Instructions printed on the manila envelope instructed them to "Read and sign the letter if you are interested in participating in this study. Deposit the signed letter in the manila envelope."

Identifying and notifying the participants. Notices announcing the research study remained posted for 15 calendar days. After that time, the researcher collected the locked box with its contents and the manila envelope containing any remaining blank forms. The researcher opened the locked box and reviewed the documents for completeness at home in a private room. There were no forms to review or verify.

Eligibility to participate in this study was based on completion of required forms, a willingness to participate in the study, and the ability to qualify for enrollment in Head Start program as prescribed by federal guidelines. Federal guidelines stipulate that children from low-income families, homeless children, some children who are not eligible but who would benefit from Head Start programs, and children whose family incomes are below 130 percent of the poverty line are eligible to participate in Head Start programs (Head Start, n. d.). Notwithstanding, the researcher attempted to accommodate all who successfully completed the Informed Consent form.

Informed Consent. Informed consent (Appendix D) is a major ethical consideration in research. It is an essential element in research involving recruiting and

screening human subjects and continues to be monitored throughout the subject's participation in the research study. This researcher was responsible for insuring the informed consent for each participant included:

1. Who is conducting the study?
2. The purpose of the study...
3. Advising the respondents that participation in the study is voluntary...
4. The geographic area of the interview and the target population...
5. How long the participants will be involved in the research and their roles...
6. An offer to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without retribution...
7. Potential benefits to the participants and to society...
8. Potential risks to the participants...
9. Assurance of anonymity and confidentiality.

During this phase of the study participants were advised in clear, unambiguous terms, of the nature of the study, what the participant is expected to contribute to the study, the limits of their participation, and the potential risks as a result of their participation in the study (Creswell, 2008). This information was provided during the information meeting and was included in the Informed Consent letter each participant was required to sign. Informed consent also included advising the participants that the protocol for conducting this study was in compliance with guidelines for ethical research and requirements and that the Informed Consent and confidentiality document is part of the Dissertation Proposal to be approved by the Nova Southeastern University IRB.

The consent form that detailed the purpose of the study, the responsibilities of the researcher, also advised the participant that she might withdraw from participation in the study at any time without explanation and without penalty to herself or child in the Head Start program. The participant was advised that should she decide to discontinue her participation in the study, all data associated with that individual will be destroyed upon notification of her intent. The participant was able to withdraw by (a) verbal request in a face-to-face encounter with or phone call to the researcher, (b) email to the researcher, or (c) written request to the researcher (Creswell, 2008). Those who proceeded with their participation in the study signed and dated two copies of the informed consent along with the researcher. The participant and the researcher will each retain a copy of the signed document. The researcher's copy will be part of the documents secured in a safe for which access will be available to the researcher and then destroyed three years after the publication of the study. This researcher anticipated five to seven participants who will be willing to share their stories.

Sampling

A sample is a subgroup of a population that represents a target population. The sample for this study were parents of children who were eligible to enroll in Head Start or had at one time participated in the program. Three essentials that were considered when selecting participants for this qualitative research included the sample, the strategy for choosing the sample and the number of subjects to participate in the study (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling is one of at least nine qualitative sampling strategies typically used in the field of education, according to Creswell (2008). The choice of strategies depended on whether its use occurred before data collection began or after data collection

had started, and depending on the research problem and questions to be answered. This researcher chose purposeful sampling as a strategy for selecting the participants. Purposeful sampling allowed this researcher to select participants based on their availability and their willingness to voluntarily participate in this study. It became necessary to rely on snowball sampling to achieve a viable number of participants. The participants were asked on the consent form whether or not their child qualified for Head Start so that the participants would match, as close as possible, the original intended population. The study participants claimed at least one child who was formerly eligible, currently eligible or will be eligible to enroll in Head Start. Eligibility in the Head Start Program increased the likelihood that the narrative data would illuminate the phenomenon based on the lived experiences of the sample. Each mother provided a descriptive account of her lived experiences related to her beliefs, attitudes and needs as her preschool age child develops literacy skills. The number of participants included in this present study was determined based on the number of volunteers who completed all aspects of recruitment described in the Invitation to Participate (Appendix B), not fewer than 5 participants and not to exceed 12 participants. This researcher attempted to recruit more than 12 to preserve the excess interviews in a secure location to be used to in the event data saturation was not achieved.

When the requisite minimum number of participants was not recruited by the deadline set by the researcher, the researcher solicited participants to recommend others outside of the purposeful sample to become members of the sample. This approach is referred to as snowball sampling. This form of sampling is a preferred alternative recruiting method to be used before considering convenience sampling. Convenience

sampling will insure a suitable sample size by recruiting volunteers who are available and willing to participate in the study (Creswell, 2009). This researcher distributed Invitation to Participate letters (Appendix B) to members of the sample with a request that they present the letter to those whom they recommend and encouraged them to contact this researcher within a specified number of days. Once the new recruits made contact with this researcher, they were provided with details about the proposed research and the role and responsibilities of the researcher in preserving their anonymity and privacy. The new recruits expressed a desire to proceed and were kindly asked to sign the Informed Consent. The new recruits were allowed to determine the type, time and location of their individual, one-on-one interviews. It should be noted that this alternative method of recruitment had both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, this researcher had the potential of recruiting large numbers of participants for the study. On the other hand, this researcher was not able to align eligibility standards between original and new sample recruits (Creswell, 2009).

The Head Start program. The proposed research site will be the Head Start program located within The Meridian Park Elementary School. Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community the program serves. It began as a program for socioeconomically disadvantaged preschoolers more than 50 years ago and has developed to include separate programs to serve pregnant women, infants and toddlers. Services provided to families include early learning, health, and family wellbeing. Head Start promotes the belief that a successful elementary experience begins with early literacy instruction during the preschool years (Whitehurst and Massetti, 2004). There are five central domains of Head Start including approaches

to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, cognition, and perceptual, motor and physical development that promote school readiness in low-income children ages birth to 5 years. A hallmark of the program is the emphasis placed on parental participation in their preschool age children's development and learning through home-based, school-based and home-school involvements. Manz (2012) reported that by strengthening family contexts Head Start advances the development of children facing socioeconomic risks (Manz, 2012).

The Meridian Park Head Start program consists of three classrooms to accommodate two daily half-day sessions at 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. morning classes and 12:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. afternoon classes. Each classroom has 11 to 13, 4- and 5-year-old boys and girls Tuesdays through Fridays. In addition to classroom instruction, children enrolled in Head Start are subjected to learning activities to stimulate all developmental areas along with health screenings and follow-ups if needed, and healthy meals. The certificated teacher for each classroom is supported by one teaching assistant and both work closely with parents to develop the most effective learning plan for each child. The Head Start program expects parents to volunteer in the classroom, on field trips and for other activities outside of the classroom. Families in need of additional support receive referrals, advocacy, parent training and leadership to support family unity and growth. In addition, parents are offered assistance with immunizations and exams. Children learn about good health habits as they receive healthy meals and snacks. Children with disabilities receive additional support and/or services provided by the school district. Instruction in each Head Start classroom follows the pre-school curriculum approved by the school district. Therefore, this research site appealed to the researcher for this

proposed study because the potential participants will be able to provide detailed responses to the research questions based on their lived experiences.

Data Collection Instrument

Qualitative research collects data through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations (Creswell, 2008). Data collection instruments are used to capture all information relevant to the study word form. The Interview Protocol was the primary data collection instrument for this study. This study adhered to data collection from face-to-face interviews and field notes and considered the telephone interview as a less preferred alternative. Face-to-face interviews have the desired attribute of allowing for visual data that adds a rich element to understanding the essence of the lived experience of the participant. Each interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder and followed an Interview Script (see Appendix F) with each participant to insure equality between each interview when presenting Interview Protocol questions (See Appendix G). In addition, hand-written field notes were taken during the interviews to make a record of environmental and non-verbal data related to the central phenomena and the participant. Audio recording interviews using a digital desktop audio recorder allowed this researcher to accurately chronicle expressions of the lived experiences of the participant. Seven interview questions (Appendix G) prepared by this researcher were designed to yield detailed data about the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants and to ensure that their voices will be heard and recorded. Specifically, the type of data collected for this study were words and/or pictures that form a narrative about the lived experiences of the participants.

Field-testing. Prior to conducting the interviews, the Interview Protocol was field-tested (see Appendix G). The purpose of field-testing was to identify questions that needed to be revised or deleted, determine questions that elicited irrelevant responses to remove and replace them with new questions that were suggested by the field test participants, and to facilitate experience in managing the data that comes from one-on-one interviews (Creswell, 2008). Field-testing required limited data collection from one or two field testers. The field-testers were parents recruited from a neighboring school district with a similar demographic as the study school district. They were parents who were known by and who knew the researcher because of their frequent visits to the researcher's work-site as volunteers or as parents of children enrolled at the researcher's work site. They were parents with similar backgrounds as the research study participants. This researcher approached the field-test participants individually and in person. Upon agreement to participate, the field-testers were provided a written description of the study along with a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, the reasons for the field-test and their responsibilities to field test the interview questions. They were not required to complete a consent form. These individuals were provided ample time to ask questions regarding the field-test and thorough responses to their questions were given.

Individuals who field-tested the interview questions were advised that their participation was voluntary and that they could discontinue their participation at any time without penalty. They were to rate the interview questions on their clarity, accuracy and understandability. During field-testing, each interview question had the potential of earning five points. A score of five points signified that the question is clear, accurate and understandable. A question that received a score of three or four required some editing. A

score of one point indicated that the question should be reworded or eliminated.

Thereafter, the Interview Questions were revised based on the results of the field tests.

The field-testers were asked to complete a short Field-Test Questionnaire that was used to further fine-tune the study interview questions and process (see Appendix H). Once the interview questions were thoroughly vetted to ensure the most impactful responses from the participants, data collection began by presenting the questions to each research study participant in face-to-face interview format.

Data Collection

For this research study, data collection encompassed the process of conducting each interview and taking field notes. The one-on-one interview served as the primary source for data and is the most practical interview approach for data collection for this qualitative study. Interview format was chosen for data collection because the research topic for this study lent itself to an exploration of lived experiences of people. Interviews and observations are the most frequently used approaches to qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Interviews help release the narrative stories people use to associate meaning to their lived experiences (Cohen et al., 2014). For this study, the availability of the participants and their preference guided the decision to conduct the one-on-one interviews face-to-face or by telephone. Face-to-face interviews provided this study with the data necessary to understand the phenomena. For this study, six in-depth interviews were conducted by following an Interview Script (Appendix F) to collect the unique data necessary to explore the essence of the lived experiences of the subjects of this phenomenological qualitative study. Interviews continued until data saturation was achieved.

Interview procedure. All interviews were scheduled during a time and at a location most convenient to the participant. Had this researcher and the participant been unable to agree on a suitable time and location for the one-on-one interview, the researcher was prepared to offer the option to conduct the interview by telephone. The focus of the negotiation would have been on the time most convenient to the participant. This researcher would have asked the participant the best time for her. If the time conflicted with the researcher's regular workday, this researcher would have explained the circumstance and suggested another time. If the participant had a conflict, this researcher would have suggested conducting the interview on a different day. This researcher would have allowed the participant the benefit of the final decision on the time of day for the interview. This researcher would have gladly met the participant at the time specified. In any case, this researcher made follow-up reminder contact to the participant approximately 36 hours and again at approximately 24 hours prior to the scheduled appointment using the contact method the participant specified on her consent form. The interviews were semi-structured. The semi-structured interview allowed for ask follow-up and clarifying questions. Interviews are structured when each participant is asked the same question without variation. Unstructured interviews are informal and have one predetermined set of questions (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).

The one-on-one interview. Creswell (2013) identified interview approaches as e-mail, focus group, online focus group, and by telephone. The one-to-one interview approach may be conducted face-to-face or by telephone and is best suited for this phenomenological study assuming that participants are articulate and comfortable sharing their ideas. The one-on-one format allowed this researcher to ask questions of and receive

answers to questions presented to one participant at a time. The preferred interview approach for this hermeneutic phenomenological study was the face-to-face interview although participants were given the option to have a telephone interview when a face-to-face meeting could not be arranged. Every effort to conduct a face-to-face interview was made because it allowed for maximum communication between the interviewer and the participant. Maximum communication is essential for understanding the perceptions of the phenomenon. It added vigor to the interview and allowed this researcher the opportunity to witness and document visual and nonverbal communication such as facial expressions, body movements; and it allowed the participant to share documents, photographs, and other objects that might support the participant's efforts to describe the essence of the lived experience. At the conclusion of each interview, this researcher provided the participant with information about what will happen next in terms of securing, transcribing, analyzing and reporting the data. This researcher again reassured the participant that her identity will remain confidential.

Face-to-face interview. To conduct this interview with the participant, the researcher first contacted the participant to arrange a suitable time and location. On the day of the scheduled interview, this researcher arrived at the designated interview site 30 minutes before the scheduled time to set up interview equipment and to identify the childcare location if needed. Having established the need for childcare with the participant in advance, the interviewer was prepared to provide it at no cost to the interviewee. The contingency plan in the event the interview was to take place at Meridian Park, the interviewer would have prearranged the on-site location of the childcare services with the Meridian Park Elementary School staff. An adult female

familiar to the researcher who was not part of the study was commissioned to provide childcare for the 30 to 45-minute face-to-face interviews. The researcher began each interview session using a prepared script (see Appendix F). At the scheduled time, this researcher greeted the participant at the Meridian Park Elementary School entrance where there is a waiting area with tables and chairs. When the participant arrived, the researcher would have escorted her to the childcare room and introduced her to the attendant. This researcher would have allowed time for the participant to settle in her child with the attendant before escorting her to the interview room. If there was no need for childcare, the participant would have been escorted directly to the interview room.

After being seated, this researcher began a scripted (Appendix F), light ice-breaker conversation before announcing to the participant that the tape recorder will be turned on to begin the interview. This researcher reminded the participant that she is volunteering to participate in the study and that she may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty to herself or her child in the Head Start program. This researcher also informed the participant that along with tape recording the interview, this researcher would be taking notes in a journal to help this researcher remember questions or thoughts that occurred to the researcher during the interview or afterwards. The filed notes were descriptive and reflective. Descriptive field notes captured the events, activities and people in this study. Reflective field notes recorded this researcher's personal thoughts relative to the insights, notions, or general ideas or themes that emerge during the interview process. This researcher assured the participant that she will receive a transcribed copy of the interview and notes not later than 2 weeks after this interview. This researcher then asked the participant if she had any questions before we proceed

with the first question. This researcher answered all questions until the participant was satisfied. This researcher then presented the first question (Appendix G). The researcher allowed ample time for the participant to respond. This researcher asked follow-up and probing questions for clarification or to gain greater insight. This researcher proceeded with the remaining interview questions until all seven broad, general research questions and probing questions had been asked. This researcher asked the participant if there was anything else she wanted to say that the researcher did not previously ask or if she wanted to add to something she had already said. This researcher thanked her for participating in this study and reminded her that she will receive a transcribed copy of the interview within 2 weeks for her review, edit or amendment. This researcher informed the participant that if her edited, transcribed interview was not returned to the researcher within 10 days, it will be presumed to reflect her true thoughts and feelings and no further action will be required on her part. This researcher turned off the recorder and escorted her to the childcare room or to the exit. This researcher continued to make field notes about the encounter in the journal.

The participants for this study chose to be interviewed at their residences. The researcher confirmed the participant's address. This researcher inquired as to the participant's need for childcare so that the 30 – 45 minutes spent during the interview might proceed smoothly and with minimal interruptions. This researcher notified the childcare provider who intended to arrive with the researcher at the location at the scheduled time. The researcher brought the field note journal, tape recorder, and interview questions. Upon arrival, this researcher allowed the participant to direct the team to the appropriate rooms for the interview and the childcare. The researcher used the

battery-operation feature of the portable tape recorder so as not to inconvenience the participant to search an available AC outlet to plug in the recorder. Once seated with the participant the procedure followed the process described for conducting the interview in the school setting.

Telephone interview. Telephone interviews were considered an option for participants in this study when the researcher and participant are unable to agree on a suitable meeting time or place for the face-to-face interview or at the discretion of the participant. This form of data collection would be less appealing for this research study because it does not allow the researcher to record valuable environmental and non-verbal data. For this approach, this researcher acquired additional equipment such as a telephone adaptor to connect the audio recorder to the telephone. To complete the telephone interview, this researcher contacted the participant to schedule the interview. Telephone interviews were not conducted for this research and no participant requested a telephone interview.

Field notes provided significant, relevant data to that provided by spoken words during the face-to-face and telephone interview. Field notes are words that record descriptive and reflective events during the interview process (Creswell, 2009). For this study, hand-written descriptive and reflective field notes would be entered in a journal to document the physical setting and describe anomalies that would contribute to the narrative. Descriptive field notes would have detailed what happened as revealed to the researcher by the participant. Reflective field notes would document this researcher's thoughts, insights, and possible broad ideas that emerge during the interview. Examples of those entries might have included hand gestures and eye movements this researcher

might witnessed during face-to-face data collection, or background sounds, pauses, vocal inflections, throat-clearing or loud sighs during telephone data collection, as well as the thoughts and reactions experienced by this researcher before, during and after each interview. The field notes were used to expand on the interview transcript portion of the data noting thoughts, emotions and environmental cues. Once the interview had been transcribed, this interviewer included annotations of the transcription process as expressed in the field notes. This researcher's reactions, thoughts and feelings were found in the field notes as reflective notes (Cohen et al., 2000). As part of the interview process, participants might be asked to keep documents such as a journal, diary, and any personal letters related to the phenomena; this researcher might also analyze relevant public documents, examine autobiographies and biographies, solicit photographs, conduct chart audits and review medical records.

Prior to calling the participant at the scheduled time, this researcher would have connected and tested the recording device. At the scheduled time, the researcher would have called the participant. This researcher would have initiate a short icebreaker conversation after a proper introduction before delving into a scripted interview (Appendix F). This researcher would have advised the participant that the tape recorder will be turned on so that it can be tested to make sure our conversation will be loud and clear. Once the equipment operation is confirmed, this researcher would have again advised the participant that the conversation will be recorded and that she may discontinue the interview at any time without penalty against herself or her child in the Head Start program. This researcher would have announced that the recorder will be turned on to begin our interview.

This researcher would have advised the participant that along with tape recording the interview, this researcher would take descriptive and reflective field notes in a journal to help this researcher remember questions or thoughts that occurred to the researcher as the interview proceeded. This researcher would have asked the participant if she had any questions regarding the interview or this research before we proceeded with the first question. This researcher would have answered all questions until the participant was satisfied. This researcher would have then presented the first research question (Appendix G). This researcher would have allowed ample time for the participant to respond and would have asked follow-up and probing questions for clarification or to gain greater insight. This researcher would have proceeded with the remaining interview questions until all seven broad, general research questions and probing questions had been asked. This researcher would have asked the participant if there is anything else she would like to say that the researcher did not previously ask or if she wanted to add to something she already said. This researcher would have thanked her for participating in this study and reminded her that she will receive a transcribed copy of the interview within 2 weeks for her review, edit or amendment. This researcher would have informed the participant that if her edited transcribed interview is not returned to the researcher within 10 days, it will be presumed to reflect her true thoughts and feelings and no further action will be required on her part. This researcher would have announced that the tape recorder will be turned off. The researcher would have thanked her for her participation in this study and would have hung up the phone. Each participant would have received a 'Thank You' letter by mail (see Appendix I) explaining the importance of her participation in the study no later than 7 days after the completion of the interview. The completion of the face-to-

face and telephone interviews and the collection of the interview responses from the participants marked the conclusion of the data collection segment of this proposed qualitative study.

Data saturation. Data saturation is a subjective determination made by the researcher according to the research methodology chosen (Creswell, 2009). In hermeneutic phenomenology, saturation was achieved when discussions or interviews with participants ceased to contribute to or clarify an understanding of the experience. In other words, data saturation was that point at which the same results were derived from a new sample of the population and no new information or insights were expressed (Saldana, 2013). This researcher scanned for data saturation as each interview was transcribed soon after the completion of each interview. The data saturation was confirmed during the data analysis phase of this proposed study.

This phenomenological study attracted a sufficient number of participants to accomplish data saturation and minimize the potential for bias (Creswell, 2013). Data saturation was achieved by the fifth interview, and interviews continued through the sixth interview. Had data saturation not been achieved by the fifth interview, additional interviews with new participants would have been scheduled until saturation was achieved. The selection of additional participants would have come from the pool of participants who were identified during the initial recruiting process. These new interviews would have been conducted in the same manner as the previous five interviews by following exactly the interview protocols. It is during the data analysis phase of this study that data saturation was identified.

This researcher sought specific examples and quotes to reflect themes by reading and rereading each transcript and when it is obvious that no new information emerged during the transcript reviews, this researcher concluded that data saturation occurred (Creswell, 2009; Saldana, 2013). To determine data saturation prior to that, this researcher carefully read and reviewed the interview as it was being transcribed, making note of any recurring themes or comments. When it appeared that no new information emerged, this researcher made note of that and a more thorough review of the transcripts took place after all interviews had been completed. Organizing the vast volume of data was a critical component in preparation for analyzing the data.

Data management. This qualitative phenomenological study generated a large volume of data in the form of words requiring systematic, organized management (Creswell, 2013). Careful management of each participant's data ensured that credibility and ethical considerations were observed and that participant's privacy was maintained. Audio recordings of each interview were transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy as quickly as possible after each interview (Cohen, et al., 2000). Transcriptions were carefully accomplished by playing and replaying audio recordings and accurately digitizing the interview verbatim into a Word document (Creswell, 2013). When transcribing, this researcher created 2-inch margins on each side of the text document to jot down notes (Cohn et al., 2000; Creswell, 2013). This researcher allowed enough space on the page between the researcher's comments and the participant's comments (Creswell, 2013). This researcher highlighted the questions this researcher asked to distinguish the end of one question and the beginning of another (Creswell, 2008). Headers that clearly defined the interview were applied to each page of the transcription.

All words were transcribed. Segments in the interview where extended pauses occur were noted in brackets, as were inaudible or non-verbal utterances and environmental sounds (Saldana, 2013).

Each transcript was reread at least twice to ensure an exact rendition of the participant's words were captured. Once transcribed and reviewed for accuracy by this researcher, the participant was provided with a copy of her transcribed interview for final verification and approval as a member check (see Ethical Considerations). Member checks improved accuracy and transcript up-dates reflecting the participant's feedback confirmed transcript accuracy (Creswell, 2013). Field notes were scanned to convert them into digital documents allowing this researcher to store a digital copy on a home computer and a hard copy in a separate locked safe maintained and accessible only to this researcher. Any documents bearing the participant's signature such as the Informed Consent form were likewise electronically scanned and placed in two separate folders to ensure confidentiality. A backup copy of the scanned items was collected on a flash drive and stored in a safe in the researcher's residence. The scanned and coded interviews were downloaded into NVivo11.4.1 Pro Student for more specific theme development.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an inductive process of developing a general sense of the data and then coding descriptions and themes about the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2008) using tables, figures, and narratives (Creswell, 2008; Saldana, 2013). The framework method of data analysis, developed in the latter part of the 20th Century, was implemented to allow this researcher to systematically categorize and organize thematic data (Gale et al., 2013). This method allowed this researcher to apply deductive and/or

inductive analysis according to the central research question. The interviews for this study produced text that was organized and transcribed manually and electronically. Manual and electronic analysis techniques are considered best practice to ensure that data analysis will allow the researcher to grasp the essence of the data (Creswell, 2008). For this study, hand analysis involved a line-by-line reading of the text and assigning a code that described the important passages. Electronic analysis involved digital coding using a computer analysis of qualitative data (CAQDAS).

During this phase of the study, this researcher documented ideas and organized the raw data, including field notes, to evaluate the need for more data. To compile the estimated thousands of words into an organized description of the phenomena for interpretation, this researcher began the process of immersion in the text database. The text database (interviews and field notes) produced groups of sentences that will be divided into segments to discern meaning from each group of sentences. Words and/or pictures were analyzed to describe the central phenomenon in the study. The outcome was a narrative description of the individuals who participated in the study. Ultimately, the desired outcome was to describe people as well as identify themes. This researcher was then able to associate the meaning of the data with findings related to existing, related research (Saldana, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). To that end, data collected for this study was manipulated, sorted, reorganized and interpreted by (a) immersion in the data, (b) data reduction, (c) thematic analysis and (d) narrative writing.

Immersion. Immersion is the first step in becoming intimately familiar with the data collected through interviewing. It involved repeatedly listening to the audiotape. This researcher began this step during the interviews by actively listening and thinking

about the meaning of what the participant said. Temporary labels were assigned to those meanings when transcribed. A more careful analysis took place during immersion of the data. To achieve data immersion for this study, this researcher played and replayed audio files of interviews while wearing headphones to minimize distraction and improve accuracy in transferring audio to text. After transcribing the audio file, this researcher again read and reread the transcript and made any additions or corrections discovered. The act of repeating the replay several times and rereading the transcript gave this researcher familiarity with the narrative, an ability to identify possible themes, and an improved understanding of data. This step in the process allowed the researcher to bring the lived experiences and meanings expressed by the participants into actuality within the context and purpose of this proposed study. To retain transparency throughout the analysis of the data collected, this researcher noted any researcher bias and potential implicit assumptions that might affect the data.

Data reduction. Data reduction is a technique for editing the data. Using this technique allowed this researcher to decide on data that is not relevant to the research and eliminate it, reorganize the data, and simplify the spoken language of the participant. This researcher then determined the unit of analysis, edit the interview transcripts to eliminate off-topic and digressions, and to synchronize data within each unit of analysis (interview). Whole interviews are suitable units of analysis as long as there is enough encompassing data as was the case for this study. This researcher used data reduction to eliminate passages where the participant had changed the topic, digressed or removed extraneous verbalizations and vocalizations. This researcher was then able to reorganize

the interviews to connect relevant discussions of the same topic for line-by-line coding essential for thematic analysis (Saldana, 2013).

Coding. Coding is a qualitative research data analysis construct that allowed this researcher to translate individual data reveal patterns of responses. Although some researchers prefer to rely on phenomenological interpretations of the themes and meanings of texts (Saldana, 2013), this proposed study used coding as an essential element in interpreting meanings of texts. Coding for this study allowed related narrative data to be unified by forming, reforming and connecting to other data strands (Grbich, 2007). Coding methods for this study was identified according to First Cycle and Second Cycle coding methods to demonstrate the cyclical rather than linear nature of coding. Each cycle was divided into subcategories. First cycle methods occurred during the initial coding of data. The unique nature of each qualitative study determined the coding method. The central and related research questions governed the specific coding choice this researcher made.

With that knowledge, the data for this study applied the Initial Coding method of data analysis. Initial Coding method or Open Coding, is a First Cycle method (Saldana, 2013). It served to break down qualitative data into discrete parts, which allowed this researcher to closely examine and compare for similarities and differences. This researcher remained open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by data readings from participant interview transcripts, field notes, journals, and other media forms that helped tell the participants lived experiences (Saldana, 2013). Initial coding for this study occurred when this researcher assigned a word or phrase to the participant's salient transcribed narratives and the researcher's field notes. Discrete parts of the data were

closely examined in search of similarities and differences. During this phase of the process, this researcher was able to reflect upon the contents of this data to become intimate with its nuances. Initial coding was a first step in this study's coding process and led to in-vivo or literal coding. In vivo coding permitted this researcher to use the actual words and phrases from the data recorded to broaden the knowledge and understanding of the lived experience of the participant. As each transcript was reviewed, this researcher carefully watched for impacting nouns, action-oriented verbs, evocative word choices, clever or ironic phrases, similes and metaphors. The frequent use of such words and phrases merited a code that provided an important alert as to whether this researcher understood what was significant. It also illuminated and consolidated meanings. This form of coding led to the emergence of themes.

Themes. Themes are categories and represent outcomes of coding, categorization and analytic reflection, and do not receive coding (Creswell, 2008; Saldana, 2013). A theme conceptualizes a recurring pattern to give meaning and identity to an experience. They are extended phrases or a sentence that defines a unit of data (Saldana, 2013). Themes are created when similar codes are linked together to form a major idea and might be classified as major or subthemes (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, 15 codes might be reduced to three or four major themes by eliminating redundancies (Creswell, 2009). Themes take on the role of summarizing what is going on, explaining what is happening or describe why something was done a certain way.

For this study, this researcher assigned themes according to an overall understanding of the text. To assign themes, this researcher examined the data line-by-line and labeled the important phrases with tentative theme names. Passages with similar

themes were viewed together for similarities. This researcher then compared the labeled passages with passages with similar labels. This researcher analyzed themes for various perspectives or viewpoints as well as for perspectives that did not support the themes. To add further insight into this study, this researcher accomplished layering and interrelating themes to depict major and minor themes in this study. Layering involved rank ordering themes from basic to sophisticated. This researcher then examined themes to determine if they were interrelated or connected to show time-lines and sequences. Themes that clarified the essence and primary elements of what the participants meant were developed from each participant's unrestricted interview responses after they had been transcribed. This phase in the process allowed this researcher to then display findings visually in the form of figures or pictures that represented the research question. A discussion of ethical considerations throughout this research project follows the discussion of representing the findings through narrative report writing.

Narrative writing. Presenting the findings of this study is this researcher's detailed summary of the findings from the data analysis. This step was accomplished after coding the data, analyzing it to apply themes, and manipulating themes (Creswell, 2008). Findings were presented in tables and figures with a descriptive narrative of the response to this study's research questions (Creswell, 2013). This study provided detailed written narrative using the theme and quote method to ensure ethical considerations are respectfully observed. This is a synopsis of the research presented in its entirety. The theme and quote method allowed this researcher to describe the overall themes followed by quotes that exemplify the source of the theme within the data. In addition, unlike quantitative research methods, qualitative research allowed this researcher to interject

personal biases, values and assumptions into the reporting to explain how personal experiences and cultural background influence interpretations and conclusions drawn in the study (Creswell, 2008). During this phase of the study, this researcher distinguished the current study findings from those of previous research; delineate future research to advance knowledge on the topic, and detail social implications and personal and professional values.

This researcher wrote and rewrote a narrative description of the lived experiences of the participants' beliefs, attitudes and needs as their preschool age children in a Head Start program in a suburban elementary school develop literacy skills. By doing so, this researcher presented a coherent picture of the lived experiences of the parents who participated in this study in the words and symbolic representations as expressed by the participants. The field notes helped to contextualize and distill themes that arose from the interview data during this process. For this study, the narrative began with a summary of the preceding chapters including the purpose statement in chapter one, the salient discussions in chapter two of current literature on this topic along with the theoretical perspective that influenced the current study, and a careful depiction of the methodology for this proposed study in chapter three. Additionally, this researcher proposed future research to deepen and expand knowledge on this topic given the in-depth research done in the course of completing this current study.

To summarize, data analysis occurs because of systematically assembling textual and structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). Data analysis from each participant was based on the stated purpose of this research (See Chapter 1). The participants' lived experiences were structured according to the participant's interpretation of those

experiences in narrative form. The data collected (recorded interviews, pictures, and/or journal provided by the participant, and field notes) were analyzed to show the arrangement, significance, structure, and consistency of the occurrences and groupings. Data were collected from screening surveys, field notes and interview audio recordings. Each participant's data was prepared for analysis by first transcribing the data by hand then electronically using software designed to code qualitative research and applying data reduction techniques. Transcribing data was best achieved by immersion in the data, data reduction, thematic analysis and utilizing a theme and quote narrative writing style.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were made prior to conducting this present study, when the study began, during data collection, during data analysis, during the reporting of the data, and during publication of the study (Creswell, 2013). Prior to initiating this phenomenological study, a Concept was submitted to the university for approval followed by a research Proposal. The Proposal detailed current research, ethical standards as well as methodology for this study. Additionally, a research site was selected and local approval for the study was secured. Ethical considerations directed this researcher to ensure participants and stakeholders were apprised of the purpose of the study. This researcher ensured that all participants were aware of their rights and responsibilities as study participants, that they will be safe, that they will be respected and that their identities will be protected at all times throughout this research.

Ethical considerations during data collection involved maintaining an unobtrusive profile as possible at the research site. Ethical problems were avoided by ensuring that the researcher for this study developed trust relationships between the researcher and the

participants. Interactions with all stakeholders for this study were treated with the utmost respect. A demonstrated respect for the site instilled trust in the study as well as the researcher. Communications were forthright, honest, and plainspoken to avoid any impression of deception, disrespect, or exploitation. To ensure open and honest communication that allowed the participants' own beliefs, attitudes and needs were captured, this researcher presented open-ended questions during the one-on-one interviews and allow the participant to share her story in her own words.

During data analysis, ethical issues were avoided by ensuring multiple perspectives and contrary findings would be reported, by ensuring privacy will be protected by using pseudonyms to identify different participants, and by avoiding disclosing information that would harm participants. This study presented data honestly, sought permission where appropriate, preserved participant anonymity and communicated using language appropriate for the designated audiences (Creswell, 2008). Participants and stakeholders were provided copies of the final report. Additional ethical considerations involved trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability as described next.

Trustworthiness. A qualitative research study defines trustworthiness as the collective result of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Differentially, trustworthiness in quantitative research is identified by validity, generalizability, reliability, and objectivity (Shenton 2004). The aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the premise that the research findings are acknowledgeable, important, relevant, and accurate (Shenton, 2004). Strategies to establish trustworthiness for this proposed study involved triangulation, member check,

and external audit to ensure findings and interpretations are accurate. Triangulation was achieved by collecting data from a review of the literature, field notations, and findings from the interviews. The data was then integrated and compared by reading and re-reading to determine similarities that supported themes. To increase the assurance of reliable answers to interview questions, the questions were rephrased. Respondents were assured that there are no wrong answers and that this investigation will, in no way, affect theirs or their child's relationship with the school staff or the child's teacher. The researcher provided a transcribed copy of the interview to the participant no later than one week after the interview to allow the participant to immediately verify the validity of the information contained in the interview. This technique, referred to as member checking, allowed the participant to review what was said in response to the interview questions. The respondent was allowed to may recant, edit and modify any comments she deemed inappropriately reflect her thoughts and attitudes. Interview participants were able to provide feedback and ask questions about identified themes in the data collected by using member checking.

Credibility. Credibility of findings indicates the truthfulness of the study (Shenton, 2004). It asks the question of whether or not the study measures precisely what it purports to measure. Credibility correlates with internal validity used in qualitative research and is considered the most important measure of trust-worthiness. It involves establishing the participants believe the results of this study and that this researcher analyzed and concluded the evidence accurately (K. Yeung, n.d.). This researcher revealed details of steps taken to recruit participants, how the interviews were conducted, as well as how data were collected and analyzed. Credibility reporting relied on this

researcher's ability to use well-established research methodology, triangulation and member checking. This researcher will also incorporate member checking to validate the accuracy of the study's findings. To accomplish member checking, this researcher asked one or more participants to verify the completeness and realism of the transcript, if the themes were accurate, and if the interpretations were fair and representative (Creswell, 2008).

Transferability. Transferability correlates with quantitative research's notion of generalizability. It signifies that this body of work may be applied to other related scientific inquiry. It indicates the degree to which findings are pertinent in other events. The cautionary yardstick for transferability is in the investigators' belief that their situation is similar to that described in this current study based on contextual data (Shenton, 2004) and it must be understood within the context of the arena in which the fieldwork was accomplished (Shenton, 2004). The interview protocol was first piloted with two parents of small children who fit the study criteria to verify that the interview questions were clear and unbiased and yielded meaningful information (Creswell, 2013). Results of the pilot were not included in the study data analysis but resulted in restructuring some of the questions. To ensure transferability, this study proposed to collect in-depth information from study participants about their beliefs, attitudes, and needs as their preschool age children develop literacy skills, by asking open-ended questions and following up with additional probes as appropriate.

Detailed information and descriptions through each step of the research process, including the methods of data collection and analysis, provided a guideline for others interested in this topic to follow. Researchers in other settings can decide, based on the

various steps, what is applicable to his or her study. Should a researcher desire to better understand the lived experiences of low SES parents when preparing preschool age children for literacy development, following the steps detailed in this research study will support efforts in developing a structured hermeneutic phenomenological study.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the degree to which research findings are consistent and repeatable (Shenton, 2004). Research designs are the specific procedures involved in data collection, data analysis and report dependability of this study relied on the implementation of procedures for accomplishing a hermeneutic phenomenological study. Electing to conduct this research as a qualitative research design ensured dependability. Several means to achieve dependability were applied to this proposed study. To show dependability a clear, detailed description of the interview process using hermeneutic phenomenological approach detailed previously in this chapter were applied. The open-ended, semi-structured questions with probes provided detailed descriptions of the research and allowed other researchers to repeat this study. To further aid in dependability, the researcher manually transcribed the interviews and upload transcribed text to NVivo Data Analysis software.

Conformability. Conformability means the researcher is neutral to the subject, excluding the thoughts of reshaping the data into matters reflecting self-interests is often determined through a formal external research audit (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). It is a mechanism by which this study showed efforts to minimize researcher bias, reveal shortcomings in the study's methods and the effects of those shortcomings (Shenton, 2004). The researcher for this study ensured careful record management of all recorded interviews, field notes and transcripts to meet conformability standard. This researcher

ensured that personal experiences did not inadvertently overshadow those of the participants. This was accomplished by careful reflection and recording of personal experiences and impressions in the field notes. Doing so increased the likelihood of clear themes emerging from the transcribed interviews will reflect those of the participant's experiences.

Potential research bias. Bias is considered in the validation process of qualitative research. Bias is interpretive and is determined according to the researchers' own perspective on the researchers' role in the study, interpretation of the findings, and political history that shapes those interpretations (Creswell, 2008). As a result, the researcher must ensure that credibility of the findings and strategies to validate research accuracy is unquestionable. The point of bias reduction for this study was to affirm that lived experiences of the participants were reported accurately in accordance with what the participants intended, and were distinguishable from those of this researcher's (Cohen et al., 2000). Bias reduction was accomplished in this study by employing triangulation, external audit and member checking strategies. Triangulation strategy allowed this researcher to collect and integrate theories (Creswell, 2013); data from each participant interview; field notes and any documents, photographs, and letters the participant shared to corroborate evidence of the lived experience (Creswell, 2008); as well as to validate the results of the inquiry (Creswell, 2013). The premise for conducting bias reduction for this study was to diminish, as much as possible, the perspectives and historical circumstances this researcher might have interjected into reading and interpreting data about the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). By triangulating data from participant interviews, field notes, information gathered from documents and pictures the participant

shared during the interview, and previous research discussed in Chapter 2, this researcher was able to highlight participant perspectives and themes and to show accuracy in the data collected. An external audit was achieved when this researcher reviewed the transcripts against the audio recordings no less than twice. Member checking was used to confirm the completeness, realism and accuracy of the transcripts by asking each participant to review her data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions to affirm its accuracy or to make additions, corrections or deletions (Creswell, 2013).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 discussed the ideas, research design, methodology, and instrument development for conducting the study. This chapter reviewed the use of hermeneutic phenomenology as a research design that was employed to discover the meaning and essence of the lived experiences of low SES parents whose preschool age children are at risk for developing literacy skills at the same level of competency as their age peers who have an economic advantaged. Chapter 3 described the instruments that were used to gather data as well as the process by which the instruments were used. Qualitative data was collected using face-to-face interviews to explore the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by low SES parents as their preschool age children develop literacy skills. The research sample population for this qualitative study consisted of approximately six self-identified, low SES parents of children eligible for the Head Start program in suburban Pacific Northwest region of the United States.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by parents with children in the Head Start program in a suburban elementary school as their preschool age children develop literacy skills. Six study participants provided data for this study through in-depth, face-to-face interviews. The data were then analyzed to address the central research question: What do low SES parents understand is their role in introducing literacy to their preschool age children and the resources they believe will support their efforts?" The following sub-questions were addressed in this phenomenological study:

R1: What importance do low SES parents place on literacy development before their children enter kindergarten?

R2: What do low SES parents say about the best time to begin helping their children develop literacy skills?

R3: What obstacles do parents feel impede their ability to help their children gain literacy skills?

This researcher employed a qualitative phenomenological hermeneutic study methodology making it likely to produce valid results and increasing the likelihood of reproducibility. Qualitative research has been used in educational inquiry since the late 20th century and has proven to be most effective in defining the lived experiences of the research subjects (Creswell, 2008). Qualitative research yields data in words. Pictures, charts and diagrams may be used to clarify the narrative data. Hermeneutic is a qualitative study methodology that allows the researcher to understand the essence of the

lived experience of the participant as described by the participant as well as the constructs that justify the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This study sought to understand from the parents' perspective the essence of their experience related to preschool children's literacy development.

Data collection included a pilot study, in-depth interviews, and detailed field notes recorded in writing before, during, and after each interview. The data collected and analyzed through this study allowed this researcher to understand the beliefs, attitudes, and needs of parents of preschool age children eligible for Head Start in a Pacific Northwest city. Chapter 4 will detail the narrative data collected from six in-depth, face-to-face interviews. This chapter will identify the common themes associated with the research questions. A summary of the results from the six interviews conclude Chapter 4.

Population and Sample Selection

The intended participants for this study were parents of preschool age children enrolled in a suburban Head Start located in a public elementary school. This form of recruitment is called convenience sampling (Creswell, 2008). Snowball sampling was ultimately used to recruit participants because the minimum number of participants needed to conduct a viable qualitative study was not obtained. The information meeting was advertised as a pizza and pop event offering free childcare, pizza, soft drinks, and dessert. The meeting proceeded as planned even as it became evident that the meeting would not be well attended. The low turn-out at the meeting may have been the result of the researcher's contact information not appearing on the flyer (although all other correspondences related to the study included this researcher's contact information), the location of the meeting, and confusion about the location of the meeting. The school staff

referred inquirers about the meeting to contact the library (the meeting venue) rather than this researcher which may have been a mitigating factor in the low turnout rate as well. The parent who attended the meeting reported that other interested parents were confused about the meeting location. She agreed to participate in the study, completed the screening form and signed the informed consent, but later withdrew consent citing objection by her husband. This researcher requested the parent to kindly identify others who might be interested in participating in this study. This technique, called snowball sampling, attracted the interest of one family who met with the researcher, completed the screening questions and reviewed and signed the informed consent form. During this meeting, the parents explained that they expected this research to include tutoring for their children. The parents were not native English speakers and this researcher read the initial screening form, informed consent, answered their questions, and described, in extensive details, the purpose of the study. They committed themselves to the study and wanted a relative not present at the meeting to translate the screening form and informed consent. However, the parents were unresponsive to multiple attempts to schedule the face-to-face interview and were ultimately dropped from the study.

The information meeting which was expected to be held in the school common area was relocated to a public library 1.5 miles away at the direction of the major stakeholders in the school district and the school. This relocation may have reduced the opportunity for parents to attend and afforded this researcher the opportunity to seek participants using snowball sampling. This researcher reached out to church congregants, friends, acquaintances, and neighbors seeking parents of preschool age children who qualify for Head Start. Ten prospective participants were referred or identified using this

method of recruitment and were contacted by this researcher. Six willing participants resulted from this effort. This researcher called each referral after their contact information was provided by her intermediary. One intermediary referred two daughters who fit the demographic population of the study. Neither returned this researcher's multiple calls and text messages and were ultimately disregarded. At this point recruitment was discontinued and six volunteers were recognized as study participants.

This researcher agreed to meet each participant at her home at the time specified by the participant. The data collected through the six in-depth interviews allowed this researcher to extract the common themes associated with the research questions. This researcher determined data saturation was achieved after five interviews. A viable qualitative study includes data collection from no less than five participants (Creswell, 2008, 2013, Saldana, 2013). Given the challenges in recruiting subjects, this researcher proceeded with interviews with all who expressed an interest in participating in this study.

Demographics. This study involved in-depth interviews with six women with current or past experience with Head Start. The six participants were women between the ages of 25 and 50 with one to three children. The children were ages 3 to late 20 years of age. One participant claimed extensive experience with young adults who she identified as having deficits in literacy skills. The study participants were all female parents with at least one child who qualified for Head Start. Two participants requested to be identified by their given first names, two participants inquired about the use of a pseudonym but expressed no preference to be identified either by pseudonym or by her given name, two participants wanted to be identified by the use of a pseudonym. Each participant was

assigned a single digit number according to the order of her interview to preserve continuity in identifying participants when writing this report. Participants' requests to be recognized by their given names was honored by placing their names in parenthesis.

Five of the six study participants identified themselves as African Americans and one participant identified herself as White. One of the five who preferred to identify herself as African American also claimed multiracial heritage. Two participants lived with their parents in single family residential homes in middle class neighborhoods, one participant lived in subsidized apartment housing, two participants rented town homes in working-class neighborhoods, and one participant did not reveal her living status. Three participants (50%) completed high school and three participants (50%) reported having "some college experience."

One participant (16.6%) reported being married, one participant (16.6%) reported being single, never married, and four participants (66%) reported being divorced. Of the divorced mothers, four (100%) reported having little, no, or strained relations with the father. The single mother reported a collaborative relationship with the father as it related to the care and raising of their preschool age child and a poor personal relationship with the child's father. Three participants (50%) had one child between the ages of 3 to 6 years, two participants had two or more children between the ages of 7 to 12 years, and one participant had two or more children between 13 to 20 years of age. Overall, the pool of participants was relatively small and no participant could be identifiable to others who might review this report (except those who purposefully requested that their identities be revealed). All participants were recruited using snowball sampling. Three of the families

recruited for this study by snowball sampling (50%) had or will have children who might qualify for Head Start.

Data Collection

Narrative data was collected in the form of interviews. Interviews were scheduled less than one week after initial contact with the participants. During scheduling and prior to the start of the interview, each participant was informed that her participation is voluntary and that she may withdraw at any time without penalty. Numerical pseudonyms were assigned according to the order in which the interview was conducted. One of the two participants who preferred to be identified by her given name, Participant 2 (Jamaica), was instrumental in this researcher's recruiting efforts by encouraging her family members to participate in this study. One family member agreed to participate only on the condition that the interview would somehow benefit Jamaica. That family member decided not to participate in this study. The six willing participants were identified after 2 months recruiting effort. The first interview was conducted on June 4th and the last interview was conducted on June 30th.

Interview process. Interviews were conducted at a variety of venues depending on the participant's preference. Four of the six interviews (66%) took place in the participants' homes, one interview (16.6%) was held in a classroom at the participant's church, and one interview (16.6%) was conducted at the home of a third party. The interview settings allowed for safe and comfortable conversations between the participant and this researcher that allowed this researcher to collect valid data. However, one interview was conducted in an upstairs room in a home where a birthday celebration was proceeding. This venue as well as the date and time were requested by the participant.

She expressed comfort about the arrangement and allowed the interview to continue. Laughter and conversations from the party were audible and distracting to this researcher and appeared to distract the participant periodically.

Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Prior to activating the audio recorder, this researcher reviewed the purpose of this study, answered the interviewees' questions, and provided them with a copy of the interview questions along with a printed copy of the power point presentation prepared for the information meeting held previously. This researcher informed participants that their participation was voluntary and that they may withdraw from participation at any time without fear or concern for reprisal. All participants agreed to proceed with the interview and signed the Informed Consent.

Prior to the start of the recorded interview this researcher provided detailed description of the purpose of the study and why this researcher became interested in studying the topic of this study. Each participant was provided an Initial Screening Form and allowed time to complete the form before proceeding to the Informed Consent. The participants completed and signed the Informed Consent before continuing with the interview.

The Interview Protocol was given to each participant and she was invited to read along as this researcher read the interview script. The participants were encouraged to ask questions before continuing to the recorded interview. Participant 2 (Jamaica) inquired about how participating in the interview would help this interviewer and a discussion about supporting women who attempt to achieve high goals ensued. When it was clear that there were no questions, each participant was given a copy of the Interview

Questions and as much time as needed to review the questions before the recorded interview commenced.

During the interviews, this researcher noted in a journal the participant's demeanor, the surroundings and any interruptions that occurred as well as this researcher's own thoughts and impressions. At the end of each interview, the participants were given opportunities to add any information that they felt was relevant to the purpose of the research. Participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without retribution. The participants were informed that they would receive a transcribed copy of their respective interviews for their review and approval within two weeks via their chosen contact modality and that their approval would be assumed if they did not contact this researcher within two weeks after they received their transcribed interviews. Respective interviews were sent by email attachment to each participant. One email was marked as undeliverable and no other contact information was provided by the participant.

Data saturation. Data saturation is that point where no new data is collected during subsequent interviews (Creswell, 2008; Cohen et al., 2000). For this qualitative study, data saturation was achieved in five in-depth interviews. Initially, it appeared data saturation was achieved after three in-depth interviews. This researcher continued to conduct face-to-face interviews to include all who had a desire to participate. Participant 4 introduced gender identity as new information and Participant 5 allowed for a racially diverse participant pool, but contributed no new data. The sixth interview yielded no new insights or information when compared to the previous five interviews. Since the nature of the selection process was such that no guarantee of population homogeneity could be

assured, this researcher was confident that the attainment of data saturation was met in five interviews. Sets and subsets became apparent after five interviews, and the sixth interview did not add additional categories or sub categories to be included in developing themes. The sixth interview supported the previous five in that it did not identify additional sets or subsets. The compilation of the data confirmed data saturation had been achieved.

Data Analysis

The process of analyzing the data began as early as the transcription of each audio recorded interview into a Microsoft Word document. The digital recordings were secured on one digital memory card designated for the purpose of this research as outlined in Chapter 3 of this report. No other data was stored on the memory card. The content of the memory card was uploaded to this researcher's personal, private desktop computer and password protected. Each transcribed interview was read two times and notes, insights, and clarifications were annotated in the margins. This step in the process was an essential effort to validated the transcribed interview.

Internal reviews. This researcher validated the transcripts against the digitally recorded interviews twice using Bose Soundlink headphones to ensure accuracy. Some corrections to complete the expressed thoughts of the participant were necessary. These changes were made to better capture the participants' thoughts that were missed because of cross-talk during the interviews and enhanced data coding and analysis.

External reviews. After this researcher completed the internal review, the transcripts were emailed to the respective participant for member check as described in Chapter 3. Participants were kindly asked to review their transcripts for accuracy. They

were also asked to update and clarify their thoughts and ideas if needed. The participants were informed in the email that their interviews would be considered accurate and reflexive of their views provided this researcher did not hear from them two weeks after they received the transcription. One participant responded that the interview transcript accurately reflected her views, thoughts and ideas. One email returned to the researcher marked 'undeliverable.' This researcher verified the email address against the information provided by the participant. No other contact information was available and this researcher attempted to hand-deliver the transcript in a sealed envelope, three weeks after the original email was sent. The participant has been unreachable and validation was credited to this interview. Sixty-six percent of the participants (four of six) did not respond within the two-week time frame. A follow-up email was sent three weeks after the original email and one participant responded within two days her validation of the transcript. Three additional days were allowed for the other three of six participants to respond. After that time frame this researcher considered the transcripts were accurate and they were used in this study data analysis as was the data collected from the participant whose email was returned as undeliverable.

Data analysis process. After the participants validated interview transcriptions as described in the above Data Analysis section, this researcher used a qualitative methodology to develop categories and to identify emerging themes. Data analysis is necessary to compare and contrast information collected throughout the in-depth interviews and this researcher's field notes. The process for this study involved developing codes and themes manually as a preliminary step followed by uploading interviews into NVivo 11.4.1 for Mac, software designed to help organize, analyze, and

discover insights in unstructured and qualitative data. NVivo software allowed this researcher to quickly discover connections in the data, and to visualize trends, themes and patterns.

Category development. Categories were developed from interview transcripts and field notes (Table 1). The function of these categories was to group both general and specific information into a common area for further development and analysis. Categories were first developed manually as: (a) importance of early literacy, (b) parental knowledge and understanding of the term ‘literacy,’ (c) physical and psychological experiences (d) financial, (e) extended family support, (f) racism, (g) health issues, (h) social influences, and (i) parent education (see Table 1). Evidence of different patterns appeared through this step in the process. Interviews were then up-loaded into NVivo 11.4.1 for MAC, Student. Sub-categories were used to create data nodes. Table 2 shows sub-categories related to the respective categories and the number of participants who expressed similar beliefs and attitudes.

Summary of data analysis process. Voice recorded interviews were transcribed to provide data to be analyzed after each interview. Internal and external validation to confirm reliability were conducted by this researcher and the study participants respectively. Adjunct field notes generated during each interview allowed this researcher to create categories to distinguish sets of information to answer the research questions. Transcripts were then coded using NVivo 11.4.1. Field notes were not coded and were used to add depth and clarity to the lived experiences of the participants. Subcategories were gleaned from the details of those lived experiences by each participant.

Results

The six in-depth interviews were completed and the data were reviewed and analyzed manually and electronically to identify and understand the beliefs, attitudes, and needs of a select demographic of parents of preschool age children whose literacy skills are developing. Coding during data analysis allowed a variety of patterns to emerge that informed each research question. Patterns resulted when at least three participants related a particular sub-category.

Emerging themes. The six in-depth interviews directly aligned with the central research question and sub-questions. This researcher identified nine categories from the data collected (see Table 2). Four themes emerged to inform the research question and illuminate participants' beliefs, attitudes and needs as their children develop literacy skills for academic success. Table 2 described the themes that were identified.

Findings for Theme 1: Lack of basic understanding of the term 'literacy.'

The term 'literacy' is used frequently in discussion with parents as a general description of the early education required in early education. Some scholars adopt a contemporary interpretation of literacy acquisition on a continuum with challenges throughout one's life from early proficiency through sustainability throughout adulthood (Benavot, 2015). Early literacy skills incorporate development in vocabulary, reading comprehension as well as motivation. Participants in this study spoke of literacy in terms of how their children behaved in public and in school. Participant 1 related literacy to learning in the home as well as at her daycare: *I'm so focused on literacy and learning and progressing in that way. I believe she needs to know how to talk to her peers and interact with her peers, how to sit down and read a book, explain pictures in the book, certain things that*

are going on in the book, recognize her name, trace her name and be able to know the alphabet. Participant 2 (Jamaica), a small business owner who provided maid services to a ‘few private clients’ and whose husband “works in construction” believed her preschooler needs to know first and last names of parents, emergency contact information, colors, and numbers. Her major concern was for the safety of her child . . . And of course, along with the primary colors and alphabet, his numbers. He should be able to spell some of his name he may not be able to do it all, but recognize the letters. He can say the entire alphabet, he can say some of his numbers. I feel literacy means like an understanding. They could think or have a forethought to—okay, there’s a consequence for this action. I think that’s what literacy is, the ability to be able to think, comprehend process and understand that there are consequences for every action, there’s a reaction. . .

Participant 3 (Adrienne) is in a position to meet young offenders. She believed “*a lot of parents don’t believe in school. But, they have to send their kids to school, because it’s the only way they get state assistance.*” Her impression was that those parents considered their children as their property and that as their parents, their authority was all that mattered. She proudly announced that hers was the first generation of college students without stipulating if she, or any of them graduated from college. She believed that prior to entering kindergarten, preschool age children should know *how to spell their name, and the alphabet, then at least count to 10.* When asked what literacy means she responded *How do you answer that question? Literacy is a lot of things. For some people, knowing how to cook.* When asked how she prepared her preschool age children

for learning in kindergarten, she responded, *Oh, gosh. I read to them. I sang to them. You know, I bought them educational toys.*

Table 1

Categories, Sub-Categories by Participants

Category	Sub-Categories	Participants
1. Importance of early literacy	I feel like it's best to prepare them beforehand. Reading. Writing.	2
2. Parental knowledge and understand of the term 'literacy'	Helping your child to be the best she can be and learn; So, it's basically loving your children and praising them when do good and kind of just feel upset if found that they do something repeated but still give them a hug and say, "It's okay" so that's what I feel they do.	5
3. Physical & psychological experiences	I get bullied by people. People call me the 'B' word and the 'N' word.	2
4. Financial	Not enough money to provide basic care	6
5. Extended family support	My mom says I lie about everything, I don't talk to her anymore.	6
6. Racism	Denial of fair academic consideration based on ethnicity	5
7. Health issues	I have PTSD because CPS was trying to take away my child. I am getting chemo for cancer. I am transgender because I was born with both gentiles. I am going through the change.	1
8. Social influences	Not immersed in the climate and culture of the school or neighborhood	4
9. Parent education	I was in special education and people called me dumb; I have dyslexia	2

Table 2

Emergent Themes and Explanations

Emergent Themes	Explanation
Theme 1: Lack of basic understanding of the term 'literacy.' Reading and writing to convey meaning, letter/sound recognition, motivation, vocabulary, print awareness, narrative skills, letter knowledge.	Study participants were asked what they understood the term literacy to mean. None of the participants indicated that it is related to sound/letter recognition, reading, or narrative skills
Theme 2: Extended Family Participation. Family members, neighbors, friends and coworkers who actively participate in the literacy development of the child.	When asked who read to the child or helped care for the child's needs when the mother was at work, 83% of participants indicated a grandparent, absent father, or a sibling. Family gatherings were a large influence in the social structure of the preschool child's life. One participant indicated daycare as the primary source of support.
Theme 3: Perception of racial biases. Impressions that their child is being treated differently because of physical differences or racial biases.	Study participants (67%) indicated that their preschool age child had one or no friends from their class. Those same parents stated they felt compelled to strongly advocate on their child's behalf because of reported classroom behavior problems the teachers identified as impeding their learning. These parents felt their children were not given the same academic consideration because of the color of their skin.
Theme 4: Limited financial resources. The availability of funds to buy books, games, toys as well as enough food and clothing.	When asked about financial resources, the participants reported having to make choices that excluded pleasure, buying books and toys over paying bills.

Participant 4. This participant apparently struggled with learning disabilities as a child and recounted the difficulties she faced as a result. *I hope that she gets blessed with the good tools that she, that she don't go to Special Ed like I have.* She believed that

parents are charged with *helping your child to be the best that they can be and learn where they can learn...* this participant believes she helps her child *“I read a lot and we do—we talk about numbers. I help her write her name out. We use ABCmouse.”*

Participant 5. *I believe preschools are always a good option. Every summer I do...a lot of reading, a lot of storytelling, a lot of counting and learning different languages. Literacy is learning wise stuff, learning as much as you can and teaching your kids from right from wrong and really affirming things that they're not supposed to do and things that they need to do and stuff...*

Participant 6. *I think it means not only being able to like, read or write but also understanding what you are reading and writing and saying. I have heard that you should read to them when they are in the womb. I thought it was ridiculous to talk to my belly.*

Findings for Theme 2: Extended Family Participation. All six participants reported relying on parents, grandparents and siblings to help support their children's learning and development. Eighty-three percent of the participants in this study reported being divorced or single. Five of the six participants shared custody with the absent fathers, however, they reported having poor relations with them. One of the five participants, Participant 3, had older, independent children and chose not to comment on their relationship with their father. Four of the six mothers who participated in this study reported that the primary strain in the relationship resulted from a difference in parenting styles. Participant 1 reported unwelcomed interference from her in-laws contributed to the stress she felt daily. Participant 6 had no relationship with the biological father and complained about the inconsistency of child support she received, stating it was

insufficient to buy basic groceries. Five of the six participants relied heavily on maternal family relations for social gatherings and child-rearing support including before-and-after school care when needed. Participant 4 relied on the support and guidance of the homeless shelter where she lived and her child's daycare for developing reading skills.

Participant 5 reported that her ex-husband's first language was not English. After their divorce, they continued to live near each other and that her small children spend at least three days per week with the paternal family. When in their presence, the children are exposed to the language of their father which Participant 5 does not speak. Participant 5 expressed concern that parental supervision was not in the best interest of the children and the added confusion of learning another language further fractured the relationship between both families and contributed to the stress she feels as a single parent.

Participant 6. *I live in a multi-generational home and I believe (my daughter's) literacy is always, her education as a whole is always the focal point.* This participant lives with her single mother who adopted and raised her as a single mother. She supports both of them and this participant reported lacks nothing.

Participant 1. *Well, the struggle of it is not really having much family support that's there. ...there was like days where you wanna be able to speak to somebody, or you wanna be able to just have a moment to yourself.* She indicated that the father of her youngest was unreliable due to substance abuse and the father of her oldest is unavailable to render *support*.

Participant 4. *I need some people. My mom, she, we don't get along. She calls me a liar. I was born with both genitals. I don't care what she says. I get bullied. CPS. I'm*

scared of CPS. Because they're rude to me. There was bullies who'd pick on me, to try and take my kid when I was pregnant and when she was an infant.

Findings for Theme 3: Perception of Racial Biases. Three of the five participants described specific instances of their suspicion of some form of racial bias directed against their children in the school and among their children's classroom peers. Participant 1 felt the educators at her child's school were not receptive to her claims of her daughter's giftedness but identified it as disruptive behavior. Participant 1 stated *She really likes to play teacher. A little girl says that she used to play with her all the time, said she doesn't want to play with her anymore because she looked brown. Because of that I felt (the teacher) should have said something. . .Because if you don't care about my child's well-being, then you're not caring about what she's learning.*

When asked for clarification, Participant 6 was less certain that racial bias was the issue: *I don't know, maybe race but only because with her being African-American, she is in a predominantly white school because we live in a predominantly white area and growing up you know. I was always told being an African-American woman, you have to work like 50 times harder than everybody else in order to show that you...know what you know.* This participant identified as multiracial.

Findings for Theme 4: Lack of Financial Resources. All six participants identified the lack of financial resources as an impediment to participating in their children's literacy development. The interview question for this theme was open-ended and allowed the participant to provide as much or as little detail as she desired. Responses to "Tell me how your finances effected your ability to help your child," were vague. This question was intended as a probe to gather in-depth details. The lack of financial

resources varied in degree of hindrance in accordance with the expectations and needs of each participant. Participant 4 seemed to express the greatest need because on the one hand she wanted to leave the women's shelter where she lived with her preschool age daughter and had neither the means nor the knowledge to make that departure a reality. On the other hand, she reported that she relied heavily on the guidance she received from the shelter staff. At the time of the interview, she was participating in a job training program sponsored by the state. Participant 6 was enjoying full material and financial support from her single mother who worked full-time. This participant indicated that she was well cared for and she and her child lacked nothing. No participant plainly expressed the financial deficit impacted food security although Participant 2 reported that her child sometimes chose not to eat breakfast.

Participant 1. *There never seems to be enough to do everything. We manage.*

Participant 2. (Jamaica): *Of course, I would like to have more.*

Participant 4. *I'd like to have resources. Free school resources. Mine (money) has been tight.* Participant 4 lives in a shelter with her 4-year old daughter.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the results of the six in-depth interviews. This chapter described the study population and sample selection, data collection procedures and methods, data saturation the emergence of categories and sub-categories and themes.

Themes that emerged as a result of this study included:

Theme 1. Lack of Basic Understanding of the Term 'Literacy'

Theme 2. Extended Family Participation

Theme 3. Perception of Racial Biases

Theme 4. Lack of Financial Resources

The four themes that emerged from the data directly supported answering the research questions. Other points related to the research questions that emerged during the analysis phase of this research included the health of the care-giver parent and the significance of the absent parent in literacy development.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs, attitudes and needs expressed by parents with children in the Head Start program in a suburban elementary school as their preschool age children develop literacy skills. The selection of a phenomenological hermeneutic methodology insured a narrative data collection analysis would uncover the essence of the lived experiences of the subjects of this study. A phenomenological study is a qualitative research methodology frequently used in qualitative research to describe the lived experiences of the subjects. Narrative data collected through interviews and field notes accounts of the phenomenon were organized using codes and themes to reveal meaningful units that described what happened and how it (the phenomenon) was experienced by the individual participants by which this researcher then produced a narrative description of the essence of the experience in the form of tables, figures and discussion (Creswell, 2013).

This present study sought to understand the essence of an aspect of parent participation in preschool age literacy development. The central research question that guided this study was, “What do low SES parents understand is their role in introducing literacy to their preschool age children and the resources they believe will support their efforts?” The central question was addressed by three sub-questions that guided the development of the face-to-face interview questions.

The interview questions were presented to six mothers of children who will or did participate in the Head Start program. In Chapter 5 the research questions will be addressed individually according to study findings, previous research, and theory. The

narratives collected from the interviews provided the data that addressed the following research sub-questions:

R1: What importance do low SES parents place on literacy development before their children enter kindergarten?

R2: What do low SES parents say about the best time to begin helping their children develop literacy skills?

R3: What obstacles do parents feel impede their ability to help their children gain literacy skills?

This researcher gained subjective knowledge of the phenomenon by getting as close to the participants as they permitted. To accomplish this closeness, this researcher visited the homes of the participants at their invitation to conduct the face-to-face interviews. The details of the participants' lived experiences resulted in the four themes that emerged to explain the phenomenon this study sought to understand. Those themes include lack of basic understanding of the term 'literacy, extended family participation, perception of racial biases, and limited financial resources. They will be elaborated upon in the Discussion section of this chapter.

Discussion

There continues to exist very little available research that addresses perspectives from the parent's position as low-income parents and their beliefs, attitudes and needs as their children develop literacy skills. The work accomplished by Renth discussed low income as a mitigating factor in academic performance. Renth discovered that while parents' beliefs did not hold schools accountable for their children's lack of academic success, contact between the parent and school failed for a variety of reasons. According

to Renth, that deficit in school-parent contact was charged with being a barrier to resources parents believed to be essential to their feelings of inclusion and the ultimate academic success of their children (Renth, 2014).

Compton-Lilly (2014), on the other hand, decried the differences in literacy development among low-income and moderate- and upper- income families as symptomatic of social inequalities that impact families. Compton-Lilly (2014) labeled those social anomalies as economic academic capital, social academic capital, and cultural academic capital. Using Compton-Lilly's analysis of barriers to academic success, barriers exist because of issues related to racism, employment, school resources, safe communities and support for the desires students express. This current research with six mothers whose circumstances may not be considered dire according to the subject of the Compton-Lilly's case study learned similar belief patterns described by the subject of the Compton-Lilly study. Compton-Lilly described social academic capital as involving accessibility of a system of interconnectedness families use to support their children academically. According to Compton-Lilly, cultural academic capital refers to the gestalt that aligns with school success (Compton-Lilly, 2014). The subjects of the current research all expressed some degree of needing assurance from school administrators that their children would receive unbiased care, instruction, and direction regardless of their family circumstances.

The parents who participated in this current study were unanimous in their belief that early education was important to their children's ultimate success in life. They differed somewhat on what that early education involved and when it should begin. The first theme to emerged as a result of the interview questions targeted their understanding

of the term ‘literacy.’ Study participants were unable to articulate their understanding of the term beyond an ability to count to 10, recite the alphabet, or accurately state the first and last names of their parents.’ One mother elaborated on the importance of her preschool age son knowing his parents’ first and last name, ...”in case someone takes him, or something bad happens he will be able to tell the police who his parents are by name...” Another participant believed literacy involved social comportment, *“I believe they should say ‘please’ and ‘thank you.’ And I want them to know how to count to 10, at least.”* Participant 1 stated, *“I believe she needs to know how to talk to her peers and interact with her peers, how to sit down and read a book, explain pictures in the book...”*

This researcher observed the body language these parents used as they responded to this question. Not one participant made eye contact with this researcher as they quietly talked about the ideas they harbored about literacy. They either looked away or kept their eyes fixed on hands folded or twisting in their laps. In fact, the use of the term ‘literacy’ was deliberate on the part of this researcher as an important element of this inquiry. This researcher believed, and the evidence showed, that the term itself carried little meaning to parents. Additionally, no one asked this researcher to define what is meant by ‘literacy.’ Conversely, there was no confusion about the high premium the mothers placed on the acquisition of literacy skills in their children. In fact, in response to the researcher sub-question, “What importance do (you) place on literacy development before your children enter kindergarten?” one participant stated that she was *...so focused on literacy and learning and progressing...* Participant 6 stated that she’d heard that *...You should read to them when they are in the womb. I thought it was ridiculous to talk to my belly...* This same participant began reading to her infant daughter when she was about 6 months of

age. This researcher believed that very different responses may have been elicited had different terms such as vocabulary, sound/letter recognition, reading and motivation been used. This revelation might suggest that administrators and teachers may improve interactions with parents whose children are below standard in literacy development provided they use terminology familiar to the parents.

Another theme that emerged as a result of analyzing narrative data from the six face-to-face interviews was extended family participation.⁷ Five of the six participants relied on close family relationships to fill-in for absent fathers when childcare was needed. Family members were expected to provide meals, bathe, read to and comfort children while in their care. Participant 1 stated that all important holidays were spent with a large family gathering. *We get together for birthdays and holidays.* She recommended her sister-in-law to this research. Her sister-in-law identified herself as Jamaica (Participant 2). Jamaica extolled the value of having close family ties. She reported that her family *gets together every weekend.* She stated she and her sisters exchange school pick-up duties and the parent who picks up the children might care for them overnight when necessary, including taking them to school the next day. One participant who was estranged from her family relied on childcare providers at her daughter's childcare and staff members at the women's shelter where the participant lives to nurture her preschool age daughter when needed. Participant 1 was willing to drive more than 50 miles round trip to deliver and retrieve her daughter to and from a childcare center she felt would treat her daughter with kindness and love. This is not a new or unique circumstance. Parents of color who also experience economic deficits have a mistrust of the system that they rely upon to educate their children. Her own experiences

confronting school staff about her daughter's "behaviors" extended beyond her daughter's tendency to imitate being a teacher while in school. Compton-Lilly described the relationship between negative assumptions about poor African American families and academic achievement. Those assumptions did not consider the abundant focus and dedication to literacy practices prevalent in low-income families (Compton-Lilly, 2014) and expressed by the incredible mothers of this study. This current study affirmed Compton-Lilly's findings. Participants 1 and 2 described episodes when they needed to defend their children's home literacy activities to their respective teachers.

The perception of racial biases was the third theme that emerged.' Sixty-seven percent of the participants felt their children's behavior in the classroom was view more harshly than other children because of their skin color. One parent reported that her child was rejected by a former playmate because her child's "skin is brown." Participants 1, 2, and 3 described episodes of conflict with their children's teachers because their children seemed to be graded more harshly because of their race. Participant 6 was less clear about the influence of her daughter's skin color on her treatment in preschool or during kindergarten. Participant 6 claimed a biracial heritage and confessed she did not recognize being treated differently. She remembered being asked by her peers whether or not she was White and felt it was inappropriate for them to inquire. She attended private schools throughout her academic life through her first year of college. She enjoyed a diverse group of friends. Her recollections of her relationship with her teachers were vague and she remembered preferring her male teachers to her female teachers, but she was uncertain if that was because she felt she was treated differently depending on the teacher's gender. Her daughter seemed not to be plagued by similar scrutiny.

Participant 3's perspective as a corrections officer led to understandings that poor African American mothers whose children were incarcerated were less tolerant of the system that has the responsibility of education all children. She relayed the sentiments of several mothers with whom she interacted when visiting their inmate children. They expressed varying degrees of "*This is my child and I will teach him what I want him to know.*" Participant 3 believed that this mindset was typical of poor African American mothers with little education themselves. Participant 3 elaborated that she was aware of the low literacy abilities of her charges and that that was perpetrated by low generational literacy development. Participant 4, whose daughter is biracial may have been victimized by biases based on gender identification more so than by racial identity. She also reported being subjected to physical and verbal attacks because of her personal appearance.

Limited financial resources represent the final theme to emerge from the narrative data. Two of the six participants rented townhomes or apartments in working class neighborhoods, three participants lived with aging parents, and one participant lived in a shelter. The participants uniformly stated the lack of financial resources prevented them from dedicating time to literacy development. At the time of this study, four of the six parents worked at least part-time and expressed being too tired to engage their children in academic pursuits. At the same time, they all believed that reading to their children, teaching them "good manners," and ensuring they were clean and well-fed were their best efforts to support literacy development. The next section will discuss findings related to the three research questions. Renth (2014) also learned parents in her study believed that children should be treated equally regardless of income status, race, or ethnicity (Renth, 2014).

Meanings and Understanding

This researcher was interested in the families who declined to be interviewed nearly as much as those who agreed to participate in this study. Their reasons for not participating were undiscovered during this study, however, it was evident to this researcher that their concerns for their children pointed to their beliefs that there was a lack of support for families whose first language is other than English or that they lacked the confidence or ability to clearly communicate their needs to the staff who can help them. The awareness that certain segments of the population might have anxieties about seeking support arose before the recruiting stage of this research commenced and became clear as recruitment began. The realization of the extent for a broader research was evident when the only two parents from the study site whose first language was other than English attended information meetings. Their primary objective was to secure tutoring for their primary-age and preschool-age children. When they learned that tutoring was beyond the scope of this particular research, they opted out of participating.

Parents whose primary language is other than English may have felt uncertain about whether or not it was their right or responsibility to ask for additional support in the classroom. This knowledge might present an opportunity for school districts, administrators and city planners to broaden the English Language Learner programs to help those families. This researcher developed an greater understanding that parents want to have a voice and to be listened to when it appears to them that their children are treated differently. On the other hand, those same parents seem reluctant to speak out when their perceptions about their children are not shared by their teachers. Participant 1 made that clear when she recounted an experience with her daughter. She remembered not

understanding why her child's teacher labeled her a behavior problem until she spent a day in the classroom watching and listening. Her daughter enjoyed playing teacher and brought that love of teaching into the classroom, albeit at inappropriate times. She was not considered a behavior problem by her mother, but by her teacher. Participant 1 recounted how she wanted to advocate for her child, but hesitated to speak up for fear retribution would visit her daughter in subtle but unpleasant ways. Participant 1 did finally approach the teacher about her concerns in what she described as a calm and respectful manner. When asked the outcome of her confrontation she stated there was almost no change in the teacher's behavior and she felt the teacher either was not listening to her, did not understand her point, or did not care. Teacher's seeming not to care was described by Renth (2014) and Compton-Lilly (2014) studies.

As this researcher watched and listened to each study participant during face-to-face interviews, it seemed evident to this investigator that the participants were suppressing specific thoughts or feelings about the question. Their repeated vague reference to racial bias was disconcerting to this researcher until this researcher recalled an incident that occurred in the elementary school where this researcher served up to 30 students each week. The incident occurred during sixth grade graduation when a male teacher publically made a comment about the only African-American child in the school that was wholly inappropriate, unnecessary and unkind. Participant 1 recounted how her preschool age daughter was rejected by a classmate after they had played together for months, "*...the little girl used to play with her all the time . . . said she doesn't want to play with her anymore because she looked brown.*" Participant 1 looked down at her hands. She was wringing them as she shared her feelings about the incident. "*I felt like,*

you should say something, there should be something that even if the teacher and principal have to talk first before you send out an email or call me. There should be a shown effort that you care about my child's well-being." This was clearly meant for the school staff and she spoke as if she was reliving the experiences again. This researcher thought she noticed in the other parents who participated in the research the same guarded, defensive, frustration Participant 1 displayed and that the parent of the sixth-grade student must have felt when the teacher criticized her daughter at the graduation ceremony at this researcher's school. This could mean that there is an underlying mistrust of the very people parents need to trust. Therefore, reaching out for added support or services may mean exposing themselves and/or their children to being publicly humiliated or passive-aggressively mistreated. Parents with little education or those who hesitate to self-advocate may retreat within themselves, turn to family members or disengage from school events and activities. When that happens, those parents may not recognize a need for early participation in their young children's literacy development. The parents in this study were more inclined to rely on family for support by their own admission. It could be concluded that their experiences with educators led them to surmise their children would not receive the same consideration as other children.

Implication of the Study

This study endeavored to enlighten the perspective of stakeholders in regard to meeting the needs of parents who do not or cannot advocate for themselves. In that regard, the implication of this study is an issue that is not new, yet not explored to any degree as evidenced by the lack of research directed at parent experiences. Parents who have little education themselves or who have little or no financial resources are reticent to

step forward to ask for help. In some cases, they are unaware of the services that might be available to them. Consider Participant 4 of this study. There was not much about her appearance that might suggest that she would struggle with self-advocacy. She is about six feet tall and medium built. She was clean and neatly dressed with her hair cut short enough for her to be mistaken for a boy. When she spoke, her voice was steady and confident. However, during the interview she revealed that she often gets bullied by neighbors and people on the street. Her communication during the interview was difficult to follow and it wasn't clear that she was aware that this interviewer had trouble following her narrative. She continued to proclaim that she wanted to tell someone her story. The other participants seemed more self-aware and indicated that they had little hesitation in advocating for their children. In essence, the implication of this study is that it may become necessary for administrators, teachers, and city planners to make the initial outreach for those at-risk families, not waiting for them to come forward because those families may not have the wherewithal to self-advocate. Park and Holloway (2013) surmised the important role school outreach has in promoting disenfranchised parents' involvement in their children's schools while suggesting an intense parental self-advocacy program for supporting their engagement at home (Park & Holloway, 2013). This, while acknowledging generalities from a large body of research that disavows school and home literacy participation by minority, ethnically diverse and low-income parents (Park & Holloway, 2013).

The small sample of participants for this study may not be representative of the parents who identify with the demographic for this current study. Participant 1 remarked that she spent a day in her child's classroom because the reports coming from the teacher

was inconsistent with what she knows her child was capable of doing. Participant 2 (Jamaica) instilled strict disciplinary measures to ensure her child understood and would follow school rules so that he would not be labeled a behavior problem and “*learn what he needs to know.*” Her concern was that his teachers may misidentify his unique gifts like many African-American males in public schools. She, like the other mothers who participated in this study, believed that the same behaviors displayed by a White male child would be accepted as typical juvenile exuberance. Participant 4, who struggled with her own medical and cognitive disabilities, repeated several times that she “*wished they had that (literacy training) when I was younger.*” Her situation was a prime example of the need for educators to reach out and “wrap around” this family to ensure life circumstances could not side-rail the development expected of her 4-year-old daughter. Participants 5 and 6 enjoyed guidance and support from college educated parents without whom their children might have been less successful in navigating through the educational system. Both participants had some form of learning disability that is not immediately evident and might easily be overlooked as parents without requisite knowledge or skills by administrators and teachers whose expectations include parents helping their children with home literacy activities.

Relevance of the Study

This study is both relevant and timely as school districts across the nation grapple with high dropout rates, and cities and states attempt to address high unemployment among young men and women, high crime rates, and substance abuse epidemics among teens and young adults. These social ailments, while not isolated to undereducated, financially disadvantaged minorities, may have their roots in early childhood literacy

failures. In fact, Clark's (1983) detailed, extensive research into why poor African American children succeed or fail found that children from homes where the parent actively engaged their children's learning abilities were as academically successful as children from homes where financial and other resources were not a concern (Clark, 1983). Compton-Lilly maintained that the academic struggles of poor, African American children were less a byproduct of family poverty but of underfunded school districts, poor quality teachers and that these disparities tended to fall heavily on families of color and poor families (Compton-Lilly, 2014).

This researcher found that low income parents are passionate about educating their children but vary in their understanding of when that education should begin, that parents find barriers such as economic strife, racial biases and their own limited understanding of terminology used to describe their children's learning are hindrances to their efforts to provide the literacy training necessary to help their children remain on a level playing field with their peers who do not experience the same barriers. The findings of this current study highlight the need for home literacy training as a mandatory adjunct to activities of daily living training such as bathing and brushing one's teeth instead of an optional pursuit as it appears is the case in some families. The fact that one participant was adamant that her child learned his parents' first and last names in case he became separated from them is indicative of the emphasis placed on survival literacy. However, it also suggested that at an early age, low income parents of small children are less focused on academic pursuits and more on developing social skills that allow them to get along with their peers. Another participant, when asked to define literacy, determined that literacy had meaning depending on the person and the circumstance. Her belief that

“literacy means many different things to many different people,” underscores the lack of attention some parents place on academic pursuits when children are very young. Unfortunately, some of those children find themselves wards of the penal system as expressed by the corrections officer who participated in this study. This researcher understands that poverty alone is not the purveyor of societal ills. Available research clearly described successful academic outcomes when children raised in poverty have parental involvement, community resources, and are motivated to read. The subject of Compton-Lilly’s case study was a single mother who lived in extreme poverty with four children. According to the researcher, the mother dedicated her life to ensuring her children were educated. She spent countless hours visiting their schools and advocating for them advocating for them (Compton-Lilly, 2014). The mothers who participated in this current study exhibited that same voracity for early literacy development, even when their understanding of the term was unexpectedly vague.

Significance and Substance

Having a stranger delve into personal or private thoughts even after agreeing to allow such an invasion may be disconcerting. It seemed important to Participant 2 (Jamaica), for example, to have her thoughts recorded under her given name rather than a pseudonym. Even still, she seemed guarded about her responses. This seemed to be true about the other participants as well. This researcher was of the impression that the mothers seemed aware of any potential negative reflections on their parenting skills and wanted to cast a positive light as much as possible on their families. Field notes generated at the time of the interviews highlighted some aspect of this. This researcher felt compelled to put participants at ease with preliminary discussions about topics of

particular interest to the participants. For example, in an effort to put Participant 1 at ease, she and this researcher dedicated about 30 minutes prior to turning on the audio recorder casually talking about literacy. She was the only participant who preferred to conduct the interview at a third party's home rather than her own home. Before the recorded interview began, it was evident that she was unclear about what it meant to be literate. When that question came up during the interview she repeated the basic definition of literacy from our previous unrecorded conversation. This researcher considered this an unfortunate mistake by a novice researcher because the unrecorded conversation may have been construed as leading the participant to answer the questions according to the researcher's preference and expectations. Prior to recording the interview her initial response to the question was genuine and did not reveal an understanding of the term. Once the recording began, she expressed her thoughts using language and ideas this researcher used during our unrecorded conversation. As she elaborated on her response, she spoke in terms of reading and learning the alphabet as her understanding of what literacy meant. In her own way, this researcher believed Participant 1 could relate to the findings Sylva reported. Sylva associated the quality of pre-school teaching was the foundation upon which later learning built (Sylva, 2014). As an adjunct to that line of thinking based on the research of others, a connecting element between poverty and underachievement may lie within the ways in which low-income and more affluent parents raise their children. Bruner (in Sylva, 2014) reported that poor children exhibited lower vocabulary skills, executive function and motivation. Becker elaborated on the effect of the parents' cultural capital to bring a rich experiential quality to poor children (Becker, 2014).

In another example, Participant 2 (Jamaica) was cleaning her bathroom when this researcher arrived at her home. Her small son was in his bedroom and called out to her to remind her that she promised him a dessert. But because there was ‘company’ he needed to wait for his treat. After about 20 minutes, he entered the living room where we were seated and petitioned her again for a popsicle. She sent him away without granting him his request using a quiet, firm, authoritative tone, directing her 4-year-old son to read a book until she called for him. Hume et al provided significant data on the indicators of a child’s interest in literacy stemmed from early motivation to entertain themselves with books (Hume, Lonigan & McQueen, 2015). The 4-year-old waited a while longer then showed up with a partially eaten popsicle at which point she sent him to his room. She remarked that he often read to himself and that he enjoyed the books he read. This small scene demonstrated a literacy promoting practice not typically enacted in low-income and poor households. Hart and Risley (2015) discovered that children from low income families were less likely to have access to library books or books at home (Hart & Risley, 2015).

It is significant to note that each of the six participants had similar viewpoints on the meaning of literacy. They generally believed it had something to do with appropriate behavior in public and only as an afterthought did it relate to reading, according to their understanding. They each gave only cursory mention of the process of learning sound/letter relationships or reading. Participant 3 confessed that she only agreed to be interviewed because she did not believe it is the responsibility of the parent to teach literacy to children before kindergarten. She later clarified that statement with a belief that many of her inmates’ parents shared that sentiment. A study by Renth (2014)

determined that parents believed that the school system made academic success nearly impossible for generational poor and that parents are impotent to change that circumstance.

The participants in this current study self-reported eligibility for enrollment in Head Start, yet, only one participant took advantage of the programs it offered. When Head Start was created in 1965 its primary focus was to mitigate the deficit effect of poverty related to early learning in the population of which this research study hoped to gain an understanding. The home-based program works collaboratively with the school based program and provides home visits as well as health screening directions (Manz, 2012). Participant 6 enrolled her daughter at age 4 and continued through the program until she entered kindergarten at age 6. When asked about her experience with the support she received while her child developed literacy skills, she recalled that her daughter was exposed to a literacy-rich environment very early and excelled in the Head Start program (Rodriguez, et al., 2009). Rodriguez and colleagues reported on the premium effect of the quality, quantity, and style of speech and language parents use with young children's early literacy. In this current study, Participant 6's recollection was that parent conferences were face-to-face progress reports and that the home visit took place once during her time in Head Start. At that time, she was unclear about the purpose of the visit. Participant 4 indicated that she intended to enroll her 4- year-old daughter in Head Start. When asked why she had not done so already, her response was vague and seemed to stray from the topic. Participant 1 said she believed she qualified for Head Start and preferred to retain the preschool daycare center her child attended. When asked what she liked about it, she stated that it seemed her youngest daughter was well-loved and cared

for at the center and she did not want to change her venue. Participant 3 reported that her children were in Head Start and she was unable to recall her experience with them.

Unlike the participants for the current study who may be considered “older,” teen mothers were reported to be less verbal and creative in their language usage with far fewer interactions with their infants (Rodriguez et al., 2009). This current study asked parents to identify factors that prevented them from participating in their children’s literacy development. Demircan and Erden identified several factors as parents’ beliefs, perceptions of a welcoming spirit to participate, class, ethnicity, and gender; child learning disabilities, giftedness, behavior problems; different goals and agendas between parents and teachers; and historical, demographic politics, and academic concerns (Demircan & Erden, 2015). Participant responses to the interview questions closely aligned with those described by Demircan and Erden and reinforced the significance of this current research.

Importance to Discipline

This research will assist the field of Speech and Language Pathology in providing a platform by which clinicians may differentiating the root cause of a language deficit in young children who may be referred for speech and language services. Understanding the cause will inform the direction of intervention and help school districts manage caseloads. It appears to this researcher that it is not enough to rely on and refer to developmental milestones as a benchmark for intervention because there are physiological, psychosocial, cognitive barriers to the development of speech and language. Each anomaly carries its own set of precepts and contingencies that may inform treatment. Understanding the deficit of lack of experience or exposure to

meaningful literacy stimulation low income and poor children endure, might allow educators and administrators an opportunity to make intervention decisions to better serve those children in programs that will allow them to “catch up” before or once they enter formal education. Vocabulary learning is an example of a literacy skill that would require remediation. Hart and Risley (2015) calculated a difference of about 15,000 vocabulary words between children in poverty and more affluent children by the time they enter kindergarten (Hart & Risley, 2015). They concluded that language and cognitive development of young children relies on the quantity and style of speech their parents use. These skills develop on a continuum that begins at birth.

In a school setting, language ability allows its users to access their academic program. The ability to read relies on the interrelationship and intertwining of family dynamics, environment, motivation, cultural ethnic influence, and home psychological and social patterns that lead to parent involvement in literacy development (Clark, 1983). Basic to this knowledge is the understanding of sounds, letters, vocabulary, and print motivation.

When parents use language to direct, instruct, entertain and comfort their small children, children learn the fundamentals of language and perpetuate what they have learned. Children who live under stressful circumstances, whose parents are themselves experiencing varying degrees of stress or depression, whose parents are illiterate or health-compromised, are at a greater risk of failing to develop the literacy skills necessary for academic success. These children, according to available research, may drop out of school at an early age, may commit crimes that lead to incarceration, experiment with drugs and other illicit behaviors. One participant in this study, a corrections officer for

more than two decades, commented that the majority of her charges struggled with or could not read. She said she wanted to tell her story during this research because she witnessed apathy among the parents who visited their children while they were incarcerated. The participant recounted multiple experiences in which the parent (usually the mother of the prisoner) commented that she (the parent) alone was in charge of the child and that she (the parent) would teach them what she wanted them (the child) to know. Participant 3 observed anger and defensive postures from those mothers whose children were locked up.

Researchers know that children from disadvantaged home environments are less likely to develop the essential communication skills to be successful in the classroom. What researchers have little knowledge of, and what this present study attempted to expose is what parents understand about their responsibility to actively participate in the literacy development of their preschool age children. Having an understanding about literacy development from the perspective of children's first 'teachers' may inform social services, community organizers and school administrators so that interventions may be tailored to meet the specific needs of each affected family at their point of need.

Critique of Findings

This qualitative phenomenological study attempted to collect the beliefs, attitudes and needs of parents whose children are eligible for Head Start as their preschool age children develop literacy skills. The sample size, the study population, and the lack of a diverse study sample are among other critiques of the findings. This study attempted to capture the essences of the experiences of parents as their preschool age children developed literacy skills. The small sample size meant that this study was not able to

capture the experiences of potentially many parents. Ten parents committed to participate in this study, six of the 10 study participants completed the interview phase of this research. For the most part, the participants appeared to provide open, honest responses to the research questions. Participant 4's responses are a good example of the open honesty the participants shared when she acknowledged her fear of DSHS. She was certain that they were trying to take away her daughter. Participant 4 felt her gender confusion and health concerns mitigated their actions. In this case, not enough information was collected to determine the effect her health and gender played in her experiences with literacy. She relied on her homeless shelter to read to her daughter and to teach her the alphabet and how to count. More to the point, Participant 4 seemed to display learning deficits of her own. Throughout the interview her conversation was convoluted and often went off-topic. Gentle probes to bring her back on topic were somewhat successful. However, this research felt she was leading Participant 4 to a particular response. Interview questions were restated using different words, and it seemed as though the participant's responses were intended to please rather than share her ideas with this researcher. By the end of the interview, Participant 4 began to cry as she reflected how little this researcher's demeanor was like that of her own mother's and how she wished her own mother had the same loving understanding as this researcher displayed.

Unlike the tears that flowed at the end of the interview with Participant 4, there was a great deal of laughter and comradery throughout the interview with Participant 1 before tears began to flow at the end of our conversation. She seemed happy to answer all questions and asked for clarification of a question when needed. It was only in retrospect that this researcher considered if the tears were a response to her relief about

having completed this probe into her personal life or an expression of satisfaction that she had the opportunity to share her thoughts and feelings about something important to her. She did not respond when this researcher later reached out to her to inquire about her feelings at that time.

While the intended population was the parents whose children were enrolled in Head Start in this study, the available and willing participants were recruited as a result of snowball recruitment spanning three different local cities. This was accomplished by asking one potential participant to recommend others who might be interested in participating in this study. For that reason, this researcher was less confident in their eligibility to participate in the study other than their confession that they could qualify for Head Start. There was relative certainty that Participant 4 qualified for Head Start. Participant 6 aged out of Head Start after spending 2 school years ages 4 through 6 years in the program. Participant 5 stated that she could have qualified for Head Start but that her youngest was in a preschool that she really liked. Participant 1 stated that her youngest child was not enrolled in Head Start at the time of this research. Participant 3 whose children were older, was enrolled in Head Start when they were younger.

This study sample was not representative of the racial and ethnic diversity of the Pacific Northwest. Four of the six participants were African-American; one participant was married to and divorced from an Iranian; and one participant identified as First American, African-American, and White. None struggled with English as a primary language although Participant 5 indicated that her ex-husband and his parents spoke Farsi when the children visited. She believed that exposure delayed their English language development. During early recruiting efforts, two families who spoke Arabic as their

primary language inquired about the research and opted not to proceed because they were only interested in tutoring in English for their children.

Conclusions and Recommendation

This phenomenological hermeneutic research study explored the essence of the lived experiences of six low income mothers whose children qualified for Head Start in the Pacific Northwest. Six participants were recruited to share their experiences as their young children developed literacy skills. The research questions asked participants to describe their experiences by discussing what they needed in order to participate in their children's literacy development; what obstacles they faced that prevented them from helping their children develop literacy skills; and to describe the support they wished was available to help them help their children.

The first interview question appeared to be the most challenging for participants to respond to because the participants lacked a basic understanding of the term 'literacy.' The limited financial resources and the lack of a strong, cohesive family unit were mentioned by each participant as impediments to their ability to help their children. In addition, parents found that having a limited education themselves to be an obstacle in their ability to create and implement home activities that support literacy development.

Researchers and educators consider the home environment to be a rich setting for language learning and literacy development before children entered kindergarten. Regardless of income level, children whose parents engaged them in literacy activities during their preschool years were more successful academically than children whose parents waited until kindergarten for teachers to expose their children to literacy. Income level had an effect on the parent's ability to provide essential technology in the home.

The following recommendations are directed to the field of Speech and Language Pathology:

I. To improve clarity during conversations with parents and others who are not familiar with education terminology, educators and therapist could include descriptors like letter/sound recognition, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation when the term ‘literacy’ is discussed.

2. Parent literacy training could be more widely implemented in conjunction with prenatal care and treatment. This service may be offered in collaboration with pediatricians, obstetrics, and gynecology.

3. School-based Speech and Language Pathologist might partner with local pediatricians to become resources for training parents to stimulate literacy skills development including speech sounds, letter recognition, vocabulary development and methods to maintain motivation to read

Recommendation for Future Research

More detailed, in-depth research with a larger population sample will advance the field of knowledge in this under-investigated topic. Parents and school settings will benefit from studies related to low income parents’ attitudes, beliefs, needs and their role as their very young children develop literacy skills when:

- (a) A study includes parents with more than one small child,
- (b) A study includes parents who live in shelters.
- (c) A quantitative study in this area would add a rich cache of data and insights on this subject.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations or weaknesses in a study are part of the qualitative research process as a way of guiding or informing future research. Limitations for this present study might be categorized as problems in data collection, unanswered questions by the participants or decisions about purposeful sampling of study populations and locations (Creswell, 2008). The researcher for this present study identified seven potential limitations that could conceivably influence interpretations and possible analysis outcomes.

1. The experience of the investigator in conducting qualitative research might have had an effect on how data were gathered and analyzed. Every effort to adhere to the principles and processes of conducting this current research was honored.

2. The target population was to have been recruited from the Head Start Program in a suburban neighborhood in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. The research population, while compliant with the national definition of poverty in small pockets of areas, was small and offered few extreme measures of poverty that one might find in urban areas. Ultimately, recruitment occurred outside of the school district's area due to the lack of willing participants.

3. The researcher presumed that all participants met the qualifying criteria to participate in the Head Start program.

4. This region, as a whole, provides services for the underprivileged that might not be available in depressed urban areas.

5. On-going parental participation in literacy development was a critical element in the success of children of all economic and sociologic backgrounds, and particularly for those who are exposed to persistent poverty.

6. This research was limited in its scope of ethnically diverse participants. This is significant because the population of school-age English Language Learners is growing, and it seems to suggest that international families may need more support in the area of English Language Learner as many more non-English speaking immigrants, refugees, as well as people of different ethnic backgrounds with or without financial means, settle in many neighborhoods throughout this region.

7. A seventh limitation in this study was suggested by research completed by Fantuzzo et al. (2004). According to the authors, research that uses surveys (questionnaires) or single items from surveys to assess the complex nature of parent participation in literacy development is inadequate. Their analysis suggested a multivariate study with empirically derived constructs as an essential model to grasp all dimensions of family involvement in their children's early literacy development.

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184942.

Appendix A

Approval to Conduct Research

Appendix A

Approval to Conduct Research

Tue, May 31, 2016 at
9:19 AM**Michael Power** <michael.power@shorelineschools.org>

To: Dianna McCoy <>

Cc: Hillery Clark <hillery.clark@shorelineschools.org>

Dianna,

I'm happy to report that the Superintendent's Cabinet approved your research study with some amendments.

We do not have space at Meridian Park for you to conduct interviews, so that will have to happen off campus.

We cannot provide you with parent contact information without the approval of each family and that would take a lot of time, so if you can provide an invitation to the study and your contact information, Hillery will see that all the Head Start families get one.

Since many of our Head Start families are not native speakers of English, are you providing the invitation and interviews in other languages as well? The Superintendent's Cabinet was concerned that their voices be heard as well.

Thank you for your interest in conducting research in Shoreline. If you want to send your recruitment information to me, I can send it on to Hillery, or you could drop it off at Meridian Park.

Michael

Michael Power

Director of Assessment and Student Learning

Shoreline Public Schools

(206) 393-4774

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval

MEMORANDUM

To: **Dianna J. McCoy**

From: **Sidi M Lakhdar, Ed.D,
Center Representative, Institutional Review Board**

Date: **March 30, 2017**

Re: **IRB #: 2017-237; Title, "Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in
Preschool Age Literacy Development in a Head Start Program"**

I have reviewed the above-referenced research protocol at the center level. Based on the information provided, I have determined that this study is exempt from further IRB review under **45 CFR 46.101(b) (Exempt Category 1)**. You may proceed with your study as described to the IRB. As principal investigator, you must adhere to the following requirements:

- 1) **CONSENT:** If recruitment procedures include consent forms, they must be obtained in such a manner that they are clearly understood by the subjects and the process affords subjects the opportunity to ask questions, obtain detailed answers from those directly involved in the research, and have sufficient time to consider their participation after they have been provided this information. The subjects must be given a copy of the signed consent document, and a copy must be placed in a secure file separate from de-identified participant information. Record of informed consent must be retained for a minimum of three years from the conclusion of the study.
- 2) **ADVERSE EVENTS/UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS:** The principal investigator is required to notify the IRB chair and me (954-262-5369 and Sidi M Lakhdar, Ed.D, respectively) of any adverse reactions or unanticipated events that may develop as a result of this study. Reactions or events may include, but are not limited to, injury, depression as a result of participation in the study, life-threatening situation, death, or loss of confidentiality/anonymity of subject. Approval may be withdrawn if the problem is serious.
- 3) **AMENDMENTS:** Any changes in the study (e.g., procedures, number or types of subjects, consent forms, investigators, etc.) must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please be advised that changes in a study may require further review depending on the nature of the change. Please contact me with any questions regarding amendments or changes to your study.

The NSU IRB is in compliance with the requirements for the protection of human subjects prescribed in Part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46) revised June 18, 1991.

Cc: Deeb P Kitchen EdD, Doctor of Education
Rose Colon, PhD

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate

Appendix C

Invitation to Participate

Date:

RE: Request for participation in a research study

Dear Parents;

My name is Dianna McCoy and I am conducting a research study in partial fulfillment of a doctorate in Speech Language Pathology through Nova Southeastern University. The topic of my study is Parents' Participation in Preschool Age Children Literacy Development. The purpose of this study is to explore the beliefs, attitudes, and needs expressed by parents as their preschool age children in the Head Start program develop literacy skills. Participation in this study is voluntary and your identity will remain confidential throughout the study. To be eligible to participate, I request that you attend one introductory meeting where you will be asked to give formal permission to participate and agree to a 30-45 minute face-to-face or telephone interview. There will be no risk to you nor will you be asked to say, do, or witness anything that you may find objectionable. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty to you or your child in the Head Start program.

If you willingly agree to participate in this study, I kindly request that you complete the attached screening form. If you have questions related to this research, please email me at _____. You may also reach me by calling my mobile phone at _____. Thank you in advance.

Kind regards,

Dianna J. McCoy, MS CCC

Nova Southeastern University

Appendix D

Information Meeting Invitation

Appendix D

Information Meeting Invitation

Come to a Pizza and Pop Event!
INFORMATION MEETING

ON A RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT PARENT PARTICIPATION IN
EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

FREE PIZZA AND POP
FREE CHILDCARE



DATE: _____

TIME: _____

LOCATION: _____

This research has been approved by Shoreline School District and will be conducted by **Dianna J. McCoy**, MS CCC a doctoral candidate at Nova Southeastern University

PLEASE SIGN UP BY:

DATE: _____

Appendix E
Consent Form

Appendix E

Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study Entitled
Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age Literacy Development
In a Head Start Program

Funding Source: None

IRB protocol #

Principal investigator
Dianna J. McCoy, MS CCC

Co-investigator
Deeb Kitchen, Ed.D
Fischler College of Education
3301 College of Education
Ft. Lauderdale, Fl. 33314
800-986-3223, Ext. 27838

For questions/concerns about your research rights, contact:
Human Research Oversight Board (Institutional Review Board or IRB)
Nova Southeastern University
(954) 262-5369/Toll Free: 866-499-0790
IRB@nsu.nova.edu

Site Information
Head Start
Meridian Park Elementary School
17077 Meridian Ave N.
Shoreline, WA 98133

What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a research study. The goal of this study is to explore parent beliefs, attitudes, and needs in preschool age literacy development in a Head Start program.

Why are you asking me?

I am inviting you to participate because you have at least one child currently enrolled and attending the Head Start program at Meridian Park. There will be between 5 and 12 participants in this research study.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in the study?

You will answer a 6-question screening form. You will also be interviewed by this researcher, Ms. McCoy. Ms. McCoy will ask you questions about your beliefs, attitudes, and needs in your preschool age child's literacy development. You will not be asked question or be asked to perform any acts that you may find objectionable or offensive. The screening form should take you no more than 10 minutes to complete. The interview will last no more than 45 minutes. If during the interview this researcher learns that your

child is not currently enrolled in the Head Start program, Ms. McCoy will end the interview.

Is there any audio or video recording?

This research project will include audio recording of the interview. This audio recording may be available to be heard by the researcher, Ms. Dianna J. McCoy, the IRB personnel, and the dissertation chair, Dr. Kitchen. The recording will be transcribed by Ms. McCoy. Ms. McCoy will use earphones while transcribing the interview to guard your privacy. The recording will be kept securely in Ms. McCoy's home office in a locked safe. The recording will be kept for 36 months from the end of the study. The recording will be destroyed after that time by standard methods for destroying digital data cards. Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for what you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although this researcher will try to limit access to the tape as described in the paragraph.

What are the dangers to me?

Risks to you are minimal, meaning they are not thought to be greater than other risks you experience daily. Being recorded means that confidentiality cannot be promised. Sharing your opinions about treatment may make you anxious or bring back unhappy memories. If this happens, Ms. McCoy will try to help you. If you need further help, she will suggest someone you can see but you will have to pay for that yourself. If you have questions about the research, your research rights, or if you experience any injury because of the research please contact Ms. McCoy at (206) 579-6638. You may also contact the IRB at the numbers indicated above with questions about your research rights.

Are there any benefits to me for taking part in this research study?

There are no benefits to you for participating.

Will I get paid for being in the study? Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you or payment made to you for participating in this study.

How will you keep my information private?

The interview will not ask you for any information that could be linked to you. The transcripts of the tapes will not have any information that could be linked to you. As mentioned, the tapes will be destroyed 36 months after the study ends. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The IRB, regulatory agencies, or Dr. Kitchen may review research records.

What if I do not want to participate or I want to leave the study?

You have the right to leave this study at any time or refuse to participate. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to participate, you will not experience any penalty or loss of services you have a right to receive. If you choose to withdraw, any information collected about you **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study and may be used as part of the research.

Other Considerations:

If the researcher learns anything that might change your mind about being involved, you will be told of this information.

Voluntary Consent by Participant:

By Signing below, you indicate that

- This study has been explained to you.
- You have read this document or it has been read to you.
- Your questions about this research study have been answered.
- You have been told that you may ask the research any study-related questions in the future or contact the researcher in the event of a research-related injury.
- You have been told that you may ask Institutional Review Board (IRB) personnel questions about your study rights.
- You are entitled to a copy of this form after you have read and signed it.
- You voluntarily agree to participate in the study entitled *Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age Literacy Development In a Head Start Program*

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Participant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____

Date: _____

Participant Pseudonym: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail Address _____

Mailing Address _____

Appendix F
Initial Screening

Appendix F
Initial Screening Form

Name: _____

Pseudonym: (to be assigned by researcher): _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

1. Are you 18 years old or older?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. Are you living in a home apartment homeless? (CIRCLE ONE)

3. Are you working full-time part time not at all? (CIRCLE ONE)

4. Do you and your family meet the federal guidelines for participation in the Head Start Program as defined in the Introductory and Informed Consent Letter?

_____ Yes _____ No

5. Do you have a child or children living with you age 5 years or younger?

_____ Yes _____ No

6. Does your child(ren) attend: preschool daycare babysitter in the home?

(CIRCLE ONE)

These questions will help ensure that qualitative study participants meet the necessary requirements to provide in-depth insight into the research question. Once these questions are answered and returned back to the researcher, the researcher will determine if the prospective participant is qualified to participate and will then contact the

participant to inform the participant of the decision using the contact information provided by the participant.

Kind regards,

Dianna J. McCoy

Doctoral Student

Nova Southeastern University

*NOTICE: After completing this questionnaire, please leave it in the secure drop box labeled **RESEARCH: SECURE DROP BOX** at (predetermined location).*

Thank you for your participation

Appendix G
Interview Script

Appendix G

Interview Script

The face-to-face interview will begin:

Hello, (Participant's name). Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. My name is Dianna and I am a student at Nova Southeastern University. I am conducting this research as partial fulfillment of the requirement for a doctorate in Speech Language Pathology. The title of my research paper is Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age Literacy Development in a Head Start Program. The purpose of this research is to understand what parents from a particular socioeconomic status feel they need to help their children develop literacy skills before they enter kindergarten. If you choose to continue with this interview, I anticipate that the interview will last between 30 and 45 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. If you would like to withdraw, please verbally inform me at any time during the interview process.

I kindly ask that you provide honest responses that fully express your perceptions of topics we discuss. Your responses represent your opinions and are not right or wrong, so please feel free to have a comfortable and open discussion about the questions asked. Before we get started, I would like to inform you that, with your permission, I will be audio recording or discussion and may take notes throughout the process. The recording and notes are for study purposes only. They will ensure that your thoughts and ideas are captured as you expressed them. I will use the audio recording and any notes to support my final written report. If you do not grant permission to be audio recorded, I will take notes throughout the interview to document your responses. All materials are

confidential. Your name will not be used in any report or publication. As a friendly reminder, your participation is voluntary and you may choose to skip questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

Do you have any questions, comments or concerns before we begin?

(Present informed consent form if the participant did not previously sign one).

Here is an informed consent form for participating in the study that I mentioned to you prior to this meeting. Would you like me to read the informed consent form to you? I will discuss each of the sections and provide you an opportunity to ask questions.

Do you have any questions about the informed consent or the information?

(Answer any questions).

If you agree to proceed, I would like to ask you to sign and date two copies of the informed consent form. One copy will remain with you for your own records. The other copy will be placed in a file for study consent forms.

Proceed with conducting the interview.

Date: _____

Time Start: _____

Time Finish: _____

Participant Pseudonym: _____

After the interview, complete the session by stating:

The next step in the process will be to manually transcribe our discussion that was audio recorded or noted on my notepad. Within two weeks of this interview, I will contact you using the contact information you provided to provide you a copy of the transcribed interview for your review. If you have any comments or feedback about the

transcription, please share them with me within one week of receipt. The transcribed data will be used for my final written report. As a reminder, you will not be identified by name in any report or publication. Do you have any questions about our session today?

(Answer any questions).

Thank the participant again and depart from the interview location.

Record the time the interview ended _____.

Continue taking field notes if appropriate.

The telephone interview will begin:

Hello, (Participant's name). Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. My name is Dianna and I am a student at Nova Southeastern University. I am conducting this research as partial fulfillment of the requirement for a doctorate in Speech Language Pathology. The title of my research paper is Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age Literacy Development When Low Socioeconomic Status is Considered. The purpose of this research is to understand what parents from a particular socioeconomic status feel they need to help their children develop literacy skills before they enter kindergarten. If you choose to continue with this interview, I anticipate interviews will last between 30 and 45 minutes. Your participation will be voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. If you would like to withdraw, please verbally inform me before or during the interview process.

I kindly ask that you provide honest responses that fully express your perceptions of topics we discuss. Your responses represent your opinions and are not right or wrong, so please feel free to have a comfortable and open discussion about the questions asked. Before we get started, I would like to inform you that, with your permission, I will be

audio recording or discussion and may take notes throughout the process. The recording and notes will be for study purposes only. They will ensure that your thoughts and ideas will be captured as you expressed them. I will use the audio recording and any notes to support my final written report. If you do not grant permission to be audio recorded, I will take notes throughout the interview to document your responses. All materials are confidential. Your name will not be used in any report or publication. As a friendly reminder, your participation will be voluntary and you may choose to skip questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

Do you have any questions, comments or concerns before we begin?

(Participant responds)

Prior to this meeting, you signed and dated two copies of the informed consent form. One copy will remain with you for your own records. The other copy will be placed in a file for study consent forms.

Proceed with conducting the interview by asking the first interview question (Appendix G).

Date: _____

Time Start: _____

Time Finish: _____

Participant Pseudonym: _____

After the interview, complete the session by stating:

The next step in the process will be to manually transcribe our discussion that was audio recorded or noted in my journal. Within two weeks of this interview, I will contact you using the contact information you provided to provide you a copy of the

transcribed interview for your review. If you have any comments or feedback about the transcription, please share them with me within one week of receipt. The transcribed data will be used for my final written report. As a reminder, you will not be identified by name in any report or publication. Do you have any questions about our session today?

(Answer any questions).

I will now turn off the recorder.

Thank the participant again and hang up the phone.

Continue taking field notes if appropriate

Record the time the interview ended _____.

Appendix H
Interview Protocol Questions

Appendix H

Interview Protocol Questions

Interview Questions:

Q1. Describe your understanding of what your child needs to know upon entering kindergarten.

Q2. Describe what you understand literacy to be/mean.

Q3. Describe how you prepared your child with the knowledge you mentioned.

Q4. What would you like to have been able to do to prepare your child?

Q5. Describe what prevented you from doing what you mentioned.

Q6. What, if any, personal limitations do you feel inhibit your ability to participate in your child's literacy development?

Q7. What, if any, immediate or extended family limitations do you feel prevent or interfere with your ability to become involved in your child's literacy development?

Q8. What, if any, abilities/characteristics do you believe your child possess that is not a shared belief by your child's teacher do you feel inhibits your willingness to participate in your child's literacy development?

Q9. What, if any, differences are there in your goals for your child that your child's teacher does not share that prevents you from becoming involved in your child's early literacy development?

Q10. I have asked you about individual factors, family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors and societal factors that you might view as barriers to participation in your child's literacy development. Are there other barriers that I

did not mention that you consider barriers to your participation in your child's literacy development?

Q11. Describe who or what services you have sought to help your child become literacy-ready to enter kindergarten.

Q12. Describe who can help you get what you need to help your child develop literacy skills.

After all questions have been asked, resume following Interview Script (Appendix

F).

Appendix I

Field Test Protocol and Questions

Appendix I

Field-Test Protocol and Questions

Hello (Participant's Name):

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. My name is Dianna McCoy and I am a student at Nova Southeastern University. I am conducting this research as partial fulfillment of the requirement for a doctorate in Speech Language Pathology. The title of my research paper is Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age Literacy Development in a Head Start Program. The purpose of this study is to explore the beliefs, attitudes and needs expressed by parents as their preschool age children in the Head Start program develop literacy skills. I am asking for your feed-back as to the completeness, accuracy, and understandability of the interview questions. These questions will be posed to the target population of parents with preschool age children in a suburban city not far from this location. Your reactions to the questions will not be included in this study and will be used solely to inform the researcher. Changes and edits to the questions will be based on your responses, so I respectfully encourage your candid review. You may include your comments on how to improve the questions in the spaces provided. As an expression of my appreciation for your time, I will present to you a \$15 Haggan's gift card upon completion of this field test. Thank you for participating in this field test.

Dianna J. McCoy, MS CCC

Speech Language Pathologist

Nova Southeastern University

Doctoral Candidate

dmccoy1281@gmail.com

Field Test Questions:

Please rate each interview question according to the following scale:

- 5: Complete, accurate and easy to understand
- 4: Complete, accurate, difficult to understand
- 3: Complete, some inaccuracies, difficult to understand
- 2: Incomplete, some inaccuracies, difficult to understand
- 1: Offensive and should be reworded or eliminated

IQ1: Describe your understanding of what your child needs to know upon entering kindergarten. (*Rate*) Comment: _____

IQ2: Describe what you understand literacy to be/mean. (*Rate*) Comment:

IQ3: Describe how you prepared your child using the knowledge you mentioned. (*Rate*)
Comment: _____

IQ4: What would you like to have been able to do to better prepare your child (*Rate*)
Comment: _____

IQ5: Describe what prevented you from doing what you mentioned. (*Rate*) Comment:

IQ6: What, if any, personal limitations do you feel inhibit your ability to participate in your child's literacy development? (*Rate*) Comment: _____

IQ7: What, if any, immediate or extended family limitations do you feel prevent or interfere with your ability to become involved in your child's literacy development? (*Rate*) Comment: _____

IQ8: What, if any, abilities/characteristics do you believe your child possess that are not a shared belief by your child's teacher do you feel inhibits your willingness to participate in your child's literacy development? (Rate) Comment:

IQ9: What, if any, differences are there in your goals for your child that your child's teacher does not share that prevents you from becoming involved in your child's early literacy development? (Rate) Comment: _____

IQ10: I have asked you about your individual barriers, family factors, child factors, parent-teacher factors and societal factors that might be viewed as barriers to participation in your child's literacy development. Are there other barriers that I did not mention that you consider barriers to your participation in your child's literacy development? (Rate)_ Comment: _____

IQ11: Describe who or what services you have sought to help your child become literacy-ready to enter kindergarten. (Rate)_Comment: _____

IQ12: Describe who can help you get what you need to help your child develop literacy skills. (Rate)_Comment: _____

Appendix J

Field Test Feedback Questionnaire

Appendix J

Field Test Feedback Questionnaire

Participant Identification Code: _____

Date: _____

1. Were the questions asked easy to understand and within your scope of knowledge to answer? YES NO:

Comment _____

2. Were any of the questions or topics not discussed that you recommend being included in this study? NO YES:

Comment _____

3. How would you describe your experience participating in this study?

4. Please include any additional comments that you feel might make this interview better, easier, more meaningful.

Thank you for your help.

Dianna J. McCoy

Doctoral Student

Nova Southeastern University

dmccoy1281@gmail.com

Appendix K
Thank You Letter

Appendix K

Thank You Letter

[Date]

Dear [Research Study Participant],

Thank you for your participation in this research study titled Parent Beliefs, Attitudes, and Needs in Preschool Age Literacy Development In a Head Start Program. Your thoughts were valuable in allowing readers to better understand your perspectives on this topic. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the final study, please contact me at my email address. I will be happy to send you a copy at no cost to you.

Thank you again for your time. It was my genuine pleasure meeting and working with you.

Sincerely,

Dianna J. McCoy, MS CCC

Speech Language Pathologist

Doctoral Candidate

Nova Southeastern University