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Parent efficacy and parent involvement in parents of preschool children

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PARENT EFFICACY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents. Their love, support, and involvement in my education have fostered in me a passion for learning and have guided me down a path of continuous growth.

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy in parents of preschool children. Twenty parents from a suburban, a predominantly White private preschool participated in the study. Parent self-reports of involvement and efficacy beliefs as they pertain to their preschooler's learning and development were assessed. On average, parents reported medium parent efficacy and medium parent involvement. Results of the study demonstrated a significant relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy. The relationship was moderate with a positive direction. Thus, the relationship demonstrated to a modest degree that greater parent efficacy is related to greater parent involvement, and vice versa. The study expands upon previous research in early childhood and supports the evidence that parent efficacy is associated with parent involvement in a small sample. Thus, the preschool administration specific to this study should focus on programs and strategies to increase both parent efficacy and parent involvement.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Parent involvement has been well recognized as an important factor in children's learning and social development by child-care providers, researchers, educators, and policymakers. The U.S. Department of Education describes parent involvement as "critical to improving outcomes for all students" and thus, is a pillar of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which aims to promote child success by strengthening and supporting parent involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). In addition, fostering parent involvement is a philosophical cornerstone of Head Start, a federal-to-local grant program that provides comprehensive child development services to more than 900,000 economically disadvantaged children with a special focus on helping preschoolers develop early skills needed to be successful in school (Administration for Children and Families, 2010). In recent decades, school districts nationwide have acknowledged parents as the most effective and economical entity for fostering and sustaining children's development. Accordingly, schools have instituted parent involvement programs in an effort to bridge the gap between home and school. These programs aim to foster parent involvement by inviting parents to participate in school activities and by educating teachers on effective ways to facilitate parent-teacher communication (Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000).

Parent involvement is complex and multifaceted with a myriad of ways in which parents can become involved in their children's learning and development. In previous

research, parent involvement has been measured in terms of the quality and frequency of parent communications with teachers as well as participation in school activities (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Dearing, McCartney, Weiss, Kreider, & Simpkins, 2004; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2004). In addition, parent involvement has been measured across the domains of school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and home-school interaction (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000; Fantuzzo, McWayne, & Perry, 2004). Examples of parent involvement include helping children with homework, reading to children, discussing school activities and student progress with teachers, and volunteering at school (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000; Jeynes, 2005; Houtenville and Smith-Conway 2008). Numerous studies have assessed parent involvement across the three domains of involvement through the use of parent self-reports and teacher and child ratings.

The increased attention to the topic of parent involvement in public policy and education over the past few decades has been grounded in a substantial body of literature that highlights the association between parent involvement and positive child outcomes. Parent involvement has been linked to fewer behavior problems in elementary school children (El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010), higher student achievement (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, & Bradley, 2003), increased high school completion (McNeal, 1999; Barnard, 2004) and higher educational attainment (Barnard, 2004). In early childhood education, parent involvement has been associated with stronger pre-literacy skills (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008) early literacy achievement (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002), increased social, motor, and adaptive skills (Marcon, 1999), lower disruptive play behavior (Fantuzzo, & McWayne,

2002) and higher levels of emotion regulation (Downer & Mendez, 2005). Thus, parent involvement positively impacts children's learning and social development as they progress from early childhood programs through K-12 schools and into higher education.

Parent involvement not only benefits children's learning and social outcomes, it also has positive effects on parents, teachers, schools, and the community. Parent collaboration with teachers and school professionals has been associated with greater parent understanding about educational programs as well as positive feelings about their abilities to help their children (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 1991; Swick, 1987; Swick & Broadway, 1997). In addition, teachers report more positive feelings about teaching, an increase in energy, a better understanding of home environments, and an increase in resources and materials to use in class (Swick, 1987; Swick & Broadway, 1997). In sum, parent involvement produces a spiral of benefits for students, parents, and teachers.

Despite the importance of parent involvement, changes in social conditions and shifts in family structure have made it increasingly difficult for parents to become involved (Epstein, 1987). To reap the spiral of benefits of parent involvement, it is imperative to determine ways to bridge the gap between home and school and improve parent-school collaboration. Thus, in order to design and implement effective parent involvement interventions, it is essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of parent involvement and to examine the variables that are associated with it.

Parent variables such as family income, parent education, and number of children in the household have been linked to parent involvement in previous research. The

research suggests that parents who are well-educated parents are more liked to be involved than less educated parents (Dauber and Epstein, 1989; Deslandes, Potvin, Leclerc, 1999), parents of a higher socio-economic status are more involved in education than low-income parents (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008) and parents with fewer children are more likely to help participate in home and school activities than parents with four or more children (Eccles and Harold 1996; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004). Despite the significant relationships found between parent involvement and family income, parent education, and number of children, these parent variables do not provide an appropriate target for intervention to improve parent involvement because there tends to be little one can do to alter them. Previous research suggests that a major factor related to parent involvement that can be an effective intervention target for improving parent involvement is parent efficacy (Swick, 1988).

Rooted in general self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), parent efficacy involves a parent's belief about his or her ability to competently perform the roles of a parent and effectively influence his or her child's learning (Teti & Gelfand, 1991; Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Jones & Prinz, 2005). Parent efficacy is socially constructed, and is influenced by personal experiences of success in parental involvement, vicarious experience of similar others' successful involvement experiences, and verbal persuasion by others (Bandura, 1994). In the literature, parent efficacy has been assessed exclusively by self-reports.

According to the literature, parent efficacy is associated with children's behavioral adjustment and socio-emotional development. High parent efficacy has been linked to high child enthusiasm, compliance, affection, and low child avoidance and

negativity in toddlers (Coleman & Karraker, 2003), fewer behavioral problems, greater seeking out of parents over peers to confer about personal problems, lower reported substance abuse in adolescents (Bogenschneider et al., 1997), and greater success of behavioral interventions (Sofronoff & Farbotko, 2002). In addition, high parent efficacy has been linked to reports of lower child anxiety, greater feelings of self-regulation, self-worth and self-efficacy (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Fan & Chen, 2001; Grolnick, Kurowski, Grolnic & Slowiaczek, 1994).

Applied to parent involvement, self-efficacy theory suggests that parents make involvement decisions based in part on their beliefs about the outcomes likely to follow their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). Thus, when parents believe they can impact their children's outcomes, they are more likely to become involved (Epstein, 1990; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassier, & Brissie, 1992). Positive parent efficacy beliefs are associated with increased parental involvement among elementary, middle, and high school students (Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris,1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Shumow & Lomax, 2002) Thus, the evidence suggest parents with a high degree of efficacy are more engaged in their children's learning and more involved with them at all stages of their development.

Furthermore, early childhood is viewed as a fundamental period for parenting and children's emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development. During early childhood, children rapidly acquire a set of cognitive, social and motor skills that set the foundation needed for acquiring more advanced skills and meeting the social and

academic demands of primary school (Blair & Diamond, 2008). Research has highlighted the association between parent involvement and children's healthy development particularly evident during this period when parents play a more prominent role in children's socialization process relative to older children (Campbell, Shaw, & Gilliom, 2000). In addition, the rapid acquiring of skills and increased mobility emerging during early childhood may leave preschool parents feeling pressured to meet the challenges of their growing children. In turn, parent efficacy beliefs may be impacted.

Despite the critical period of early childhood for both children and parents, a majority of the literature on parent involvement and parent efficacy focuses on parents of school-aged children. Limited research has been done on parent involvement and parent efficacy in parents of preschool children. Thus, to gain a comprehensive understanding of parent efficacy and parent involvement in early childhood and to ultimately promote child outcomes, it is important to understand how parents of preschool children report their levels of involvement and parent efficacy. In addition, in an effort to establish an intervention target to improve parent involvement in early childhood, it is important to determine whether a relationship exists between parent involvement and parent efficacy in preschool parents.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to expand on previous research by exploring the variables of parent involvement and parent efficacy in early childhood. Specifically, the study aimed (1) to examine levels of parent involvement as reported by parents, (2) to

examine reported levels of parent efficacy, and (3) to investigate the relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy in preschool parents based on self-reports.

1.3 Research Questions

In an effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of parent involvement and parent efficacy in early childhood, the present study proposed the following research questions:

1. How do parents of preschool children report their involvement in their children's learning and development, collectively across the domains of school-based, home-based, and home-school involvement?
2. How efficacious do preschool parents believe they are at influencing their children's learning and development?
3. Does a relationship exist between reported levels of involvement and levels of parent efficacy in parents of preschool children?

1.4 Hypotheses

The researcher formulated two hypotheses based on the literature to address the research questions. The researcher hypothesized that a relationship would exist between preschool parents' report of their involvement and their reports of parent efficacy:

H_1: A relationship exists between preschool parents' reported parent efficacy and their reported level of parent involvement.

In addition, the researcher further hypothesized that the relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement would be positive:

H_2: A positive relationship will exist between the parent efficacy and parent involvement.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The substantial body of literature on parenting and children's development has examined parent involvement and parent efficacy independently, and limited studies have taken into account the relationship between the two variables. Thus, the present study expands upon previous research by exploring the correlation between reported parent involvement and parent efficacy. In addition, despite the recognized importance of early childhood, the majority of parent involvement and parent efficacy literature has focused on parents of school-aged children. Thus, the present study distinguished itself from the majority of previous literature by exploring the variables of parent involvement and parent efficacy in parents of preschool.

Further significance of the present study lies in its unique sample. An extensive amount of the research focuses on parent involvement and parent efficacy in low-income, minority populations. The present study took place in a suburban, predominantly white middle-class preschool located in the Northeast. The present study hopes to help this preschool learn more about its' parents, their efficacy beliefs and involvement. Through this research, the preschool can gain valuable information to guide the implementation of parent programs within the school, and ultimately promote their goal of helping the children develop and learn.

1.6 Assumptions

The research made two assumptions of the present study: that the parents answered each question on the surveys honestly and that all questions reflected the parents' involvement and efficacy experiences with their preschool child, not other school-aged children.

1.7 Limitations

Several limitations exist in the small sample size and the measures used in the study. First, the sample consists of parents from one preschool in a predominantly White, middle-class, suburban neighborhood. Thus, the results of the study cannot be generalized to parents of different ethnicities, geographic locations, or social economic statuses. Secondly, the family involvement questionnaire (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000) was previously tested for validity on parents of low-income, minority children, not on the demographics in this study. Lastly, the methodology of the present study used two surveys to collect data. The results of the study are based on parent self-reports. Thus, parents' responses may have been biased and reported in congruence with social desirability. Ultimately, this could have yield skewed results.

1.8 Definitions

Parent- A primary caregiver of the preschool child who is responsible for the child's well-being and schooling.

Parent involvement- the active engagement of parents in activities and behaviors at home and at school to benefit their children's learning and development (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000).

Parent efficacy- Parents' beliefs that they can competently perform the roles as parents and effectively influence their children's outcomes, in the areas of development and schooling.

Preschooler- A child ranging from infant through prekindergarten. Specifically, from six weeks through five years old who regularly attends a daycare or preschool.

Positive parenting- Parenting behaviors, skills, and strategies that have been considered to promote positive and adaptive child development and learning outcomes (Jones & Prinz, 2005).

1.9 Summary

Parent involvement and parent efficacy have been recognized as important aspects of parenting and are associated with a plethora of positive child outcomes. Despite the importance, many parents report low involvement in their children's activities in addition to doubtful beliefs about their ability to make a difference in their children's outcomes. Early childhood is a critical period of development for a child and is characterized by a myriad of challenges for parents who are learning and adapting their roles to meet their children's rapidly growing needs. However, little research focuses on parent involvement and parent efficacy in parents of preschool children. Thus, the present study aims to fill in the gap in the literature by examining the two variables in preschool parents. Chapter 2 presents the current research on parent involvement and parent efficacy in greater detail. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the present study and Chapter 4 presents the results of the analysis through the use of tables and figures. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses the results by addressing the research questions and hypotheses, limitations, and future directions for further research.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The following chapter summarizes the literature relevant to parent involvement and parent efficacy in reference to children's learning and development. Parent involvement is discussed in terms of today's society, definition, an ecological theory (Brofenbrenner, 1976, 1986), models of parent involvement, school-aged and early childhood outcomes, parent variables and parent efficacy. Five aspects of self-efficacy are discussed as it pertains to parent efficacy: theory, development, description, parenting, and the effects on children, parents, and teachers. Parent efficacy is also discussed as it relates to parent involvement in previous research. The Hoover-Dempsey Model is used as a framework to describe parent involvement and the decision-making process that drives participation in children's learning.

2.1 Parent Involvement Today

Parent involvement plays an important part in children's development and academic outcomes, especially in today's demanding and ever-changing society. In recent decades, an increase in the number of single parents and an increase in the number of mothers working outside of the home have had a significant impact on family structure (Epstein, 1987). The changes in social conditions have expanded the roles and responsibilities of parents. As a result, parents have less time, energy, and resources available to adequately fulfill the roles of parenthood, ultimately hindering their participation and limiting their child's developmental potential. Thus, parent involvement has evolved over the years as social conditions have affected families.

In response to these changes, schools and social services have taken a more ecological, community approach to parent involvement, by expanding their focus beyond the child to include the whole family and by demanding better communication between the family, school, and community (Coleman, 1997). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 established by the U.S. Department of Education aims to promote child success by strengthening and supporting parent involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The policy emphasizes the role of parents in children's schooling and calls for all school districts to implement programs that increase parent participation and facilitate parent-teacher communication. Consequently, parents, teachers, and administrators are working in collaboration with community groups and social service agencies to create a dynamic and effective learning environment for children (Coleman, 1997; Comer & Hayes, 1991).

Theories of parent involvement which once focused on the distinct and separate roles of family and schools has shifted toward the partnership between home and school in which teachers and parents cooperate, communicate, and share the responsibility for children's developmental and educational outcomes.

2.2 Parent Involvement Defined

The changes in social conditions and family structure in recent decades coupled with an increased focus on an ecological approach to family involvement in children's development and education has expanded the definition of parent involvement. Parent involvement has been defined in the present literature as the active engagement of parents in activities and behaviors at home and at school to benefit their children's learning and development (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000). Parent involvement has been

conceptualized along three dimensions: home-based involvement, school-based involvement and home-school communication (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004). Home-based involvement includes educational activities in which family members actively participate in support of a child's learning at home (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Manz et al., 2004). Numerous studies have assessed parent involvement across the three domains of involvement through the use of parent self-reports and teacher and child ratings (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Fantuzzo et al., 2000).

Examples of such activities include helping with homework, discussing the school day with their child, and creating a space for learning activities. School-based involvement activities include parents' active participation in educational activities typically undertaken at school, such as volunteering in the classroom or assisting on class field trips (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Manz et al., 2004). Lastly, home-school communication includes interpersonal interactions and connections between parents and teachers, such as attending parent-teacher conferences and exchanging notes or phone calls between the teacher and parent about the child's progress (Fantuzzo et al., 2000; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Manz et al., 2004).

2.3 Ecological Theory

With changing social conditions and shifts in family structure, it is important to understand child development in the context of the ecological system in an effort to promote parent involvement. In the ecological theory of human development, Bronfenbrenner (1977) provides a socio-cultural view of child development and how the

family system along with other social contexts within a child's environment influences his or her outcomes. According to the ecological theory, the child is part of a small social system encompassed by four interconnected and hierarchical systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. These four systems are influenced by the chronosystem, which incorporates the effect of time on the child.

The microsystem is the layer closest to the child and encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has in the setting in which he or she lives. It describes face-to-face relationships such as interactions with parents, peers, school, and neighbors. The microsystem includes the parent-child relationship at home and takes into account understanding of involvement and the active participation in their children's development. For example, the amount and quality of time the parent spends with the child engaging in activities to bond and to build skills influences the child's development.

The second system, the mesosystem is the layer that provides the connection between two or more structures of the child's microsystem. An example of the mesosystem is the partnership between parents and teachers to support a child's learning at home and in school. The ecological approach considers the joint impact of two or more settings and focuses on changes in role and environment that occur throughout the lifespan (Bronfrenbrenner, 1977). The mesosystem takes into account how events at home can affect the child's behavior at school and how events at school can impact the parent-child interaction at home. For example, children whose parents have rejected them may have difficulty developing positive relations with teachers.

The exosystem is the layer that defines the aspects of the larger social system in which the child does not have an active role, but that affects or is affected by the immediate microsystem. These aspects include the parent's place of work, school district policies, school parent committees, and community-based resources. For example, a parent receives a promotion at work that requires additional work hours a week. The additional hours places extra strain on the other parent to care for the child and to participate in the child's education. The extra pressure causes marital discord, which ultimately will affect the child and could impact the child's ability to function in school. Therefore, in this example the child is not directly involved in the parent's work or need to work additional hours, but is affected by dealing with the negative environment that occurs from the additional strain and marital distress. Thus, a parent's job experiences will affect parent involvement, which in turn, will affect the children.

The macrosystem is the cultural blueprint (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001), which is comprised of attitudes and ideologies of the culture in which the individual lives. The effects of this blueprint have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of the micro, meso, and exosystems. Cultural values, customs, and laws shape the individuals relations with their environment and impacts development. Cultural contexts include developing and industrialized countries, democracy, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, poverty, and ethnicity.

The chronosystem encompasses the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course. It refers to the effect created by time or critical periods in development within the individual and within environments over time. For example, the

chronosystem addresses the critical periods in the preschool setting, where infants grow attached to a caregiver, where toddlers learn to talk and to interact with peers, and where parents adjust to parenthood and their children's early milestones. The children as well as the parents learn from their environments embedded in the four systems as they progress through their early milestones. Their experiences with these systems and in these critical life events influence their future experiences, by shaping their expectations, motivation, and responses.

Ultimately, the ecological theory places an emphasis on understanding the individual in relation to the whole system (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001) consisting of multiple systems of "layers" of socio-cultural interaction. Each system has an effect on the child's development. A change or conflict in any one layer will demonstrate a ripple effect throughout the other layers. Thus, the interconnectedness of the individual to his or her environment shapes their development. To better understand a child's development, it is imperative to examine not only the child and his or her immediate environment, but also the interaction of the larger environment as well.

2.4 Model of Parent Involvement

Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1976, 1986), the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995, 1997, 2005) explores a system of parent, student, school, and community relationships that influences parent involvement and consequently children's development and learning. The theoretically grounded model of the parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005) describes specific elements of the involvement process and aims to answer why parents become involved, how their

involvement influences child outcomes, and how teachers and schools can be supported in encouraging involvement.

The model, which consists of five distinct levels and is interpreted from bottom to top, begins with parents' decision to become involved. The foundation of the model, level one includes parent role construction, parental self-efficacy and invitations. The model reasons that parents decide to participate when they understand that involvement is part of their role as parents, when they believe they can positively influence their children's learning, and when they perceive an invitation from both the child and school to become involved. In addition, the model suggests that once parents make the decision to participate, they choose specific activities shaped by their perception of their own abilities and skills, general invitations from the school and specific invitations from the child and teacher, and other demands on their time and energy. The forms of involvement consist of involvement activities at home, involvement activities at school, and parent-teacher communication.

The second level of the model consists of the specific activities parents can do to influence their children's learning, behaviors, and beliefs. These activities include instruction, modeling, reinforcement, and encouragement. The third level of the model suggests that parents' involvement is mediated by the child's perceptions of their involvement activities. At level four, the model suggests that parents' involvement activities influence student outcomes to the extent that parents use developmentally appropriate strategies and to the degree that parents and teachers share consistent expectations. The fifth and final level of the model focuses on specific student outcomes

influenced by parent involvement. These outcomes include, but are not limited to achievement, skills and knowledge, students' personal sense of efficacy for succeeding in school, and other attributes that facilitate learning such as self-regulation and motivation (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001). For this study, the first level of the parent involvement process will be examined, specifically looking at parent self-efficacy and how it related to a parent's involvement their children's preschool development and learning.

2.5 Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education

In early childhood education, parent involvement has been associated with stronger pre-literacy skills (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008) early literacy achievement (Senechal & LeFevre, 2002).

In the study, "Parent Involvement in Preschool: Predictors and the Relation of Involvement to Preliteracy Development," Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, and Ortiz (2008) examined the relation between parent involvement in preschool and children's preliteracy skills. 163 preschool aged from mostly low-income families, their parents, and their teachers participated in the study. From teachers' ratings of parent involvement and standardized tests to assess preliteracy skills, the researchers determined that greater parent involvement was associated with stronger preliteracy skills.

In addition, parent involvement has been linked to increased social, motor, and adaptive skills (Marcon, 1999), lower disruptive play behavior (Fantuzzo, & McWayne, 2002) and higher levels of emotion regulation (Downer & Mendez, 2005). Beginning in infancy, parent involvement in children's play is associated with literacy development and academically relevant skills including as independent and pro-social behaviors

(Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; Tamis-Lemonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). The research suggests that when parents provide cognitively stimulating home environments their children develop stronger academic skills and demonstrate higher achievement (Britto & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Fantuzzo & McWayne, 2002; Nord et al., 1999; Tamis-Lemonda et al., 2004). By supplying and interacting with materials such as books and games, parents can provide cognitive stimulation necessary for brain development and learning. Thus, parent involvement in early childhood is important to the child's social and academic development and sets the stage for an array of positive child outcomes in school-aged children.

2.6 Parent Involvement and School-Aged Children's Outcomes

Parent involvement in children's learning is related to a number of positive academic, psychological, social, and behavioral outcomes for all children from preschool through high school (Aeby, Manning, Thyer, & Carpenter-Aeby, 1999; Barnard, 2004; Domina, 2005; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Ma, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Trusty, 1999).

First, parent involvement has been linked to fewer behavior problems in elementary school children. In the study, "Leveling the Home Advantage: Assessing the Effectiveness of Parental Involvement in Elementary School" Domina (2005), data from a national longitudinal survey of youth was used to examine the effects of several types of parent involvement models on student academic achievement and behavior problems. The results demonstrated a positive link between parent involvement and children's behavioral problems. Specifically, the greater the frequency of parent involvement, the

fewer childhood behavior problems reported. In terms of type of involvement, this study suggested that parents inhibit children's behavioral problems when they volunteer at school, help their children with schoolwork, and check their children's homework.

To further support the claim that parent involvement positively impacts children's behavioral outcomes, El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal (2010) conducted a study using data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Childcare and Youth Development to investigate children's trajectories of academic and social development across first, third, and fifth grades. The study examined the associations among maternal and teacher reports of parent involvement and children's standardized achievement scores, social skills, and problem behaviors. Findings suggested that that improvements in parent involvement predicted declines in problem behaviors and improvements in social skills. In addition, the study demonstrated that children with highly involved parents had enhanced social functioning and fewer behavior problems. Thus, the two studies demonstrate the importance of parent involvement on children's behavioral and social adjustment.

Secondly, parent involvement has been positively linked to increased academic achievement. In the study, "Teacher-rated family involvement and children's social and academic outcomes in kindergarten," Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, & Bradley (2003) examined the relation between teachers' report of family involvement in school and children's social and academic competencies during kindergarten, after accounting for socioeconomic status and early maternal sensitivity. Teachers reported on the parent involvement of 223 children across two dimensions of parent involvement: families'

attitudes toward schools and parents' activities with schools. Children's social and academic competence was assessed through classroom observations and teachers' reports. The results of the study demonstrated that teachers' reports of parent involvement were positively linked to children's social and academic competencies. Thus, this study supports the role of parent involvement on student academic achievement.

In addition, parent involvement has been associated with child motivation for school work (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta, Cox, & Bradley, 2003), lower rates of grade retention and higher rates of participation in advanced courses (Ma, 1999; Marcon, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Trusty, 1999), increased high school completion (McNeal, 1999; Barnard, 2004) and higher educational attainment (Barnard, 2004).

In the study, "Parent Involvement in Elementary School and Educational Attainment," Barnard (2004) used a longitudinal study of 1165 inner-city Chicago children to investigate the association between parent involvement in elementary school and academic success in high school. Parent and teacher ratings of involvement along with data regarding the student's grades, retention, and drop-out status were used in the analysis. Results indicated that even after controlling for background characteristics, parent involvement in school was significantly associated with lower rates of high school dropout, increased on-time high school completion and highest grade completed. The study indicates the powerful effect of parent involvement in school-aged children's education to promote high school success. Thus, parent involvement positively impacts

children's learning and social development as they progress through K through 12 schools and into higher education.

2.7 Parent Variables Related to Parent Involvement

In previous literature, several family factors have been identified that influence levels and aspects of family involvement. These family factors include parent education, family income, parent gender, number of children in the household.

Social economic status (SES) as determined by family income has been positively linked to parent involvement in parents of preschool children (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008). Thus, parents of higher SES tend to be more involved in preschool children's preliteracy development than parents of lower SES. In addition, parent education level and family structure have been associated with parent involvement. Dauber and Epstein (1989) argued that well-educated parents (Eccles & Harold, 1996) are more likely to be involved at school. Deslandes, Potvin, Leclerc (1999) found that adolescents from traditional families and well-education parents report more affective support through parent encouragement and praise, help with homework, frequent discussions about school, attendance at school performances and sports events, than do adolescents from nontraditional families and less educated parents. In addition, social economic status (SES) determined by family income has been positively linked to parent involvement in parents of preschool children (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, & Ortiz, 2008).

To support these findings, Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000) found in their study, "Family Involvement Questionnaire: A Multivariate Assessment of Family Participation in Early Childhood Education," that parents with education beyond high

school were engaged in higher levels of school-based involvement and home-school conferencing than parents with less than high school education. In addition, there were higher levels of home-school conferencing and home-based involvement in two-parent families than in single-parent households. Thus, the research shows the relationships between parent education level and family structure and level and aspects of family involvement

Previous research has shown links between parent gender, parent occupation, the number of children in the household, and levels of family involvement. Deslandes and Cloutier (2000) reported that mothers are more involved with their children's schooling than are fathers, indicating the differences gender can play in level of family involvement. In addition to parent gender, the number of children living in the home has been significantly related to the ways in which families are involved in their children's education. Eccles and Harold (1996) found in their study that parents with fewer children provide more help with homework than do parents with more children.

In support of this research, Manz et al. (2004) found that caregivers in households with five or more children reported less Home-based Involvement and Home-School Communication than those in households with fewer than five children. Ultimately family factors have been identified to influence levels of family involvement, however, there is little one can do to change these variables order to promote involvement. Therefore, it is important to understand and evaluate the variables that can be improved upon to increase family involvement in children's learning such as parent efficacy discussed in the Hoover-Dempsey model.

2.8 The Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy refers to a person's beliefs about their capabilities to master a situation and produce desired effects. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and approach daily tasks, goals, and challenges. Self-efficacy is concerned with the beliefs one has about their abilities, rather than the actual abilities one possesses. Beliefs about one's capabilities, independent of underlying skill, are demonstrated as one of the most influential aspects that determines one's performance (Heflinger & Bickman, 1996) and offers a significant advantage for achieving success in many domains of human action (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1995), including academics, work, athletics and health functioning (Lerner & Locke, 1995, Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1995; Schwarzer, 1992; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). In general, people with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to engage in behaviors leading to a specific outcome and to be more persistent in the face of obstacles than individuals with low self-efficacy. People with poor senses of efficacy tend to shy away from difficult tasks and to achieve less desired outcomes.

In Bandura's (1989) self-efficacy theory, self-efficacy is defined as individuals' beliefs about their capabilities to exercise and maintain some level of control over events that affect their lives. The theory suggests people who strongly believe in their personal capabilities are more likely to approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided. According to Bandura (1994), unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act. He states, "people's level of motivation, affective states and actions are based more on what they

believe than on what is objectively the case" (Bandura, 1997, p.2). Self-efficacy beliefs act as a major catalyst to action, influencing one's decision making, level of motivation, perseverance in the face of obstacles, and realization of achievements. In summary, self-efficacy is concerned with the individual's beliefs about their abilities, rather than their actual capabilities. A strong sense of efficacy enhances goal accomplishment. Thus, in an effort to develop strategies to increase motivation and encourage action, it is important to understand the sources that influence self-efficacy beliefs.

2.9 Development of Self-Efficacy

People's beliefs in their efficacy are developed by four main sources of influence. Bandura (1995) outlines these forms of influences: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and somatic and affective states. The most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences. Successes and failures influence one's belief about their abilities. Successes contribute to a robust sense of personal efficacy, whereas failures tend to undermine it, especially if these failures occur before one has established a strong sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1997). However, setbacks and difficulties in pursuits offer a useful learning tool that success requires sustained effort. A resilient sense of efficacy requires experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverance.

Vicarious experiences create and strengthen self-efficacy beliefs through the use of social models. Seeing others similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort promotes one's beliefs that they too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities. The impact of modeling is strongly influenced by one's perceived similarity to the models;

the greater the assumed similarity, the more persuasive the model's successes and failures.

Social persuasion involves verbally persuading the individual that they possess the capabilities to master a given task. People who are persuaded through supportive appraisals are likely to exert greater effort and sustain it. In contrast, people who are persuaded that they lack capabilities tend avoid challenging activities and to give up quickly in the face of adversary. Although social persuasion can be effective at increasing self-efficacy through encouragement, it is generally less challenging to decrease person's efficacy through negative appraisals. People who successfully build self-efficacy in others not only raise beliefs through encouragement, but structure situations in ways that bring success and minimize failure.

Lastly, somatic and affective states refer to the physiological reactions and moods that affect a person's judgments of their capabilities. A person's perceptions of their physiological and emotional responses to unusual, stressful situations can markedly alter a person's self-efficacy. If a person with low self-efficacy exhibits signs of distress in reaction to a stressful event, he or she may interpret the signs as a deficient in their own ability. In contrast, a person with high self-efficacy is likely to interpret the physiological signs as normal and unrelated to his or her actual ability. Thus, it is not the individual's actual physical and emotional reactions that play an important role in the development of self-efficacy, but rather how one perceives and interprets the reactions.

Thus, the four sources of influence on people's beliefs include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and somatic and affective states.

Through the understanding of these sources of influences, specific strategies can be developed to promote self-efficacy beliefs and ultimately achievement in many domains of human functioning.

2.10 Parent Efficacy Described

Parent efficacy emerges from the self-efficacy theory and refers to a specific domain of self-efficacy. Parent efficacy is defined as the beliefs parents have about their ability to perform competently and effectively as caregivers, and to positively influence their children's behavior and development (Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Hess, Teti, & Hussey-Gardner, 2004). According to the self-efficacy theory, parent efficacy involves not only the parent's specific knowledge about child-rearing behaviors, but also the degree of confidence the parent has in his or her ability to perform the specific behavior. Bandura (1994) indicates that parents' beliefs about their abilities predicts the behaviors they will exhibit, what activities they will engage in, how much effort they will put forth in activities, and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) define parent efficacy as it pertains to helping children succeed in school as the degree to which parents believe they are capable of exerting a positive influence on their children's academic outcomes. Efficacious parents are confident that their involvement will be beneficial for their children and are more likely to participate in their children's schooling, even when faced with difficulties and barriers. Parents who lack a strong sense of efficacy tend to not pursue tasks they believe are beyond their abilities and are likely to refrain from actively

participating. Thus, parents' beliefs about their ability to help their children succeed, regardless of their underlying ability, is one of the most influential aspects that determines parents' participation in their children's learning (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992; Hoover-Dempsey & Sanders, 1995). Thus, it is important for schools to understand the concept of parent efficacy and the sources that influence it during development and implementation of parent involvement programs.

2.11 Parent Efficacy and Child and Parent Functioning and Adjustment

According to the literature, parental efficacy is associated with children's behavioral adjustment and socio-emotional development. In the study, "Maternal Self-Efficacy Beliefs, Competence in Parenting, and Toddlers' Behavior and Developmental Status", Coleman and Karracker (2003) examined parenting self-efficacy beliefs as correlates of mothers' competence in parenting toddlers, and as predictors of toddlers' behavior and development. Sixty eight predominantly middle-class mother-toddler dyads participated in the study. Mothers complemented questionnaires, toddlers were administered the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, and each mother-toddler dyad participated in a procedure designed to observe parent and toddler behaviors in a semi-structured laboratory context. The results of the study demonstrated a significant relationship between parent efficacy beliefs and observed behaviors such as affection toward mothers, avoidance of mothers, compliance, enthusiasm, and negativity. Thus, high parent efficacy was associated with high child enthusiasm, compliance, affection, and low child avoidance and negativity in toddlers (Coleman & Karraker, 2003).

In addition, parent efficacy has been linked to fewer behavioral problems, greater seeking out of parents over peers to confer about personal problems, lower reported substance abuse in adolescents (Bogenschneider et al., 1997), and greater success of behavioral interventions (Sofronoff & Farbotko, 2002). More specifically, high parent efficacy has been linked to reports of lower child anxiety, greater feelings of self-regulation, self-worth and self-efficacy (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Fan & Chen, 2001; Grolnick, Kurowski, Grolnic & Slowiaczek, 1994).

In addition to children's adjustment, parent efficacy also appears to play a role in the psychological functioning and adjustment of parents, which has also been linked to parenting effectiveness and children's adjustment (Burke, 2003; Crnic & Acevedo, 1995; Lovejoy, Graczyk, O'Hare, & Neuman, 2000). Parent efficacy correlates positively with parental satisfaction (Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Laws & Millward, 2001), and inversely with parent's depressive symptoms (Cutrona & Troutman, 1986; Teti & Gelfand, 1991). In addition, research suggests that individuals with high levels of parent efficacy are more optimistic, authoritative, and consistent in interactions with their children than individuals who are less efficacious (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Teti & Gelfand, 1991).

2.12 Parent Efficacy and Parenting

Parenting today can be complex and challenging, placing continual and stressful demands on parents. Parents not only have to deal with ever-changing challenges as their children grow, they also have to manage interdependent relationships within the family and other social connections outside the family system (Bandura, 1995). Positive parent efficacy beliefs have been associated with parenting competence and a greater ability to

cope with the everyday demands. In general, parents with strong parenting efficacy demonstrate greater levels of parent competence in that they are able to perform behaviors required to successfully raise a child. Furthermore, individuals high in parent efficacy are able to guide their children through the developmental stages they face without undue strain on their relationship with their spouse or partner (Bandura, 1997; Sanders & Woolley, 2005). Individuals low in parent efficacy may struggle to meet familial demands and are vulnerable to stress and depression (Sanders & Woolley, 2005).

Research suggests that parent efficacy impacts child adjustment directly but also indirectly via parenting practices and behaviors. Bandura (1997) suggests that efficacy beliefs set the stage for parental practices, which are also associated with children's development (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Gardner, Ward, Burton, & Wilson, 2003). High levels of parent efficacy are also associated with positive parenting behaviors such increased warmth and responsiveness to child needs, non-punitive caretaking, active parent-child interactions, parental acceptance and promotion of child outcomes, and use of effective coping strategies (Coleman & Karracker, 1997). Specifically, parent efficacy has been linked to positive maternal interactive behavior with infants (Bohlin & Hagekull, 1987) to parental warmth and control with toddlers and school-aged children (Izzo, Weiss, Shanahan, & Rodriguez-Brown, 2000; Dumka et al., 1996), and to parental limit setting and harsh discipline with preschoolers (Hill & Bush, 2001) and to adolescent-reported parental responsiveness (Gondoli & Silverberg, 1997).

Based on Bandura's theory and previous research, Ardelt and Eccles (2001) described a conceptual model that suggests parents who feel efficacious are more likely

to be engaged in promotive parenting strategies, which in turn increase the likelihood for their children's success in both academic and social-psychological domains. In contrast, parents with low efficacy may struggle to use promotive parenting strategies and give up easily when challenges arise, which in turn may confirm their incompetent beliefs (Prinz & Jones, 2005). Thus, the research strongly supports the need for interventions to improve parent efficacy in order to improve involvement and to promote positive child outcomes.

2.13 Parent Efficacy and Parent Involvement

Applied to parent involvement, self-efficacy theory suggests that parents make involvement decisions based in part on their thinking about the outcomes likely to follow their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker, Wilkins, Dallaire, Sandler, & Hoover Dempsey, 2005). Self-efficacy is influenced by personal experiences of success in parental involvement, vicarious experience of similar others' successful involvement experiences, and verbal persuasion by others to become involved (Bandura, 1997). In addition, the relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement has been described as a mutual and bi-directional relationship. For example, parent efficacy acts as a stimulus for initiating parent involvement and parent involvement maintains and extends parents' efficacy beliefs (Swick & Broadway, 1997).

Previous research has examined the relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement in children's learning and intervention programs. Positive personal beliefs about efficacy for helping one's children succeed in school have been associated with increased parental involvement among elementary, middle, and high school students

(Bandura et al., 1996; Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Seefeldt, Denton, Galer, & Younoszai, 1998; Shumox & Lomax, 2002). In addition, parent efficacy for helping their children succeed in school has been shown to predict home and school-based involvement (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007; Walker et al., 2005), indicating that parents are more likely to be involved if they have the belief that their actions will improve learning and academic performance (Green et al., 2007; Grolnick et al., 1997; Hoover-Dempesey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Stevenson, Chen, & Uttal, 1990).

To support this research, the study, "Parents' Motivations for Involvement in Children's Education: An Empirical Test of a Theoretical Model of Parental Involvement", Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler (2007) examined the levels of parental involvement and perceived parent efficacy in 853 parents of first through sixth grade students enrolled in an ethnically diverse metropolitan publics school system. The results revealed that parents' home-based involvement was predicted by self-efficacy beliefs; parents with high efficacy reported greater involvement in home-based involvement. The researchers also found that parents who view themselves as less able to effectively contribute to their child's education are more likely to refrain from participating in such activities.

Moreover, parent-efficacy beliefs have been shown to play a mediating role between parenting stress and family involvement. In the study, "Family involvement for children with disruptive behaviors: The role of parenting stress and motivational beliefs," Semke, Garbacz , Kwon , Sheridan and Woods (2010) found that parent efficacy

mediated the relation between parenting stress and home-based involvement in a sample consisting of parents of children with disruptive disorders. Parents of children with disruptive behaviors report more stress and may experience negative beliefs about their efficacy to support their children's learning. Thus, stressed parents of children with disruptive behaviors may experience negative beliefs regarding their own efficacy, which may thereby negatively influence their actual involvement in educational activities at home. The researchers suggest that the effect of stress on family involvement at home may be lessened as parents demonstrate increased self-efficacy regarding their ability to help their child in educational endeavors.

In addition, parent efficacy has been demonstrated to be increased through intervention (Evans et al., 2003; Miller-Heyl, MacPhee, & Fritz, 1998) and may be a predictor of parenting in intervention programs (Spoth, Redmond, Haggerty, & Ward, 1995) as well as a predictor of treatment outcomes (Hoza et al., 2000). Therefore, parent efficacy may serve as an important point for intervention to support involvement of families of children with disruptive behaviors and learning disabilities.

Ultimately, numerous research studies have looked at the relationship between the motivational belief of parent efficacy and levels and aspects of parent involvement. In previous literature, parent efficacy beliefs have been positively linked to parent involvement, particularly home-based involvement, and have been shown to be a mediating variable between parenting stress and family involvement. Parent efficacy beliefs have also been increased through intervention as well as a predictor of both parenting intervention programs and treatment outcomes. Therefore, the research

supports the importance of parent efficacy in parents' participation in children's schooling and in the successful implementation of intervention programs.

2.14 Summary

Overall, this literature review aimed to explore the previous research and theory of self-efficacy and parent involvement as it pertains to children's development and learning. The review discussed five aspects of parent involvement: parent involvement today, the ecological theory, the Hoover-Dempsey Model of parent involvement, definition, parent variables, and effects of involvement on children's outcomes. In addition, self-efficacy was discussed in reference to Bandura's self-efficacy theory, parenting efficacy, and parenting. The review presented the findings of previous research regarding parent efficacy and family involvement in children's learning. The following section discusses the methodology of the present study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The present study aimed to examine parent reports of involvement and of parent efficacy in preschool parents. In addition, the study aimed to determine whether a relationship exists between parent involvement and parent efficacy, such that parents who report high efficacy beliefs in their ability to fulfill the role as parent and positively influence their preschooler's learning and development will also report high levels of parent involvement. Consequently, parents who report low efficacy beliefs will report low levels of involvement. The following chapter presents the participants, measures, and procedure of the present study. Demographics of the participants and instrument reliability are provided.

3.1 Participants

Participants in the study were parents of preschool children attending a suburban private preschool, Grow-Ville Community Day School, located in Hamilton, New Jersey. Parents of children in the Infant Room, Toddler One, Toddler Two, 3/ 4, and/or Pre-Kindergarten classrooms were invited to participate in this study. Surveys were distributed to all of the parents of the 64 children at Grow-Ville Community Day School, to increase the chances that the sample could be considered representative of the school population. The majority of the respondents were mothers (85%), were married (90%), between the ages of 30 to 39 (70%), and identified as White (85%).

A total of 110 surveys were distributed, one for each primary caregiver identified by the teachers and director. Twenty-eight surveys were returned with a total response rate of 25%. Eight surveys returned were incomplete, two surveys were returned

indicating responses for more than one child attending the preschool, and one survey indicated that both parents jointly completed a single survey together. Thus, it was brought to the researcher's attention that the response rate may be an underestimate of the actual number of participants as some parents may have completed the surveys together or may have completed only one survey for all of their children attending the preschool.

3.2 Preschool Profile

Grow-Ville Community Day School is a private preschool located in the suburbs of New Jersey. Based on demographic information obtained from the school, the school consists of a predominantly White population with a few minorities of Hispanic, African American, and Asian ethnicity. A majority of the parents are identified as married, with a very low representation of single and divorced parents. Among the population, parents range in age from 20 to 44 years old with a majority of parents in their thirties. The comparison of the sample in the present study to the population of Grow-Ville Community Day indicates strong demographic similarities in terms of ethnicity, age, and marital status. Thus, the researcher concludes that the sample in the present study is relative to population and that the results can be generalized to the majority of parents of Grow-Ville Community Day School.

3.3 Measures

This study used research methodology in order to determine the relationship between participants' reported parent efficacy and participants' reported level of parent involvement. The researcher collected data through two self-administered surveys completed by the parents. Information regarding the demographic profile of the

preschool population was gathered from the director of the preschool. The researcher collected data from parents of preschoolers in the Infant Room to Pre-Kindergarten. The researcher employed an adapted version of the Family Involvement Questionnaire-Elementary (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000) to describe the parent involvement of the sample group. The Parent Efficacy Scale developed by Duke, Allen, and Halverson (1996) was used to determine the level of parent efficacy for the sample. Finally, a Family Background Questionnaire was specifically developed to collect family background data (See Appendix A).

3.4 Adapted Family Involvement Questionnaire- Early Childhood (FIQ)

Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) originally developed for use by Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs (2000), was used with permission of the author and adapted to fit the current study. The FIQ is a multi-dimensional scale of family involvement in early childhood education. The FIQ uses parent or primary caregiver self-reports to assess family involvement for children in preschool, kindergarten, and 1st grade programs. The FIQ is supported by the empirical parent involvement literature. The original version of the FIQ was developed for and used with low-income, minority families. The original FIQ consisted of a 46-item scale, reflecting various levels of parent activity across home, classroom, and school contexts. The researcher adapted the FIQ by reducing the number items from 46 to 16 in an effort to increase parent participation. The researcher eliminated the items from the survey that would not apply to the specific sample. For example, items such as “I help children with their homework”, “I attend school field trips”, and “I attend parent-teacher conferences” were

removed because they are not applicable to the parents at Grow-Ville Community Day School. The preschool students do not receive homework, go on field trips, or have parent-teacher conferences.

After the inapplicable items were eliminated, the researcher randomly selected 16 items to be used in the questionnaire. Examples of the items used are "I volunteer in my child's classroom", "I maintain clear rules at my home that my child should obey", and "I talk to my child's teacher about his/her daily routine." The adapted FIQ asked participants to indicate on a 4-point scale (1=never, 2=sometimes, 3= often, 4=always) the extent to which they engage in the following activities with their preschooler. A score of four consistently reflects the highest level of parent involvement and a score of one reflects the lowest level of parent involvement. A total score of the adapted FIQ was determined by calculating the sum of all 16 items. Possible total scores for the FIQ range from 16 to 64, with higher scores representing higher levels of parent involvement and with lower scores representing lower levels of parent involvement. The reliability of the adapted FIQ used in the present study was determined by utilizing Cronbach's alpha to find the internal consistency of the survey. The reliability of the survey was calculated as, $\alpha = .83$. Therefore, the FIQ results can be deemed reliable in the present study.

3.5 Parent Efficacy Scale

The Parent Efficacy Scale developed by Duke, Allen and Halverson (1996) was used to assess parents' self-report of parenting efficacy on a 34-item scale. The scale consisted of three subscales that assess parents' beliefs in their efficacy concerning education, communication, and general efficacy. Parents were asked to indicate on a 4-

point scale ranging from 1 “never” to 4 “always” the extent to which each item applied to them as parents. Items include “I cope well with the stresses and frustrations of parenthood;” “I am able to teach my child the things that will help him/her in life;” “I am good at solving the everyday problems of being a parent;” and “I feel that feel like I know how to discipline my child.”

The scale consisted of eight negatively worded items (3, 7, 10, 16, 17, 19, 22, and 31) which are reverse scored. A total score of the scale was found by calculating the sum of all 34 items after the negatively worded items were rescored so that the higher scores uniformly reflected higher efficacy. A score of four consistently reflects the highest level of parent-efficacy and a score of one reflects the lowest level of parent efficacy. An overall global score is obtained to represent the parents’ sense of efficacy. Possible total scores for the scale range from 34 to 136, with higher scores representing higher levels of parent self-efficacy and lower scores representing lower levels of parent self-efficacy. The reliability of the Parent Efficacy Scale determined by Cronbach’s alpha to find the internal consistency of the survey was $\alpha = .86$. Thus, the results of this instrument can be assumed reliable in the present study.

3.6 Family Background Questionnaire

The Family Background Questionnaire was specifically developed for this study. The development of this questionnaire was based on similar surveys and findings in the literature. The purpose of the questionnaire was twofold: to provide a description of the sample and to determine family variables that have been found to make a significant difference in parent involvement and parent efficacy. The questionnaire aimed to gather

information about the participants' gender, ethnicity, marital status, age, and relationship to the child as well as the child's gender and age. The parent variables collected information regarding family income, parent education, and number of children in the household.

3.7 Procedure

The researcher contacted the director of Grow-Ville Community Day School to obtain permission to collect data within the school. After receiving written permission from the school director, the proposal to conduct the study was presented to the IRB at Rowan University for endorsement. With permission granted from the preschool and endorsement from the Rowan University IRB, permission was obtained to have surveys distributed to parents.

Parents were informed of the study through the preschools' monthly newsletter that was given to the parents a month prior to the distribution of the survey. The researcher prepared envelopes consisting a consent form and the surveys, the adapted Family Involvement Questionnaire and the Parenting Efficacy Scale. The researcher provided the envelopes to the teachers of the preschool to be given to the each parent in the Infant Room, Toddler One, Toddler Two, 3/4 and Pre-K Classrooms. The consent form described the purpose of the study, the risks involved in participation, and the anonymous nature of all responses. The consent form also contained a phone number and email address of the investigator and sponsor should parents have questions or concerns about the study. Each envelope had a label on it informing the parents of where to place the completed surveys as well as the deadline for submission. The label also informed

parents to not place their names, their child name or any other identifying information on the envelope or surveys.

On the day of envelope distribution, the researcher placed a sealed box labeled "Master's Thesis Research Study" in the main hallway of the school. Parents were asked to place the completed surveys in the box within two weeks of the distribution day. Three weeks following survey distribution, the researcher collected the box with the completed surveys.

3.8 Data Analysis

The researcher began the process of sorting and coding the surveys. Any incomplete surveys were eliminated and not used in the data analysis. All data from the FIQ, Parent Efficacy Scale, and the Family Background Questionnaire were entered into an SPSS data document for analysis. A number was assigned to each envelope and respective data from the three measures. The researcher totaled the scores of the FIQ and the Parent Efficacy Scale by adding the scores from each question and accounting for reversed score questions. The researcher determined the frequencies and descriptive statistics of the sample, the parent variables, and the total scores of the FIQ and the Parent Efficacy Scale. Then, the researcher conducted a Pearson Correlation between the total of the FIQ and the total scores of the Parent Efficacy Scale. The researcher then determined the existence and strength of the relationship.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, the methodology of the present study was discussed including the participants, measures, procedure, and data analysis. The demographics of the participants and the reliability for the FIQ and Parent Efficacy scale were provided. A correlation analysis using a Pearson's Correlation was used to determine the relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy among parents in a small, suburban, predominantly White private preschool. The following chapter discusses the results of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy as well as parent-status variables in parents of preschool children. The following chapter presents the results of the study. Demographic information is provided in greater detail as well as the frequencies, descriptive statistics, and the results of the correlation analysis among the variables.

4.1 Demographic Information

Parents completed a Family Background Questionnaire, which provided the researcher with contextual information from which to interpret the parent involvement and parent efficacy survey results. The questionnaire was specifically designed to provide a description of the sample including parent age, ethnicity, marital status, gender, and relationship to child. A total of 20 parents returned completed surveys that were used in the analyses. Parent ages ranged from 25 to 44 years old, with M= 36.15, SD= 4.73. The demographics of the parent sample in the current study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Parent Demographic Data

Parent Characteristics	N	Percentage
Age		
20-29 30-39 40-49	2 14 4	10% 70% 20%
Ethnicity		
White Hispanic Asian	17 1 2	85% 5% 10%
Marital Status		
Married Single Significant Other	18 1 1	90% 5% 5%
Gender		
Male Female	3 17	15% 85%
Primary Caregiver		
Mother Father	17 3	85% 15%

In addition, the Family Background Questionnaire completed by the parents also provided the researcher with a description of the preschooler of the parent. The questionnaire asked for the child's age and gender. The majority of the children were males (60%) and ranged in age from 1 to 5 years, with M= 2.75 and SD =1.3. The demographics of the children in the study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Preschooler Demographic Data

Child Characteristics	N	Percentage
Age (years)		
1	4	20%
2	6	30%
3	3	15%
4	5	25%
5	2	10%
Gender		
Male	12	60%
Female	8	40%

In addition, the Family Background Questionnaire collected data on three parent variables: parent education, family income, and number of children. The distribution and frequency of each of the three variables is presented in Table 3. In reference to parent variables, the majority of respondents reported having two children (75%), completion of a four- year or Bachelor's degree (55%), a family income above $100,000.00 annually (55%).

Table 3
Distribution and Frequency of Parent Variables

Parent Variables	N	Percentage
Family Income	20	
$20,000-$40,000	2	10%
$40,000-$60,000	2	10%
$80,000-$100,000	5	25%
$100,000+	11	55%
Parent Education		
High School Graduate	6	30%
Some College	1	5%
College Graduate	11	55%
Graduate Professional	2	10%
Number of Children		
1	1	5%
2	15	75%
3	2	10%
4	2	10%

4.2 Research Question 1

The researcher wanted to know how parents report their level of involvement in their preschooler's schooling and development.

To answer this question, parent involvement information was collected from the scores of the Adapted- Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ). The frequency of the reported scores for the FIQ was determined. Figure 1 presents a histogram of the frequency of the reported scores for parent involvement.

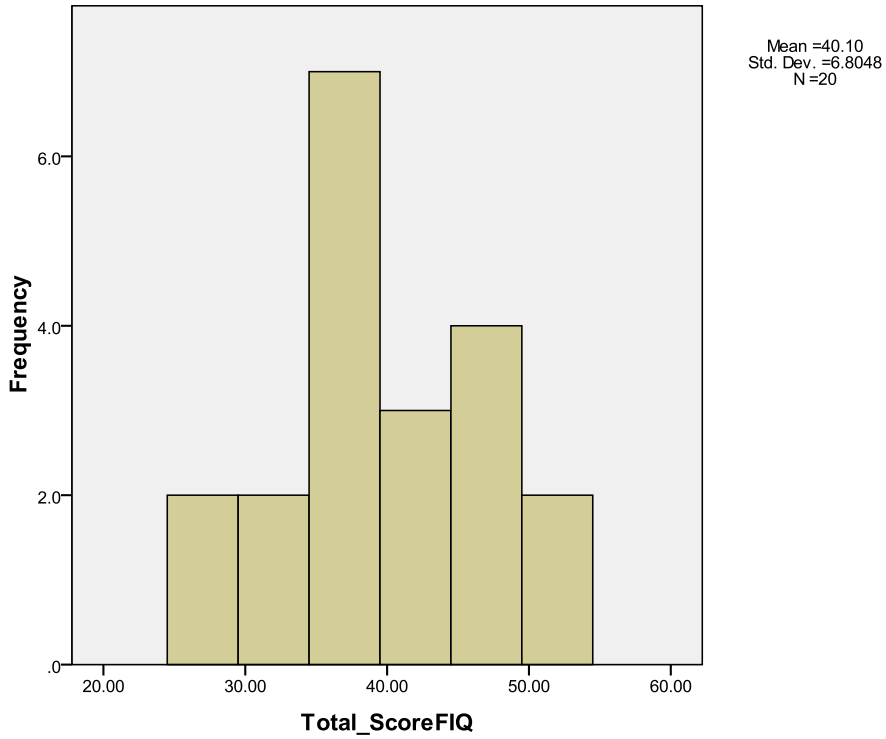

Figure 1 Frequencies of Parent Involvement (Total scores on FIQ).

In addition, descriptive statistics were conducted to describe minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of the reported total scores for the FIQ. To summarize, the possible total scores of the FIQ range from 16 to 64, with higher scores indicating greater parent involvement. The total scores were broken down into two levels of involvement: low (16-40) and high (41-64). The descriptive statistics are minimum= 27.00, maximum= 52.00, M= 40.10 with a standard deviation of 6.80. The data suggests that on average parents report their involvement on the borderline of low and high. To further explore this relationship, the total scores were broken down into three levels of involvement: low (16-32), medium (33-48), and high (49-64). The majority (80%) of parents report their involvement at the medium level. Two parents reported their involvement in the low range and two parents reported their involvement in the high range. Thus, parents at Grow-Ville Community Day School feel that they do participate in their preschooler's learning to some extent. However, the findings suggest that there is an opportunity to increase parent involvement within the preschool.

4.3 Research Question 2

The researcher also wanted to determine how efficacious preschool parents feel they are at competently performing the roles as parent and influencing their children's learning and development. The present study used the total scores of the Parent Efficacy Scale (Appendix A) to determine the level of parent efficacy among the parents of preschoolers. The possible total scores on the Parent Efficacy Scale ranged from 34 to 136, with higher scores indicating higher reported parent efficacy. The frequency of the total scores of the Parent Efficacy Scale is provided in Figure 2.

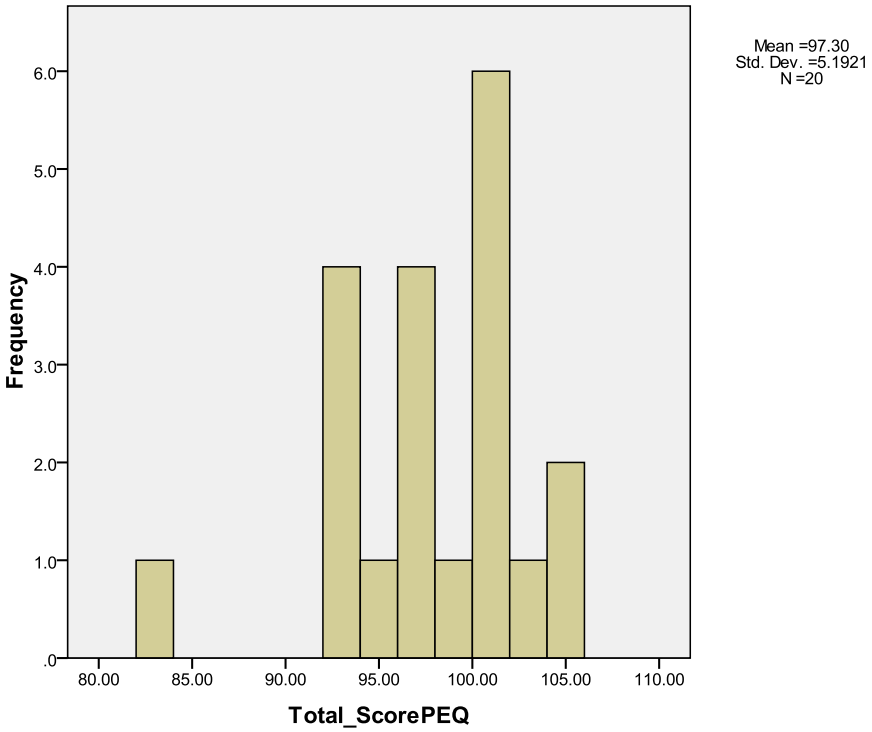

Figure 2 Frequencies of Parent Efficacy (Total Scores on Parent Efficacy Scale).

In addition, descriptive statistics were determined. For the total score on the Parent Efficacy Scale, Minimum= 83.00, Maximum = 105.00, M= 97.30, SD= 5.19. When broken down into three categories of efficacy: low (34-68), medium (69-102) and high (103-136), the majority of parents reported high parent efficacy. Three parents reported in the high efficacy range with scores of 103.00, 105.00 and 105.00. No parents fell in the low efficacy range. Thus, the results indicate that the majority (85%) of

respondents express some doubt in their abilities to competently fulfill their roles as parents and to influence their children's learning and development. Fifteen percent of respondents feel that they are highly capable of fulfilling their roles and promote their children's outcomes.

4.4 Research Question 3

Does a relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement exist among the reports of preschool parents?

To address this question, the researcher hypothesized that a relationship would exist between parent efficacy and parent involvement.

A correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement. The researcher conducted a Pearson's correlation between the total scores of the Parent Efficacy Scale and the total scores of the Family Involvement Questionnaire. Table 4 presents the results of the Pearson's correlation between the two variables. The Pearson's Correlation showed a significant relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement, $r\ (20)=.56$, $p=.009$. Thus, the hypothesis that a relationship exists between parent efficacy and parent involvement was true. The researcher rejected the H_0 hypothesis. A scatter plot of the correlation between parent involvement and parent efficacy is provided in Figure 3.

Table 4
Pearson's Correlation between Parent Efficacy and Parent Involvement N=20

Scale	1	2	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. Parent Efficacy	-	.565*	.009
2. Parent Involvement	.565*	-	

*p<.01

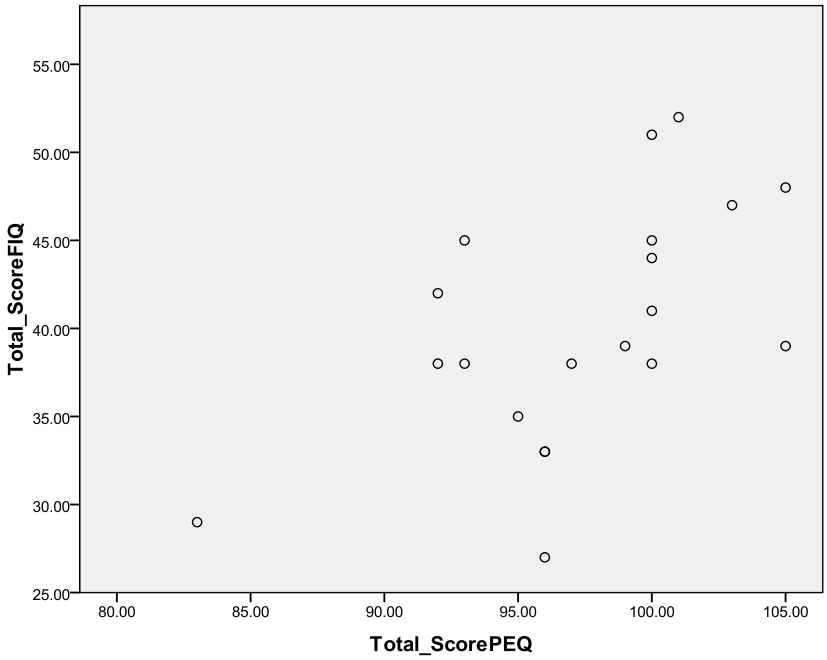

Figure 3 Scatter plot of total scores on Parent Efficacy Scale and on FIQ.

The relationship was positive, of moderate strength, and is significant at the .01 level. The positive relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy as determined by total scores on the FIQ and Parent Efficacy Scale supports the hypothesis that greater parent efficacy is related to greater parent involvement and vice versa.

4.5 Summary

The study aimed to determine the frequency of parent involvement and to determine parent efficacy among preschool parents. This chapter presented the results of the present study including tables and figures of the data. The data analysis reported medium parent efficacy and medium parent involvement. The analysis also revealed a moderate, but significant relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy as reported in the FIQ and Parent Efficacy. The relationship was positive and showed that higher scores of parent efficacy were associated with higher levels of involvement. Chapter five discusses the findings of the present study and how it supports previous research. Strengths, limitations, and implications for future research are also discussed.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter discusses the results of the present study and how the outcomes relate to the findings in previous research. The limitations of the study are addressed. Finally, implications and considerations for future research involving parents of preschoolers are presented.

Parent involvement has been well recognized as an important factor in children's learning and social development by child-care providers, researchers, educators, and policymakers (Administration of Children and Families, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The increased attention to the topic of parent involvement in public policy and education over the past few decades has been grounded in a substantial body of literature that highlights the association between parent involvement and positive child outcomes. Despite the importance of parent involvement in children's learning and federal and state mandates for schools to increase home-school collaboration, parents report that they would like to become more involved (Epstein, 1995) The research has suggested that parent involvement is influenced by parent efficacy beliefs (Swick, 1988).

5.1 Present Study Outcomes and Previous Research

One of the objectives of the present study was to gain a better understanding of parent involvement and parent efficacy beliefs among parents at Grow-Ville Community Day School, a suburban, predominantly White private preschool in the Northeast. The researcher hoped to give the preschool valuable information to help with the development of parent participation programs and with the promotion of child outcomes. Thus, the

study explored the reports of parent involvement and the reports of parent efficacy among the preschool parents. Parent involvement was defined for the purpose of this study as the active engagement of parents in activities and behaviors at home and at school to benefit their children's learning and development (Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000) and was measured collectively along the dimensions of school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and parent-teacher communication. Parent efficacy was defined as parents' beliefs that they can competently perform the roles as parents and effectively influence their children's outcomes, in the areas of development and schooling.

The results of the study described the levels of parent involvement and parent efficacy as reported by parents who have children attending the preschool. The present study showed that 80% of respondents reported in medium range of total parent involvement with a mean of 40.10 with a standard deviation of 6.80 on scale of 16 (lowest) to 64 (highest). In addition, = 97.30, SD= 5.19. These finding suggest that parents' involvement in their children's early childhood education is limited in the sample.

Furthermore, the present study showed that the majority of parents (85%) at Grow-Ville Community Day School reported their parent efficacy in the medium range. The minimum total score on the Parent Efficacy Scale was 83.00; the maximum was 105.00 with a mean of 97.30 and a standard deviation of 5.19. These results suggest that parents of the sample hold beliefs that they are not completely confident in their abilities to fulfill their roles as parents and are doubtful in their ability to impact their children's outcomes. Because the sample is representative of the population, the findings can be generalized to the majority of parents of preschoolers attending Grow-Ville Community

Day School. Bandura (1977) described parent efficacy as linked to one's beliefs about their abilities and not their actual abilities. Therefore, although parents do not report high parent efficacy, it does not mean that they are not capable of fulfilling their role as a parent and influencing their children's outcomes. Parent efficacy beliefs can be improved and strengthened. Interventions should focus on increasing parent efficacy in order to increase positive parenting and parent participation, which is associated with positive child outcomes for all children.

The second objective was to determine whether a relationship exists between parent involvement and parent efficacy. The Hoover- Dempsey Model of Parent Involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005) describes specific elements of the involvement process and aims to answer why parents become involved. In reference to parent efficacy, the model reasons that parents become involved in their children's schooling when they believe they can positively influence their children's learning. In addition, Swick and Broadway (1997) described the relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement as a mutual relationship and bi-directional relationship.

In the present study, the relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy was examined through a correlational analysis. Based on the previous research, the researcher hypothesized that a relationship would exist between the two variables and that an increase in one variable would be related to an increase in the other variable. The results of the Pearson's Correlation showed a significant relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement, $r(20)=.56$, $p=.009$. Specifically, the relationship was of moderate strength in the positive direction.

Thus, the results of the present study support the Hoover-Dempsey Model of Parent Involvement and other empirical research that highlights the relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy, indicating that parents are more likely to be involved if they have the belief that their actions will improve learning and academic performances, and in turn, parents who are more likely to be involved maintain stronger beliefs about their ability to produce desired outcomes (Green et al., 2001; Grolnick et al., Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Swick & Broadway, 1997).

Additionally, the study supports previous research that mothers are more involved in their children's schooling than fathers (Deslandes & Cloutier, 2000). In the present study, the majority (85%) of respondents were mothers even though surveys were distributed to mothers, fathers, and other primary caregivers.

5.2 Limitations

There are a number of limitations in the present study that must be considered. The study is limited in its use of self-reports, the surveys, the sample, and participation. The present study used survey research to collect data and compute the analyses. Survey research does not allow interaction with the respondents or for the researcher to follow up on the respondent's understanding of the questions. Further research should use qualitative research, employing a structured interview approach to allow for interaction between the research and the respondent to clarify directions and address questions. Although the researcher adapted the FIQ to make the overall survey shorter, the length of the survey may have deterred some parents from completing it. The parents who did not return surveys may be significantly less involved in their children's schooling, and thus the study is unable to measure these parents' levels of parent efficacy or to provide

demographic information on these parents. Thus, there is a lack of information regarding the parents who did not participate which limits the study.

In addition, survey research is based on perceptions and not on actual behaviors. The present study used self-reports to describe both levels of parent involvement and parent efficacy. Thus, parents may have not responded honestly to the questions and may have responded in ways that are socially desirable. Also, the study only takes into account parent self-reports and does not examine parent involvement and parent efficacy from the others' perspectives. Future research should assess parent involvement using a blend of parent, teacher, spouse, and child reports of involvement in early childhood education.

Thirdly, the present study is limited because it only examines the total scores on the Adapted FIQ to determine parent involvement, and not specific types of involvement. Thus, future research should look at the specific types of involvement in school, at home, and in parent-teacher communication to gain a better understanding of parent involvement in early childhood education. In addition, a limitation exists in the characteristics of the sample. Although the sample was large and was similar to the overall preschool population, the representation of ethnic minority parents and low-income parents in the sample was small. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be applied to parents outside of Grow-Ville Community Day School, and cannot be applied to minority and low-income parents.

Lastly, correlational analysis was used in the study and thus, the direction of causality cannot be determined. It can be assumed that parent efficacy influences parent involvement, and that parent involvement influences parent efficacy. Despite these

limitations, this study provides valuable information for preschools and educators. The results of the study can help the educators and administration and Grow-Ville Community Day School implement programs that foster and encourage parent involvement in their children's early childhood education.

5.3 Strengths

The present study has a few strengths in its high response rate, reliability of instruments, and its finding of a significant relationship between the variables. The response rate (25%) was high, which provided a generous sample size upon which to ground the data analysis. In addition, the reliabilities for the instruments used were strong (.83 and .86), which provided confidence in the instruments in this study. Lastly, a strength of the study is found in the modest but significant correlation between parent efficacy and parent involvement: $r(20)=.56$, $p=.009$. The correlation was significant at the .01 level. This finding supports previous research.

5.4 Implications

The results of this study offer suggestions for practice, for both preschools and parents of preschoolers. The findings demonstrate a relationship between efficacy and involvement. From these findings, parents can better understand how their beliefs impact their actions, and how those actions are directly related to their preschooler's learning and social development. Parents can understand that involvement in their children's education is a choice and is influenced by their beliefs. In order for parents to help their children, they need to believe that they can competently perform their role as a parent and they can make a difference. Thus, parents should focus on nurturing their sense of parent efficacy. This can be accomplished by observing professionals, talking to their

preschooler's teachers, reading about early childhood development and education, and taking early childhood education course. By improving upon their sense of parent efficacy, parents can learn to effective ways to discipline, nurture, and support their children. In addition, a strong sense of parent efficacy can help parents cope with the demands of having a growing child.

Furthermore, the relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement determined in this study emphasizes that schools need to act in accordance with the ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1991) and look beyond the child to the whole family system in order to help their students learn and grow. Preschools must communicate to the parents the significance of their involvement in their children's learning and social development. Preschools need to reach out to families, encourage participation in school activities and provide more opportunities for parents to participate at home. Preschools can promote parent involvement by giving parents educational information for them to read and by offering workshops. In addition, preschools need to implement programs that will bridge the gap between home and school, and will allow for the reinforcement of skills learning at school in the home. For example, teachers should be required through programs to tell the parents what the child is learning and then give the activities and drills for parent to do with the child at home. In addition, preschools must focus on promoting parent-teacher communication by establishing a system to reward teachers who make an effort to communicate with parents.

Finally, preschools need to implement parent involvement practices that focus on increasing parent efficacy. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992) confirms that schools need to design programs that focus on increasing parents' sense of positive influence in their

children's learning and development. Through programs, preschools could provide models and examples of how to positively discipline their child, what skills to work on with their child, and could establish support groups among parents to discuss what practices work best for them. Thus, preschools need parents to know the importance of involvement, encourage their participation through programs, and also promote parent beliefs that they can make a difference in their children's outcomes.

Ultimately, parents and schools have to acknowledge that parent involvement is a two-way. Schools must establish practices and programs that promote parents' capacities and opportunities to support their children's learning and development, and in turn, parents are responsible for providing the time, energy, commitment, efficacy, and other resources to promote their children's learning.

5.5 Future Directions

The purpose of the present study was to explore parent efficacy and parent involvement and to build upon previous research that examined the relationship between the two variables in school-aged children. The majority of research was based on samples of elementary school students. The present study focused on the population of parents with preschool children. Future research should expand on this research paying attention to parents of preschool children. The present study collectively looked at efficacy and involvement in parents who had children from six weeks to five years in a preschool. To better understand efficacy and involvement in early childhood, research should focus on a specific age group of the child. Parent efficacy may change as the

child becomes more independent, and parent involvement may increase as the child begins to start learning number skills and to read.

In addition, the present study looked at a composite score of parent involvement. To gain more information, future research should focus on the different types of involvement and how each changes throughout the course of the child's preschool education. Through this analysis, preschool educators can better understand what involvement is most important during different child ages, and then, implement strategies to promote involvement during those points in time.

5.6 Summary

In summary, parent involvement is a significant factor in children's learning and social development from early childhood into kindergarten through high school and into higher education. Parent involvement benefits not only the child, but also parents, teachers, and the community. Despite the importance of parent involvement and reports that parents would like to be more involved, parent participation is reported as low. Therefore, it is crucial to examine parent involvement in early childhood education and examine whether a relationship exists between parents' beliefs about their abilities to make a difference in their children's outcomes. Previous studies have suggested a significant relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy, indicating that parents with high levels of parent efficacy tend to be more involved than parents with low levels. Therefore, it was hypothesized that parent involvement was positively related to parent efficacy in preschool parents. The results of the present study demonstrate a moderate, positive relationship between parent efficacy and parent involvement in

preschool children's learning and development. Suggestions for future research were extended including more studies to explore parent involvement and efficacy in parents of preschool children; an investigation of parent involvement reports of preschool parents participation from a multiple sources including parents, teachers, and students; and an examination of the relationship between parent involvement and parent efficacy in distinct age groups; and an investigation of specific types of involvement and efficacy beliefs that influence preschool parents. Both parent efficacy and parent involvement require extensive and comprehensive research to provide a broad understanding of the variables that affect them. With a greater understanding of parent efficacy and parent involvement in early childhood education, more effective strategies and interventions may be implemented to ultimately improve child outcomes from the early stages of life throughout early adulthood.

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Appendix A

Family Background Variables

Reminder: Do not put your name, your child's name, or any other identifying information on this page. Please answer honestly. The researcher will not be able to trace your responses back to you in anyway.

Directions: Please answer ALL of the following by filling in the blank or placing a check next to the correct answer.

Your marital status:

1)____ Never-married
2)____ Married
3)____ Separated
4)____ Divorced
5)____ Widowed
6)____ Significant other/Partner

What is the highest level of education you have completed:

1)____ Some high school
2)____ High school graduate
3)____ Some college (at least 1 year) or specialized training
4)____ College Graduate (Associate or Bachelor's Degree)
5)____Graduate professional degree (Master's, Doctorate)

What is your total family income per year (combined with your spouse):

1)____ Under $20,000
2) ____ $20,000 to $40,000
3)____ $40,000 to $60,000
4)____$60,000 to $80,000
5)____ $80,000 to $100,000
6)____ Above $100,000

Number of children you have in your household:_____

Relationship to Child:_____

Parent Age_____
Parent Gender _____
Parent Ethnicity_____
Child Age____
Child Gender____