Parental Involvement: Teachers' And Parents' Voices

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: TEACHERS’ AND PARENTS’ VOICES

by

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ABSTRACT

Parents have been involved in the education of their children since the early days of our nation. Their roles have evolved from teaching the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic in Colonial times to overseeing the selection of teachers and designing the curriculum during the early 1800s to providing academic support in the home up through the present time. Although educators are generally viewed as professionals and in charge of their students’ education, the importance of parental involvement is readily acknowledged. Confusing to both parents and educators is what constitutes parental involvement. The research revealed numerous definitions for the term, but none that were universally agreed upon. This lack of a clear delineation of roles has both parties struggling to make sense of their separate and joint responsibilities. Add to this confusion the complex issues surrounding linguistic and cultural diversity and both sides become mired in their differences rather than building upon their commonalities.

Barriers to parental involvement can come from the family as well as the school. The purpose of this study was to examine those barriers from the perspective of educators as well as parents. A convenience sample was taken from the population of elementary schools in a Central Florida county. Parents of students from ethnic minorities were asked to complete a survey questionnaire regarding their experiences with the classroom teacher as well as involvement in their child’s education. Elementary school teachers from the same county were given the opportunity to respond to an online survey questionnaire regarding their attitudes about cultural and language diversity and parental engagement at school and with learning.
Five hundred and fifty parent surveys and one hundred sixty-six teacher surveys were completed. The data analysis will show which factors influence parent involvement and how similarly parents and teachers feel about parent involvement.
I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my grandparents, Charles and Dorothy Shearer and Nellie Stoudt. They inspired me to make the most of my educational opportunities through their example, work ethic and self-sacrifice.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family for understanding why I couldn’t travel to Pennsylvania to spend more time with them. Special thanks to my dear friend, Dee, for her unwavering support and encouragement. To my first grade students, thank you for reminding me that we are all teachers and we are all learners. I would like to gratefully acknowledge and thank Dr. Susan Brown for helping me to understand my culture so that I could begin to understand and appreciate cultures different from my own. Lastly, thanks to Dr. Ettien Koffi, my friend and brother and an example of perseverance, dedication and excellence.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

In the United States, parents have been a key component in the education of their children since the early days of our nation. In colonial times, parents were in charge of instilling moral values, promoting social development and teaching their children the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Even as education began shifting from home to the school and more of the responsibility for education was handed over to teachers, parents were vital to the operation of the school. They had authority to select teachers, design the curriculum and voice their opinions regarding school management. By the mid-1800s, industrial and urban development moved families farther away from schools. As immigrants flocked to this country, schools sought to maintain order by compulsory attendance, prescribed curricula and other means. These bureaucratic rules further eroded the personal connections between families and schools (Kagan, 1984). Educators were viewed as professionals which further separated them from untrained or uneducated parents Crozier, 1999). Schools were responsible for academic instruction while families provided religious, moral and cultural education. Educational issues were decided by school personnel and parents were relegated to the position of providing academic support in the home. Their role in schools was reduced to that of chaperone, fundraiser and helper.

The implementation of Goals 2000: Educate America Act has reintroduced parents into the schools, stressing the importance of parent-school collaborations and partnerships. One of the goals defined by the National Education Goals Panel is: “Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, academic growth of children” (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). While this may
be viewed as a strengthening of our educational system, it actually has very little impact if school personnel are not trained how to partner with families. Historically, teacher education programs across the nation have done little to prepare pre-service teachers to work with families and this trend still continues today (LeRoux, 2001; Rothstein-Fisch, 1997; Shartrand, Kreider, & Erikson-Warfield, 1994).

Teachers are now faced with the added responsibility of involving parents and extended family members who come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Schools have attempted to initiate programs that encourage parent participation with little understanding of the needs of the parents or how they perceive themselves as participants in their children’s education. Particularly troubling is when schools spend their time and resources on educating teachers about the histories of various ethnic groups rather than providing frameworks that help explain the deep value orientations underlying the beliefs and behaviors of different cultures. Educators need to go beyond a simple recognition of cultural practices to a much deeper understanding of the role of cultural values in learning, schooling, and child-rearing (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001; Quiroz, Greenfield & Altchech, 1999). Teachers need to establish a cross-cultural connection with students and parents which is more than an attitude of tolerance (Kasahara & Turnbull, 2005). To acquire a true understanding and appreciation of the cultures of others, teachers need to first become aware of their own culture. Then they can broaden their view to include different ways of seeing the world. Authentic connections based on understanding why people believe and act as they do are imperative if students and parents are to feel as though they belong (Jordan, Reyes-Blanes, Peel, Peel & Lane, 1998). The intention of this study is to serve as a tool to generate observations which will lead to
meaningful discussions on how teachers can involve and respond to parents and students with more awareness and more mindfulness.

**Background and Significance**

Parent-teacher collaboration, though a major factor in a student’s success, does not happen automatically. The implementation of and commitment to a quality parent involvement program is hindered by the evolving family structure as well as the school personnel’s understanding of how to create such a partnership. “It is certainly true that designing ways to involve parents and families in their children’s education and in the schools their children attend is not a science. It is decidedly an art form, allowing for innovation, adaptation, revision, and invention” (Drake, 2000, p. 34). Understanding this need for adaptation and innovation is imperative if the involvement of today’s families is going to have the potential of enormously affecting the educational process.

Historically, schools have not successfully met the educational needs of the large numbers of minority children (Chavkin, 1993a). Since parents play a crucial role in their children’s educational success, it is especially important to involve minority parents in education. Their involvement and collaboration with teachers may lead to an increase in scholastic achievement among minority children. The realization that the minority school population is rapidly becoming the majority school population should propel schools forward in this endeavor.

Parental involvement has the capability of producing positive outcomes for both schools and families. Davies (1993) reported that families benefit by gaining more information about the school and how its support systems can support students’ education. Teachers benefit from
learning about students through the eyes of the family which provides valuable information on how students can be taught more appropriately and more effectively. They develop more empathy for their students’ lives and stereotype their families less often (Epstein, 1996).

If the research strongly supports the involvement of parents in children’s education, then one has to wonder why more schools are not actively engaged in partnering with parents. The literature provides several reasons why parent-teacher collaboration has been ineffective, less than satisfying for all parties concerned and at times, practically non-existent. Barriers to parental involvement can be the result of clashing cultures, differences in values and beliefs, insufficient knowledge and training, family constraints, lack of time, language barriers or perceived lack of skill and confidence. Both parties may lack the initiative to pursue a meaningful and mutually beneficial relationship; or the unknown may be too threatening thus paralyzing them and thwarting any attempts to move closer.

The significance of this study is its in-depth examination of the literature on culturally and linguistically diverse parents’ involvement in their children’s education and the utilization of the research to interpret the findings from the survey questionnaires administered in several Seminole County public elementary schools. Much of the research accentuates white, middle-class teachers’ views on parental involvement while glossing over the voices of the parents. Cultures have been lumped together as if parental involvement by diverse groups can be understood collectively. Only recently have the research studies looked at individual cultures, the differences in their views on education and parent participation, and the influences on their involvement in their children’s education (Carlisle, Stanley & Kemple, 2005; Daniel-White, 2002; Drake, 2000; Garcia, 1999). Teachers’ perceptions and attitudes greatly influence their
actions even though they may be inaccurate, unfounded and biased. It was the intent of this study to uncover some of these attitudes and perceptions and provide a more accurate picture of parental involvement as well as an understanding of the barriers to increased involvement with schools. It is the researcher’s hope that this glimpse into the belief systems of parents and educators will be the first step forward in creating more successful collaborative efforts and in turn, more successes for children as they continue on their educational journey.

**Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine the attitudes that influence elementary school teachers’ practices regarding the involvement of culturally or linguistically diverse parents in their children’s education and to determine the extent to which these attitudes impact the level of parents’ involvement. By exploring the differences and similarities in perceptions and attitudes among parents and teachers, more informed decisions can be made regarding the educating of teachers for the purpose of forging true partnerships with parents and families whose backgrounds are different from their own (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Sprinthall, Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall, 1996).

The following questions were examined in this research study:

1. What are teachers’ attitudes about cultural and language diversity?
2. In what ways do parents and teachers agree or disagree about parental engagement in school and with learning?
3. What barriers do teachers and parents cite as possible explanations for lower rates of contact and collaboration?
4. What is the effect of teacher attitudes and perceptions on the types of parental involvement?

**Explanation of Terminology**

The following terms appear frequently in this study:

1. **Parent** - “The significant caregiver, one who has primary responsibility for, and lives with the child; family member or guardian” (Swap, 1993).

2. **Elementary School Classroom Teacher** – A regular education classroom teacher of kindergarten or grades 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

3. **Parental Involvement** – This study uses the Epstein definition (1995) which includes:
   - Providing for children’s health and safety, developing parenting skills and child-rearing approaches that prepare children for school and that maintain healthy child development across the grades, and building positive home conditions that support school learning and behavior all across the school years.
   - Talking regularly with school staff about programs, children’s progress, and other school affairs.
   - Volunteering at school and attending student performances, sporting events and other activities.
   - Assisting student learning through help with homework and other curriculum-related activities at home.
- Participating in school decision making; becoming a parent leader, representative or advocate.

4. Linguistic diversity – communicating through a language other than English; it is referred to in the literature as language minority.

5. Cultural diversity – “Cultures whose ideas, beliefs, knowledge, and ways of acquiring knowledge and passing it on (learning and teaching) differ from the dominant US culture” (Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield & Quiroz, 2001).

6. Deficit Model – used to describe how some educators view students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These students are referred to as “culturally deprived and intellectually inferior resulting in their entering school with a deficit. Pullout programs (so named because students are ‘pulled out’ from their classrooms) were initiated as a way of addressing individual deficits” (Wong-Filmore, 1992).

Assumptions

It is assumed that respondents will be representative of culturally or linguistically diverse parents whose children attend Seminole County public elementary schools. It is also assumed that teachers who respond to the survey will be representative of classroom teachers employed in Seminole County public elementary schools. Third, it is assumed that parents and teachers will provide honest responses to the survey questions.
Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the extent that any parent or teacher may not trust that they will remain anonymous and/or their answers will not be kept confidential. An important design limitation was that the data was collected from specific schools in one school district and may not generalize to schools in districts around the country. A third limitation was the time of year when the survey was administered. Due to time constraints, the survey was distributed in the fall which meant parents had only seven weeks of experience with their child’s teacher. Although the results from this study should be considered preliminary, it is important to address the issues which negatively affect parent-school relationships.

The ability of teachers to reflect honestly on their experiences with parents and to report candidly their perceptions of parental involvement is of concern to the researcher. As an elementary school teacher for several years, I have experienced the pressure put on teachers to demonstrate that they are doing everything possible to meet the learning needs of every student in their class. We are also called upon to assure parents through a variety of means that their concerns, questions and requests are being handled with respect and a sense of urgency. Conversations with colleagues have revealed a disparity in the handling of parent inquiries. It will be interesting to ascertain if the data support or refute the inconsistency in teachers’ behavior.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of parental involvement by Greenwood and Hickman (1991, p. 279) revealed that “parent involvement in schools contributes to higher student achievement, positive student attitudes and self-concepts, and positive parental and student perceptions of schools and daily life.” The obvious question that presents itself is “If parental involvement in schools is so beneficial, why is it so difficult to attain?” Part of the answer to this question is contained in the study of the different ways parents and teachers conceptualize family involvement and the barriers that prevent effective collaboration between them (Christenson, 2004). A review of the literature shows that a wide variety of factors influences both of these issues.

The literature surrounding parental involvement appears in two phases: that written prior to 1990 and literature written since 1990 which begins the emphasis on parent diversity as it relates to parental involvement. Since the study of linguistically and culturally diverse parents’ involvement in their children’s education is fairly recent, much of the research reflects the findings of the same small group of researchers. Their research is highlighted in this review of the literature. I am confident I have included all of the relevant research as I have conducted a thorough search of several databases and keep seeing the same few citations. I am excluding the literature pertaining to parental involvement in exceptional education as the issues differ significantly from those discussed within the scope of this study.
Parental Involvement Defined

An implicit assumption in the existing research is that parents, students, and teachers hold similar conceptions of what constitutes parental involvement. In reality, there is little consensus about how effective parent involvement should be defined. Although both teachers and parents may agree that home-school communication is essential to effective parental involvement, other components of the definition are not as easily agreed upon. Some teachers tend to define parental involvement as being primarily school-home communication while others place their emphasis on the importance of parents supporting the educational process within the home environment. They may expect parents to follow through on suggestions for remediation or enrichment without questioning the teacher’s authority to offer such suggestions. Parents also have a wide and varied interpretation of the relationships and functions that need to be performed ranging from attending school activities, participating in school committees and acting as an advocate for their child (Baker, 1997). They may see themselves in a limited role or they may intentionally place themselves at the classroom door, taking advantage of every opportunity to immerse themselves in their child’s educational experience.

Traditionally, parental involvement has been narrowly defined, focusing mainly on the activities parents can do in the home that support the learning taking place in schools (Auerbach, 1989; Gonzalez, Moll, Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales & Amanti, 1995). These include, but are not limited to, reading aloud to their children, providing assistance with homework, and teaching such basics as ABCs and counting to ten. Parents are naturally their child’s first teacher, a role taken seriously by most as it is regarded as one of the most important roles of parents in the education of their children.
(Nieto, 1985). However, this role is quickly taken over by schools and government agencies if parents are judged inept at fulfilling their responsibilities as first teacher (Daniel-White, 2002). Parents who are unable or unwilling to assume this responsibility as judged by the educational community are viewed as operating from a cultural deficit. Fixing the family becomes a priority rather than learning how to foster a spirit of collaboration and cooperation (Christenson, 2004). By viewing families from a deficit perspective, educators feel free to manipulate them as they see fit. Using a deficit model greatly reduces teachers’ effectiveness as they fail to acknowledge and learn from parents’ instructional practices being carried out in the home (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992). Educators must have knowledge of children’s lives outside of school so as to recognize their strengths. Wong-Fillmore (1992, p. 45) contends that “when the cultural backgrounds and linguistic knowledge of students are considered deficit models, teachers tend to lower expectations of what these learners can achieve leading to serious psychological and academic implications.” The ramifications of this label will be examined alongside the term funds of knowledge (Civil, 1994) in a later section of this work.

The interpretation of the term ‘parental involvement’ has left teachers, administrators and parents shaking their heads in disbelief when they fail to see the others’ points of view. Each stakeholder feels strongly about his/her position and can quickly cite past experiences that lend credence to present day beliefs. Add to the complexity of the situation the parent whose cultural or linguistic background varies from that of the teacher and the contrast of expectations between home and school is very different (Carlisle, Stanley & Kemple, 2005; Sheldon, 2002). Parent-teacher partnerships
require educators be afforded the opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills to communicate with parents who differ in beliefs, culture and experiences (Bruneau, Ruttan, & Dunlap, 1995). The acknowledgement of student achievement as a shared responsibility can eventually lead to dialogue which affords parents and teachers the opportunity “to come into contact with ideas and to understand, to meet the other, and to care” (Noddings, 1984, p. 186).

The literature on the educational reform movement in the United States was not included in this literature review. Even though parental involvement is a key factor in how successfully educational reform addresses the educational needs of the students (Garcia, 1999), the inclusion of such literature is beyond the scope of this research study. Likewise, parental involvement in relation to exceptional student education was not considered in this study. It was determined that doing so would introduce more variables than could be addressed effectively.

Although it is not the researcher’s desire to make a definitive statement about what should constitute parental involvement, it is hoped that emerging from this study will be a strong case for doing what is needed in order to bring parents and teachers into a more collaborative stance for the sake of meeting the educational needs of all children.

**Barriers to Parental Involvement**

Parents are essential for children’s optimal performance in school (Christenson, 2004). Research clearly documents that when parents are involved in their students’ education, those students have higher grades and test scores, more positive attitudes toward school, lower dropout rates, and better attendance and complete their homework
more consistently regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial background or the parents’ education level (Henderson & Berla, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). In spite of the strength of the message contained within the research, a lower level of parental involvement in schools continues to exist among Latino, African-American, and Asian-American parents (Ascher, 1988; Moles, 1993).

Some of the barriers to parents becoming fully involved in their children’s education include (1) lack of child care, (2) inflexible work schedules, (3) lack of income and transportation to participate in school programs and events, (4) lack of confidence interacting in a culture and/or language different from their own, (5) parental shame of their own educational failure, (6) lack of written literacy skills, (7) insufficient information on home-school collaboration, (8) different expectations of the school role, (9) discomfort in higher-class settings, and (10) fear they are not educated enough to be helpful in the classroom or to their own children (Lareau, 1987; Moles, 1993). These barriers might affect parents differently according to parents’ personal and cultural backgrounds and characteristics.

Many teachers, such as I, grew up in families that valued education. This paved the way for financial stability, sufficient social resources and community support (Coleman & Churchill, 1997). Since school was valued, I grew up knowing that securing a good education was a priority and that my parents would do everything in their power to ensure that I succeeded. Not all families are afforded the opportunities that were available to me. Parents may harbor resentment over negative experiences they had in school themselves (Barbour & Barbour, 1997) or may exhibit antagonistic attitudes and know-it-all behavior as a result of poor treatment during previous encounters with
schools (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Lareau (1987) argues that parents may feel disenfranchised from the formal school system and less able to navigate it successfully and therefore may be less able to communicate with teachers their commitment to their child’s educational process.

Embarrassment over lack of a diploma or an unequal level of education with that of the teacher may prevent parents from venturing into the school environment. The lack of education may also influence their perception of whether or not they possess the skills to positively influence their children’s education. This view of self has a major effect on whether or not parental involvement becomes a reality (Sheldon, 2002). If school was a place of emotional or psychological alienation, parents may feel reticent to expose themselves to that type of vulnerability a second time. Thus, their only contact with teachers may be when their child is experiencing academic or behavioral difficulty (Davies, 1997).

Teachers may contribute to parents’ lack of self-efficacy by mistakenly believing that parents with limited educational backgrounds have little to offer their children when it comes to supporting their education. Viewing parents with little or no education as having a deficit limits the effort teachers will expend in order to learn how poorly educated families support education. In contrast to this belief, parents in these situations are often staunch proponents of education. They support their children academically by monitoring homework, talking with them about school and emphasizing the importance of doing well in school (Caplan, 2000).

Even if parents have the ability to assist their children with homework, they are limited in the type of assistance they can offer as teachers and schools are not
forthcoming with information on how to work with their children at home (Drake, Bernard, Gray, & Meixner, 1996). Many parents stated that they would willingly spend additional time working with their children if teachers provided directions on how to assist them (Dauber & Epstein, 1993).

Statistics show that 90% of the teachers in the United States are white while only 7% are African American (Snyder, 1999). The lack of representation of today’s diverse cultures among those in the teaching profession may impact parental involvement. Parents may believe that the teacher does not respect or understand their family’s culture. “When a significant difference exists between students’ culture and school culture, teachers can easily misread students’ aptitudes, intent, or abilities as a result of the difference in styles of language use and interactional patterns” (Moseman, 2003, p. 127). This may result in unwillingness on the part of the parent to participate in school activities or to take seriously suggestions made by the teacher regarding educational activities in the home. In addition, cultural barriers may become more apparent as parents struggle with cultural expectations regarding appropriate parental involvement. Hispanic parents may shy away from school involvement because it is not a tradition practiced in their culture. In the Hispanic culture, education has been historically perceived as the responsibility of the schools and parent intervention is viewed as interference with what trained professionals are supposed to do (Garcia, 1990). There are some cultures that believe it is disrespectful to contact teachers and doing so implies that parents are questioning the teacher’s authority. Baker (1997) and Mannan & Blackwell (1992) report that some parents have had negative experiences being involved and feel that it would be better for their child if they stayed away.
Parents who are struggling to communicate effectively in English or who are unfamiliar with the education system may shy away from establishing meaningful connections with teachers. Inhibited by their lack of knowledge of the English language, the curriculum and the expectations of U.S. schools, culturally and linguistically diverse parents are silenced and locked out of meaningful participation in school. Since educators assume that all parents have the same knowledge concerning schools and the education system, they fail to take a close look at individual students’ family life. Parents are held accountable for meeting the demands of the school without being given the necessary tools and support (Daniel-White, 2002).

Teachers’ Barriers to Parental Involvement

Several factors can affect teachers’ development of effective relationships with the parents and families of their students. The most common barriers are:

- Lack of teacher time
- Teacher’s own background
- Fear of criticism
- Teacher attitudes
- Institutional atmosphere
- Teacher expectations (Caplan, 2000; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Henderson, 1988; Lazar & Slostad, 1999)

The amount of responsibilities placed on teachers continues to grow year by year. Teachers are faced with the additional workload produced from high-stakes testing,
progress monitoring assessments and documentation of student behavior, interventions and accommodations. Planning periods are taken over by team meetings or grade-level meetings with administration. Before and after-school hours are quickly consumed with paperwork accumulated from previous days and planning for future lessons. Contact with parents whether through email, by phone or during a conference is seen as an interruption in a day already overflowing with too many tasks (Caplan, 2000). Working on parent involvement without a guaranteed payoff seems to be a risky adventure. The amount of effort involved in tailoring involvement to fit a particular child’s educational needs and his/her family’s willingness to carry it out may not be viewed as the best use of the teacher’s time.

Today, it is unlikely that parents and teachers will embrace similar beliefs as was common during the early years of public schooling when middle-class European American teachers taught students from similar backgrounds. The mobility of people worldwide brings together races, colors, creeds, ethnicities and orientations that would not have been found in previous educational settings. A teacher’s socioeconomic class, race or ethnic background often differs from that of the children in their class as well as their parents. Accompanying these differences are different ways of viewing the world, speaking, interacting, and valuing (Burke, 1999). The cultural lenses which have been a part of a teacher’s way of making sense of the world can severely hamper his/her interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse parents (Columbo, 2004). Failure to recognize these biases, prejudices, stereotypes and attitudes that may interfere with engaging parents in education can result in interactions that continue to keep parents on the periphery of their children’s education.
Some teachers are reluctant to encourage parental involvement because they are afraid that parents will criticize them. Worry that parents may accuse them of not caring whether or not their child succeeds in school may cause teachers to avoid communicating with them. Teachers are already under a considerable amount of pressure to get students to pass the FCAT, demonstrate improvement on Florida Writes and progress to the next grade. Being accused of neglecting individual children because of cultural or linguistic differences or “being judged for their methods or teaching style may be reason enough to erect boundaries around their classroom” (Carlisle, Stanley, & Kemple, 2005, 158).

Teachers’ attitudes can affect whether or not a parent chooses to participate in the classroom. If the teacher feels the classroom is where he/she has control, then parents may not be welcome there. Teachers displaying this type of attitude harbor the belief that they are the expert and no additional information is needed from the parents. If the opinions of parents aren’t valued, then parents will be reluctant to become involved. Failure to acknowledge that parents may have something to contribute reinforces their belief that the teacher is the one who knows best.

Schools themselves can effectively keep parents from having a voice in their children’s education. School administrators set the tone for how welcome parents feel to participate in school government, to volunteer for school events, to offer suggestions for school improvement and to engage in ongoing conversations about the quality of their children’s education. Parents who struggle with learning English as their second language may feel shut out of the school culture due to a lack of available translators at meetings, teacher conferences, and school-wide events. Failure to provide newsletters, notices,
teacher memos and calendars in parents’ first language further separates parents from the life of the school.

The expectations of teachers play a major role in whether or not parents feel comfortable to enter into a partnership with their children’s teacher. Teachers’ expectations of parental involvement emerge from their childhood, personal experiences, their own culture, information gleaned from professional journals, conferences and workshops, conversations with fellow educators and preservice training. Stories from coworkers can affect how likely a teacher is to hold onto or let go of his/her expectations of parents. Students’ stories of their home life can influence the expectations of the teacher (Grossman, 1999). It is up to the classroom teacher to help parents understand what is expected of their children and of them and to make sure they are equipped to meet those expectations.

In a majority of the research, the voice of linguistically and culturally diverse parents has been ignored. Teachers, administrators and other stakeholders in education have interpreted parental behavior in regard to the education of their children. This has resulted in a gross misrepresentation and over-simplification of the issues and complexities surrounding their involvement in an educational system built largely on white, European-American values, beliefs and traditions. The subsequent chapter on methodology describes how the design of this study creates an opportunity for parents to be heard.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology used in this research study and has been arranged into the following sections: Statement of the Problem, Study Population and Sample, Instrumentation, Methodology for Parent Survey, Methodology for Teacher Survey, Instrument Reliability and Validity and Factor Analysis.

Statement of the Problem

Parents have had surprisingly few opportunities to share their unique and valuable perspectives on what parent involvement means to them and what they need to make home-school partnerships work (Kiley, 1995). As explored in the literature review, parents whose backgrounds differ from those of the teacher face additional barriers to understanding their roles in their children’s education. This study examined the perceptions that culturally and linguistically diverse parents have regarding involvement in their children’s education. It also investigated parental involvement from a teacher’s standpoint and what role teachers’ attitudes and perceptions play in determining the level of parental involvement. It is hoped the data collected for this study will provide the basis for a better understanding of parents’ views on teachers’ practices and how their perceptions influence the level of involvement in their children’s education.
Study Population and Sample

The population for this study included parents and teachers of elementary school students enrolled in grades K-5 in Seminole County public schools who met the qualifications for participation in the study. Elementary schools were chosen because parents of elementary school children are more apt to be involved in their children’s education. The target population consisted of parents of students who are African American/Black, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Islander and Multiracial. These are the categories of the school population as defined by Seminole County public schools.

Initially, the elementary schools were randomly chosen from each of the clusters as identified by the school district depending on their geographical location. One school was randomly selected from each cluster. The principals from each school received an e-mail outlining the details of the study and inviting their school’s participation. The informational letter contained reference to permission granted by Dr. Ron Pinnell, Director of Secondary Schools in Seminole County, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Central Florida. Only one school from the sample agreed to participate in the study. Cluster sampling would have allowed the researcher to use population members who are naturally grouped into units (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). However, refusal and lack of response on the part of school administrators forced a restructuring of the sampling procedure.

Convenience sampling was chosen as the method of nonprobability sampling for this study. This method of sampling allowed the researcher to select individuals because they were willing to participate in the study, convenient to the researcher and
representative of the characteristics being investigated in this study (Creswell, J., 2005). This method yielded a total of four elementary schools whose principals agreed to have their students’ parents complete the survey instrument.

Methodology for Parent Survey

The four principals were sent an email thanking them for their willingness to participate and asking them for the number of students meeting the study’s qualifications. Upon receiving a participant count from each principal, individual survey packets were coded and delivered to their respective schools. Survey packets contained an informational letter and survey for parents in both English and Spanish and a pre-addressed, stamped envelope for returning the survey. Envelopes were coded to identify respondents by school. Parents, comprising a minimum response rate of 37%, completed a total of 553 surveys. It is probable that the actual response rate was considerably higher. The reasons for the inability to calculate a more exact percentage of participants include: (1) failure on the part of administrators to identify the number of families who have more than one student in that school resulting in an inflated number of surveys that can actually be completed and (2) failure on the part teachers to recognize all the families in their classrooms who meet the survey qualifications and thereby should receive a questionnaire.

The parent survey instrument consisted of 19 items selected from the Epstein and Salinas (1993) survey on school partnerships along with an open-ended question regarding how the parent’s working relationship with the teacher can be improved. Background information was solicited the parents regarding ethnicity, their highest level
of education and the gender and grade level of their oldest child at that school. A 5-point Likert scale was used by parents to respond to questions regarding barriers to involvement in their children’s education and perceptions of the teacher’s attitude toward them and toward their child. Possible responses were: (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) uncertain; (4) agree; and (5) strongly agree.

Table 1 provides an overview of the parents who responded to the survey. Of the 553 respondents, Hispanics/Latinos comprised 48.5% for a total of 268, making them the largest group. Caucasians/Whites followed at 21.5% or 119 and African American/Black respondents totaled 15.6% or 86. American Indians comprised the smallest group at .5% for a total of three respondents. Although Caucasian/Whites were not listed in the target group, they may have received surveys for these reasons: (1) teachers did not follow the protocol for who was to receive a survey, and (2) teachers were unaware of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the parents. In regard to level of education, 25.7% completed high school while 60.1% or 338 had at least some college education. 165 out of the 338 had earned a college degree. Brinkley Elementary School comprised 36.0% of the respondents, followed by Deer Run Elementary School at 25.9%, Sparrow Elementary School at 21.0% and Grove City Elementary School at 17.2%. The names of the participating schools have been changed to protect confidentiality.
Table 1

Descriptive Profile of Responding Parents (N=553)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
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<td>.5</td>
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<td>5.1</td>
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<td>.7</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8.9</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Grove City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brinkley</td>
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<td>36.0</td>
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<td>25.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sparrow</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>21.0</td>
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</table>

Instrumentation for the Parent Survey

The parent survey instrument used in this research study was designed to collect data on four different constructs: perceptions of child’s teacher and learning environment, teacher’s respect for child, parent-teacher partnerships and parent barriers to involvement in the child’s education. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree.
Construct 1 measured the parents’ perceptions of their children’s teacher by utilizing the mean scores of items 1, 2 and 4. The survey items were as follows:

1. My child’s teacher encourages my child to learn.
2. My child’s teacher provides extra help when my child needs it.
4. I am satisfied with the learning environment in my child’s classroom.

Construct 2 measured teachers’ respect for students by using the mean scores of items 3, 7, 13 and 17. The survey items identified with this construct were as follows:

3. My child’s teacher has high expectations of him/her.
7. My child’s teacher knows about and appreciates the cultural heritage of my child.
13. My child’s teacher cares about my child as an individual.
17. My child’s teacher helps my child feel good about his/her cultural heritage.

The third construct measured parent-teacher partnerships utilizing the mean scores of items 5, 6, 9, 10, 15, 16 and 19. They were as follows:

5. My child’s teacher contacts me to say good things about my child.
6. I could help my child more if the teacher gave me more ideas.
9. My child’s teacher views me as an important partner in his/her education.
10. My child’s teacher returns my phone calls or emails promptly.
15. I am included in decisions affecting my child’s education.
16. When I try to be involved, I don’t feel my efforts are appreciated.
19. My child’s teacher invites me to visit the classroom during the day.

A mean score was calculated for each survey respondent using the individual items listed under each construct (See Table 2). A comparison of the mean score for each
construct identified that Construct 1 had the highest mean (4.34). This indicated that more respondents were in agreement with the items measured in this construct than they were with the items measured in any of the three other constructs. The mean score of 3.68 for Construct 3 revealed that respondents disagreed with the items on this construct.

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Constructs 1-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of child’s teacher</td>
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<td>4.34</td>
<td>.6915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s respect for child</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.6538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-teacher partnerships</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.6529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to parental involvement</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>.8645</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the 19-item survey questionnaire, parents were invited to respond to the open-ended response item “How can the working relationship your child’s teacher has with you be improved?” Common themes emerging from the responses were coded and relationships between the themes were noted. These will be explored in detail in the Data Analysis section.

Methodology for Teacher Survey

Teacher questionnaires were originally to have been distributed to classroom teachers in participating schools. When non-participation became an issue, the researcher
was advised to invite all elementary classroom teachers in the county to participate in the research study. This yielded a list of 1,190 possible participants. It became impossible to hand deliver surveys to teachers at all 37 elementary school sites. The researcher was advised to use an electronic survey as an efficient means of dispersing the survey questionnaire. Several factors adversely affecting the response rate were: (1) school sites had failed to update their teacher lists resulting in email addresses for persons who had retired, resigned or been reassigned to another department; (2) teachers with identical first and last names were not delineated in the address list resulting in only the first person receiving the survey; and (3) the school district email service was down for the first 48 hours of delivery of the survey resulting in a delay of two days up to one week before surveys were actually received. 166 elementary school classroom teachers resulting in a 14% response rate completed the survey. A study by Lee, Frank, Cole, Mikhael, and Miles in addition to one conducted by Matz (as cited in Wiersma & Jurs, 2005) reported response rates to Web-based surveys varying from 33 percent to 63 percent. Regardless of the low response rate by the teachers contacted in this study, the researcher believes that insights into their perceptions and attitudes are imperative to a more thorough understanding of parental involvement, particularly among culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

Teachers were invited to respond to a 17-item survey measuring their perceptions and attitudes regarding cultural and linguistic diversity as well as parental involvement. The survey items were taken from the teacher portion of the Epstein & Salinas (1993) survey on school partnerships. Each survey item was measured using the following 5-point Likert scale: (1) strongly disagree; (2) disagree; (3) uncertain; (4) agree; and
(5) strongly agree. Classroom teachers were also asked to provide any additional comments they deemed important to this study. According to Table 3, the largest percentage of respondents (87%) was Caucasian/White. African Americans/Blacks, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latinos and Multiracial respondents accounted for the remaining 13% of respondents. 40% of the survey participants had been teaching for 10 or fewer years while 57% of the respondents had 11 or more years in the education profession with the largest number of respondents (53 or 32% of the total number surveyed) having taught 20 years or more. Kindergarten through third grade showed a rather similar representation of the number of teacher respondents, approximately 20% coming from each grade followed by a decrease to approximately 10% from each grade for grades four and five. 57% of the educators who responded to the survey had obtained a bachelor’s degree, 39% had earned a master’s degree, 3% had a specialist’s degree and less than 1% had earned a doctorate.
Table 3

Descriptive Profile of Responding Teachers (N=166)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Grade Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiage</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Level of Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrumentation for the Teacher Survey

The teacher survey instrument used in this research study was designed to collect data on three different constructs: perceptions of child’s teacher and learning environment, teacher’s respect for child, parent-teacher partnerships and parent barriers to involvement in the child’s education. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree.

Teachers’ perceptions of diversity were measured in Construct One by utilizing the mean scores of items 1, 3, 5, 7-9, 11 and 13. The survey items were as follows:

1. I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding.

3. Teachers should provide a classroom atmosphere where students’ cultures are respected and shared.

5. I have lower expectations of my minority students.

7. I am uncomfortable with people talking in a language I cannot understand.

8. I am at ease around people whose cultural background is different from mine.

9. I provide an environment that accommodates parents who do not speak English.

11. The values, behaviors and attitudes learned in minority cultures keep children from making progress in school.

Construct Two measured the teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement by using the mean scores of items 2, 4, 6 and 10. The survey items were as follows:

2. I feel that parents who don’t make time to come to school don’t really care about their child’s education.

4. Parents who care about their child’s education will come to parent-teacher conferences.
6. Parents should know how to help their children on schoolwork at home.

10. I view home-based involvement as an integral component of a student’s education.

The third construct measured teacher perceptions of parent-teacher relationships by using the mean scores of items 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

12. I welcome parents’ questions and comments about their children’s schoolwork.

14. The working relationships I have with most of my students’ parents are satisfactory.

15. When I contact parents, it’s usually about problems or trouble.

16. Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways.

17. I adjust my schedule so I can meet or contact parents at a time that is convenient for them.

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations for Constructs 1-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ perceptions of diversity</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>.2997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ perceptions of parental involvement</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.4196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ perceptions of parent-Teacher relationships</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.3761</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were given an opportunity to provide any comments they felt added to the information being gathered through the survey questionnaire. Responses were coded, analyzed and relationships were made to the quantitative data. These relationships will be discussed in the Data Analysis section.
Instrument Reliability and Validity

The School and Family Partnership Surveys (Epstein & Salinas, 1993) were purchased for use in this research study. The survey questionnaires have been utilized by various researchers (Brilliant, 2001; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997) and have been tested for reliability and validity by the authors, Joyce Epstein and Karen Salinas (1993). Prior to the implementation of this project, a small pilot study of culturally and linguistically diverse parents not involved in this study was conducted to test the reliability of the 19 items selected from the purchased parent survey. The internal reliability of the survey scales was assessed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 11.5 (SPSS). The coefficient alpha of .84 suggests that the scale scores are reasonably reliable. This was an indication that items extracted from the original survey maintained their high level of reliability.

The teacher survey questionnaire utilized 17 items from the Epstein & Salinas (1993) survey mentioned above. Fifteen elementary school classroom teachers from counties other than Seminole County were asked to participate in a pilot study. Each participant reported that the survey items were clear and concise and that the layout of the survey was easy to follow. Using SPSS, the alpha reliability coefficient for the teacher questionnaire was .63 indicating that the scale scores are fairly reliable for the teachers to whom it was given. A review of the corrected item-total correlations suggests that the variable Helpchi does not correlate with the corrected total very well. Its elimination is warranted on the basis that reducing the scale to only relevant items would make for a more cohesive scale, increasing the reliability coefficient to .6476. Removing both the Confer and Helpchi variables further increases the reliability coefficient to .6642.
Factor Analysis

Data from the 553 completed surveys were entered into the SPSS 11.5 program. The factor extraction procedure yielded four factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (as shown in the first four rows of Table 5). Upon closer examination of the Scree plot in conjunction with the eigenvalues, the determination was made to retain two factors for rotation.

Using a Varimax rotation procedure, two interpretable factors emerged: teacher involvement and parental involvement. The teacher involvement factor accounted for 29.8% of the item variance and the parent involvement factor accounted for 11.6% of the item variance. Only one item loaded on both factors.

The same procedures were utilized with the 166 teacher surveys. Six factors were found to have eigenvalues greater than 1 (as shown in the first six rows of Table 6). Using the Scree plot, it was determined that only three of those six factors should be retained for rotation.

The Varimax rotation procedure yielded two interpretable factors: positive teacher perceptions and negative teacher perceptions. The positive teacher perceptions factor accounted for 12.67% of the item variance and the negative teacher perception factor accounted for 6.77% of the item variance. None of the items loaded on both factors.

Table 5
Parent Survey – Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction of Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
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33
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>1.385</td>
<td>98.720</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>1.385</td>
<td>98.720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>1.280</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>1.280</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6

Teacher Survey – Factor Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Initial Eigenvalues</th>
<th>Extraction of Sums of Squared Loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of Variance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.977</td>
<td>17.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.784</td>
<td>10.493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.589</td>
<td>9.348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.292</td>
<td>7.598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.159</td>
<td>6.816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.068</td>
<td>6.284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>5.563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>5.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>4.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.752</td>
<td>4.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.712</td>
<td>4.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.621</td>
<td>3.656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>3.394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>3.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>2.778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.431</td>
<td>2.537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>2.170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The changes made in the method of sampling were an indication of the ensuing difficulties with data collection among teachers and distribution of survey instruments by teachers to parents. Administrators who refused to allow their parents and teachers to participate in the study cited lack of time and inconvenience as reasons for non-participation. These issues along with others revealed in the analysis of the data support the research of Caplan (2000) and Epstein & Dauber (1991). The relationship between this study’s data and previous research will be examined in more depth in the upcoming chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS

This research study examined the attitudes that elementary school teachers have regarding diversity and how their attitudes translated into action in the classroom and dictated their involvement with minority parents. The study also explored parents’ perceptions of their child’s teacher’s willingness to connect with families of diversity and what barriers may have affected the quantity and quality of parent-teacher contacts. An examination of teachers’ demographic data was conducted to determine if there were patterns between ethnicity, level of education, grade level taught and years of experience. Similarly, parents’ demographic data were analyzed to ascertain the amount of influence ethnicity, level of education, grade level of child and school attended had on their perceptions.

This chapter is divided into seven sections: Population and Sample, Descriptive Analysis of Survey Items, Research Question 1, Research Question 2, Research Question 3 and Research Question 4.

Population and Sample

The population of this study included parents and classroom teachers of elementary school students enrolled in grades K-5 in Seminole County public schools who met the qualifications for participation in this study. From this population, a convenience sample of four elementary schools yielded a total response of 553 parents. Of the responding parents (N=553), 15.6% were African American/Black, .5% were American Indian, 5.1% were Asian American, 21.5% were Caucasian/White, 48.5% were
Hispanic/Latino, 7.4% were Multiracial and .7% were Pacific Islander. Four respondents (.7%) did not indicate their ethnicity. The largest reporting population was Hispanic/Latino. In regard to highest level of education, 8.9% reported they had not completed high school, 25.7% had completed high school, 31.3% had some college or training, 29.8% had a college degree and 3.8% did not indicate their level of education. It is important to note that over 60% of the respondents had some education beyond high school and almost 87% had the minimum of a high school diploma.

Of the four elementary schools in the sample, Brinkley had the highest percentage of parent respondents with 36%. Deer Run followed them with 25.9%, Sparrow with 21% and Grove City with 17.2%. Parents of fourth grade students responded most frequently representing 18.4% of the total number of respondents. They were followed by parents of second graders representing 17.4% of the respondents, parents of fifth graders representing 17.0% of the respondents, third grade parents representing 14.5% of the respondents, first grade parents representing 13.0% of the respondents and parents of kindergartners representing 9.9% of the total number of respondents. Fifty-four respondents did not indicate the grade level of their child (9.8%). The administration of this survey near the beginning of the school year coupled with this probably being many parents’ first child in elementary school resulting in minimal contact with the teacher may have contributed to the low percentage of respondents among parents of kindergarten students.

The teacher sample included all K-5 regular education classroom teachers in Seminole County public schools. The list of eligible classroom teachers was dependent on the accuracy of the faculty lists maintained on each individual school’s website.
Several teachers emailed the researcher to indicate that they were no longer in a classroom setting. It is impossible to know the total number of ineligible survey recipients due to resignation, leave of absence or change of teaching assignment. Of the 166 responding teachers, 4.2% were male and 95.8% were female. In regard to ethnicity, 4.8% were African American/Black, 1.2% were American Indian, 84.3% were Caucasian/White, 4.8% were Hispanic Latino and 3.0% were Pacific Islander. Three respondents (1.8%) did not indicate their ethnicity. It is important to note that 84.3% of the responding teachers were Caucasian/White indicating the strong possibility that the majority of K-5 classroom teachers in Seminole County are Caucasian/White. As pointed out in the Literature Review, when there is a disparity in the ethnicity between the teacher and parents, there tends to be a disparity between perceptions and expectations of both parties.

The largest percentage of responding teachers (31.9%) had been teaching more than 20 years. Those who had been teaching for less than 1 year accounted for 3% of the respondents making them the smallest group of teacher respondents. The remaining data revealed that 20.5% of the teachers had taught 1-5 years, an equal percentage had taught 6-10 years, 13.9% had taught 11-15 years and 9.6% had taught 16-20 years. If the six groups of teachers are merged together into three groups such as those having taught 0-5 years, those having taught 6-15 years and those who have over 15 years teaching experience, the data reveal that the percentage of respondents for each group increased by almost 10% as the number of years teaching increased.

Each grade level was almost equal in representation with the lowest percentage of teacher respondents occurring among multi-age teachers followed by teachers in grades
four and five. Thirty teachers (18.1%) taught kindergarten, thirty-two teachers (19.3%) taught first grade, thirty-one teachers (18.7%) taught second grade, thirty teachers (18.1%) taught third grade, eighteen teachers (10.8%) taught grade four, nineteen teachers (11.4%) taught grade five and five teachers (3%) taught multi-age groups.

Of the 166 teacher respondents, over half (54.2%) had a bachelor’s degree. Approximately 43% of the respondents had a graduate level degree of which 39.8% had a master’s degree, 3% had a specialist’s degree and .6% (1) had a doctorate. It was interesting to note the high percentage of respondents who chose to pursue an advanced degree even though it was not a requirement of their continued employment.

**Descriptive Analysis of Parent Survey Items**

This next section contains a summary of the descriptive statistics for the survey items contained within each of the four construct scales. Each item within the construct scale is discussed individually in this section.

Table 7 represents the beliefs parents have about their child’s teacher as measured in items 1, 2 and 4. The analysis showed that the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all three statements in this construct. The highest percentage of agreement was reflected in item 1 with 93% of the respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the teacher encourages their child to learn. Although the percentage of respondents that were in agreement dropped for item 2 to 79%, this number still reflects a significant majority of respondents that agree with this perception. Item 2 also contained a higher number of respondents who are uncertain if the teacher provides help for their child when it is needed (15.7%). This may be an indication that the parent
has never asked the teacher or child if help is provided and under what circumstances it is provided. The third item showed an increase in agreement from that found in item 2 indicating that even if parents are not aware of the help their child is receiving in the classroom, they are still generally pleased with the learning environment.

Table 7

Percentage Responses for Parents’ Perception of Teachers (Construct 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My child’s teacher encourages my child to learn.</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My child’s teacher provides extra help when my child needs it.</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I am satisfied with the learning environment in my child’s classroom.</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items 3,7,10 and 17 represented parents’ perceptions of teachers (See Table 8). While 81% of parents conveyed the belief that their child’s teacher has high expectations of him/her, only 9% seemed uncertain of the teacher’s expectations. In item 7, the rate of uncertainty jumped to 42.3%, which was slightly less than the percentage of parents (50%) who believe that the teacher knows about and appreciates the cultural heritage of their children. This may be due in part to parents’ reluctance to visit their children’s classroom or to volunteer to share their unique cultural experiences with their children’s classmates.
Item 13 revealed that 83% of the parents perceive that the teacher cares about their child as an individual. This is comparable to the percentage of parents in item 3 who believe the teacher has high expectations for their children. When comparing the two items that examine how the teacher relates to the individual student (Items 3 & 13) in comparison with how the student is made to feel about his cultural heritage (Item 17), parents are less sure about latter, reporting a 30% hike in their level of uncertainty.

Table 8
Percentage Responses for Teachers’ Respect of Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.  My child’s teacher has high expectations of him/her.</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.  My child’s teacher knows about and appreciates the cultural heritage</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of my child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My child’s teacher cares about my child as an individual.</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My child’s teacher helps my child feel good about his/her cultural</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heritage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Construct 3 contained the largest number of items of any of the constructs (See Table 9). The seven items measured different dimensions of the parent-teacher relationship. In item 5, two-thirds of the respondents reported that they had been contacted by the teacher when he/she had something good to share about their children. An analysis of items 9, 10 and 15 indicated parents are being included by the teacher in
their children’s education at school. A range of 72% to 82% of the parent respondents indicated their agreement with these three statements. Item 6 produced a higher percentage of disagreement (61%) with the statement as opposed to agreement (17%) with the statement regarding helping their child more if ideas were provided by the teacher. A possible interpretation of this negative response is that parents are not feeling that their help is needed or appreciated or that when they do help, the assistance they provide is seldom right. Item 16 produced a conflicting result with items 9 and 15. Although 82% of the respondents indicated on item 9 that their child’s teacher viewed them as an important partner and on item 15, 76% agreed that they are included in decisions, 71% reported on item 16 that their efforts to be involved in their child’s education are not appreciated.
Table 9

Percentages for Parent-Teacher Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. My child’s teacher contacts me to say good things about my child.</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My child’s teacher knows about and appreciates the cultural heritage of</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my child.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My child’s teacher cares about my child as an individual.</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. My child’s teacher helps my child feel good about his/her cultural</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heritage.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am included in decisions affecting my child’s education.</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>40.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. When I try to be involved, I don’t feel my efforts are appreciated.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My child’s teacher invites me to visit the classroom during the day.</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fourth construct looked at barriers parents may encounter that prevent them from fully participating or participating at all in their child’s education. It is important to note that when the response categories “agree” and “strongly agree” were combined, the percentage of those in agreement with the statements ranged from 47.8% - 82.9% (See Table 10). This suggests that many culturally and linguistically diverse parents face
barriers in addition to those they may encounter with their child’s teacher. Teachers need to ask themselves how aware they are of the barriers faced by the parents of their students. Secondly, the data reveal the importance of teachers and school administrators examining the steps they are taking to accommodate and assist parents who face one or more of these barriers.

Item 14 was split down the middle as far as parents disagreeing or agreeing that their work schedule makes it difficult for them to be involved in their child’s education. Lack of transportation and family health problems were the top two barriers with percentages of 82.9 and 81.7, respectively. The language barrier was an issue for 77.2% of the respondents followed by lack of available care for children and other family members which was an issue for 52.8% of the respondents.
Table 10

Percentage Responses for Parent Barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Lack of available care for my children or other family members reduces my involvement.</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Lack of transportation reduces my involvement.</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Family health problems reduce my involvement</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My work schedule makes it hard for me to be involved.</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. A language barrier reduces my involvement</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive Analysis of Teacher Survey Items

This section of the study examines teacher attitudes and perceptions on three constructs: diversity, parental involvement and parent-teacher relationships. As with the parent survey, the categories “strongly agree and agree” were tabulated together as well as “strongly disagree and disagree.” The reasoning for this was to more easily show the strength of response on each side of the scale. Table 11 focuses on diversity, the first construct found in questions 1, 3, 5, 7-9, 11 and 13. The percentages for this particular construct are rather high on the positive end. For Item 1, 91.5% of the respondents reported that they find teaching a culturally diverse group of students rewarding.
Similarly, the percentage of teachers reporting being at ease around diverse cultures was 85.5%.

Table 11
Percentages for Teacher Perceptions of Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers should provide a classroom atmosphere where students’ cultures are respected and shared.</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I have lower expectations of my minority students.</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I am uncomfortable with people talking in a language I cannot understand.</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am at ease around people whose cultural background is different from mine.</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I provide an environment that accommodates parents who do not speak English.</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The values, behaviors and attitudes learned in minority cultures keep children from making progress in school.</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An even higher percentage (93.4%) believed that students should be provided with a classroom where diversity is respected and cultures are shared. The survey item measuring the belief that all parents have strengths that can help their child succeed
academically was agreed with by 94.6% of the respondents. In support of that finding, 94% of the teachers disagreed with the statement regarding having lower expectations of minority students. Two of the items received fairly significant percentages of respondents who marked the “uncertain” category. For Item 9, 20.5% of respondents were uncertain if they provide an environment that accommodates parents who do not speak English. Responses for Item 11 indicated that 18.7% were uncertain if children’s academic progress was negatively affected by the values and attitudes learned from their cultures. If teachers are unsure of the affect of minority children’s cultures on their success in school, then they may be making judgments about non-English speaking parents resulting in unwillingness to accommodate these parents. This coupled with the fact that almost 50% of the respondents agreed with the statement about being uncomfortable around people talking in another language or indicated uncertainty about where they stood on this issue speaks loudly of the conflict occurring in some classrooms over English language acquisition.

Four survey items made up the parent involvement construct (See Table 12). Item 10 responses indicated that 97% of the teachers viewed home-based involvement as an important part of students’ education. This response vividly points out the disparity between parent and teacher interpretations of what constitutes parental involvement. This will be examined more closely further on in this chapter in light of some contradictory statements made by parents in response to the open-ended question. Almost one-third (30%) of the teachers agreed that parents who do not come to school do not care about their child’s education while 52% disagreed with that statement. A similar question about parents demonstrating that they care about their child’s education by attending parent-
teacher conferences yielded a 77.7% rate of disagreement and a 13.9% rate of agreement.

Lastly, 28.3% of the teacher respondents indicated that parents should know how to help their children with schoolwork while 17.5% remained uncertain.

Table 12

Percentages for Teacher Perceptions of Parental Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel that parents who don’t make time to come to school don’t really care about their child’s education.</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Parents who care about their child’s education will come to parent-teacher conferences.</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Parents should know how to help their children on schoolwork at home.</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I view home-based involvement as an integral component of a student’s education.</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third construct investigated teachers’ perceptions of parent-teacher relationships (See Table 13). In three out of five of the items, at least 90% of the respondents indicated agreement with the statements about their relationships with parents. Responses for Item 12 indicated 98.8% of the teachers welcome parents’ questions and comments about their child’s schoolwork. An equally high percentage of teachers (97%) reported having a satisfactory working relationship with parents. Respondents for Item 17, which represented teachers adjusting their schedule to meet or
contact parents at a time convenient to them, demonstrated 90.3% agreement. For Items 15 and 16, which, respectively, addressed teachers mostly contacting parents when there was a problem and not having the time to involve parents in useful ways, 72.7% and 81.9% were in disagreement regarding these professional practices.

Table 13
Percentages for Teacher Perceptions of Parent-Teacher Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. I welcome parents’ questions and comments about their children’s schoolwork.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The working relationships I have with most of my students’ parents are satisfactory.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. When I contact parents, it’s usually about problems or trouble.</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways.</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I adjust my schedule so I can meet or contact parents at a time that is convenient to them.</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>34.9</td>
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</table>

In addition to the questions listed above, teachers were given an opportunity to share any supplementary information. Only fourteen teachers out of the one hundred sixty-six teacher respondents chose to provide further information. Two of the respondents reported, “Things are going fine; I have no complaints.” Another reported, “I could not run my classroom without the help of my parents at home and in my
classroom.” A third teacher said, “I think parent support is VITAL to a child's success both academically and socially. There needs to be more friendly collaboration between teachers and parents. Right now there is a line between the two when really we are working towards the same goals. A teacher needs to invest more time in meeting parents and vice versa so that this line will disappear. It can be done!”

The remainder of teacher comments reflected the belief that many parents do not value education because they do not make the effort to be involved in their child’s education. Several teachers mentioned that if parents do not seem to care, then they are not willing to make the effort to keep them informed of their child’s progress. A few commented that they are not willing to make the time to involve parents because they are unreliable. The general statement conveyed by teachers was that they are “doing all they can do under the circumstances.” This belief that there is nothing more to be done as a teacher of students whose parents are linguistically and culturally diverse is an issue that should be addressed in future research studies.

**Research Question One**

What are teachers’ attitudes about cultural and language diversity?

According to the survey responses by the teacher participants, over 85% see themselves at ease around people whose cultural background is different from theirs, find that teaching a culturally diverse student group is rewarding, believe teachers should provide a classroom atmosphere where students’ cultures are respected and shared and recognize that every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success. A large majority (94%) disagreed with the statement that says they have lower
expectations of minority students. In addition, 72.9% of the teacher respondents indicated they do not agree with the statement that values, behaviors and attitudes learned in minority cultures keep children from making progress in school. However, there are 18.7% who are uncertain about their position regarding this statement. The possibility exists that respondents who indicated their uncertainty may believe that children in minority cultures are being exposed to negative attitudes or non-compliant behavior or that the values and attitudes being taught are non-compatible with middle-class, European-American expectations for students and their parents.

In contrast, 31.3% of the respondents are uncomfortable with people talking in a language they do not understand and 15.1% are uncertain how they feel about being in the presence of someone speaking a language that is foreign to them. In a similar vein, an interesting response to the statement regarding the accommodation of non-English speaking parents, 71.6% of the teachers reportedly provide such an environment, while 20.5% are uncertain if they accommodate those parents whose first language is not English. Is it possible that teachers who are uncomfortable with foreign languages have little understanding or knowledge about accommodating non-English speaking parents? While it is encouraging to note the large percentage of teacher respondents who reported that they accommodate parents ill-at-ease with communicating in English, there are still a third of the teacher respondents who reported feeling uncomfortable around speakers of other languages. This is a topic that may need to be addressed in teacher education programs or through district-wide in-service programs.

As a teacher, I am skeptical of the results of this portion of the survey. I have often heard colleagues complain that parents need to learn English if they’re sending their
children to a school in the United States. Teachers have openly expressed their disdain with parents who come to school expecting the availability of a translator. They fault the parents for not taking the initiative to become fluent in English. Teachers have also expressed unwillingness to contact non-English-speaking parents about issues regarding their child’s behavior or academic progress citing the phone call into the home as a “waste of time because nobody there understands me anyway!”

Parents reiterated my observations in their responses to the open-ended question which asked how the relationship with their child’s teacher could be improved. One parent responded by writing, “My child’s teacher will not make an effort to improve her relationship with certain parents, like myself. I don’t speak English so I don’t have a good relationship with her.” Another parent reported, “When I finally got to talk with the teacher, she talked down to me, treating me like I was stupid because my English wasn’t good. She acts like she’s better than me. I don’t feel respected by her.”

A comparison of the parent and teacher responses regarding knowledge and respect of students’ cultural backgrounds revealed another difference in perspective. Although 91.5% of teachers reported that teaching a culturally diverse student group is rewarding and 93.4% indicated that teachers need to provide a classroom atmosphere where students’ cultures are respected and shared, only 50.6% of the parents agree that their child’s teacher knows about and appreciates his/her cultural heritage. An almost equal percentage of parents (42.3%) are uncertain if the teacher is aware of their cultural heritage. Several parents wrote that they wish the teacher would get to know their child personally and try to understand the struggles he/she faces as a student from a culture different from the majority of students as well as that of the teacher. Recalling a recent
incident, one parent wrote, “My child gets confused and sometimes uses words from his native language. He came home very upset because the teacher told him to only speak English. He knew the answer to her question, but didn’t know all the English words. He just wanted the teacher to know that he’s smart, too.”

In addition to the parents’ written accounts of what has transpired in the classroom, the data revealed that only 51.5% of parent respondents agreed that the teacher helps their child feel good about his/her cultural heritage while a large 42.9% remain uncertain about the teachers’ efforts to encourage pride in one’s cultural background. This suggests that almost half of the parent respondents are not receiving any feedback or assurances that their child is respected and treated with dignity.

Similarly, 85.5% of teacher respondents indicated that they are comfortable around people whose cultural heritage is different from their own. However, when it comes to parents being invited into the classroom during the day, only 51.9% of the parents reported knowledge of such an invitation being extended by the teacher. Although there may be other factors contributing to teachers’ reluctance to invite any parents into the classroom such as parents being more of a distraction to their child or teachers perceiving the parent as checking up on them rather than observing how their child functions in that particular learning environment, attention needs to be given to the messages being received by parents. Some parents may sense that they are not welcome or that teachers do not want to put the effort into understanding how the parents’ mores dictate their perception of the role of teacher, student and parent in the educational setting. Several parents wrote that they’ve received no invitation to come to the classroom. In fact, it was made quite clear to them that they were only to come when it
was a school-wide event such as an Open House. One parent interpreted this to mean that “my daughter’s education doesn’t include me at all. My help isn’t wanted.”

The question on the parent survey regarding their involvement being hindered by a language barrier was agreed upon by 77.2% of the parents. This suggests that a rather significant majority of parents are not receiving or benefiting from the language accommodations. It is possible that teachers choosing not to respond to the survey may be more representative of the percentage of teachers who do not make accommodations for non-English speaking parents. In contrast, perhaps those teachers who did respond actually believe they are making all the necessary accommodations for culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

Of equal importance in this discussion is the disparity between the percentage of teachers who believe all families have strengths that could assist in the education of their child and the parents’ narrative of the lack of input they receive from teachers regarding how they could work with their children at home. This will be examined closely in the section covering the second research question as it crosses over into the area of parent involvement as well.

The data collected from parents and teachers shows a disparity between words and actions. Although teachers say they provide a classroom where cultures are respected, they believe every family has some strengths that can help their child achieve and they make the effort to accommodate parents whose first language is not English, the responses from the parents tell a different story. Only half of the parents believe the teacher knows their child’s heritage, three-fourths of the parents experience a language barrier which affects their involvement at school and many parents commented that they
receive no instruction regarding how to assist their child with schoolwork at home. The differences in perspective may be accounted for in that teachers who do feel comfortable with diversity and openly support it in the classroom are the ones who responded to the survey as did parents whose children are not receiving assistance from the classroom teacher and who doubt that the teacher even knows the cultural heritage of their child.

Research Question Two

In what ways do parents and teachers agree or disagree about parental engagement in school and with learning?

Items 2 and 4 on the teacher survey measure teachers’ perceptions about parental involvement as demonstrated by attendance at conferences. While respondents had mixed feelings about whether or not parents who do not make time to come to school do not really care about their child’s education, they were clearly in disagreement with the statement that parents who care about their child’s education will come to parent-teacher conferences. Half of the teacher respondents (52%) did not agree with the statement equating parents coming to school with whether or not they care about their child’s education. It is important to question why 17.5% were uncertain of their opinion and 30.1% agreed with the statement. The split among response categories indicates the possibility of a wide disparity in the teacher population over the use of parent visits to school as a measure of their interest in their child’s education. This belief opens wide the likelihood that teachers will interpret lack of participation in this area as overall disinterest in partnering with teachers. In addition, teachers may choose to withheld valuable information from the parents thinking it a waste of time and effort.
The downward spiral continues as 71.2% of parents agree that their efforts to be involved in their child’s educational process are not appreciated. This may result in parents’ decisions to avoid the traditional opportunities to meet with their child’s teacher such as at the Meet the Teacher event held prior to the start of the new school year, Open House and parent-teacher conferences. Assumptions about parents’ level of commitment to their child’s education as a result of their attendance or non-attendance at these events are made by teachers and set the tenor for parent-teacher relationships the remainder of the year.

In spite of 51.8% of teachers disagreeing with the statement that parents should know how to help their children on schoolwork, which indicates their belief that parents may require some instruction on assistance with homework, parents indicated in the open-ended response item that often times that assistance is not forthcoming. Sixteen parents wrote that they would appreciate receiving instructions on how to complete the homework as well as information on what the teacher is looking for from the student and strategies parents can use to explain difficult concepts. Several parents reported that their child had brought home work to be redone with no explanation of why the work was not acceptable to the teacher. This is puzzling when 97% of the teacher respondents indicated that home-based involvement is an integral component of a student’s education. The possibility exists that teachers put the responsibility for helping at home squarely on the parents’ shoulders, regardless of their level of education, the barriers caused by language and cultural differences, health issues faced by themselves or family members or their lack of understanding what it is the teacher is requiring of the student.
In spite of teachers’ overwhelming support for home-based involvement in children’s education, they don’t seem willing or consider it necessary to invest time in making certain that parents have the skills, tools and understanding of the subject matter to adequately assist their child at home. Ignoring all the issues presented in the previous paragraph, teachers seem content to let parents struggle and possibly give up on assisting their child rather than taking the initiative to ensure that information is disseminated in the language spoken in the child’s home, that family members have the skills or education necessary to explain homework assignments and that they have the necessary resources to provide support when there are questions or a need for additional assistance. This is an area that will require considerable attention in future research studies if parents are to be involved in their child’s education.

Research Question Three

What barriers do teachers and parents cite as possible explanations for lower rates of contact and collaboration?

Barriers to parents’ contact and collaboration with teachers include the following: (1) family health issues (81.7%), transportation (78.8%), language (77.2%), non-appreciation of their efforts by teachers (70.2%), lack of available care for children or other family members (59.3%) and work schedules (48%). Although 90.3% of teachers reported adjusting their schedule to meet or contact parents at a time convenient to them, parents indicated that there are additional barriers preventing them from attending conferences, contacting teachers through notes, phone calls and emails and working with teachers to ensure their child’s academic success.
Twelve of the parents wrote that they blamed themselves and their lack of understanding English for the poor working relationship they have with their child’s teacher. Two parents believed that their participation was a hindrance to the goals the teacher had for their child. The majority of written feedback from parents focused on the lack of written and verbal communication from school to home. Thirty-six parents reported receiving little or no response to emails, phone calls and notes requesting information about their child’s academic progress, behavioral issues or homework assignments. Several parents expressed frustration with “not being contacted about behavioral problems or academic difficulties until they read about it on the progress report.”

Teachers presented a different view of their collaborative efforts with parents. In contrast to the written responses provided by the parents, 98.8% of the teacher respondents indicated that they welcome parents’ questions and comments about their children’s schoolwork. In addition, 97% reported having satisfactory relationships with their students’ parents. The discrepancy can be related to one of the underlying premises of this dissertation which is there is little consensus among the stakeholders as to how to define parental involvement. If parents are unhappy about the frequency of contact with teachers, but teachers are satisfied with the frequency of contact with parents, then the possibility exists that their perceptions of parental involvement are incongruent.

If parents report dissatisfaction with their relationships with teachers and almost 98% of the teachers report satisfactory relationships with parents, then there must be a discrepancy in the expectations each one has for their relationship with the other. It is crucial for teachers to initiate meaningful dialogue with their students’ parents at the
beginning of each school year rather than waiting for parents to reach a point of frustration and despair. Schools where this is an ongoing point of contention can ease the burden for both parents and teachers by facilitating opportunities for exchange of information at the beginning of each school year.

Research Question Four

What is the effect of teacher attitudes and perceptions on the types of parental involvement?

If it had been possible to randomly select and survey elementary classrooms for this study, teacher and parent responses could have been correlated to determine if a relationship existed between parent involvement and teacher attitudes and perceptions. Although the design of this study does not allow the researcher to make such definitive statements, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a positive relationship exists between these variables. Parents revealed that if they sense the teacher is interested in establishing an ongoing working relationship with them, they, too will put forth the effort to actively participate in their child’s education at school and at home. Conversely, if parents feel their efforts are not appreciated or their input is not valued, then they will remain behind the scenes doing what they can at home. Teachers wield considerable power, especially when working with parents who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Most parents will quickly back down so as to not jeopardize their child’s ability to receive an education. They will also rise to the occasion if invited to partner with the teacher in an effort to provide the best educational experiences for their child.
Teachers have the responsibility of using every resource available to educate the children entrusted to them. Most parents will willingly bring a wealth of information and understanding about their child to the educational setting. It is my choice to ignore these first teachers of my students or to embrace them.

In conclusion, it is imperative that teachers use their power to positively influence the working relationship they have with their students’ parents. They need to become aware of the attitudes and perceptions that interfere with their being accessible to parents, to open themselves up to new ways of engaging parents in the day-to-day education of their children and to see themselves as learners, collaborators and advocates for families whose voices have yet to be acknowledged within educational institutions.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to examine the attitudes that influence elementary school teachers’ practices regarding the involvement of culturally or linguistically diverse parents in their children’s education and to determine the extent to which these attitudes impact the level of parents’ involvement. The researcher attempted to provide answers to the following research questions through the implementation of a teacher and a parent survey questionnaire:

1. What are teachers’ attitudes about cultural and language diversity?

2. In what ways do parents and teachers agree or disagree about parental engagement in school and with learning?

3. What barriers do teachers and parents cite as possible explanations for lower rates of contact and collaboration?

4. What is the effect of teacher attitudes and perceptions on the types of parental involvement?

The findings showed that the parent barriers to more involvement in their child’s education closely matched those cited in the literature review. These were (a) their own or family members’ health issues, (b) lack of available care for children or other family members, (c) lack of available transportation, (d) conflicting work schedules, (e) inability to communicate effectively in English, and (f) not being appreciated by the teacher when they do make the effort to be involved in their child’s education. Teacher barriers to collaboration and contact with parents are their level of comfort when around people of a
different culture or whose first language is not English, the attitudes they have toward parents who are unable to attend the traditional start-of-the-school-year meet and greet and their own experiences with education by which they judge the parents of the students in their classroom. Instead of showing empathy when parents are reluctant to enter their child’s educational arena, teachers are quick to label parents as uninvolved, disinterested, or irresponsible.

One of the strengths of this study was the insertion of an open-ended question in both the parent and teacher survey questionnaires. This gave both parties the opportunity to express concerns that were not addressed in the body of the survey or to expound upon issues raised. Research of the existing body of literature gave example after example where teachers had been given the opportunity to express their concerns about the lack of parental involvement in education. Missing from the literature was an equally substantial amount of research dedicated to hearing the voices of parents as they try to make sense of their ever-changing world and how those changes affected their involvement in their child’s education. Several parents wrote brief notes thanking the researcher for listening to their point of view. Two parents included letters with their completed survey, asking for help with the issues they found most disturbing. A number of parents requested some form of communication from the teacher in acknowledgement of their intention to continue this conversation with the parent either in person or by phone or email. The number of written responses from the parents (120) indicated that they wanted to be heard and the unexpressed hope was that their message would get back to those who had the power and means to facilitate change.
Findings That Confirm Prior Research

As pointed out in the literature review, parents and educators have difficulty agreeing on the meaning of parental involvement and how the parties involved can work together for the benefit of the student. Educators are seemingly unwilling to acknowledge that parents’ funds of knowledge can assist teachers with understanding how particular cultures view parent-teacher interactions, how students are educated at home and how various cultures could be acknowledged in the classroom. In addition, the mismatch between the ethnicity of the majority of teachers and that of students (and their parents) has an effect on how they perceive each other and what expectations they hold for each other.

Teachers continue to withhold valuable information on how parents can work with their children at home. This lack of effort on the part of the teacher to communicate clearly results in parents feeling unwanted, unimportant and disconnected from their children’s education. The barriers of language and lack of transportation add to list of reasons why parents fade into the background instead of claiming their place next to the teacher as a co-educator.

Findings That Contradict Prior Research

In this particular research study, parents did not comment on their lack of education or make an issue of prior incidents at school that may cause them to shy away from entering the school building or from involving themselves in their child’s education through an official means. In fact, over 60% of the parent respondents had at least some
education beyond high school. This is a contradiction of the research. Parents did not situate themselves beside teachers and measure their level of education with that of their child’s teacher. Neither did they look at cultural differences and use those as an excuse for not entering into a more collaborative relationship with teachers. Educational attainment and cultural mismatch were not listed as factors inhibiting parent-teacher partnerships. In fact, much to my surprise and chagrin, teachers went so far as to proclaim that they had satisfactory relationships with parents. This seems to indicate (though with questionable reliability) that teachers feel fairly confident about the quality of their relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse parents.

**Findings That Contribute to the Research**

The most profound offering from this study to the existing field of research is the opportunity afforded parents to express their opinions regarding involvement in their children’s education. Few studies have given parents the forum for expressing their needs and wants as they relate to communicating and collaborating with the teachers of their children. Parents responded overwhelmingly to the open-ended question, offering heartfelt accounts of their encounters with educators. Their desire to go beyond the choices provided in the survey indicates the need for more opportunities for parents to express their perceptions, fears, and frustrations as well as the desire to assist their children.

Unfortunately, the teachers surveyed in this research project were not as anxious to provide insight beyond what was indicated in the question portion of the survey. This supports the finding that a high percentage of teachers are satisfied with the relationship
they have with parents. Although this may not be a new finding, it is important to note that when this information is coupled with that of the parents, the possibility exists that teachers are satisfied because the majority of culturally and linguistically diverse parents are not trying to interfere with the business of educating their children. The fact that parents are dissatisfied with their relationships with teachers, that they feel embarrassed and humiliated when the teacher talks down to them because it is assumed that the inability to communicate effectively in English is equated with being uneducated and that a majority of them are not recognized as providing a valuable contribution to their children’s education seems of little consequence to those who need all of the resources available to meet the educational, emotional and social needs of the students in their classroom.

**Recommendations for Changes in Survey Implementation**

As this research study progressed, it was evident that there would be limits in its applicability due to the changes that had to be made to increase receptivity among school administrators. Since this study was limited to those elementary schools in a Central Florida school district whose principals were willing to involve their teachers and students’ parents in research, the results do not necessarily reflect the perceptions of teachers and parents living in other geographical regions. Replication of this study by future researchers in various geographical areas may be warranted.

Limits were placed on the distribution of the parent survey as administrators of the individual schools determined whether or not their school would be participating in the study. For this reason, random sampling was replaced by convenience sampling. The
researcher also had to forego the five points of contact which help to improve the response to self-administered surveys (Dillman, 2000). This was done to make it as easy as possible for teachers to include survey distribution in their daily routine.

Researchers who choose to replicate this study should insist on the following:

1. Teacher willingness to pass out follow-up surveys, reminders and notes of thanks.
2. Teacher awareness of the students in his/her class who are eligible to receive the survey.

The timing of the distribution of parent and teacher surveys had considerable bearing on participation by individual schools and teachers’ willingness to take the time to answer an online survey. It is recommended that future replications of this study be conducted later in the school year so that administrators will not view the survey as one more form being sent home to parents for them to complete, parents will have had some time to accumulate experiences with their child’s teacher and teachers will not be as encumbered as they are at the beginning of the school year.

Although management of an online survey is easier than that of a paper survey, placing a paper version of the teacher survey in individual teachers’ mailboxes, requesting that they be returned to school and sending them together in one envelope to the researcher would make it easier to group parent and teacher responses from the same school. The reminder of a mailing deadline by school personnel would also probably have the advantage of increasing the response rate among teachers. The online survey service used for this study did not have the means to track responses by individual teachers. Blanket reminders had to be sent to the school email addresses of all teachers.
regardless of whether or not they had already responded to the survey questionnaire. This caused unnecessary confusion as emails were sent to the researcher by teachers inquiring if their survey had gone through. In addition, with no one hand delivering or collecting the survey, teachers could quickly delete the online survey without knowing what it was about or how it would be of benefit to them.

It is a possibility that self-assessment doesn’t get to the crux of the matter. Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), attention to preparing students for mandated testing has taken precedence over developing and implementing school-wide policies and procedures that are in the best interest of the students, their families and the community at large. Teachers may not have the time or think they have the time to involve parents in meaningful ways. They fail to acknowledge that a little effort exerted in the area of developing relationships with all parents at the beginning of the school year will actually save time as the year progresses.

**Recommendations for Improving Parent-Teacher Contact and Collaboration**

One of the main findings of this study confirmed what had been previously reported in the literature: parents can be confronted by a number of barriers which keep them from fully participating in their child’s education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). Schools can help to alleviate some if not all of these barriers through creative use of their resources as well as those resources available within the community. Carpooling may be a solution to problems with transportation. Providing child care during parent-teacher conferences, Back to School Night and other monthly meetings may increase the attendance of parents at these events (Karther & Lowden, 1997). Teachers meeting their
children’s parents in their room prior to a school program and then sitting together as a group may ease some of the anxiety about not fitting in or being accepted by the dominant culture of the school. Utilizing resources within the school and community to locate interpreters for meetings, conferences and school-wide events shows culturally and linguistically diverse families that they are valued and their participation is important to the school community (Finders & Lewis, 1994). Tied into this is making it a priority to have all communication sent home in the language spoken within the home (Erickson, Rodriguez, Hoff, & Garcia, 1996). Teachers will need to make the effort to ascertain from parents their primary language at the beginning of the school year. Establishing clear lines of communication by removing as many barriers as possible can only increase parental involvement and lead to increased student success (Moles, 1993).

Finally, teachers and parents need to create times to have meaningful dialogues about parental involvement (Karther & Lowden, 1997). Making this a priority at the beginning of the school year can pave the way for open communication and a clear understanding of expectations throughout the remainder of the year. My experience has been that this will be a major undertaking for many teachers. If teachers are to honestly consider their stance with parents of diversity, the realization will come that their classroom doors have only been open to parents who share the same perspective regarding educational priorities and have similar understandings regarding the role of teachers, parents and students.
Recommendations for Future Research

As a result of the continued silence among teachers regarding their relationships with linguistically and culturally diverse parents, research in the following areas is suggested: (1) teachers’ specific knowledge of cultural differences and how this knowledge has influenced their relationships with students and parents of diversity; (2) teachers’ attitudes and stereotypes regarding cultures different from their own; and (3) the education and resources teachers have been given to involve a diverse population of parents in their children’s education.

This research study has done what it was designed to do and that is to give parents a voice. Although continuing work needs to be done in this area, the recognition that parents, (especially those holding additional pieces of information that can provide a more complete picture of the child who sits in your classroom every day), desire to engage in dialogue with their child’s teacher and form a meaningful partnership with them is a huge step toward embracing the value of connecting with families.
APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL FROM UCF
September 8, 2006

Ms. Karen Shearer
5000 East Maryland Place
Casselberry, FL 32707

Dear Ms. Shearer:

With reference to your protocol #06-3748 entitled, "The Effect of Teacher Attitudes and Perceptions on the Involvement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents in Their Children's Education" I am enclosing for your records the approved, expedited document of the UCFIRB Form you had submitted to our office. **This study was approved on 09/06/06. The expiration date for this study will be 09/05/2007.** Should there be a need to extend this study, a Continuing Review form must be submitted to the IRB Office for review by the Chairman or full IRB at least one month prior to the expiration date. This is the responsibility of the investigator.

Please be advised that this approval is given for one year. Should there be any addendums or administrative changes to the already approved protocol, they must also be submitted to the Board through use of the Addendum/Modification Request form. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 407-823-2901.

Please accept our best wishes for the success of your endeavors.

Cordially,

Joanne Muratori
UCF IRB Coordinator
(FWA0000351 Exp. 5/13/07, IRB00001138)

Copies: IRB File
Susan Brown, Ed.D.
David Boot, Ph.D.

JM:jt
June 29, 2006

Dear Dr. Pinnell,

I am a first grade teacher at Eastbrook Elementary School as well as a doctoral candidate in the College of Education at the University of Central Florida. I am writing to secure permission to administer my questionnaires to parents and teachers in selected elementary schools in Seminole County.

Enclosed is the Research Permission Request Form as well as the requested documents. The abstract, literature review and survey instruments are contained within my proposal and will be sent in that format unless you require them to be sent as separate documents. I have also included a list of the procedures to ensure confidentiality of the subjects.

I will be attaching a cover letter to the parent and teacher surveys explaining the reason for the survey and procedures for returning the survey to the school. It is my understanding that permission forms are not required as children/students are not involved in the study and completion of all or only a portion of the questionnaire by teachers and parents is voluntary. It is assumed that the return of the questionnaire implies consent. Please notify me as soon as possible if this does not hold true for the administration of this survey in Seminole County Schools and I will be more than happy to construct an informed consent form.

As noted on the request form, these surveys are adapted from the Epstein & Salinas (1993) Questionnaires for Teachers and Parents in Elementary and Middle Grades. These surveys are prominent in the literature regarding school and parent partnerships and have been used in their entirety or have been adapted to meet the needs of the researcher. I conducted a small pilot study among elementary school teachers and parents to check the clarity of the instructions and questions and to determine if any survey items needed to be added or eliminated. The enclosed survey design is a result of the feedback received from the pilot study.

I appreciate any feedback you can give me regarding my research project. Please let me know as soon as possible if there are any changes that need to be made so that I may receive approval to administer the surveys. I will be seeking permission to continue with my study from UCF’s Institutional Review Board on July 14, 2006. I would appreciate it if you could contact me prior to that date. Thank you for your time and assistance, Dr. Pinnell.

Respectfully,

Karen A. Shearer
APPENDIX C: E-MAIL LETTER TO PRINCIPALS
July 24, 2006

Dear Principal:

I’m contacting you at the request of Dr. Ron Pinnell, Executive Director of Secondary Schools in Seminole County. I am a first grade teacher at Eastbrook Elementary School and a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida. As a teacher, I have a keen interest in developing a positive working relationship with the parents of my students. In the process, I’ve come to understand that many factors affect how successful I am at fostering these relationships. It has become especially clear to me that I have a lot to learn about students who come from backgrounds different from mine in order to successfully partner with their parents. It is out of this realization that I’ve developed my research topic.

Dr. Pinnell has granted me permission to conduct my dissertation research study in Seminole County Public Schools. However, I also need your permission to conduct research in your school.

The working title of my dissertation is “The Effect of Teachers’ Attitudes on Parental Involvement in Diverse Children’s Education.” I want to examine the attitudes that influence elementary school teachers’ practices regarding the involvement of culturally or linguistically diverse parents in their children’s education and to determine the extent to which these attitudes impact the level of parents’ involvement. A survey and a cover letter will be sent home with students of color in grades K-5 on September 10, 2006. Procedures will be in place to ensure confidentiality of the respondents.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this with you and to answer any questions you may have regarding this process. As you know, a research study is only valuable if it adds to the body of knowledge on that subject. It is my hope that our joint efforts will result in a study that benefits our students, their parents and classroom teachers.

I appreciate you willingness to assist me with this important study. Please email me as soon as possible if you have any questions needing to be answered before you can grant me permission to conduct this research study at your school.

Warmly,
Karen Shearer
September 10, 2006

Dear Fellow Educator,

I am writing to ask your help in a research study being conducted in several Seminole County elementary schools. As a teacher, I have a keen interest in developing a positive working relationship with the parents of my students. As a researcher and a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida, I’ve come to understand that many factors affect how successful I am at fostering these relationships. It is out of this realization that I’ve chosen to research the effect of teacher attitudes and perceptions on the involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents in their children’s education.

As a participant in this study, you’re being asked to complete a 16-question survey which should take no more than ten minutes of your time. You do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. Upon completion, the survey should be mailed to me in the pre-stamped, addressed envelope. Your submission of a completed survey implies your consent to participate in this study. Only persons who are at least 18 years of age may participate in this study. Although no compensation is provided for your participation, your willingness to express your opinions and share your experiences is sincerely appreciated.

Your participation will be kept confidential as I will be the only person having access to study information. Individual answers will not be published. Results from the survey will be shared with the principals of participating schools, Dr. Ron Pinnell, Director of Secondary Schools in Seminole County and my dissertation committee.

Please contact me if you have any questions. My school number is (407) 320-7918 and my email address is karen_shearer@scps.k12.fl.us. You may also discuss any questions you have with my faculty supervisors Dr. Susan Brown and Dr. David Boote. Dr. Brown’s email address is subrown@mail.ucf.edu and Dr. Boote’s email address is dboote@mail.ucf.edu.

I greatly value your opinions and appreciate the time you are taking to share them with me.

Warmly,

Karen A. Shearer

P.S. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board. Questions or concerns about research participants’ rights may be directed to UCF IRB Office, University of Central Florida, Office of Research and Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The telephone number is (407) 823-2901.
APPENDIX E: COVER LETTER FOR PARENT SURVEY
September 10, 2006

Dear Parent,

I am writing to ask your help in a research study being conducted in several Seminole County elementary schools. As a teacher, I have a keen interest in developing a positive working relationship with the parents of my students. As a researcher and a doctoral candidate at the University of Central Florida, I’ve come to understand that many factors affect how successful I am at fostering these relationships. It is out of this realization that I’ve chosen to research the effect of teacher attitudes and perceptions on the involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents in their children’s education.

As a participant in this study, you’re being asked to complete a 19-question survey which should take no more than ten minutes of your time. You do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. Upon completion, the survey should be mailed to me in the pre-stamped, addressed envelope. Your submission of a completed survey implies your consent to participate in this study. Only persons who are at least 18 years of age may participate in this study. Although no compensation is provided for your participation, your willingness to express your opinions and share your experiences is sincerely appreciated.

Your participation will be kept confidential as I will be the only person having access to study information. Individual answers will not be published. Results from the survey will be shared with the principals of participating schools, Dr. Ron Pinnell, Director of Secondary Schools in Seminole County and my dissertation committee.

Please contact me if you have any questions. My school number is (407) 320-7918 and my email address is karen_shearer@scps.k12.fl.us. You may also discuss any questions you have with my faculty supervisors Dr. Susan Brown and Dr. David Boote. Dr. Brown’s email address is subrown@mail.ucf.edu and Dr. Boote’s email address is dboote@mail.ucf.edu.

I greatly value your opinions and appreciate the time you are taking to share them with me.

Warmly,

Karen A. Shearer

P.S. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board. Questions or concerns about research participants’ rights may be directed to UCF IRB Office, University of Central Florida, Office of Research and Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. The telephone number is (407) 823-2901.
APPENDIX F: SPANISH TRANSLATION OF PARENT LETTER
Septiembre 10, 2006

Padre querido,

Estoy escribiendo para pedir su ayuda en un estudio de la investigación que es
conducido en varias escuelas primarias del condado del Seminole. Como profesor, tengo
un interés aislado en desarrollar una relación de funcionamiento positiva con los padres
de mis estudiantes. Como investigador y candidato doctoral en la universidad de la
Florida central, he venido entender que muchos factores afectan como es acertado estoy
en fomentar estas relaciones. Esta fuera de esta realización que he elegido investigar el
efecto de las actitudes y de las opiniones del profesor en la implicación los padres de
cultural y lingüístico diversos en la educación de sus niños.

Como participante en este estudio, le están pidiendo terminar un examen 19-
question cual debe tomar no más de diez minutos de su tiempo. Sobre la terminación del
examen, debe ser enviado a mí en el sobre pre-estampado, con sena preimpresa. Usted
no tiene que contestar a ninguna pregunta que usted con no conteste. Su sumisión de una
revisión completada implica su consentimiento de participar en este estudio. Solo las
personas que son al menos 18 a nos mayores de edad pueden participar en este estudio.
Aunque ninguna compensación sea proporcionada para su participación, su buena
voluntad de expresar sus opiniones y compartir sus experiencias es sinceramente
apreciada.

Su participación será mantenida tan confidencial que seré la única persona que
tiene acceso a la información del estudio. Las respuestas individuales no serán
publicadas. Los resultados del examen serán compartidos con los principales de las
escuelas que participan, el Dr. Ron Pinnell, director de escuelas secundarias en condado
del Seminole y mi comité de la disertación.

Estreame en contacto con por favor si usted tiene cualesquiera preguntas. Mi
numero de la escuela es (407) 320-7918 y mi email adre es
karen_shearer@scps.k12.fl.us. Usted también puede hablar de cualquier pregunta que
usted tiene con mis supervisores de facultad, doctor Susan Brown y doctor David Boote. La
dirección de correo electrónico de doctor Brown es subrown@mail.ucf.edu y el correo
electrónico de doctor Boote es dboote@mail.ucf.edu.

Valoro grandemente sus opiniones y aprecio el tiempo que usted esta tomando
para compartirlas con mi. Con gusto, se ha repasado el estudio de la investigación de
Karen A. Shearer

APPROVED BY
University of Central Florida
Institutional Review Board
\[\text{[Image]}\]

IRB Designated Reviewer

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PS. This y los BU aprobados la universidad del comité examinador institucional central de la Florida. Las preguntas se pueden dirigir a la oficina de UCF IRB, universidad de la Florida central, oficina de la investigación y la comercialización, 12201 investiga el parkway, habitación 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246. El número de teléfono es (407) 823-2901.
Survey of Teachers in Elementary Grades

Directions: Please read the statements and determine the extent to which you agree or disagree with each one. Circle your responses.

START HERE

1. I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding.
2. I feel that parents who don’t make time to come to school don’t really care about their child’s education.
3. Teachers should provide a classroom atmosphere where students’ cultures are respected and shared.
4. Parents who care about their child’s education will come to parent-teacher conferences.
5. I have lower expectations of minority students.
6. Parents should know how to help their children on schoolwork at home.
7. I am uncomfortable with people talking in a language I cannot understand.
8. I am at ease around people whose cultural background is different from mine.
9. I provide an environment that accommodates parents who do not speak English.
10. I view home-based involvement as an integral component of a student’s education.
11. The values, behaviors and attitudes learned in minority cultures keep children from making progress in school.
12. I welcome parents’ questions and comments about their children’s schoolwork.

Please continue on next page
CONTINUE HERE

12. Every family has some strengths that could be tapped to increase student success in school.  
   1 2 3 4 5

13. The working relationships I have with most of my children’s parents are satisfactory.  
   1 2 3 4 5

14. When I contact parents, it’s usually about problems or trouble.  
   1 2 3 4 5

15. Teachers do not have the time to involve parents in very useful ways.  
   1 2 3 4 5

16. I adjust my schedule so I can meet or contact parents at a time that is convenient for them.  
   1 2 3 4 5

Please use this space to add any comments.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Your Experience and Background (Check One)

1. Ethnicity:
   ______ African American/Black
   ______ American Indian
   ______ Asian American
   ______ Multiracial
   ______ Caucasian/White
   ______ Hispanic/Latino
   ______ Pacific Islander

2. Teaching experience:
   ______ less than 1 year
   ______ 1-5 years
   ______ 6-10 years
   ______ 11-15 years
   ______ 16-20 years
   ______ more than 20 years

3. Indicate your highest level of education
   ________________________________________________

4. Indicate the grade level you are teaching this year
   ________________________________________________

*Thank you for your time in completing this survey.*
APPENDIX H: PARENT SURVEY INSTRUMENT
SEMINOLE COUNTY PARENT SURVEY

Directions: Please read the statements and determine the extent to which you agree or disagree with each one. **Circle your responses.**

1. My child’s teacher encourages my child to learn.  
2. My child’s teacher provides extra help when my child needs it.  
3. My child’s teacher has high expectations of him/her.  
4. I am satisfied with the learning environment in my child’s classroom.  
5. My child’s teacher contacts me to say good things about my child.  
6. I could help my child more if the teacher gave me more ideas.  
7. My child’s teacher knows about and appreciates the cultural heritage of my child.  
8. Lack of available care for my children or other family members reduces my involvement.  
9. My child’s teacher views me as an important partner in his/her education.  
10. My child’s teacher returns my phone calls or emails promptly.  
11. Lack of transportation reduces my involvement.  
12. Family health problems reduce my involvement.  
13. My child’s teacher cares about my child as an individual.  
14. My work schedule makes it hard for me to be involved.  
15. I am included in decisions affecting my child’s education.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1—Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2—Disagree</th>
<th>3—Uncertain</th>
<th>4—Agree</th>
<th>5—Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please continue on the back
**Thank you for your time in completing this survey**
APPENDIX I: SPANISH TRANSLATION OF PARENT SURVEY INSTRUMENT
ENCUESTA PARA PADRES DEL CONDADO SEMINOLE

**Instructivo:** Favor de leer las afirmaciones y determinar en qué grado está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo. Favor de englobar sus respuestas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1-Muy En Desacuerdo</th>
<th>2-En Desacuerdo</th>
<th>3-No Estoy Seguro(a)</th>
<th>4-De Acuerdo</th>
<th>5-Muy De Acuerdo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) le anima a aprender.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) le da ayuda adicional cuando lo necesite.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) espera mucho de el/ella.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Estoy satisfecho(a) con el ambiente de aprendizaje en el salón de mi hijo(a).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) se pone en contacto conmigo para decírmelo cosas buenas acerca de mi hijo(a).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Podría ayudarle más a mi hijo(a) si el maestro o maestra me diera más ideas.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) conoce y aprecia la herencia cultural de mi hijo(a).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. La falta de servicios para cuidar de mis hijos u otros miembros de la familia reduce mi participación.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) me ve como un(a) socio(a) importante en su educación.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) devuelve enseguida mis llamadas o correos electrónicos.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. La falta de transporte reduce mi participación.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Problemas familiares de salud reducen mi participación.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Al maestro o maestra le importa mi hijo(a) como individuo.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. El horario de mi trabajo dificulta mi participación.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Me incluyen en decisiones que afecten la educación de mi hijo(a)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

Favor de continuar al otro lado
Favor de continuar aquí

16. Cuando trato de involucrarme, no siento que aprecien mis esfuerzos.
1  2  3  4  5

17. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) me ayuda a sentirme orgulloso(a) de su herencia cultural.
1  2  3  4  5

18. La barrera del idioma reduce mi participación.
1  2  3  4  5

19. El maestro o maestra de mi hijo(a) me invita a visitar el salón de clases durante el día.
1  2  3  4  5

20. ¿Cómo se puede mejorar la relación de trabajo que el maestro o maestra de su hijo(a) tiene con usted?


Datos personales (Marque uno)

1. Origen Étnico:
   ___ Afro-Americano/Negro  ___ Caucásico/Blanco
   ___ Amerindio             ___ Hispano/Latino
   ___ Asiático-Americano    ___ Isleño Pacífico
   ___ Multirracial

2. Nivel de Educación Alcanzado:
   ___ No terminé la preparatoria   ___ Universidad sin terminar o capacitación
   ___ Terminé la preparatoria     ___ Licenciatura

3. Género de su hijo(a) mayor en la escuela: ___ Hombre
   ___ Mujer

4. Nivel de grado de su hijo(a) en la escuela: 

**Gracias por tomar el tiempo para responder esta encuesta**

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LIST OF REFERENCES


