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Educators' perspectives on school family involvement within the context of a PAT structure: A qualitative case study

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EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL FAMILY INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A PAT STRUCTURE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by

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Dedications

I would like to dedicate my dissertation and the entirety of this process to my family. Without their encouragement and support, I would never have been able to complete this goal. Completing the many on-line classes, the weekends and nights of researching and writing, the vacations that required me to bring my computer, and a thorough search for good writing locations, you have understood. First to my husband Eliot, your belief in me when I doubted myself and your constant support and understanding through this process has been my driving force. You were always there to encourage me to keep going and were so understanding when time to write came before other responsibilities. This dissertation would not have been possible without you and for that and who you are, I love you. To my children Yesenia and Eliot, your own drive and perseverance have been an example for me. You pushed me to begin the journey and have been very supportive throughout the process. I could not have done it without your support, positivity, and example. Finally, to my mother that could not see me accomplish this goal, I am eternally grateful. The focus for this study was due to her influence and the sacrifices that she made to make sure that I received an education. She instilled in me the importance of working hard and never forgetting my roots. When I think of all of the strong women in my life that have helped to shape me into the woman I am today, she is front and center. Although she is not with me today, I know that she is looking down on me and shares in this accomplishment.

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Abstract

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THE CONTEXT OF A PAT STRUTURE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY
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Beth Wassell, Ed.D.
Doctor of Education

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine, through a social capital
and funds of knowledge lens, how educator's view and promote involvement within the
context of a school's Parent and Teacher Organization (PAT). The study was conducted
in one large suburban high school and consisted of twenty (N = 20) participants who
were responsible for promoting involvement. Data was collected in the form of archival
documents, participant interviews, and field notes from observations which produced
clear patterns around the topic of family involvement. The findings of this study indicated
that participants made distinctions between elementary/middle school involvement and
high school involvement, that teachers had difficulty explaining their role in the school
community's PAT, and that participants did not create activities to promote involvement
for culturally diverse members of the school's community.

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Chapter 1

Family Involvement Perspectives

As schools across the State of New Jersey become more diverse, so will the needs of students and families. Different cultural perspectives about education and language barriers add to the challenges that schools must address on a daily basis. The United States is more culturally diverse today and will become more diverse in the near future (Swail, Cabrera & Lee, 2004). Moreover, the United States Census (2015) has identified the Hispanic population as the largest ethnicity group. The Census has identified 56.6 million Hispanic people that currently reside in the United States. Due to the disparateness among family involvement perspectives that derive from culture and beliefs (Tang, 2015) and the practices that exist within a family and community that contribute to social capital (Coleman, 1998), this number adds to the urgency with which organizations explore perspectives about family involvement (FI) in schools. Schools seeking to establish meaningful FI in schools would benefit from moving beyond traditional forms of FI and towards deeper engagement and collaboration (Ishimaru, 2014). Understanding perspectives about involvement that fail to consider viewpoints governed by ethnicity and culture are of significance importance when attempting to build equity in educational organizations.

Educators define FI as being involved in the education process as families volunteer in the school and help their children with homework (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Epstein (2002) identifies six categories to outline the manner in which families become involved: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Adding to the definitions of involvement

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is the Title I Statute (USDE, 2016) which adopts the definition outlined by the United Code of Law (USCS 7801 (32) that states "parental involvement is the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities". Henderson, Mapp, Johnson and Davies (2007) have adopted the definition provided by the statute to continue the involvement discussion using Epstein's six categories. Although the definition outlined by the Title I Statute appears to be a comprehensive definition, it implies that families must be actively involved in formal school activities, but does not encompass those families who may be actively involved in their child's education in other ways. Families may view involvement as getting their children to school on time and solving issues at home that involve students, whether related to school or not (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). Home-based involvement, as well as school-based involvement, have demonstrated benefits too (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) but the simplistic definitions provided seem to be too ambiguous to properly label families as involved or not involved. Moreover, missing from the definition are families who may be omitted from formal school activities due to being a member of the non-dominant population in the school (Daniel, 2011).

Evolution of Family Involvement Definition

Partnerships among schools, families, and community groups that support learning enable children to do better in school, stay in school, and like school more (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002). Although there is a considerable amount of literature that indicates that family involvement leads to student achievement (Coleman & McNeese, 2009; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010; Malone, 2015), the overall definition encompassing

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what constitutes involvement is still evolving. The evolution of the definition is a consequence of the varying perspectives of involvement that can be shaped by culture (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2002). Velez-Ibáñez & Greenberg (1984) define culture as a set of customs that are mutually understood by members of a society. Although the uniqueness of family structures and cultural differences among the major stakeholders in educational organizations all contribute to the evolution of the definition, this understanding should not imply that families of the non-dominant group are lacking. Looking at families through a lens of deficiency (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012) implies that families need remediation as opposed to viewing them as valuable resources for educational organizations. Deficit thinking suggests that the root of educational failure derives from students, families, and their culture (Valencia, 2010). Although the deficit thinking approach is based upon inaccurate stories and stereotypes that continue to be held as truths in American culture (Kozol, 2005), this belief system continues to shape opportunities for involvement as schools tend to "socialize non-dominant families into school-centric norms and agendas" (Ishimaru et al., 2014, p. 850). When thinking about FI, it is important to note that racial and cultural boundaries between schools and families have the potential of shaping family disengagement (Dyrness, 2011).

Changes in family structures today have shaped the manner in which families participate in involvement organizations. Time and economic constraints could make it difficult for families to participate in these organizations (Catsambis, 2001; Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007) especially if outdated methods with which involvement organizations promote involvement are practiced (Gestwicki, 2016). Contributing to the traditional forms of FI are school stakeholder perspectives about what

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constitutes family involvement, which guide the manner in which organizations seek, promote, and evaluate involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Schools and Involvement Definition

Efforts to support family involvement, as outlined in family involvement models (e.g., Epstein, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) used by educational organizations, have contributed to conversations about involvement. Although these models provide discussions about the activities with which schools could promote family involvement, a dissonance among schools and families could still exist if involvement perspective is not explored. Unfortunately, even if these activities support involvement positively, other barriers that shape involvement may exist and impede organizations from reaching all of the families within a school's community, such as undervalued cultural capital (Lareau, 1987) or the inability to communicate in the school's language (Denessen, Bakker & Gierveld, 2007). Compounding the differing perspectives of involvement, are the barriers that exist due to underprepared leaders having limited knowledge for how to connect to their school's community (Auerbach, 2010). Finding out how stakeholders view family involvement and how they practice involvement has the potential to uncover the lack of resources that the organization may have.

Before educational organizations render judgments about who is or is not participating, a need exists to clarify the types of activities that are included in the term "involvement." It is unfair to imply that families are not participating if the activities used to promote involvement are not in keeping with their belief systems or if the activities are exclusive to a particular family group. Individuals of different backgrounds view school involvement differently (Zarate, 2007) therefore, these viewpoints are important when

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considering the promotion of involvement by school personnel. Understanding the varying perspectives and outside influences that contribute to family involvement are crucial to explaining and defining involvement. The definition will undoubtedly aid involvement organizations as they try to create meaningful partnerships (Bower & Griffin, 2011) with families and teachers.

The professional duty of individuals within educational organizations is to support student achievement, build equity, and support families. Leaders can support families by fostering social connections among families and with teachers and identifying and building on strengths in the community and among families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The code of profession as outlined by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) pushes the educational leader to make the education and well-being of students the central focus of all decision-making. Title I funding proposes that districts conduct outreach to all families and establish the expectations and objectives for meaningful family involvement (ESSA, 2015). Leaders have a responsibility to lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students' and staff members' backgrounds and cultures (NPBEA, 2015). Gorski (2013) declares that a pledge to equity is a commitment to justice, equal opportunity and to impartial dissemination of resources. Cooper (2010) argues that educational leaders must profoundly comprehend the structures, policies and practices that reinforce community inequity. Understanding the varying perspectives of what constitutes involvement (Baeck, 2010) in order to support family partnerships in schools have strengthened the need to define family involvement. A strive towards building equity has made exploring

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the differing cultural perspectives about involvement (Zarate, 2007) important in the expansion of the definition, as schools attempt to support family partnerships.

Importance in Collaboration

Due to the shared responsibility of families and teachers for the education and development of their children (Epstein, 2011), collaboration between families and educators is the best way to ensure that all students are prepared for the 21st century workforce (NEA, 2009). Moreover, due to teachers' influential role in the attraction of families towards proper schooling and education (Aslandogan & Cetin, 2007; Caspe, 2003), the importance of understanding how schools and teachers understand involvement is evident. Exploring how this perspective guides the manner in which family involvement is promoted (Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011) could aid educational organizations in their quest to encourage family members to become involved.

Given the importance of family involvement on student achievement and the varying perspectives about what constitutes involvement, I will use social capital theory and a funds of knowledge approach. I will use social capital theory and funds of knowledge to explore procedures that facilitate what Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt and Moll (2011) describe as the conversion of various funds of knowledge into more concrete forms of capital, such as access to involvement groups that could influence student achievement. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) posits that there are powers that influence the conversion process. Lamont and Lareau (1988) boldly state that one of the most prevalent forms of power is the manner in which some students are disregarded from the education system.

Problem Statement

Since perspectives about family involvement in schools govern the manner in which schools and organizations promote involvement, not fully understanding perspectives about involvement opportunities could inadvertently exclude families from involvement opportunities. Are schools inhibiting involvement by the very nature of their definition of involvement? Understanding the dissonance among organizations, with respect to defining involvement, how to create involvement opportunities and if the activities that are promoted are valuable (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011) contribute to the importance of analyzing how school involvement groups promote family involvement in efforts to increase membership and engagement in these groups. School involvement groups such as PAT, PTA, PTO, are groups composed of families, teachers, and staff intended to facilitate family involvement (National PTA, 2017). Even though many schools declare that they have family involvement groups and although research supports the importance of involvement in student achievement (Al-Alwan, 2014; Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000; Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000; Manz, Fantuzzo & Power, 2004), the varying perspectives of involvement make defining involvement difficult. As schools attempt to support student achievement by promoting family involvement and including all families in involvement opportunities, the need to understand the varying perspectives of involvement is crucial.

School climate sets a strong foundation for family involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) and recognizable organizations, such as the parent and teacher organization (PAT), present an opportunity for influencing school climate. Schools that do not actively promote involvement or promote it by using antiquated techniques may negatively affect

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a family's motivation to participate in school-related activities (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). A family who does not feel an integral part of the school's community could be less likely to participate in school-related activities or appear uninvolved. A family member with limited English speaking skills could potentially feel disengaged with the school due to language and the disengagement propounded by sharing English only information (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson & Davies, 2007). Henderson et al., (2007) discovered that parents with limited English feel intimidated, some feel uncomfortable visiting the school, and some have trouble helping children at home because they do not understand how the subject is taught at school. These feelings of disconnection support the need to explore perspectives of family involvement among school stakeholders, those who promote involvement.

Adding to familial feelings of disconnection are teacher beliefs that some families simply do not make education a high priority (Henderson, et al., 2007). To further explain this assertion, Henderson, et al., (2007) referred to a study conducted in a Kansas City elementary school where the number of Latino parents was growing, but not many were involved according to school expectations. In this study, Henderson et al., (2007) reported that most teachers were troubled that families were not making education a priority. When teachers erroneously label families as non-involved, family involvement groups fail to acknowledge different perspectives of involvement, or schools are not clear about their own definition of involvement, schools may create opportunities that are not widely supported by all members of the school community as demonstrated in the Kansas City elementary school (Henderson, et al., 2007). Without discussing perspectives about involvement and identifying inhibitors to involvement, parent and teacher organizations

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may find it difficult to attract and gain support from the diverse members within the school community.

Although many family involvement groups wish to include teachers within their organizations, bridging the gap between membership and involvement could be problematic without first understanding perspectives about involvement. An expectation for teachers to be involved as members is evident as suggested by the names of the organizations, parent-teacher association (PTA), parent and teacher organization (PAT) and parent-teacher organization (PTO). However, can these organizations create the necessary partnerships that will affect student achievement without establishing clear roles and objectives? Specific school programs and teacher activities that encourage and guide family involvement are the strongest predictor of family involvement at school and home (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). While Epstein and Dauber's theory was disseminated nearly two decades ago, it is still pertinent today and continues to evolve. Using school programs and teacher activities to encourage and guide family involvement will undoubtedly shape school climate as proposed by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005). With this approach, many schools have the opportunity to use their teachers in promoting involvement and creating partnerships to support student growth.

Looking at school personnel specifically is important since educators are considered to be in a primary position when it relates to involvement and ensuring valuable exchanges of information about life at school and home (Oostdam, 2009). Although improving the level of involvement is often seen as a priority in many schools, simply joining the school's involvement groups is insufficient to make strides towards academic achievement (Oostdam & Hooge, 2013). Actively engaging families in their

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children's education and direct involvement of families is what will make differences in academic achievement (Crozier, 2005; Evangelou et al., 2008). Understanding that each member of the school team is responsible for putting the school policy on communicating with families into practice (Oostdam & Hooge, 2013), supports the need to understand how the stakeholders responsible for promoting family involvement in schools define involvement and what they expect from families and teachers in terms of involvement.

Unfortunately, although schools understand that there are benefits to involvement, the manner in which to participate in these partnerships is still unclear (Oostdam & Hooge, 2013). Due to the different dimensions of family involvement, the manner in which schools promote involvement is diverse (Oostdam & Hooge, 2013). While the literature substantiates the benefits of involvement and confirms that there are divergent definitions of involvement, the literature is not replete with how involvement organizations can use school personnel to garner active participation in involvement organizations. In addition, although a shift towards a joint responsibility of schools and families in children's education (Oostdam & Hooge, 2013) is appearing in emerging literature, family involvement organizations that use traditional forms of involvement may be missing an opportunity to involve families. The proposed research has the potential to address this gap by the very nature of exploring perspectives of involvement of the individuals who are responsible for promoting family involvement. Examining practices and opportunities for involvement that are used by major stakeholders in a family and involvement group, will add to the minimal literature that exists on how family involvement groups promote involvement.

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Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand, through a lens of social capital and funds of knowledge, how educators viewed and promoted involvement within the context of a school's PAT. The study sought to examine how these organizations included or excluded some family groups and teachers when perspectives about involvement differed. The study sought to analyze membership in a family involvement group to identify practices that could be inclusive or exclusionary thereby, affecting involvement in the PAT organization. As current practices that the involvement organization used to garner support were examined, an understanding about how to create a more inclusive family involvement group that was a better representation of the school community was explored. The nature of family involvement in the school's PAT was analyzed by exploring the viewpoints of the executive board of the family group, the school liaison, and included the teachers' perspectives about involvement, in order to understand how they viewed their role in seeking and promoting family involvement. The teacher perspective included an exploration of activities meant to promote exchanges of cultural experiences in an effort to include culturally diverse members of the school community. The analysis will aid the organization in identifying areas where their understanding can be used to enhance the manner in which culturally diverse families are encouraged to participate. Further inquiry about the objectives and how the organization included teachers to meet the objectives was explored. The analysis will aid the organization in explaining how the school, teachers, and the PAT promote involvement to achieve the objectives of the PAT organization.

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Theoretical Framework

The proposed study, framed by empirical research linking family involvement with student achievement, social capital theory and the funds of knowledge approach to explain the importance of defining involvement, sought to understand the perspectives of educators in a family involvement organization and examined current practices geared towards promoting involvement. Since family involvement is linked to higher grades and test scores, enrollment in higher-level programs, improved attendance, increased graduation rates and increased improvement of student behaviors (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Malone, 2015), the need to ensure equitable involvement opportunities is crucial. The connection between family involvement and student achievement (Coleman & McNeese, 2009; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010), supported the need to analyze a school's PAT to better understand current perspectives and practices that may inhibit involvement. Lareau (2011) posits that middle-class families organize daily life around the talents and skills of their children while working class and poor families nurture their children as they grow but children are responsible for their own recreation. Moreover, middle-class families intercede for their children while working class or poor families may have a sense of inadequacy and frustration with schools (Lareau, 2011). Promoting involvement based on middle class viewpoints on family involvement could potentially inhibit non-middle class families from becoming involved.

How educator stakeholders, connected with family involvement organizations, understand the differences in family involvement in connection with socio-economic status is crucial to the strategies that a school uses to promote involvement. Students at risk of failure have the most to gain when schools involve families (Caplan, 2000;

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Funkhouse & Gonzalez, 1997). Unfortunately, many barriers exist preventing family involvement programs from seeing success in their involvement approaches such as poor training for school staff in how to work with families or administrators and teachers worried that increased family involvement would mean an increase of work to their already busy schedules (Drake, 2000). Funkhouse and Gonzalez (1997) posit that schools must be willing to invest in professional development opportunities that support family involvement, provide time for teachers to work with families, and design different strategies to meet the needs of diverse communities. Rather than attempting to increase family involvement only in school-based activities, schools should support families and build relationships between school staff and the school community (Ferguson, 2004). Jones (2001) argue that activities that insist on participation of traditional activities, such as volunteering and fundraising, are not likely to have much impact on student achievement because not all families can be involved in conventional activities. Family involvement opportunities must be matched to a school community's interests, needs, and resources (Caplan, 2000; Funkhouse & Gonzalez, 1997). To encourage involvement, schools must provide family members with encouragement and direction (Caplan, 2000; Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). Staff should recognize that all family members have strengths to share with the school (Moll & González, 1994). Understanding that divergences exist between middle and working class families and the manner in which they view and participate in involvement, could aid the organization in exploring inhibitors of involvement as they attempt to increase student achievement and examine social capital.

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Social Capital

Social capital refers to the resources, power and information, that are present in a community's social relationships that can be used to attain additional resources (Lin, 2001). Coleman (1998) defines social capital as any aspect of social structure that adds value and makes the actions of individuals within that social structure easier. Social capital theory was described by Coleman (1998) as a way to understand the social systems that add to the cultural incongruences of student achievement. Social capital theory proposes that educational expectations, standards, and responsibilities that exist within a family or community can influence the level of involvement and investment that in turn influence academic success (Coleman, 1998). Coleman argued that practices that exists within a family or a community contribute to social capital, social capital influences the level of family involvement, and family involvement affects academic success. Coleman (1998) goes on to expand the topic of social capital with social closure, which he describes as reciprocally underlying partnerships between parents and schools. Therefore, a family with social closure possesses social capital. Acar (2011) posits that the role of family and the significance of family life, produce social capital. Similarly, Dika and Singh (2002) conclude that family connection, discussion, expectations, and obligations form social capital in school, which affect students' academic achievement.

Moreover, Bourdeiu's (1986) discussion of the topic outlines three types of capital: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital, which in turn influence relationships. Bourdeiu (1986) posits that all of the aforementioned forms of capitals have the potential of conversion into economic capital granting the bearer access to resources. Social capital, he describes, is the connections that being a part of a social

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group affords the bearer and grants the group the collectively owned capital to be used as a credential of sorts. Similarly, Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt and Moll (2011) posit that social capital theory "recognizes capital as an investment (e.g. relationships with professionals) associated with expected profits (e.g. better jobs)" (p. 168). Therefore, a family member who has social capital, through the very nature of their membership in a school's family social group, has the potential to influence conversations and issues related to school matters.

Perez and McDonough (2008) and Perna (2006) indicate that social capital can influence students' access to higher education. This could be attributed to Kainz and Aikens' (2007) assertion that family-school relationships have been conceptualized based on middle-class values and Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt and Moll's (2011) assertion that social capital privileges the dominant classes. Plagens (2011) argues that youth from nontraditional family structures may experience eroded social capital that could potentially lead to negative effects on student achievement. When traditional family involvement structures, such as back-to-school night and traditional family involvement fail to attract families of color (Auerbach, 2009), the need to explore hegemonic views that guide involvement opportunities are crucial.

Unfortunately, inhibitors to attaining social capital exist. Family networks within involvement groups contribute to positive outcomes (Sil, 2007) but if families are not members of these groups, they could possess less social capital than a family who is a member. The identification of inhibitors are important in order to establish equity in educational organizations due to the benefits of involvement on student achievement. A family's view on involvement, culture, or their perception of involvement may inhibit a

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family's participation in involvement groups. Tang (2015) posits that the degree to which families participate in school activities may be a result of cultural differences regarding how families view their roles and their schools' roles in education. Moreover, being less familiar with the language of school or a divergent parenting style from the group could inhibit access to involvement groups (Leithwood & Patrician, 2015). Similarly, Lareau (2011) discusses that parenting styles influence future outcomes and that families who do not know how to navigate bureaucracy could potentially be at a disadvantage. Since social capital is the abstract resources embedded within social relationships or institutions (Plagens, 2011), social capital theory supports the need to increase involvement in an effort to build equity in family involvement groups. Plagens' (2011) argument that social capital can influence the level of family involvement and investment, which in turn, affects academic success, further supports the need to analyze involvement groups and examine the perspectives of those responsible for promoting involvement as schools attempt to build equity and to support student achievement equitably.

Funds of Knowledge

Moll and González (1994) define funds of knowledge as "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 443). The idea of funds of knowledge revolves around the notion that people are capable and have developed understandings, and their life experiences have contributed to that knowledge or perspective (Gonzales & Amanti, 1997; González et al., 1995; Moll, 1992). Looking at families as having funds of knowledge implies that families could present opportunities for meaningful experiences with teachers.

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Researchers have used the funds of knowledge framework in an effort to record the "competence and knowledge embedded in the life experiences of under-represented students and their families" (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011, p. 164). Moreover, Ares and Buendia (2007) have added that funds of knowledge enables teachers' acknowledgement and use of family resources for instructional purposes when funds of knowledge are integrated into curriculum and instruction. The funds of knowledge approach has been used to record the wealth of knowledge of under-represented families that could help teachers link school curriculum to students' lives (Basu & Calabrese Barton, 2007; Mercado, 2005).

Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) posit that one of the greatest merits of the funds of knowledge framework is that it values the resources rooted in students, families and communities, thus defying deficit viewpoints. Establishing a sense of value could enhance how schools seek and promote partnerships between families and schools. González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) suggest that the funds of knowledge approach includes the possibilities for changes in classroom practice. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) suggest that household customs are related to classroom practice. Therefore, working with teachers to build a bridge between the two practices is essential in an effort to support student achievement for all students.

School personnel, such as teachers and administrators, have the potential to shape involvement for families (Mulford, 2003). Valencia (2010) suggests a series of factors that play a significant role in shaping and reproducing academic failure: school segregation, language and cultural exclusion, teacher/faculty-student interactions, teacher certification, and curriculum differentiation. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) posit that teachers

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need more opportunities for meaningful experiences with students and families. The assertions made by Valencia (2010) and Rios-Aguilar et al., (2011) further support the need for using teachers to facilitate involvement.

The Two Theories

Analyzing the PAT organization through a social capital and funds of knowledge lens provided an opportunity to explore the extent to which the organization used school-centric practices and traditional forms of involvement (Green, 2015). The role of school personnel is to work with students and families to transform inequitable community and school conditions (Green, 2017). Acknowledging that school personnel, responsible for promoting family involvement, play a role in establishing relationships between schools and families (Cooper 2009; Watson & Bogotch, 2015), makes the importance of exploring perspectives of involvement evident. Green (2017) recommends the assessment of school-community practices, such as PAT meetings and open houses, in order to readjust ways of perceiving. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) recommend that teachers engage in critical thinking and participate in dialogues that challenge misperceptions. Exploring divergent definitions of involvement could begin the conversations about misperceptions and disrupting the traditional forms of capital that have value. Zipin (2009) affirms that when funds of knowledge are successfully fused into classrooms, the traditional exchange-value process is disrupted thereby making changes to the types of knowledge that have value. Finally, Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) conclude that although conversion is the exchange of funds of knowledge into forms of capital, "the exchange rate in the field of education is determined by an arbitrary class and race-based process that is context specific" (p. 177). Understanding the processes through which educational organizations

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encourage family involvement is vital in the quest to promote student achievement equitably.

Research Questions

The research questions were:

1) How do stakeholders in a high school PAT define family involvement?

2) How do teachers explain their role in the school community's PAT?

3) How do stakeholders promote involvement to encourage participation of culturally diverse members of the school community?

Definition of Key Terms

Throughout the research study, I will use the following terms: Family involvement and familial involvement synonymously. Involvement refers to those activities in which families participate to support student learning and achievement (Epstein, 2002). Family, in the dissertation, will refer to the U.S. Department of Education's (2016) definition that includes all adults who raise and care for children, biological, adoptive, foster parents, grandparents, legal and informal guardians and adult siblings. Participation refers to the "the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children's development, learning, and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems" (US Department of Education, 2016, p. 1). Engagement refers to "feeling a profound sense of personal-agency (Hoffman et al., 2005); emotional involvement or commitment (Merriam-Webster's dictionary, 2017). The term culture used throughout the research will refer to the set of customs that are mutually understood by members of a society (Velez-Ibañez & Greenberg, 1984). Finally, perspective is synonymous with outlook, view,

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viewpoint, interpretation, and beliefs. Zheng (2009) posits that teachers' beliefs are essential in understanding a teachers' thinking and pedagogical practices. Pajares (1992) asserts that belief systems serve as a map to help individuals understand the world around them.

Significance of the Study

The diversity present in New Jersey schools adds to the vast differences in involvement perspectives. There are 41.8 million Hispanics in America, representing 14.2 percent of the U.S. population and expected to grow 20 percent by the year 2050 (NEA, 2017). The total number of New Jersey public school students is 1,369,085. The total number of Hispanic students in Monmouth County, the county of the research site, is 15,778 (NJDOE, 2017). Teachers' expectations about involvement can influence families' participation in educational organizations (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). With the growing number of diverse students, key players, such as teachers, have a role in building a bridge between home and school. Pratt-Johnson (2006) posits that instructors must understand that by living in a global society, they must teach and work with students who have very different ethnicities and beliefs than their own. Moreover, by tapping into a family's funds of knowledge, awareness of culture, familial background, and other contributions, help educators build a stronger bond between home and school (Gregg, Rugg, & Stoneman, 2011; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Understanding how a family's values and beliefs contribute to their views on involvement (Mangual-Figueroa, 2011) could help in the quest to garnering equity in educational organizations.

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The proposed study has the potential to shape school-based practice by recognizing that family involvement is linked to student achievement and that in order to create equitable partnerships, non-acknowledgement of the dissonance among involvement definitions could make garnering support for involvement organizations difficult. The proposed research could aid in the creation of an involvement definition and the enhancement of the organization's objectives that is more in keeping with stakeholder beliefs. The findings could put the school in the position to create professional development opportunities that include PAT board members framed around building cultural competence and partnership building.

For research, the study has the potential to inform the emerging literature on family involvement groups and the drive for movement away from school-centric involvement opportunities and more towards joint connection among schools, families and community members. Due to this study's focus and theoretical framework, it has the potential to bring awareness to the varying levels of social capital that are not always as recognizable in involvement organizations. The awareness could help in the reformulation of involvement opportunities that are more culturally relevant. Finally, this study helps to inform further research on using knowledge about perspectives from stakeholders responsible for promoting involvement in order to conduct a similar qualitative approach to explore how families view involvement. In addition, the study could equip researchers with the starting points to conduct an action research study to bring all stakeholders together in an effort to create opportunities for involvement that are valued by all stakeholders.

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The proposed research has the potential to contribute to policy too. Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides financial assistance to schools to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. In order to receive funding, schools must conduct outreach to all family members by implementing programs and activities to involve all family members and establish expectations and objectives for meaningful family involvement (ESSA, 2015). Since Title I requires establishing expectations and objectives for meaningful family involvement, the proposed study has the potential to add to conversations about how to better support family involvement groups to meet Title I requirements. The proposed study could enhance conversations about the improvement of family involvement groups since the allotment of funding depends on improving programs for more effective family involvement and revision of family engagement policies.

Limitations

Although I was as comprehensive as possible in my study, acknowledgement of the limitations of the study are important. Implementing a purposeful sampling approach, choosing individuals who will best help me understand the research problem and questions (Creswell, 2014), the information rich cases (Patton, 2002), the study was limited to the analysis of the involvement perspectives of the administrative team, PAT board members, and teachers. Although the board members of the PAT were parents, the perspectives of parents outside of the PAT board was not sought at this time. I instead focused on school personnel's perspectives about involvement and limited the study to twelve teacher faculty members, four administrators and four PAT board members. The twelve faculty members were selected based on their affiliation with the school and not

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their affiliation with the PAT organization. Therefore, not all members were PAT members thereby presenting an opportunity for PAT non-members to explain their reasons for not joining PAT and their perspectives on involvement.

How I Came to the Research

I decided to concentrate on teacher perspective due to my own personal disengagement with the school's parent and teacher organization, which caused me to question membership versus participation. As a member of my school's parent and teacher organization, I personally felt a detachment from the organization and often wondered if the disengagement evolved from my own actions or if the organization was inadvertently excluding other teachers too. Since teacher expectation and opinions about involvement can influence families' participation in educational organizations (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011), using school programs and teacher activities to encourage and guide family involvement presents an opportunity to shape school climate (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The exploration of perspectives were used to explain how family involvement groups could potentially inhibit participation by maintaining the status quo within their organization.

My personal belief that family involvement was crucial in my and the successes of my children serves as a catalyst for conducting this study. My non-English speaking mother, who lacked the confidence to fully engage in activities that were promoted on hegemonic views of involvement, was on the forefront of my motivation for this study. The struggles that she faced when the classroom instruction conflicted with her English ability or when her knowledge of cultural opportunities were not in sync with her own belief system, drives my belief that when teachers take the time to understand family

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perspectives and build relationships, student growth is achievable. My mother became a member of the school's family involvement organization because the meetings, held in both Spanish and English, allowed her to build relationships with the teachers and other parents who understood Spanish. These relationships became a resource for her when she experienced difficulty maneuvering in the school's bureaucracy. The belief that relationships with families are beneficial in my role as a teacher and that through these partnerships real learning can take place have inspired the focus of this study. I believe that teachers waste a valuable resource when families are contacted only when problems arise. Building relationships and meaningful partnerships requires so much more.

Conducting research for a qualitative research course at Rowan University, I uncovered that teachers considered themselves members of the family involvement group, through the contribution of a ten-dollar membership, but lacked the connectivity to the group. Moreover, teachers admitted that they did not understand the role of the involvement group in addition to their own role within the organization. The collection of interviews and material culture along with my disconnection with the organization became the incentive for the present study.

Due to my teacher role in the school and the involvement group, I interacted with the phenomenon as an insider (Stake, 1995) as I sought to understand PAT. In my efforts to be cognizant of my researcher role, I used analytic memos and a journal in order to work out any bias that arose in my field notes, interviews and/or observations. I looked for things that were happening, not causes for the things that were happening (Stake, 1995). Patton (2002) proposes that data collection include a deliberate search for "discrepant evidence" attempting to see the plausibility of explanations rather than

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seeking to discredit them (p. 276). I interpreted as I discovered and sought to understand through interpretations (Stake, 1995). I used member checks to ensure that I understood what was being said and peer-debriefing in an effort to attain impartial views on the research (Patton, 2002).

The final section of this chapter will offer an overview of the dissertation. To aid the reader, I provide chapter outlines with a brief description of all the pertinent information contained in each section.

Overview of Dissertation

Chapter one. In the first chapter, I present my viewpoint of a current issue in public school in the United States: the varying perspectives of family involvement that are shaped by culture and definitions of involvement that are in keeping with middle-class values. I link this dissonance to the varying forms of social capital that non-English speaking families have in educational organizations. I present a funds of knowledge approach to discuss how educators can diminish deficit thinking that often shape decision-making in schools. Due to the importance of family involvement on student achievement and the varying perspectives about what constitutes family involvement, I use social capital theory and a funds of knowledge approach with which to frame the problem and to present the research. Framing the problem around social capital theory presents a lens through which to analyze the powers that exist in educational organizations that influence the conversion process of capital (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011). The problem is described within extensive literature that describes the many barriers that prevent family involvement.

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Chapter two. The chapter provides a thorough literature review pertaining to the link between family involvement and student achievement. Moreover, it includes a thorough review of the varying perspectives and factors that shape the development of an involvement definition. A discussion about the barriers to involvement that make promotion of involvement difficult and the involvement models developed to aid organizations in promoting family involvement is provided. The chapter also provides a review regarding a non-deficit thinking approach to inclusion of culturally diverse families and a discussion about involvement organizations and the drive towards equitable partnerships. Finally, I synthesize the literature and provide an explanation for the need to conduct my study**.**

Chapter three. The third chapter delineates the methodology that I used in the dissertation. I employed a qualitative case study approach allowed me to explore perspectives of family involvement and how educational stakeholders in a family involvement group facilitated opportunities for families to become involved. The chapter provides information about the context of the study and its participants. The chapter discusses the data gathering approaches that were used and how the data was organized and analyzed. In addition, I describe how triangulation of the data collected occurred. I also discuss how I sought to achieve credibility and validity. Finally, I present my positionality in the research and my role of researcher.

Chapter four. Chapter four will provide an overview of the data collection process. The chapter will contain a description of all of the data sources used to conduct the research and a detailed explanation of the results of the study.

Chapter five. Chapter five will contain a synopsis of what was presented in Chapter 2 and a reminder of all the research questions. I present a discussion where I summarize the findings as they relate to each question. I will make recommendations for policy, research, and practice and what the findings mean for leadership.

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Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The framework that informs the proposed research, perspectives on school family involvement within the context of a PAT structure, will encompass five areas in the literature. The first includes the empirical research that connects family involvement to student achievement. The second concept explains the varying perspectives and factors, such as culture, family and teacher viewpoints, that shape the development of an involvement definition. The third concept focuses on the barriers to involvement that make promotion of involvement difficult. The fourth concept examines involvement models and frameworks developed to aid organizations in promoting involvement and a teacher approach to inclusion of culturally diverse families that sees culture as a benefit rather than detriment to learning. Finally, the fifth concept includes a discussion about involvement organizations and the drive towards equitable partnerships.

Family Involvement and Student Achievement

Family involvement is linked to higher grades and test scores, enrollment in higher-level programs, improved attendance, increased graduation rates and increased improvement of student behaviors (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Malone, 2015). Family engagement positively contributes to student learning and achievement (Al-Alwan, 2014; Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000; Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000; Manz, Fantuzzo & Power, 2004) and engagement of families in school is more vital than involvement at home (Kim, 2009). Therefore, influencing family involvement to help students actively participate in school is vital to student success for all students (Christenson, 2004) and

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involvement organizations can create a platform for influencing active participation (Glueck & Reschly, 2014).

Empirical studies about involvement have contributed to the discussion about student achievement attesting that when parents and school staff work together to create interventions for impediments to student achievement, improved academic performance and behavior were noted (Cox, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 2002). Partnerships consider student achievement as a mutual responsibility with all stakeholders holding a vital role in supporting a student's education (Caplan, 2000). Engaging in communication with families is vital since the collaboration deriving from regular two-way exchange of information, where all parties are treated as equals, empowers families to become involved in their child's education (Cox, 2005).

The essential questions are how to effectively organize families to participate and how to form family-school partnerships that are equitable and beneficial? Family–school partnerships tend to decline over the years due to high school schedules, curriculum, discouragement from students who do not want families involved and families who want their children to succeed in school, but do not know how to best support children as learners (Simon, 2001). In an analysis of 11,000 reports from parents of high school seniors and 1,000 high school principals, Simon (2001) found that high schools could increase family involvement in partnership activities by communicating with families. In the analysis, Simon (2001) found that when schools specifically reached out to families, involvement increased. Schools not only have a responsibility to create partnership programs that reach out to include all families at all grade levels, but they also have the capacity to change the way that families support teenage students (Simon, 2001).

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Since partnerships are beneficial to student-growth (Simon, 2001), efforts to support school partnerships are advantageous in the quest to promote student achievement. The literature on student achievement and the promotion of family involvement sheds light on the importance of family involvement. Although much of the literature suggests that forming partnerships with families are beneficial to student growth (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Glueck & Reschly, 2014; Simon, 2001), forming equitable partnerships relies on understanding a family's background, culture, and goals for children (Epstein, 2002; Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011) and enhancing the capacity of educators (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Moreover, the assertion that engaging in communication with families and treating families as equals is vital, neglects the idiosyncrasies with which school personnel promote family involvement. In addition, treating families as equals but failing to consider how some social capital is more valued than others (Hill, 2009) is a matter for consideration too. Simon (2001) supports the need for involvement at all grade levels and places the responsibility of creating these partnerships on the school. Understanding perspectives about involvement that are held by the individuals who are responsible for promoting involvement is crucial in the mission of forming partnerships with families.

Involvement Perspectives

Due to divergent views of involvement, exploring how major stakeholders view involvement is essential. Defining family involvement is crucial since many involvement perspectives can be shaped by culture (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002) or deriving from interpretations of involvement from the more dominant socio-cultural backgrounds (Daniel, 2011). Understanding culture as a set of customs that are mutually understood by

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members of a society (Velez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1984) requires educators to understand a family's background (Epstein, 2002; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) and acknowledge perspectives that could lead to stereotyped assumptions (Boethel, 2003). Moreover, varying perspectives among school personnel shape the opportunities that are created to engage families and could potentially inhibit involvement based on conflicting perspectives (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

Involvement encompasses a range of home and school behaviors from discussing school-related matters with children, being active in parent-teacher organizations (Altschul, 2011), providing help with homework (Mangual Figueroa, 2011) and visiting the school to talk to teachers (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Through homework assignments, teachers hope to include families in the learning process (Mangual Figueroa, 2011) but divergent views of the purpose of the task (LaCasa et al., 2002) could inhibit the link through which teachers attempt to connect home and school (Mangual Figueroa, 2011). Although family involvement behaviors can be categorized into two separate entities, home-based and school-based participation, they both have been found to positively influence student achievement (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000; Kohl, Lengua & McMahon, 2000; Manz, Fantuzzo & Power, 2004). However, strictly focusing on school-centered definitions can create a power imbalance in the school-family-community partnerships (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002) thereby creating superficial partnerships that do not contribute to increases in family involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Moreover, relying on remediation approaches based on the viewpoint that families of the non-dominant group are deficient (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992) could

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potentially inhibit efforts to create successful partnerships and impede the trust that is needed to garner partnerships.

Insisting on traditional forms of involvement without exploring varying perspectives of involvement could potentially force families to methods of involvement sanctioned by the schools (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006) that conflict with a family's definition of involvement or through activities that require families to possess cultural knowledge about how schools function that they do not have (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991). School personnel, who are unaware of their own beliefs about involvement, could inadvertently promote traditional forms of involvement due to the familiarity of those activities or due to training "to reproduce US mainstream culture" (Hill & Torres, 2010). For example, traditional definitions that require contributions of time and money from families could make those who are unable to participate, improperly characterized as uninvolved (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Individuals who are responsible for promoting involvement, who only promote involvement in this manner, could unintentionally omit these members from participating. Moreover, teachers' assumptions about families could potentially influence participation (Kim, 2009), when stakeholders have divergent viewpoints about what involvement embodies and what the individual roles among stakeholders should be (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). Teachers have been known to miscalculate the inherent culturally based contentions from which schools function (Hill, 2009). Seeking to promote involvement opportunities based on school culturally based assumptions, could shape how involvement is promoted due to the lack of congruency on an involvement definition.

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Empirical research exists documenting the varying perspectives about involvement that are present among families and teachers (Barge & Loges, 2003; Lawson, 2003; Scribner, Young & Pedroza, 1999). Scribner, Young and Pedroza (1999) found in their study that families viewed involvement as a way of supporting the total well-being of a child, yet teachers viewed it as a support for academic achievement. Similarly, Lawson (2003) found that school-centric definitions, involvement opportunities such as volunteering, attending meetings and helping with homework, failed to garner support by families. Moreover, Barge and Loges (2003) examined family, student, and teacher perceptions of involvement and communication and found that perceptions were divergent. The study uncovered that families viewed their role as monitoring student progress, establishing relationships with teachers and helping their children become involved in extra-curricular activities, whereas teachers believed that the family's role was to communicate with both the child and the school, participate in the child's school activities, supervising, and disciplining (Barge & Loges, 2003). Views about a family's role in a child's education can influence the frequency and types of communication between the school and family (Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011). Exploring how the individuals responsible for promoting involvement view and encourage involvement has the potential to generate discussions about how to create a mutually supported definition of involvement that could be further grown to encompass community viewpoints too. Lee and Bowen (2006) posit that when schools understand and recognize all involvement efforts, their partnerships with families have a better chance to become more productive.

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Due to divergent interpretations of involvement, a family could potentially assert that they are involved by engaging in specific involvement strategies that they value. However, these involvement practices could be unrecognized by teachers as demonstrated in a study conducted by Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow and Fendrich (1999), where teachers reported being unacquainted with practices at home for about one third of the families. The finding highlights the need for exploring varying perspectives about family collaboration and identifying what role teachers and families should have on a child's education (Izzo et al., 1999). Teachers who protest that families are not engaged sufficiently in their children's schooling (Mapp, 2003; McKenna & Millen, 2013) could be erroneously classifying families based on personal assumptions of what a family's involvement ought to be. Wherry (2003) found that one of the biggest errors that school staff make when implementing family involvement programs are categorizing parents as disinterested because they do not attend school invitations or measuring involvement on a family's participation in school activities. Changing the way schools understand involvement could serve as the catalyst for moving towards greater family engagement (Baker, Wise, Kelley & Skiba, 2016) and this present examination of involvement in the context of a PAT structure presents an opportunity to understand varying perspectives within a school prior to exploring family perspective and partnerships. Without proper characterization, schools may find it difficult to create a definition that is clear among stakeholders charged with promoting involvement and one that has the potential to be supported by families that could ultimately lead to increase family involvement.

On the other hand, mere efforts to revise the definition of involvement could potentially be insufficient to garner the support and establish the partnerships that schools

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aspire to have, as demonstrated in a study conducted by Bower and Griffin (2011). The study included two administrators and five teachers in a school with 347 students. The basis for the study was the assumption that new family involvement practices that incorporate culturally relevant practices were needed. The results of the study indicated that although the school revised their definition of involvement to include home-based learning opportunities and a more comprehensive version of an involvement plan, the school was still unable to attain its goal of working together to improve the school (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Due to the results, the authors recommended practices that included relationship building, advocacy, and parental efficacy in order to empower families to participate (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The results of the study confirmed Redding, Langdon, Meyer and Sheley's (2004) assertion that building effective relationships is crucial and Baker et al.'s (2016) contention that organizations ought to move towards greater family engagement rather than mere participation.

Although family involvement behaviors can be classified as home-based and school-based participation, the need for schools to create a more school and family centered definition is essential in order to create a balance of power in the school-family-community partnerships. Boethel (2003) suggests that acknowledging different perspectives about involvement can help both teachers and family members evade misunderstandings and stereotyped assumptions. Without examining school perspectives about involvement and the activities used to promote involvement, efforts to build partnerships could be less focused on equity and more in keeping with tradition. When the individuals responsible for creating involvement opportunities have differing viewpoints about involvement, a disconnection may exist among the very partnerships

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that schools are trying to build (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2012). Understanding how schools and teachers understand involvement and how this perspective governs the involvement opportunities that are provided for families (Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011) creates opportunity for generating equitable partnerships and producing an involvement definition that is supported by all members of the community in the future. On the other hand, mere revision of a definition is not enough to support family engagement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Building relationships, support, and familial efficacy can begin to cultivate the empowerment needed for involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). By demonstrating respect for families' activities at home, schools can find commonalities and support from which to strengthen relationships with families and students (Boethel, 2003).

Barriers

Adding to the factors that contribute to traditional forms of involvement definitions are the barriers concerning class, ethnicity, and parent gender that are pertinent when discussing family involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Empirical research suggests that many families do not participate in school-related activities due to complications that they experience as a result of social class factors such as, cultural differences and beliefs, and an educational system that is based on middle-class values (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Daniel-White, 2002; Lewis & Forman, 2002; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001). In addition, some families have to contend with cultural capital that does not match the cultural capital that is valued by the schools (Reay, 1998) or social capital that inhibits them from drawing upon resources to promote student learning (Noguera, 2011). In a qualitative study conducted by Lareau and Horvat (1999), the

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researchers found that families whose patterns of behavior aligned well with the school's culture experienced less conflict than the families whose behavior was outside of what was seen as the norm. Moreover, in a study conducted by Abrams and Gibbs (2002) families discussed discriminatory treatment by school staff and parents who formed part of the family and teacher organization. In addition to these barriers, family members could experience a lack of confidence when the language of instruction is not a family's first language (Baker, Wise, Kelly & Skiba, 2016; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) making it difficult to communicate between school and home (Chripseels & Rivero, 2001; Smith, Stern & Shatrova, 2008). Schools without bilingual staff undermine involvement opportunities, such as parent-teacher conferences, that could impede relationship building with teachers (Hill & Torres, 2010). Due to these disconnections, families may possess an absence of trust with the school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) necessary to develop a partnership with schools. Gutman and McLoyd (2000) affirmed that families who had previous negative experiences with school staff were more suspicious of a school's goals and activities. Ignoring the role of ethnicity on family involvement and not creating involvement opportunities that are sincerely inclusive of other cultures will influence the effectiveness of family involvement organizations (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Examining involvement opportunities and exploring how traditional methods could overlook some cultures could be the impetus needed to garner support for involvement groups.

With the growing Hispanic population in the United States, the educational needs of multilingual students are very important. Since the Hispanic population is projected to increase by 115 percent and 29 percent of the population is expected to be Hispanic by 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2015), the needs of multilingual students add to the challenges

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that schools face when attempting to build equity for all students and support family involvement. The rapidly growing numbers of Hispanics adds to the importance of understanding the cultural perspectives from which families choose to participate or not and the traditional forms of viewing participation through which involvement organizations promote participation. As noted in Peña (2000), ignoring family needs, such as limited English proficiency, has the potential to send negative messages about family culture, which could affect involvement. Examining practices that could unintentionally send negative messages about culture are important to build a bridge between home and school.

Today's schools consist of more ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse students (Allison & Rehm, 2007) and the numbers are projected to rise. Due to the growing number of multilingual students, the need for teachers to become knowledgeable about the cultural backgrounds of their students and families and recognizing the abilities and skills of students who speak a language other than English is vital (Carbo, 1995). Teacher expectation and opinions about involvement can influence families' participation in educational organizations (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Pratt-Johnson (2006) posits that instructors must understand that by living in a global society, they must teach and work with students who have very different ethnicities and beliefs than their own. By working with students and acknowledging the differences, educators are in a position to build relationships (Pratt-Johnson, 2006). Moreover, by being more cognizant of culture, familial background, and other contributions help educators build a stronger bond between home and school (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Gregg, Rugg, & Stoneman, 2011). All families, regardless of

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culture, should be afforded the same opportunity to partake in involvement opportunities at the school as families from the dominant culture (Daniel-White, 2002). Family involvement organizations present a platform for teachers to increase their cultural competence through the experiences that they share with the families of their students within these organizations. Unfortunately, without understanding how school personnel view involvement could make organizations ill-equipped to reach out to families from the non-dominant culture. The proposed examination of educator perspectives about family involvement in the context of a PAT structure presents a suitable manner in which to explore divergent perspectives with the hopes of building equitable partnerships.

Involvement Frameworks

Involvement models provide frameworks to aid educational organizations in their efforts to influence involvement (Epstein, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Epstein's model (2002) proposes that educational organizations assist families with parenting skills and through these involvement models, a gained understanding of families' backgrounds, culture, and goals for children could be achieved. The model suggests reciprocal communication between school and home and encourages teachers to design homework that inspires students to share and discuss interesting tasks. Moreover, Epstein (2002) recommends the empowerment of families in decision-making through involvement in improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations. Sample practices and expected results are outlined focusing on promoting participation through six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2002).

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While Epstein's model (2002) provides a framework for involvement around the six types of involvement, the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1997) focuses on parents' motivations for involvement and provides a framework around the reasons why families become involved and what they do when they are involved. Moreover, the model attempts to identify the student behaviors that lead to achievement and discusses the influence of a family's view of their role in involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The ability of the family to help their children with coursework also influences a family's involvement in the child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The varying perspectives govern how schools promote involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1997) and could potentially prevent involvement if the family does not share the same perception of involvement. Examining how those responsible for promoting involvement view involvement is crucial in efforts to garner support from families.

Finally, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) understand that schools suffer from ineffective family school partnerships and have created a dual capacity-building framework that attempts to find a solution and address this challenge. Their framework encompasses goals and conditions necessary to effectively engage families in an effort to influence student achievement and school improvement (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). The principle behind the framework is to build and enhance the capacity of educators, recognize a family's funds of knowledge and connect family involvement to student learning (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Utilizing the funds of knowledge presents an opportunity for teachers to encourage involvement by gaining knowledge of a family's culture, familial background and other contributions that aid in a child's education and use those to

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enhance student learning (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011). Deliberately seeking that knowledge has the potential to influence the shared respect and trust that families and teachers grow over time with partnerships (Gonzalez et al., 2005). For family and school partnerships to prosper, the adults charged with a child's academic development must learn and grow, as they aid students in their learning and development (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Ferlazzo (2011) proposes engagement where families become partners with the school, listening to their thoughts, dreams, and worries, while Redding et al., (2004) recommend fostering relationships of trust and respect. Building effective relationships is important since these connections may lead to increases of participation (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Criticism. Although the involvement models attempt to guide educational organizations in structuring their involvement opportunities (Epstein, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) and building capacity among educators and families (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013), the models lack a clear definition of involvement and the designs lack specificity for the different needs of a K-8 school and a high school. Family involvement is most notable in elementary school and few families persist as active partners during middle and high school years unless schools make special efforts to continue the relationship (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2011) describe involvement as a family's contribution of a myriad of resources in their children's education while others view it as participating in prescribed activities organized by the school (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jeynes, 2012). The ambiguity in the definition and grade level perpetuates the challenges that involvement organizations face when attempting to garner support for involvement

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opportunities. Organizations may potentially create opportunities for involvement that are not in keeping with distinctive grade levels, unique family structures, or community intricacies in which the schools reside. In a study conducted by Williams and Sanchez (2012) at a predominantly African American high school, the researchers found that although existing models of family involvement are suitable for understanding family involvement, no single model encompasses the meaning of family involvement for diverse settings.

To tackle the issue of grade levels, Henderson and Mapp (2002) have outlined specific types of involvement including proposed suggestions for the involvement at the eighth and twelfth grade levels but the recommendations are based on a definition that includes attending school events, attending parent-teacher conferences, and volunteering at schools. Unfortunately, if families do not participate in this manner, schools could inadvertently exclude these families from involvement. Since participation in involvement organizations is advantageous regardless of student age (Cox, 2005; Henderson & Mapp, 2002), exploring varying involvement perspectives is essential in order to build understanding of the many facets of family involvement for school personnel.

Finally, while the involvement discussion implies relationships consisting of two-way communication about children's academic necessities, joint problem solving, and decision making (Reschly & Christenson, 2012), other important factors influence the development and sustainment of these partnerships. Fantuzzo, Tighe and Childs (2000) affirm the necessity of collective goals, contributions and responsibility while Christenson and Sheridan (2001) emphasize the quality of these partnerships between

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families and schools as they work to impact student learning. Unfortunately, the quality of partnerships relies on the assumption that educators and families possess the necessary skills, information, confidence, and values to create and sustain these relationships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Therefore, the underlying issue is attaining the expertise needed to create the congruency between the team members and generate quality interactions among the collaborators (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Funds of Knowledge

Congruency is difficult when educators operate from a deficit thinking approach (Nelson & Guerra, 2010). Deficit thinking implies that students, predominantly of low-SES background and of color, do not achieve due to deficiencies that impede learning (Valencia & Black, 2002). Kinney (2015) describes it as a culture of poverty approach that faults the poor and their life choices for supposed inadequacies. This line of thinking reinforces a view of reliance on school goals due to families' need of support (Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander & Hernandez 2013; Payne, 2003). This viewpoint ignores the manner in which schools and politics have been designed that inhibit students from learning (Hill, 2009; Valencia & Black, 2002). Deficit thinking stems from the belief that Hispanics and African American families do not value education (Valencia & Black, 2002). A study conducted by Laosa and Henderson (1991), contradicted the myth about minority families and their value on education. Personal accountings from families affirmed that the families valued education and engaged in involvement within the home to promote student success (Laosa & Henderson, 1991).

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Kainz and Aikens (2007) declare that educational policies have always regulated home-school relationships through a perspective based on middle-class values. Historically, minority families have been identified as families in need of remediation as demonstrated by programs under the Title I Statute. Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander and Hernandez (2013) posit that this line of thinking presents families as failing at their obligation to educate their children as opposed to holding a shared responsibility and partnership with the school in the education of their children. Practices that are aligned to middle-class agendas benefit middle-class families (Lareau, 2000) and ignore the needs of immigrant families (Gandara et al., 2010) fail to promote equitable partnerships (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013). A look at involvement organizations and their practices presents an opportunity for examination of school-centric agendas. Ignoring practices that promote middle-class values forces families into home-school models that push the assimilation of families into the structure and culture of schools (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013). Exploring the viewpoints within a school's involvement organization creates the opportunity for discussion about practices used to promote involvement that may only benefit middle-class families.

Viewing families as a resource to learning or funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) as opposed to failing to educate their children (Baquedano-Lopez, et al., 2013) could enhance partnerships with families (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Moll and Gonzalez (1994) define funds of knowledge (FOK) as the bodies of knowledge and skills necessary for living within a particular culture. The authors suggest that teachers can activate that knowledge to aid students in classroom learning. The FOK approach was a result of two studies conducted in San Diego, one of which used classroom observations

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and videotapes of lessons to analyze the social organization of bilingual education and the other which involved home visits to inform classroom instruction (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). The first study was conducted due to teaching practices that did not capitalize on students' Spanish-language abilities. The researchers used teachers in the study to change the traditional ways of approaching reading comprehension, providing support in English only, to developing reading comprehension while providing support in both languages (Moll & Diaz, 1987). The second study focused on writing in English for English language learners and included home observations and interviews to document family literacy. The new approach in this study required teachers to create opportunities for the students to talk about what they wrote, while generating more writing by the students and more teaching opportunities (Moll & Diaz, 1987). Both studies were instrumental in the development of the first FOK study (Gonzalez & Moll, 1988) which included teachers as ethnographers, involved home observations, an after-school study group and classroom work where teachers used a family's knowledge as ways to shape classroom instruction. The study gave meaning to cultural practices that shape a student's experiences and ultimately shape learning (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). The FOK approach was developed to challenge deficit approaches to instruction (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

Funds of knowledge view culture and language as benefits to learning and education (Kinney, 2015). Gutierrez (2008) posits that teaching is not merely making connections among home and classroom learning but rather creating new opportunities that produce a space for using both. In analyzing both, Paris (2012) pushes the need for pedagogies to move away from simply recognizing cultural experiences and practices but

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rather "support[ing] young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95). Helping students become competent in both rather than using one to diminish the other, calls for policy that allows students to keep their heritage while succeeding in educational organizations. Exploring how school personnel create the cultural opportunities that generate these opportunities for students is crucial in the desire to create equitable partnerships.

Using an FOK approach, Kinney (2015) found that students' homes possess extensive resources, talents, information, and assets that are valuable and negate conversations about deficits. Relationships that derive from the home among the individuals within that social structure tend to rely on trust and are richer in structure (Kinney, 2015), relationships in the classroom are more limited due to teachers' lack of awareness of the resources that students possess as a result of their everyday lives (Moll et al., 1992). Kinney's (2015) challenged the perceptions that culturally and linguistically diverse learners are less capable and in need of remediation.

Through an FOK approach, teachers have the ability to rethink students' language and culture as assets rather than issues to be remedied and use them to advance student learning (Moll & Diaz, 1987). The approach relies on teacher-student relationships that are dynamic (Moll et al., 1992) and the understanding that people are capable, have knowledge and their life experiences have contributed to that knowledge (Kinney, 2015). Moreover, through an FOK approach, the teacher is able to see students' social worlds as positive and consider methods to use them to enhance academic learning (Kinney, 2015). Understanding school personnel's perspectives of involvement that encroach on this

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approach are vital in strides to encourage more families to participate in involvement groups.

Involvement Organizations

As previously mentioned, although there are benefits to family involvement (Coleman & McNeese, 2009; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010), challenges to effectively engage family members exist. The difficulties in empowering families to participate lie in promoting involvement by creating activities that are inclusive of all families (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002) and move away from traditional approaches that are not likely to greatly impact student achievement (Jones, 2001). Identifying what involvement encompasses and how major stakeholders interpret participation (Bakker & Denessen, 2007) is vital since perceptions govern participation too. As schools become more diverse and family structures demonstrate that diversity, educational organizations will have to contend with varying perceptions of involvement (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002) and provide school personnel with the opportunities for understanding varying perspectives (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Involvement organizations, such as PATs, are a familiar presence in many schools. Unfortunately, although parent-teacher organizations involve families and school personnel to advance student well-being (Cheung, 2009), and students are more likely to respond and do well when families are involved (Khaejehpour, 2011), a lack of clarity for how to organize families and teachers to participate may make efforts within these groups to advance student well-being futile. Miretzky (2004) posits that traditional efforts such as sending more newsletters or providing resources for homework help aid in creating

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more interaction with families but these interactions maintain families as outsiders of the school. Continuing traditional forms of involvement prompt interactions that continue an imbalanced relationship (Miretzky, 2004) and are ineffective in creating equitable partnerships (Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011). The need for family involvement organizations to organize and engage all families in a partnership with the school is vital to student success (Glueck & Reschly, 2014).

To address promotion of traditional school involvement, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) propose that the most important invitations to involvement come from the school in general, teachers, and students. Teachers are instrumental in the attraction of families and community sponsors towards proper schooling and education (Aslandogan & Cetin, 2007; Caspe, 2003) and family groups and teachers dispense positive outcomes for everyone in school regardless of a family's educational or income levels (Sil, 2007). Since schools have the responsibility for creating partnerships (Simon, 2001), exploring teachers' perspective about involvement and garnering their membership and support in involvement groups are crucial in the quest to create these partnerships with families.

Although family groups and teachers yield positive outcomes for everyone in school, it is important to note that disparities in academic success can also be associated with disparate levels of social capital (Acar, 2011) and the issue of social capital must be given consideration. Positive social capital allows families to partake in discussions about student achievement yet negative social capital diminishes the ability of families to draw upon resources to further student learning (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Noguera, 2011). Regardless of the disparate opinion on educational and income levels or positive and negative social capital, the overarching principle found among the literature is that

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positive relationships among family groups and teachers positively influence student achievement (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Caplan, 2000; Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011; Redding et al., 2004).

The positive relationships between families and teachers strengthen values and norms that positively influence student achievement and these relationships promote social success (Coleman, 1998). Noguera (2003) posits that partnerships between families and schools can be weak or nonexistent because racial and class differences contribute to lack of trust (Noguera 2003). Moreover, traditionally defined school involvement often feels disingenuous (Hill & Torres, 2010). Therefore, building equitable partnerships relies on removing hegemonic views of involvement. Hegemony can occur when an organization represents its particular demands as common and thereby employs rational and proper direction sanctioning certain conceptual customs and beliefs (Klimecki & Willmott, 2011). When cultural differences and beliefs influence how families participate in involvement opportunities (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001), traditional forms of involvement may inhibit involvement from individuals whose cultural capital does not match the capital valued by the schools (Lareau, 2011; Reay, 1998). When involvement opportunities are created using one interpretation of involvement, the non-dominant group could be at a disadvantage due to a divergent interpretation of involvement. Efforts to continue to define involvement through traditional methods impede successful and effective relationship building (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). To move from family involvement to engagement, schools should adopt a more comprehensive view of family encompassing various interpretations of how families are involved (Baker, Wise, Kelley & Skiba, 2016). Miretzky (2004) recommends that educators set aside

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traditional ideas of authority and rethink their own roles. Exploring perspectives about involvement could help to understand the traditional approaches in place with which organizations promote involvement.

Family partnerships. In order to collaborate and work together as a team, both families and teachers must be involved in discussions about student achievement and academic well-being (Sheridan, Eagle, & Doll, 2006) thus moving away from a school-centric focus and toward the development of a joint connection among schools, families and community members (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). The creation of school-family partnerships is ineffective if the focus is on families and schools as separate entities rather than as central components of the learning environment (Christenson, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Supporting students through collaborative relationships among families and schools is effective (Christenson, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002) and seeing family members as equal partners in the success of students (Caplan, 2000; Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009) is vital in establishing collaborative partnerships. The underlying question is how do these partnerships see fruition without establishing a clear understanding of what the involvement partnership entails or resembles? Moreover, how do educators do this without first examining their own perceptions of involvement and acknowledged of the inherent culturally based contentions with which schools function?

Daniel's (2011) assertion that increasing an understanding of effective and viable family-school partnership practices that allow the involvement and participation of families from all backgrounds in the school is vital supports Baker, Wise, Kelley and Skiba's (2016) recommendation for moving from involvement towards family engagement. Although the benefits of effective partnerships are well recorded across all

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grade levels of schooling, the practices are not ubiquitous (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Traditional practices that focus on school-centric approaches, promoting support from families to school, lack the necessary engagement needed to create partnerships and potentially contribute to barriers to involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2012). Involvement efforts sometimes promote engagement from families to meet the school's needs (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002) rather than creating partnerships to promote academic achievement (Caplan, 2000). Moreover, the issue of teacher training in working with families is important (Miretzky, 2004). A study conducted by Miretzky (2004) confirmed that although families and teachers would like to partake in opportunities for establishing connections and relationships, they are at a loss for how to cultivate these relationships. Hill and Torres (2010) declare that if a shared responsibility between families and schools is the focus, then removing the contradicting expectations between families and schools is required. Hill (2009) posits that the first step to building fruitful family-school relationships is for schools to reflect upon their own cultural biases and assumptions. Understanding involvement perspectives within the context of a PAT structure and the involvement opportunities that are generated by the group are important in order to have discussions about the resources needed to foster relationships with families.

Connecting the Dots

Family involvement is crucial in increasing student achievement (Coleman & McNeese, 2009; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Jeynes, 2007; Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010). Yet, difficulties exist when organizations attempt to create activities that do not encompass varying perspectives of involvement

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(Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). Moreover, organizations recognize that involvement requires collaboration (Caplan, 2000) but the collaboration relies on promoting regular exchanges of information where individuals are equals (Cox, 2005; Daniel, 2011; Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009). The exchange of information must be in a language that all parties understand (Baker, Wise, Kelly & Skiba, 2016; Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Smith et al., 2008) and where the focus is on the best interest of the students (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002; Peña, 2000; Williams & Sanchez, 2012). The dissonance among the varying perspectives of involvement influences the manner in which involvement is promoted (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002).

Efforts to increase involvement could be affected when divergent views about involvement activities exist (Daniel, 2011; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002; Williams & Sanchez, 2012). In order to establish equity, all families should be provided the same opportunity to participate at the school (Daniel-White, 2002; Sil, 2007). Building equity requires school personnel to attain cultural competence (Baker, Wise, Kelly & Skiba, 2016; Carbo, 1995) in an effort to build quality relationships that encompass collaboration and trust (Caplan, 2000; Cox, 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Izzo et al., 1999). Building trust is impeded by insensitivity to racial, class and cultural differences (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Noguera 2003; Peña, 2000). Therefore, methods of participation ought to be in congruence with a family's perspective of involvement (Crawford & Zygouris-Code, 2006; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Understanding these perspectives requires an exploration of assumptions held by school personnel (Hill & Torres, 2001).

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Finally, involvement frameworks present pertinent information to guide organizations in the quest of influencing involvement (Epstein, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Organizations should examine the population of students that they are serving (Peña, 2000; Williams & Sanchez, 2012) and assess whether the activities proposed in the models are in keeping with the needs of the school's population. Encouraging teacher to acknowledge a family's funds of knowledge helps to garner trust among home and school (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Moreover, building capacity among school personnel and families, where a focus on strengthening partnerships to aid students in their academic careers, is fostered (Caplan, 2000; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). Utilizing a funds of knowledge approach to strengthen those partnerships is helpful since a partnership created on the supposition that one party is the problem is destined to fail (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Need for Further Research

Although research exists about the definitions of involvement and the potential impediments to involvement, there is a gap in the literature concerning how family and teacher organizations actually promote family involvement and how teachers are included or excluded from involvement organizations. Moreover, an analysis of the literature identifies traditional school-centered definitions of family involvement that govern teacher assumptions about a family's level of involvement. In addition, the literature also identifies teacher perceptions about a family's role in student achievement that could potentially impact the types of involvement opportunities that the teacher initiates. Subsequently, the focus of this study, understanding perspectives on school family

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involvement within the context of a PAT structure, could contribute to school policy, practice and research for school involvement organizations in pursuits of cultivating successful partnerships. Jordan, Orozco and Averett (2002) propose a movement away from traditional approaches to involvement and towards a shared relationship among schools and families that are advantageous and encompass the joint vision of all stakeholders. In this study, looking at the organization through the lenses of the key players will help to explain how the organization views involvement and how communication with families and teachers is conducted. Moreover, examining the opportunities for involvement of culturally diverse families will help in dialogues about how to create an involvement organization that is a reflection of the school community. This study has the potential to aid the organization in taking a more profound look at how the school might employ relationship building and the formation of viable partnerships to increase involvement.

Henderson and Mapp (2007) describe family involvement groups as groups that rarely deviate from traditional and activity-based models of parental involvement**.** Thus, they recommended using an approach that attempts to build relationships among families as a basis for a community-based relational approach to family engagement (Henderson & Mapp, 2007). Reynolds, Crea, Medina, Degnan and Mcroy (2015) and Simon (2001) recommend that school administrators consider employing specific invitations due to its effectiveness for increasing family involvement. The issue of communication between involvement groups and families is pivotal for the accomplishment of collaboration between school and home (Glueck & Reschly, 2014). Tan and Goldberg (2009) declare that children's success or failure in school does not occur within a vacuum. In order to

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positively affect student achievement, the need exists to promote familial involvement by any means readily available such as, but not limited to, parent and teacher organizations. Kinney (2015) recommends that scholars look at differences as cultural practices in which individuals partake with other individuals in ever-changing cultural communities.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand, through a social capital and funds of knowledge lens, how educators viewed and promoted involvement within the context of a school's PAT. Social capital theory is an orientation that involves understanding the social systems that exists that add to the cultural inequalities of student achievement. A funds of knowledge approach places value on the resources embedded in students and families thereby defying deficit viewpoints (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011). Green (2017) posits that the role of school personnel is to work with students and families to transform inequitable community and school conditions. Moreover, Caplan (2000) declares that partnerships are the mutual responsibility of schools and families. Both of these assertions support social capital theory and a funds of knowledge approach to explore involvement definitions and perspectives that could potentially inhibit the formation of equitable partnerships.

An analysis encompassing Epstein's model (2002) of involvement was conducted to better understand the manners in which the school and teachers promoted involvement. Epstein (2002) proposes that an understanding of a family's background, culture, and goals for children are essential. The model proposes that teachers design homework that enables students to dialogue with family members. Finally, Epstein (2002) encourages the inclusion of families as participants in family organizations. Further inquiry about the objectives and how the organization includes teachers to meet those objectives will be explored to better understand The analysis will aid the organization in understanding how PAT was used as a forum to engage families in involvement, how teachers promoted

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involvement and an understanding about the activities with which teachers attempted to include families.

The research questions that guided this study were grounded in the concept of social capital and a "funds of knowledge" approach. Social capital theory supports the exploration of hegemonic views that may exist within the family involvement group and how these views could perhaps contribute to involvement opportunities. The study sought to examine the opportunities for cultural activities that the organization arranges to promote involvement from culturally diverse members of the community. Moreover, the study sought an explanation as to why participation at PAT events was so low. The research questions were deeply rooted in exploring the perspectives of the individuals who were responsible for promoting involvement and an examination of the activities that promote exchanges of cultural experiences in the classroom. Specifically, a "funds of knowledge" approach was used based on Zipin's (2009) assertion that making changes in the types of knowledge that have value is achieved when funds of knowledge are effectively merged into classrooms. A "funds of knowledge approach" was appropriate due to the belief that the ability to tap into the wealth of knowledge of under-represented families could help teachers link school curriculum to students' lives (Basu & Calabrese Barton, 2007; Mercado, 2005) and help in the formation of equitable partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Social capital and funds of knowledge were appropriate in the quest to understanding the processes through which educational organizations govern involvement opportunities in the hopes of promoting student achievement equitably.

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Research Questions

The research questions were:

1) How do stakeholders in a high school PAT define involvement?

2) How do teachers explain their role in the school community's PAT?

3) How do stakeholders promote involvement to encourage participation of culturally diverse members of the school community?

This chapter provides an overview of the qualitative case study approach to data collection that I used to guide my study. The overview will include a description of the qualitative instruments that I used to collect data.

Assumptions and Rationale for Qualitative Research

A qualitative methods approach seeks explanation by employing a process theory, seeing the world in terms of individuals, circumstances, events, and the procedures that connect all (Maxwell, 2011). Qualitative research relies on a process orientation toward the world and focuses on situations, individuals, and descriptions rather than numbers as in quantitative research (Maxwell, 2013). Employing a qualitative approach allows the researcher to comprehend the meaning, for the participants in the study, of the events, circumstances, experiences, and activities in which they participate (Maxwell, 2013) as they are lived and experienced.

A case study is the study of the singularity and intricacies of a single case, coming to understand the activity within environments (Stake, 1995). Wishing to explore a case, the researcher has the genuine interest in learning how the individuals function in their routine business (Stake, 1995). The case study approach allows for a complete understanding of a case within everyday contexts from the perspectives of the individuals

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involved in the case (Stake, 1995). Moreover, Stake (1995) states that reality is subjective, a result of perspective, contributing to the importance of exploring perspectives of involvement that may shape family involvement opportunities. Finally, a case study approach looks for happenings rather causes where the goal is understanding through interpretation (Stake, 1995).

In order to understand how the PAT organization viewed involvement and how PAT encouraged involvement from teachers and culturally diverse members of the community, I employed a qualitative case study approach. Weiss (1994) explains that a qualitative approach aids in understanding the contexts within which the participants function and the influence that this context has on their actions. A qualitative approach aided in understanding the manner by which events and actions take place (Weiss, 1994) and the findings could serve to "improve practice by enhancing understanding of that practice" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 19). Specifically, qualitative case study research is an exploration and investigation of a collective case, aimed to capture the complexity of the object of study (Stake, 1995).

This study sought to examine how the organization defined and promoted involvement that encouraged participation from culturally diverse members of the community and how the organization involved teachers in the execution of involvement opportunities. The study sought to analyze membership in a family involvement group to identify practices that may have been inclusive or exclusionary, thereby affecting involvement in the PAT organization. Exploring the school's administration, the PAT's executive board, the faculty liaison and the teachers view of involvement, could help the organization understand the opportunities that the organization uses to promote

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involvement and how stakeholders acknowledge or ignore inherit culturally based contentions with which schools function (Hill, 2009). The exploration could be the catalyst for starting dialogues about the inclusion of teachers and culturally diverse family members. Moreover, the study has the potential to aid the organization in discussing efforts to garner more support for the PAT organization from current and potential members.

The proposed study has the potential to serve as a lens to further understand PAT and the involvement opportunities that the organization promotes. The uses of the study could contribute to an instrumental use, where the knowledge is applied to specific problems and where recommendations for specific problems are made (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). In addition, the study has the potential to enlighten the participants by contributing to general knowledge and enhancing the understanding (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) of teacher involvement in PAT. Moreover, the research has the potential to be used symbolically. Rossman and Rallis (2012) describe symbolic use as building explanations, making difficult to understand experiences and beliefs understandable for others. Finally, the research has the potential to be emancipatory. Rossman and Rallis (2012) describe emancipatory use as the process of not simply generating knowledge to inform but to collaborate and produce knowledge to improve the work and lives of the participants. The study focused on the specific individuals since they were the ones responsible for encouraging and facilitating participation from family members.

Qualitative Data

Using a qualitative inquiry to explore how educators viewed and promoted involvement within the context of a school's PAT required me to seek the participation of

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select key players within the organization that could speak about the communication and the objectives. Neuman (2014) suggests that qualitative research is about depth rather than breadth, and that researchers draw upon this method to develop an understanding as it is experienced. A qualitative approach allowed me to transform the data obtained into information that could be used (Rossman & Rallis, 2012) to understand involvement within the context of the PAT. Maxwell (2013) posits that in qualitative studies the major part of what the researcher wants to understand is the meanings and beliefs of the participants. A researcher is interested in the physical events, the behavior that takes place, how the participants make sense of these and how their understanding influences their behavior (Maxwell, 2013). Specifically, an instrumental case study approach in qualitative research is described as one that provides insight into an issue (Stake, 1995). The instrumental case study approach was appropriate in the quest to obtain information about the PAT from the viewpoints of the key players as they discussed involvement and membership from their perspectives. Moreover, the approach allowed exploration and explanation of the practices that were used to encourage involvement from teachers and culturally diverse families. The scope of this study was limited to the analysis of involvement perspectives of the administrative team, PAT board members, and teachers in an effort to understand the viewpoints and the activities with which the organization recruited members, promoted involvement, and included culturally diverse family members.

The analysis could aid the organization in identifying areas where their understanding can be used to enhance the manner in which families are recruited and support for PAT is garnered. Moreover, the analysis could aid the organization in

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understanding their practices to include culturally diverse families. With that understanding, I am hopeful that the administration could begin efforts to cultivate relationships with families by using the PAT organization and its teacher members.

Context for the Study

Setting

All interviews, observations, and artifact collection took place at a suburban New Jersey high school. The school's current population is 2,121 students and approximately 150 classroom teachers. The school serves students from six neighboring townships within the high school district. The demographics of each school differ, as do the intricacies of the family involvement group.

Similar to Epstein's model (2002), the organization asserted their objectives to be to help parents and teachers acquire a profound appreciation of the ideas of education. PAT further asserted to promote a clearer understanding of the mutual education responsibilities of parents and teachers. Moreover, the organization declared to study the neighborhood's environmental conditions that influence children's behavior. Finally, PAT stated that the organization helps parents reach an agreement on the best solutions to children's common behavioral problems.

The school's PAT included five executive board members: president, vice president, recording and corresponding secretaries and treasurer. The school's administrative team included the principal and three assistant principals. The school's administrative team took turns in attending meetings and ensured that there was one representative of the administration at every meeting. A school's guidance counselor served as the faculty liaison and teachers and families were recruited through a

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membership form that was distributed at the beginning of every school year. Teachers and families were encouraged to become members, attend meetings, and participate in events sponsored by the PAT organization.

PAT did not make any distinction in initial recruitment efforts for families and teachers. The organization invited teachers and families to participate by issuing the same membership form at the beginning of every school year. While the families received the membership form along with pertinent school documents, the teachers received the membership form within their new school year folder.

The PAT had a link on the school's website that directed members to the PAT homepage. The homepage began with a welcome statement and the organization's objectives. The page announced the meeting time and place of the organization. The message directed members to the calendar for dates indicating that they were held on the second Tuesday of every month. A link to the membership form appeared on the homepage along with an announcement about the need for volunteers and an invitation for all parents and teachers to attend meetings and functions.

The school's PAT advertised four events and volunteer opportunities on their membership form: teacher appreciation event, snack shack (football season), gift auction committee, and the gift auction donation. The membership form did not indicate if these opportunities were strictly for families or teachers. There were other events that the PAT took an active role in supporting, funding, and participating, such as the school's freshmen orientation day where the PAT donates t-shirts to the upcoming freshman class and the teacher appreciation breakfast in May. In addition, PAT formed a committee at the end of the academic school year that was responsible for awarding scholarships to

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selected members of the graduating class. Finally, the PAT had been responsible for donating resources to the school such as, but not limited to, a filtered water system for the teachers' lounge.

I have been a member of the faculty at the research site for 11 years. As a member of the faculty, I have seen the district adopt a new strategic plan when the former superintendent was replaced. The strategic plan was adopted in the 2011-2012 school year and the plan addresses the district's vision on student performance and staff accountability. Furthermore, the plan demonstrates the district's desire to strictly adhere to state policies without sacrificing student achievement. The school was chosen as the research site for their belief that relationship building is crucial in education. In addition, the district's vision towards innovation and their high priority on student performance and staff accountability supports the examination of the resources that the school already possesses to support student achievement. The importance of the study for the school stems from preliminary qualitative data collection that uncovered that teacher attendance at PAT meetings and functions was low. The research gathered could equip the district in understanding current involvement organizations that could aid them in further achieving their goal of promoting significant partnerships with near and far communities in an effort to provide opportunities for participation, learning and exploration of career options for students.

Participants

Purposeful sampling is described by Patton (2002) as a sampling approach that is used to obtain the greatest amount of information for the most effective use of limited resources. In the proposed study, I sought participation from the individuals who were

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rich in information as it pertained to the PAT organization (Patton, 2002) due to their specified roles in PAT or their potential of serving as members of the PAT. The study sought to explain perspectives about involvement from school administration, PAT board members, the faculty liaison, and teachers in an effort to understand the activities with which the stakeholders promote involvement. The sampling included members and potential members of the PAT organization. The only criterion was that the participants were members of the PAT's executive board, the administration at the high school and/or a teacher in the school since the study could not accommodate the resources needed to include all members of the school community at this time. In the study, I requested the participation of:

1) all five PAT board members

2) the faculty liaison

3) the school principal

4) the three vice principals tasked with attending PAT meetings

5) ten teachers (members and non-members) of the PAT.

I invited the twenty stakeholders to participate in the study in order to explore their viewpoints to better understand involvement opportunities within this high school. Although all five PAT board members were asked, only four participated in the study. For the 2017-2018 academic school year, the faculty liaison served as vice president of the board as no one wanted to fill the position. All administrators participated and due to my desire to interview twenty participants, I asked twelve teachers rather than ten. The examination included multiple methods of data collection.

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Email

I used e-mail to find out who of the administration and PAT board wanted to participate in the study. To invite teachers, reached out to at least two teacher members of each department at the high school and attained twelve participants from different departments. My hope was to gain acceptance from one person from each department that was willing to participate. One department had more than one member. My thought behind this desire was geared towards the conversations about classroom opportunities that were cultural in nature. I hoped to explore perspectives about involvement and classroom activities from each department.

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Qualitative Data Collection

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In this section, I will discuss the data collection process that will occur in the study. The study included data collection in the form of observations, interviews, and material culture. A researcher journal was also used to further explain data collection choices, observations and reflective thoughts (Stake, 2010). Rossman and Rallis (2012) compare gathering data to a loop where the researcher "records, reflects, records, and reflects again" (p. 174). Stake (1995) describes data collection and analysis methods as serving to further develop and understand the case, shaped by background and emergent data. Stake (1995) recommends redefining issues and gathering additional data that I did as I observed, interviewed and gathered material culture. The iterative process helped me avoid personal assumptions from clouding the data collection and data analysis and helped in triangulating my data.

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Observations

       Observations are an essential method of acquiring information in qualitative

studies (Patton, 2002). Observations helped in obtaining a greater understanding of the

case (Stake, 1995). I used observations of PAT functions and meetings to describe

"settings, behavior, and events" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 102). The observations took place at

PAT meetings, PAT functions, such as freshman orientation day and the new school year

faculty meeting. The specific functions were selected due to the organization's omission

of these specific events on the organization's membership form. The observations were

used to gather information about how PAT board members recruited teacher members

and how the board members interacted with teacher members. I sought information

regarding the amount of teacher members who attended PAT functions, the manner in

which the executive board interacted with family and teacher members, how teacher

members interacted with families, and the conversations that took place during these

events. I specifically listened for conversations about cultural events that the group

sought to organize. In addition to gathering information about recruitment and

interaction, I used these observations as a way to enhance the questions that were used to

interview teacher members.

       During these observations, I used a simple observation protocol (Appendix A)

that I developed to aid me in "recording information while observing" (Creswell, 2014, p.

193) and to create field notes of my observations to be used as a data source. Maxwell

(2013) affirms that observation can enable the researcher to draw inferences about

perspectives that only relying on interview data could miss. I used the protocol to keep

me focused and to provide "a relatively incontestable description for further analysis and

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ultimate reporting" (Stake, 1995, p. 62). The protocol consisted of questions that guided me in observing and gathering descriptive notes about the physical setting of the event, what agenda items were discussed at meetings, and who attended the meetings. I hoped to describe the events with great detail in an effort to "develop vicarious experiences for the reader" (Stake, 1995, p. 63). Within the document, I allowed room to record reflective notes about my own personal thoughts about what I observed. I paid close attention to the manner in which participants interacted with each other and my impressions about the event. I searched for culturally specific activities in which PAT engaged, discussed or planned during these events. I made sure to separate my descriptions from my reflections. The field notes collected were transcribed and reviewed for content to aid in developing interview questions and to further understand PAT as an involvement organization in the school.

The observations were conducted at four of the PAT meetings conducted from September to December. Each PAT meeting lasted approximately an hour. Moreover, I observed the PAT at the freshmen orientation day as well as their involvement at the first faculty meeting of the school year to gather field notes. I made clear that the purpose of these observations is to gather information and not make judgments (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to observations, I conducted face-to-face interviews with all twenty participants. Seidman (2006) describes the purpose of interviewing as to understand the "lived experience of the other person and how they make meaning of that experience" (p. 9). Stake (1995) suggests that the main uses of case studies are to obtain the descriptions

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and interpretations of others and that the interview facilitates the quest to understand those perceptions. The interviews were conducted to explore how participants viewed and promoted involvement. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest that often having conversations with those involved in a program can defy established assumptions and have the ability to reform ineffective public policies. Interviewing key players in the PAT organization allowed me to obtain data that helped to explain the organization's perceptions about involvement and the practices that the group routinely used to promote involvement. Rubin and Rubin (2012) posit that interviewing is important when the practices under study are almost inconspicuous. Stake (1995) describes interviewees as individuals with distinctive experiences and unique stories to tell.

Following suggestions by Rossman and Rallis (2012) about the phases of an interview, I began my interview with a statement of the overview and purpose of the interview at which time I established informed consent and the acknowledgement of the use of a recording device. During the interview, I explored topics for examination that included the individual's perspective of involvement, how they described their role in the promotion of involvement, and the activities with which the individual facilitates involvement. During the interview, I asked for elaboration on unclear statements and actively listened and summarized my understandings to ensure that I fully captured what was said. Although I planned to transcribe the interviews, I listened to the interviewee, took a few notes, and asked for clarification during the interview (Stake, 1995). At the conclusion of the interview, I thanked my participant, asked for permission to make further contact should I have required elaboration, and informed the participant about the

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review and transcription process and sharing. I also informed the participant what my next steps in the research would be.

I used an interview protocol (Appendix B) to guide the interview process. The primary questions asked key players how they defined involvement to gain their perspective about family involvement groups and opportunities for involvement. Moreover, interviews were conducted with key players to ascertain what forms of involvement were currently promoted by the PAT organization and what activities were designed to promote involvement from teachers and culturally diverse members. In addition, teacher interviews were conducted to gain an understanding about how teachers viewed their role in promoting family involvement, their role in PAT, and to understand how they communicated with families throughout the school year. Moreover, the questions were framed to gain an understanding of the cultural opportunities that the individuals created to gain the participation of culturally diverse members.

Artifacts

Material culture were gathered and analyzed. Hodder (1994) suggests that material culture provides more insight into the world that is being studied and can be a window into the values and beliefs of an organization. Material culture has the potential of eliciting information and understanding of the means through which PAT recruits and maintains membership in the organization. Charmaz (2006) posits that documents can be used to polish ideas and Hodder (1994) adds that material culture corroborates or contradicts claims made by participants through analysis of other data. Stake (1995) suggests that documents can serve as insights to activities when the researcher could not observe directly.

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Data collected using material culture included the organization's goal and objective statements and the PAT website link provided on the school's website. Moreover, I analyzed the membership form that teachers and families received in the beginning of the year. I analyzed attendance sheets and meeting minutes to gather information about agenda topics and to examine who attends. In addition to the meeting minutes, I accessed correspondence between PAT and teachers in order to further understand what information the PAT shares with teachers.

Researcher Journal

Throughout every data collection opportunity, I used a research journal to document the steps taken to collect the data, to document any biases or assumptions that I may have had about the topics under exploration, and to record a personal reflection about every data collection opportunity. My journal housed personal reflections and insights as I sought, attained and analyzed data. I documented the purposes for reaching out to specific individuals and recorded follow up dates. In addition, I used the journal to keep track of emerging topics. I used the journal to document the reasons why I had taken specific courses of actions. Marshall and Rossman (1999) discuss the process of knowing yourself and being attuned with how one makes meaning. I used the journal as a type of diary to have a written conversation with myself about what I have uncovered and how it was useful in answering the research questions.

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Data Analysis

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Qualitative Data Analysis

Patton (2002) recommends rigorous techniques and methods for gathering data. I used different methods of acquiring data to ensure that I attained sufficient data to fully

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achieve an understanding of involvement perspectives. Stake (1995) affirms that researchers understand through direct interpretation of what has been observed or said by participants or through a combination of instances until something can be said about them as a group. After gathering data, careful analysis to ensure reliability, validity and triangulation are vital (Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995). To work towards triangulation in a case study, Stake (1995) recommends presenting an extensive uncontestable description so that anyone observing would have noticed everything described. Throughout the analytic process, ensuring that the case remains the same at different times, spaces or through the interaction of individuals (Stake, 1995) was vital therefore, I used different ways of checking for multiple perspectives as I analyzed my data. Stake (1995) posits that triangulation of a description and meaning of the phenomenon would generate similar detail by other individuals describing and interpreting the phenomenon. Looking for additional explanations rather than the confirmation of a single interpretation and using various forms of collecting data will helped me to achieve triangulation. I provided an audit trail where enough detail was given to allow others to judge the quality of the results (Patton, 2002).

Data Transcription

I recorded all interviews in order to facilitate word-for word transcription of the interview. I transcribed the interviews rather than relying on memory that could have biased the results (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I used the notes that I had taken during the interview to add to the transcription (Stake, 1995). The transcription took place immediately following the interview (Stake, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I took notes in order to help with the transcription process. Moreover, I followed Rubin and Rubin's

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(2012) suggestion of reviewing each interview before engaging in the next one in order to avoid missing opportunities for follow-up questions.

While transcribing, I included comments along with the text, in a different color and font, to ensure not confusing what the interviewee said with my personal thoughts. I engaged in member-checks, by sharing raw transcriptions (Stake, 1995), without notes and comments, with the interviewee to ascertain if the transcription was a correct representation of what was said. After the interviewee had agreed with the transcription, I will continue the analytic process. I created a memo file for every interview transcription with the participant's name, why I chose the interviewee and a summary highlighting the insights of the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For the data collected as a result of observations and material culture I transcribed the field notes, create a memo file, and reviewed my research journal. Reading through the transcripts and memo files helped me to take data apart, seeking to see the data separately and how they related to each other (Stake, 1995).

Patterns, Content Analysis and Naturalistic Generalizations

Fundamental meanings achieved through content analysis (Patton, 2002) are essential in qualitative research. Stake (1995) posits that a search for meaning is generally a search for patterns, for regularity within certain conditions. In a case study, the purpose is to try to understand behavior, issues, and contexts of a particular case and the review of data under various possible interpretations (Stake, 1995). Using Stake's (1995) recommendation, I reviewed data with the understanding that it might lead to gathering new data as I deliberately sought disconfirmation of findings. As data was compiled, I labeled events, examples, and concepts. I analyzed and synthesized in direct

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interpretation as I pulled data apart and put it back together (Stake, 1995). I sought connections among the different forms of data collected (Stake, 1995). Looking for straightforward and easy to identify cues such "PAT fundraiser" for an event or when an interviewee said "for example" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) helped me begin the process. Rubin and Rubin (2012) explain concepts as ideas that are "often expressed as a single noun, or noun phrase" (p. 193) such as "culture" or "low attendance." The importance of labeling these concepts was evident since they had the potential to "convey goals, values, perceptions, attitudes or represent strategies that frame action" (p. 194). I looked for incidents that confirmed and disconfirmed assertions to better understand PAT (Stake, 1995). As I engaged in this process, I was able to make connections among all data and to provide detailed information when I made assertions and helped me to make generalizations about PAT.

Stake (1995) declares that the purpose of case studies is to make the case understandable and to help individuals learn by receiving generalizations or making generalizations on their own. In my quest to make educator perspectives of family involvement within the context of a PAT structure understandable, I carefully provided enough detail about the collection and analysis of data and my own personal experiences that helped me make naturalistic generalizations about educators' family involvement perspectives. Stake (1995) describes naturalistic generalizations as "conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (p. 85). To provide a vicarious experience I relied on providing rich details as I collected, analyzed, and reported my findings.

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Inductive Analysis

To analyze observations and interviews, I wrote analytic memos. This process will allowed me to reflect upon the emergent patterns in my data (Saldaña, 2016). The memos included reflections, ideas and personal reactions from observations and interviews, in order to document and remember what transpired during an observation or interview that could potentially be forgotten if not recorded. Maxwell (2015) suggests that memos not only document your analytic thinking about data but also promote that thinking, stimulating analysis. This process allowed me to summarize patterns found in the data.

The memos began with my beliefs and assumptions about the PAT in order to explain my role as a researcher. Moreover, with interviews, I explained why I chose the individual and what my assumptions about his or her role in the organization might be. With observations, I explained what I discovered as a result of the observation. The memo continued with categories that surfaced from my analysis, narratives about what the interviewee said or conversations that took place at an event, and how these assertions might relate to other discoveries. Finally, the conclusion encompassed my preliminary thoughts about the data and how I planned to proceed as a result of the discoveries.

Coding the Data

Once the interviews had been transcribed, shared, and comments had been made in the transcripts, I engaged in a coding process to search for patterns and created categories in an effort to make connections among all data (Saldaña, 2016). Rubin and Rubin (2012) describe a code as a word or phrase that denotes what you think a statement signifies. Saldaña (2016) describes a code in qualitative inquiry as a word or phrase that

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symbolically assigns a code for a portion of language. Stake (1995) describes a code as classifying observations into preset categories. To begin the coding process, I used terms such as "attendance" or "role". Although these terms were general in the beginning, they still elicited pertinent information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data from interviews as well as observations and material culture also elicited information about roles and/or attendance.

During my first cycle coding process, I developed qualitative variables and categories as I coded the interviews individually. Stake (1995) describes coded data as data "obtained from categories dividing a variable" (p. 29). Using the aforementioned example, "role" as my qualitative variable, the categories were "family involvement" and "PAT" to categorize the different roles teachers had in relation to family involvement in general and in the PAT organization. In addition, I used process coding, which Saldaña (2016) describes as using gerunds to describe action in the data allowing for the observation of simple activities. Using process coding in my research allowed me to visualize the actions that the interviewees described to help me in identifying similar activities since interviewees used different gerunds to describe similar activities. For example, using the qualitative variable "role", I developed a process code such as "attending meetings" or "actively promoting involvement".

Stake (1995) posits that "all research is a search for patterns, for consistencies" (p. 44). Once data had been coded using process coding, pattern coding followed. Looking for patterns among the different forms of data. I sought connections between interviewees, material culture, and observations (Stake, 1995). I reviewed data obtained,

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gathered new data and drew tentative conclusions (Stake, 1995). I engaged in a cyclical process to purposely look for challenges to the findings (Saldaña, 2016; Stake, 1995).

By implementing pattern coding, I was able to create lists of similar assertions and then created a code that "tells a story" about what was being said. By using pattern coding, I was able to make connections within the interviews, individually and then among all of them. Moreover, I used pattern coding with the data obtained from observations and material culture to make connections across all of my data. In addition, I reviewed my researcher journal to ensure that personal assumptions did not interfere with my coding. These patterns allowed me to see similarities among the data, analyze the data and allowed me to speak about the data more effectively.

To organize the codes and the data, I created a codebook. The codebook contained the code, definition, the inclusion/exclusion criteria and the example from the text that supported the code. Within the text, I identified the interviewee by assigning a number and letter, for example "Interviewee 2" as (I2), to signify which interviewee made the statement. In addition, I used data obtained from field notes and artifacts to support the codes too. Similar to the interviews, I identified the observation by assigning a number and letter, for example "Observation 2" as (O2), to signify during which observation the data was collected. Once all of the qualitative data were analyzed, I began to answer the research questions in an effort to help the school understand viewpoints about involvement and the activities used to promote involvement. When I was done coding and analyzing, I went back to the interviewee list and assigned pseudonyms (Table 1) to the participants to ensure the anonymity of my participants.

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Validity, Trustworthiness and Credibility

Stake (1995) posits that all researchers must be "accurate in measuring things and logical in interpreting the meaning of those measurements" (p. 108). I was rigorous in data collection, analysis and reporting. I did not limit my data collection to one source. Instead, I reviewed documents, conducted observations and interviews. I allowed participants to review interview transcripts. I provided enough details in my descriptions that will help others see what I had seen (Stake, 1995). I kept a researcher journal to document and organize case findings, to capture my thought processes, and to self-monitor biases and my understanding throughout the research process. I documented all of the steps taken to engage in the research process and the reasons for taking those steps. Stake (1995) describes validity as the presentation of rich descriptive data that allows the reader to reach an understanding of the meaning of the experience under study. Presenting vivid data to help the reader understand the meaning, documenting all of the steps employed in the process, and using different methods of acquiring research enabled me to check my data since triangulation of data is vital in qualitative research.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a concern for qualitative studies (Guba, 1981; Maxwell, 2012). Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Stake (1995) stress the significance of meticulously recording and describing data collection, analysis and interpretation. Following these recommendations, I outlined and described the data collection in detail by using a research journal to document every event. I used the research journal to record the reasons for gathering artifacts and how the artifacts helped to further understand PAT. I created analytic memos to further analyze the data. The use of a research journal

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documenting all the steps taken during the research process, careful notes about the purposes of the types of inquiry and participant selections, and the use of analytic memos provided an auditable study allowing another researcher to follow the process that was used during data collection, analysis and interpretation (Guba, 1981).

In addition, I created field notes at every observation to document the event. I transcribed, analyzed, and included this data in the coding process. The detail with which the study was designed and described created an auditable study contributing to its trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the school's PAT was unique due to the population of students that they served and the individuality of all participants in the study, my step by step process could be beneficial to another family and teacher group in their quest to analyze perspectives of involvement.

Credibility

I engaged in various processes that contributed to the study's credibility and ensured triangulation of the data. Credibility is attained when a researcher develops data supported by participants through the approval of interview transcriptions and using peer checks (Maxwell, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Triangulation is described as using various methods as a check on one another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2015; Patton, 1990). I followed Mertens' (2005) and Patton's (2002) suggestion about triangulation and engaged in member checks, transcriptions, approval of transcriptions, impartial peer reviewed observations, and in the use a researcher journal to create an accounting of the entire research process. Triangulation decrease the opportunity for biases in my conclusions and allowed me to gain a better understanding of the issues that I was researching (Maxwell, 2015). Member checking assisted in identifying misinterpretations

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from observations and/or interviews (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2012; Seidman, 2013). Allowing participants to review transcriptions safeguarded against misinterpreting data (Stake, 2010). Using members of the administration, the PAT board, the faculty liaison and teachers ensured that I had collected information from a diverse range of individuals and settings (Maxwell, 2015). Using an impartial peer who examined the research process along with all of the discoveries, analysis and conclusions (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002) ensure that I contributed to "interpretation beyond the researcher" (Creswell, 2009, p. 192), which added to the credibility of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

My Positionality in the Research

As a member of my school's P.A.T., I had personally felt a detachment from the organization. I was not sure if the disengagement stemmed from my own actions or those of the organization. I had questioned if perhaps other teachers had experienced the sense of exclusion too thereby explaining the low attendance at meetings and functions sponsored by the PAT. Based on conversations with other teachers, I was not sure if the objectives outlined by the PAT organization were recognized or even followed by the organization.

Due to the lull in involvement that I had seen in the high school, I wondered if high school families wanted more than simple fundraising or back to school nights or if high school students wanted a sense of independence when attending high school. I had also wondered if high school teachers were less willing to allow families into their classroom based on their own viewpoints about family involvement in high school.

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My beliefs about the topic encompassed my thinking that if the organization promotes a different way of engaging teachers and empowering them to participate, more teachers would get involved and help more families to get involved. In addition, I believed that a family and teacher organization without the active engagement and involvement of teachers is simply a family group. I believed that it is necessary for teachers to get involved in the organization to promote a sense of teamwork needed to help students achieve. Moreover, I believed that as educational leaders speak about closing the achievement gap and offering programs and making plans that would allow educational organizations to do so, we lose a big component of student life if we omitted families and excluded teachers from student life outside of the classroom. These beliefs drove my interest in the topic of family involvement.

Role of Researcher

Onwuegbuzie (2003) states that researcher bias occurs when the researcher has personal biases or assumptions that she is unable to set aside. Due to my personal belief that family involvement was crucial in my and the successes of my children, I had to be cognizant of views about involvement that might have differed from my own. I had to be cognizant in my quest to explore hegemonic views of involvement due to the hardships that my mother experienced that I did not inhibit the explanations provided by the participants in the research. I had to be aware in the preparation of questions and analysis of same, that the participants in the study might have not shared my own experiences and belief system that when teachers take the time to understand family perspective and build relationships, student growth is achievable. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) warn against mannerisms and statements that could uncover information about the researcher's

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preferences. Finally, although my belief that relationships with families were beneficial in my role as a teacher and that through these partnerships real learning could take place have inspired the focus of this study, I might have uncovered different sentiments about the teacher role in involvement opportunities and had an obligation to report those findings even if they conflicted with my beliefs.

Due to my teacher role in the school and the involvement group, I interacted with the phenomenon as an insider (Stake, 1995) as I sought to understand PAT. I tried to avoid causal errors (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) and used member checks to ensure that I understood what was being said and that my interpretations were not misguided by my own assumptions. The use of a researcher journal helped me to record reflections about observations and interviews to work out any assumptions that I may have had prior to data collection or during analysis of data. Throughout the data collection and analysis, I was cognizant of Stake's (1995) assertion that my methods should be inductive and flexible. I discovered and interpreted simultaneously and sought to understand through interpretation (Stake, 1995).

Closing Summary

The proposed study explored educators' perspectives on family involvement within the context of a PAT structure. The study examined how participants defined involvement, and explained their role in the organization. Moreover, the study examined how the individuals responsible for promoting involvement facilitated activities to promote involvement from teachers and culturally diverse members in the organization. Exploring definitions pertaining to involvement will allow the organization to gain a greater sense of how membership and involvement are garnered for the involvement

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organization. By analyzing the organization through the perspectives of the individuals who are most responsible for promoting involvement, the school will be able to explore predetermined value systems with which some school systems operate that could impede formations of equitable partnerships.

The research allowed the participants to participate in actively exploring their own perceptions and using this understanding to aid them in exploring opportunities to increase involvement in the organization. The findings have the potential to aid the school and the PAT in creating opportunities for collaboration and involvement from teachers and family members. Moreover, the findings could put the school in the position to create professional development opportunities that include PAT board members framed around building cultural competence and partnership building. The collaboration and participation will undoubtedly strengthen partnerships within the school and create a PAT that is more representative of the schools' community.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to learn about educators' perspectives on school family involvement (FI) within the context of a parent and teacher organization (PAT) structure. Qualitative data were analyzed to explore how stakeholders in a high school PAT define involvement, how teachers explain their role in the school community's PAT, and to understand how stakeholders promote involvement to encourage participation of culturally diverse members of the school community. The qualitative findings will be summarized in this chapter.

For this qualitative study, I conducted interviews with twelve (n = 12) high school teachers, four (n = 4) members of the administrative team and four members (n = 4) of the PAT's Board (comprised of 4 parent volunteers and one educator). Participation from one member of each of the school's departments was sought to gain perspectives about the promotion of involvement from culturally diverse members of the community within the individual departments in the school. Pseudonyms were used for all participant and school names. See Table 1 for an overview of all participants' demographics. In addition, I conducted four observations of PAT meetings, one observation of a PAT event and one meeting designated to share information about the upcoming academic school year. I also analyzed material artifacts such as the organization's objectives, meeting agendas, attendance lists, membership forms, and technology platforms used by the organization.

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Table 1

Participants' Pseudonyms and Information

Participant	Department	Member of PAT
Theresa	Special Education	Yes
Frank	Science	No
Catherine	English	No
Ana	Technology	Yes
Helen	Family & Consumer Science	Yes
Claire	Physical Education	Yes
Margaret	World Languages	Yes
Harry	World Languages	No
Tonya	Social Studies	No
Yasmin	Mathematics	Yes
Missy	Art	Yes
Anthony	Business	No
Robert	Administrator	Yes
Charles	Administrator	Yes
Peter	Administrator	Yes
Evelyn	Administrator	Yes
Debbie	PAT Board	Yes
Stephanie	PAT Board	Yes

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Table 1 (continued)

Participant	Department	Member of PAT
Cathy	PAT Board	Yes
Caroline	PAT Board	Yes

Overview of Findings

The analysis revealed several findings. First, when asked to define FI, participants made assertions about FI bringing school personnel and the community together as well as developing partnerships. In addition to this definition, the participants made distinctions among FI in elementary and high school and disclosed using technological platforms with which to promote involvement. Although teacher participants were able to define FI and mentioned using technological platforms to promote it, teachers described a lack of clarity when explaining their role in promoting FI whether in school or within the PAT organization. On the other hand, non-teacher participants were able to describe a role for teachers in the organization but connected teachers to helping PAT promote traditional and school-centric forms of involvement opportunities.

Second, in analyzing the organization's objectives, the findings in this study suggest that the objectives outlined on the organization's website conflict with assertions made by teacher and PAT board members about the PAT's function at the school. Although the objectives profess to aid parents and teachers in different aspects of education and declare studying the neighborhood's environmental conditions, the

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activities with which PAT promotes involvement fall short in helping the organization accomplish these goals.

Finally, the participants in the study do not demonstrate great familiarity with culturally diverse members of the community as suggested by their views of culturally diverse members and the lack of differentiated activities to promote involvement for these members of the community. The findings that will be discussed suggest the lack of connection among school personnel and the PAT organization, and the uses of traditional forms of FI by PAT that fail to promote participation from teachers.

Definitions, Disparities and Discrepancies

The qualitative data revealed two connected findings pertaining to the participants' definition of FI. First, while describing FI, some participants expressed disparities among involvement in elementary, middle and high school. Second, in order to enact this involvement, the participants professed using different technological platforms to connect with families but lacked confidence in articulating their role in promoting FI or were hesitant to promote it.

Disparities

While describing FI, some participants expressed disparities among involvement in elementary, middle, and in high school, although the Title I Statute does not make distinctions among FI in elementary and high school (USDE, 2016) and the literature supports the need for involvement at all grade levels (Simon, 2001). All participants believed that elementary schools have more FI when compared to high school: "I think in the elementary level you see a lot more of it [family involvement]. I think as kids get older and we get to the high school level, some families are not as involved as they were"

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(Administrator Robert, interview transcription). The comment implies that there is an expectation of FI to decrease in high school.

In addition, teacher participants indicated that in high school, students should receive autonomy and be encouraged to be independent. Assertions about the manner in which FI ought to exist, according to teacher participants, help to explain the differences between FI in elementary and high school and present an explanation for diminished FI at the high school level. Participants' descriptions of FI in high school imply that teachers do not expect parents to be as involved or active as they were prior to high school. "I think the perfect amount of family involvement is, especially in high school, a hands-off approach until something goes wrong" (Teacher Catherine, interview transcription). The description of the perfect amount of involvement as a hands-off approach implies that families are expected to be passive participants or not involved at all until something goes wrong. This expectation contradicts the description of FI described by the participants; when asked to provide a definition for FI they explained that it was to develop partnerships between school personnel and the community. Moreover, Frank, a science teacher, discussed the difference between involvement with a five year old and a high school student.

> It's different from the high school as it is with me and my five year old; in high
> school it's a big transition where you have to go from, I want to help you and I
> want to be involved with your life, but at the same time, you have to figure out
> how to do this on your own to prepare yourself for the future" (interview
> transcription).

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Frank's explanation implies that a parent of a high school student wants to be involved in the life of a student but in an effort to help students for the future, a parent should be less involved than in the years prior to high school. In addition, Tonya, a social studies teacher, described the need for students to have more autonomy in high school. "[B]ut it is also vital at the high school level for parents to provide more autonomy and allocate greater responsibility to their children and not coddle them" (interview transcription). Teachers expressed a desire for families to be less involved than in elementary and middle school and suggested a passive role for families until something went wrong. The comments also imply that FI infringes upon students becoming independent and autonomous.

The contention that a hands-off approach is the perfect amount of FI presents a dilemma for a family who wishes to continue the same active participation in high school. Teacher participants explained their expectation of FI as teaching students responsibility without too much parent intervention. Teacher participants disapproved of too much parent intervention. In fact, Ana, a technology teacher, blames too much FI for lowering academic rigor and critiquing a teachers' instruction.

> Too much. Way too much. The parents control everything. Educationally, sports in particular. I feel like the parents run the school. I think parent involvement has changed, unfortunately, the way we are allowed to teach. When I was a kid, if I got a bad grade it was my fault, and I had to deal with it. Now when kids get bad grades it's the teacher's fault (interview transcription).

Ana's view of FI presented an "us vs. them" relationship that inhibits relationship building. Other participants similarly supported autonomy for high school students but

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did not connect FI to teachers' work in the classroom. "In elementary school, the parent has a duty to be there. In high school, they should start to move back a little and allow students to make decisions and [parents] not be so visual in the building" (Teacher Anthony, interview transcription).

The participants in this case study presented a different expectation of FI in high school. The participants' viewpoints suggest an expectation of FI to decrease in high school and an expectation for students to gain responsibility and to figure things out on their own. The assertions made by these participants suggest that FI ought to decrease in high school to help students become more responsible and that families who were too involved had a negative impact on classroom instruction.

On the other hand, as participants provided their definitions of FI and made distinctions among elementary and high school FI, some participants added that there was a lack of involvement from both teachers and parents in the PAT organization.

> I think [families] support them in that they are members but again, I don't think the active participation is there on the part of the teacher either. When I say either because it's a parent and teacher. I don't think there's enough active parent involvement and I don't think there's enough active teacher involvement (Administrator Evelyn, interview transcription).

The comment suggests that the lack of involvement was not exclusive to families, but that teachers did not actively participate either.

When asked about FI at the school, some participants spoke about extra-curricular activities and described a difference between participation at academic functions and extra-curricular activities. Maureen, a world languages teacher stated:

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. . . [Y]ou know, festivities, all the kids' parents were there. Their children were in

the homecoming court. Some looked like they had students in my class and I have

never met those parents before, so I have them a whole year and I never met

them; I never had any communication with them and now they're there because

their child is involved in something extracurricular (interview transcription).

Maureen's statement implies that although families were not visible when the student was

in the teacher's class, they were visible at extra-curricular events, suggesting involvement

in some aspects of the student's life and not others.

The teacher comments imply that the lack of involvement is not only seen in the

PAT organization but in academic functions, too. Families are less visible at PAT

meetings (field observation notes, September-December 2017) and family membership is

very low. The low attendance numbers were visible at observations at PAT meetings,

showing no more than six members at each of the meetings. In a meeting in November,

the members of the PAT's board were the only members in attendance. In addition,

analysis of membership records suggested that family membership was low. The records

showed that the organization currently has 284 dues paying families out of 1,834 families

for the 2017-2018 school year. On the other hand, the extra-curricular activities had

visible participation from families as suggested by participant comments.

Participants in the case study justified the lack of involvement with the school's

size as well as families' and teachers' time constraints. The school has 2,121 students

with approximately 1,834 families in the school making garnering familial support

difficult as suggested by participant comments. "I think [PAT] certainly make an effort to

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[promote FI]. I think their challenge is the enormity of the school" (Teacher Theresa, interview transcription).

Although some stated that participation from families and teachers was low and attributed the lack of involvement on the size of the school, some teacher participants demonstrated a desire to be more involved, but explained that time constraints were an impediment for doing so. After viewing the organization's objectives, Tonya, a social studies teacher commented:

It would be useful to see and be a part of the greater discussion of actually accomplishing these goals [as outlined in the organization's objectives] [but participation is needed] on both sides which is easier said than done, especially for teachers who live far away from school to attend a 6:30 PAT meeting (Teacher Tonya, interview transcription).

The PAT organization's objectives outlined a desire to "help parents and teachers acquire a profound appreciation of the ideas of education and promote a clearer understanding of the mutual education responsibilities of parents and teachers" (Common High School, PAT objectives material culture notes, September 2017). In addition, the organization added the vision "to encourage the home and school to a greater degree of cooperation in discharging their responsibilities and professed to study the neighborhood's environmental conditions which influence children's behavior" (material culture notes, September 2017). Finally, the organization posited, "to help parents reach agreement on the best solution of common problems of children's behavior" (material culture notes, September 2017).

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Although the participants' expectations of FI were different at the high school level than in elementary school, the participants in the study did not offer their perceptions of involvement as an explanation for the lack of participation in PAT activities. The assertions made by the participants support the view that there ought to be a shift from a hands-on to a hands-off approach when students come into high school. However, participants did not present the view as an explanation for a decrease in FI.

How Teachers Encourage and Enact Involvement

All of the participants in this study articulated using different technological platforms with which to communicate and encourage involvement from families. Yet, descriptions of the types of involvement facilitated by teachers and administrators focused on informing parents about grades and engaging in conversations when something went wrong. Claire, a physical education teacher, explained that she used her gradebook to keep families involved. "I think for us, it's making sure that the grade books are live, that they're as up-to-date as they can be" (interview transcript). The gradebook at this school was an online tool where families could have immediate access to a students' grade as the teacher updated the gradebook. Moreover, Robert, an administrator, described using e-mails and other technological platforms to keep families involved. "We send out non-stop mass emails to parents to keep them notified. We use Twitter to create community involvement…We use a ton of social media with this district, with Facebook" (interview transcript). An updated gradebook informs the parent about students' performance, but limits the conversation to grades in a gradebook. Moreover, using non-stop mass emails, to keep parents notified, suggests a one-way forum with which to disseminate information. Although a parent can call a teacher about

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a particular grade in the gradebook or contact the school about a question in reference to the information, such as upcoming events or changes to previously disseminated information that was distributed, the interaction between school and home is very limited to grades and information. Exclusive use of technological platforms that encourage one-way, school to home communication limit interaction with families and governs how families can become involved.

Although Robert iterated a similar sentiment about using technological platforms to keep parents notified, he added using Twitter to create community involvement. When asked specifically about community involvement and Twitter, the Twitter use was connected to sharing what was happening in the school as opposed to soliciting families' active participation in schools. Sharing what is happening in the school could create interest or curiosity but the curiosity may not necessarily lead to active FI. Similarly, connections to using technological platforms for communication were expressed by Cathy, a board member of the PAT, in her assertion: "If you do sign up, you get the monthly emails to say come to the meeting" (interview transcript). Again, emails were used to share information such as invitations to the monthly PAT meeting, which do very little to foster meaningful family-school partnerships as demonstrated by PAT administrative meeting agendas (material culture notes, September-December 2017). The meeting agendas were limited to conversations about upcoming fundraising events and how much money a previous fundraising event had generated.

Cathy's use of e-mail focused on informing parents about PAT meetings and like Robert, used email primarily as a one-way form of communication about school events. Cathy's description of email use as a way to promote FI suggests that she views

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attendance at PAT meetings as a form of family involvement. Unfortunately, both the analysis of the PAT meeting agendas (material culture notes, September-December 2017) and observations at PAT meetings (field observation notes, September-December 2017) were not indicative of purposeful conversations to promote active participation from families. Rather, they were primarily comprised of requests for volunteers for different PAT functions, such as fundraising events and teacher appreciation luncheons. Using traditional, school-centric forms of involvement fail to garner equitable partnerships (Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011).

Similar to the previous assertions about the use of technological platforms to promote FI, Frank, a science teacher, discussed using technological platforms to give parents ways to contact him.

Aside from allowing parents to sign up for my "remind" [a forum used to send text messages without sharing your phone number with parents nor students] and I let my parents know about google classroom. So that they do know and to know the genesis [grade portal]. They have alotta [sic] options to be able to [contact me] but I leave it on them (Teacher Frank, interview transcription).

In his interview, Frank explained that it was up to the parent to contact him to establish communication. Cathy and Robert's use of technology and Frank's expectation suggest that technology platforms were not used to actively promote involvement. Rather, they were merely used to share information in a unidirectional manner from school to family

Although the use of technology is, as one of the participants in the study stated, "staying current with the times" (Board Member Cathy, interview transcription), the exclusive use of technology to keep families informed discriminates against families who

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do not have access to technology or are not technologically savvy. Using technology

platforms to communicate aids schools in sharing information with families quickly and

facilitates learning at home by making resources available through platforms such as

Google classroom. However, this manner of promoting FI assumes that families have the

technology necessary to receive information and the skill with which to maneuver

assignments and resources using technology. Moreover, the platforms fall short in aiding

in decision making and collaborating with the community. Strictly using technology to

promote involvement privileges some parent groups and creates barriers for others when

relying on technology to help promote FI (Blumenreich & Jaffe-Walter, 2015; Yoder &

Lopez, 2013).

Lack of Clarity in Promoting FI

Teachers are influential in the attraction of families towards involvement in

schools (Aslandogan & Cetin, 2007; Caspe, 2003). Yet, the teachers in this study could

not articulate their role in promoting FI or were hesitant to promote FI. The disparities

among the participants' comments suggest a lack of clarity with which teachers viewed

their role in promoting involvement. School personnel, such as teachers and

administrators, have the potential to shape involvement for families, but the teacher

participants in this study did not see their role in promoting involvement or suggested that

the school was not supportive of promoting it. Assertions such as "I mean I think [we

promote involvement] because we have to, otherwise we're in trouble" (Teacher Ana,

interview transcription) suggest that teachers perceived that they were required to

promote involvement by administration. Viewing promoting involvement as a

requirement rather than promoting involvement due to the belief that school-family

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partnership building is beneficial for students, limits involvement opportunities and the sincerity upon which partnership building relies.

On the other hand, some participants made opposing remarks. Catherine, an English teacher commented: "… I feel like a lot of times we're discouraged from getting the parents involved" (interview transcript). Comparably, Peter, an administrator commented: "[S]ome teachers are very comfortable, and I think other teachers are hesitant to extend [FI] for whatever reason" (interview transcript). Both of the comments contradict the obligatory feeling that Ana expressed. Although Catherine's and Robert's assertions conflict with Ana's, the assertions do explain the participants' uncertainty with what the school expects of teachers in terms of promoting involvement. Similarly, when asked how she promoted FI, Tonya, a social studies teacher, commented: "I'm not exactly sure" (interview transcription) and Maureen, a world languages teacher commented: "I don't really see that there is [a role]." These assertions point to the lack of clarity with which teachers view their role in promoting involvement.

The comments made by the participants imply that there is great uncertainty among teacher participants as to their role in promoting involvement and if the school wants them to promote it. While one teacher perceived FI as something that she had to promote, the other teacher perceived FI as something that the school discouraged. Moreover, the hesitation about promoting involvement was noticed by an administrator, but he could not articulate why some teachers were hesitant. The participants in the study had similar views when describing FI at the high school and shared similar perspectives about how the PAT organization was not achieving their objectives. The disconnection between the expectation of a passive role for families at the high school level and

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objectives that seek to create collaboration with the school and families imply that members of the organization lack a shared vision with which to promote FI.

<div align="center">**Lack of Connections with PAT**</div>

The data revealed traditional and school-based activities in which family involvement was promoted by the PAT organization. Moreover, when asked about the PAT organization's objectives, the participants did not connect the organization's objectives to what the PAT actually does. Finally, teachers could not articulate their role in the PAT organization.

Traditional and School-Based Activities

All of the participants in this study described the PAT as promoting FI through school-based activities such as fundraising and volunteering. The fundraising aspect of the organization was evident in assertions made by teachers, administrators, and PAT board members. Helen, a family and consumer science teacher, commented: "PAT raises money for the school…but other than that, I'm not really sure of their role" (interview transcription). When asked about how PAT promotes involvement, Robert, an administrator commented:"…[T]o help raise money to meet their objectives which, in a nutshell, is to support whatever the school needs under their umbrella" (interview transcription). Another administrator commented: "The only thing I really know about our PAT is that they conduct fundraisers" (Peter, interview transcription). A board member reiterated this fundraising objective: "Our goal is always what can we do to raise more money.… I feel that our objective is more about raising funds to provide scholarships and a gift to [the] school" (Debbie, interview transcription). All of the participants' comments imply that the PAT's function is to raise money for the school,

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which did not appear as one of the organization's objectives. The assertions connect the PAT's objective to school-centric goals that do very little to create school-family partnerships (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) which are necessary to fulfill the organization's objectives.

In addition to school-centric goals, the organization was described as not changing much throughout the years. Missy, an art teacher, commented: "I'm not sure that we do anything new and innovative when it comes to promoting FI" (interview transcription). Similarly, another teacher commented: "We do the same things that PATs have done for years" (Anthony, interview transcription). The comments imply that the organization does not deviate from the status quo and continues to promote traditional forms of involvement. Moreover, observations at PAT meetings (field observation notes, September-December, 2017) and analysis of meeting agendas (January-May, 2016) suggest that the meetings rarely deviate from promoting traditional activities. Monthly PAT meetings are held every second Monday and they generally last two hours (field observation notes, September-December 2017). Prior to these meetings, the board meets and discusses upcoming meeting agendas (field observation notes, September-December 2017). In addition, they prepare reports, such as the organization's deposits and withdrawals and membership numbers (field observation notes, September-December 2017). The board members routinely search for committee members for different fundraising events at every meeting and report how much money the different fundraisers have raised or are projected to raise. After the monthly meetings, the board prepares detailed PAT minutes and shares them with attendees at the next meeting (material culture notes, September-December 2017). The PAT board's practices focus on school-

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centric approaches such as promoting support from families to school. The efforts through which the organization seeks to promote FI promote imbalanced relationships (Miretzky, 2004) and are ineffective in creating equitable partnerships (Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011).

Objectives

Analysis of the organization's objectives revealed that although the published objectives allude to goals that rely on family-school partnerships, the organization's focus on fundraising limits the achievability of the goals. Review of the organization's objectives revealed that one of the organization's goal was "to promote a clearer understanding of the mutual education responsibility of parents and teachers" (Common High School, PAT objectives). Unfortunately, the lack of connection among the objectives, the activities promoted by the organization, and the absence of clarity when discussing teachers' roles in the organization, make promoting a clearer understanding of the mutual education responsibility of parents and teachers difficult. The objective implies that the organization will promote an understanding of the roles of parents and teachers but the dissonance between the objectives and teacher role in the organization, make achieving this objective difficult. Moreover, the activities used by the PAT organization, such as fundraising and volunteering, are insufficient "to help parents and teachers acquire a profound appreciation of the ideas of education or helping parents reach agreement on the best solution of common problems of children's behavior" (Common High School, PAT objectives) as the organization's objectives outline.

Analysis of participant interviews revealed that the majority of the participants were not able to connect the organization's objectives to what the organization actually

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does. After reading the organization's objectives that were provided to all participants, Frank, a science teacher, commented: "I just never see any of this happening" (interview transcription) when asked about the organization's objectives. Ana, a technology teacher, provided a similar response when she commented: "….[B]y no means do I feel like the PAT represents this, or has anything to go towards this" (interview transcription). The comments imply that teacher participants did not see the current PAT fulfilling the articulated objectives.

While many participants described the goals as "lofty, worthy and thoughtful", all but two participants opined that PAT was not achieving the objectives. In fact, participants described a lack of intersection between PAT and school personnel. Missy, an art teacher, commented: "I do not see PAT seeking [teachers'] input" (interview transcription) when asked about how PAT accomplished the proposed objectives. Moreover, Anthony, a business teacher, posits a need for teacher involvement in order to accomplish the goals. "I do not see them attaining the goals without more collaboration with school personnel" (interview transcription). Interestingly, although the organization members profess to fundraise and seek volunteers, the objectives were not aligned with those goals.

While there were two participants (a board member and an administrator) who commented that PAT was achieving their objectives, the board member participant commented: "Some of [the objectives], you can't look at it and read it too literal[ly]" (Cathy, interview transcription). The comment implies that although she believed that PAT was achieving the objectives, the way the objectives were written required an

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interpretation that was not too literal. The comment is confusing because if the objectives are not to be interpreted literally, then how should stakeholders interpret them?

In summation, the participants' in the study were not clear as to what the school's expectation was with regard to their role in promoting FI. Some teachers believed that the school did not want them to promote FI. Moreover, the lack of clarity with which teachers viewed their role in the PAT organization suggests that a role had not been created or clearly articulated for teachers. Finally, espoused objectives not realized or objectives suggesting a non-literal interpretation demonstrated a lack of coherence and direction among the major stakeholders in the organization. The disparity among the espoused objectives and the objectives in action creates a problem for teacher role identification. The dissonance makes it difficult for teachers to help the organization achieve the organization's mission.

Teachers' Roles

Although the organization is considered a *Parent and Teacher Organization*, the teacher participants expressed a disconnection with the organization. In addition, administrators described a lack of teacher participation in the organization. The teacher participants were not able to describe a clear role in the organization. "My role is dormant with the PAT. I honestly do not know [the role of teachers in PAT]" (Teacher Harry, interview transcription). "Currently, I do not have a role in the PAT other than being a paid member" (Teacher Yasmin, interview transcription). Regardless of their membership status in the organization, both teachers could not describe their role in the organization.

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The lack of clarity with which teachers described their role in the PAT organization suggests that the organization was not garnering effective participation from teachers. Although the organization had achieved robust teacher membership, with 74 teachers out of 137 as members, the membership derived from a $10.00 donation at the beginning of the school year without any expectation of participation in the organization. Caroline, a PAT board member, explained her expectation of teachers' roles in her statement: "I mean, I know it's a parent teacher association, but I think the teachers are involved in the school thing, the teaching, and I don't really see them, I don't see them needing to really be super involved" (interview transcription). The statement implies that teachers were expected to be less involved in the organization and Debbie, a PAT board member, limited the teachers' roles to paying the membership dues and helping the PAT carry out their events.

> Well I think your role starts off by paying your membership fee, because as silly as it sounds, $10 goes so far. Another person to reach out to help us coordinate things. Have some representatives in the school. Having any teacher as a backup to help us be our go between what we need at the school, so that when we get there, our tables are there, our chairs are there. If we need a microphone, if we need a podium. Just any help from any teacher would be greatly appreciated (interview transcription).

A comparable sentiment was expressed by Robert, an administrator, when he commented:

> I think the role of the teacher is to be a member, to be a participant, to be supportive of what [the PAT is] doing, but I think the doers [sic] are more the

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parents than the teachers. In the PAT the parents are the ones being the doers

[sic]. The teachers are supportive (interview transcription).

The statements made imply that teachers were expected to be passive, dues-paying members rather than participatory ones.

When asked to describe their connection to the organization, some teacher members confirmed Debbie and Robert's assertions. They described giving a $10.00 membership fee as their only affiliation to the organization. "I pay my dues… and that is it" (Teacher Tonya, interview transcription). While some teacher members described their membership fee as their only connection to the PAT, other teacher members simply described their role as non-existent or very limited. "Quite frankly, over the past few years, extremely limited involvement. I'm a member but I don't really have any [role]" (Teacher Theresa, interview transcription). "…I actually don't really feel like a have a role at this moment. So, no role" (Teacher Catherine, interview transcription). The expectation of teachers to be passive members in the organization strongly limits the potential opportunities created for teacher involvement and continues to cultivate the absence of a teacher role in the organization.

Although the name of the organization implies a partnership between parents and teachers, the answers provided by the teacher participants suggest that teachers could not describe their role in the organization. Moreover, the assertions made by teachers imply that membership in the organization does not suggest active participation by teachers since both members and non-members expressed a lack of connection to the organization. In addition, the role for teachers, described by board members and one administrator,

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suggests that the organization is not seeking active involvement from teachers due to the descriptions and expectations of passive teacher roles within the organization.

Overlooking Culturally Diverse Members of the School Community

The qualitative data revealed two connected findings pertaining to the extent to which stakeholders promote involvement to encourage participation of culturally diverse members of the school community. First, some participants expressed deficit thinking assumptions when asked about the activities through which the organization promotes involvement for culturally diverse members of the community. Second, the organization did not make any attempts to differentiate approaches to promote involvement for these families.

Deficit Thinking Assumptions

When asked to describe the manner in which the participants promoted involvement for culturally diverse families, some of the participants shared deficit-thinking assumptions when describing these members of the school community. Although the uniqueness of family structures and cultural differences among the major stakeholders in educational organizations all contribute to the evolution of a FI definition, this understanding should not imply that families of the non-dominant group are lacking or are undeniably financially disadvantaged. Exploring assumptions that individuals who are responsible for promoting involvement have about culturally diverse members of the school community is important in understanding the activities with which participants profess to promote involvement.

When asked about classroom activities designed to promote involvement from culturally diverse members of the school community, Ana, a technology teacher,

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described creating design problems for families in desolate areas but acknowledges not addressing the actual diversity. "I think a lot of the projects that we do sometimes lead toward it [promote involvement from culturally diverse members of the school community]. Like, our design problems are for families in a desolate area. But I don't think we address the actual diversity" (interview transcript). When asked to elaborate on design problems, Ana shared:

> Some of our students are unaware that we have students currently enrolled here that are homeless or have lost everything due to varying circumstances. They are also unaware [that] in certain cultures, it is not abnormal to not only live with your immediate family, but with extended family as well, which would make for a very crowded home life (e-mail correspondence).

The distinction made regarding not addressing the actual diversity suggests that although Ana believed that the design problems for families in desolate areas applied to culturally diverse members of the community, the activity did not promote involvement from culturally diverse members of the school community.

In addition to Ana's assertion, when asked about promoting involvement for culturally diverse members of the school community, Peter, an administrator, explained that in his experience, culturally diverse students did not have a large group of friends. "One of the routes I usually take when I have a student who's diverse is that I find often that they don't have a large group of friends" (interview transcription). Looking at families through a lens of deficiency (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012) implies that families need remediation as opposed to viewing them as valuable resources for educational organizations. The predisposition that a culturally diverse student does not

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have many friends may significantly govern how an administrator interacts with the student.

When asked what he does to promote involvement for culturally diverse members, Peter described remediation efforts with which he helped families become acclimated with resources.

> [I do things] like spending the time to get their emails straightened out so that they have a better window into seeing what's going on here. If English isn't their first language and the school's website is primarily in English, they're going to struggle with that and so just helping them overcome some of the barriers, just to see what their student is doing. Sometimes that really involves a third person interacting but also them coming and support them too…to get them all squared away (Administrator Peter, interview transcription).

While the activities with which he proposed to promote involvement suggested informing families or getting them "caught up" rather than actively seeking their involvement, Peter empathetically described the activities and acknowledged some of the difficulties that culturally diverse members of the community could experience with keeping informed.

On the other hand, while Peter discussed activities in which he believed he promoted involvement from culturally diverse members, another administrator explained that he promoted involvement from culturally diverse members in the same manner as he did for all other members of the school community. Not paying attention to perspectives of involvement of culturally diverse members or how culture has the potential to influence involvement inadvertently excludes families from participating in involvement opportunities. To further explain how he did not differentiate efforts to promote

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involvement for culturally diverse families, the administrator added, "…we don't go after economically [disadvantaged families] to join. It's equal opportunity" (Administrator Robert, interview transcription). The question enquired about the manner in which involvement is promoted for culturally diverse families and the participant responded by talking about socioeconomic status. This response suggests that culturally diverse members of the school community were financially disadvantaged. Assuming that culturally diverse members are economically disadvantaged will shape the opportunities for involvement created by the organization. Although the deficit thinking approach is based upon inaccurate stories and stereotypes, they continue to be held as truths in American school culture (Kozol, 2005). Moreover, this belief system continues to shape opportunities for involvement as schools tend to "socialize non-dominant families into school-centric norms and agendas" (Ishimaru et al., 2014, p. 850).

Lack of Differentiated Approaches to Promote Involvement

Although today's schools consist of students who are ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse (Allison & Rehm, 2007) and individuals of different backgrounds view school involvement differently (Zarate, 2007), the participants in this study did not make differentiated efforts to promote involvement from culturally diverse families. Debbie, a PAT board member explained: "There's nothing that we focus [on when promoting involvement for culturally diverse families]. We basically [promote involvement] like [we do for] all families in general" (interview transcription). One teacher participant indicated that he had never considered a differentiated approach to promoting involvement; Frank, a teacher, commented, "That's an interesting question but I can't

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think of anything," (interview transcription) when asked how he promotes involvement for culturally diverse families.

On the other hand, even though the participants candidly shared that they did not do anything specific to promote involvement of culturally diverse members of the community, assertions made suggest that some participants were aware of possible barriers to involvement for culturally diverse members of the community. Stephanie, a PAT board member, commented: "We do not have anybody there [at meetings] to translate. Nobody's calling parents. There's no real communication going to those parents" (interview transcription) when asked about how the organization promotes involvement for culturally diverse families. Caroline, a PAT board member, commented: "….I mean there's nothing in any other language. I don't think any of us even speak another language which would be difficult then to communicate with them" (interview transcription). Both of the board members explained the difficulties with participation in the organization that a non-English speaking family would experience.

Culturally diverse members of the school community whose primary language is not English may experience difficulties communicating with the school or experience exclusion from the PAT organization since all correspondence from the PAT was in English. Unfortunately, parents with limited English feel intimidated, some feel uncomfortable visiting the school, and some have trouble helping children at home because they do not understand how the subject is taught at school (Henderson et al., 2007). The language limitation would not only limit their participation in the organization but could potentially inhibit conversations about student growth and formation of

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partnerships. The participants in this study neglected to discuss any of the many

additional reasons that families may be reluctant to participate in traditional FI.

Recognizing that culturally diverse members of the community may experience

barriers to involvement is important in the quest to promote equitable partnerships.

Organizations have a responsibility to ensure that all members of the school community

have access to the same information. Unfortunately, limiting engagement to giving

families access to grade portals and continuing to share information in a language not

understood by all members, limits the participation of culturally diverse members in

regular, two-way, and meaningful communication. Although recognizing that barriers do

exist is important, mere acknowledgement is insufficient in creating equitable family

partnerships (Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011).

<center>**Conclusion**</center>

In summary, research question one, regarding the manner in which stakeholders

in a high school PAT define involvement, generated two qualitative findings. When

asked to define FI, participants made assertions about FI bringing school personnel and

the community together as well as developing partnerships. On the other hand, when

participants offered definitions, a dissonance among expectations for FI in elementary,

middle school and high school was described. Participants described high school FI as a

hands-off approach where the expectation was for students to be independent and

responsible for individual actions strongly contradicting participants' FI definition. The

second finding revealed that the major stakeholders described using technological

platforms as a way to promote FI. On the other hand, although participants professed

using technological platforms to promote involvement, the FI efforts described suggested

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the use of technology as communication forums rather than as activities to actively promote involvement.

Research question two regarding how teachers explained their role in the school community's PAT generated three findings. First, the participants in the study described the actions of the school community's PAT as promoting traditional and school based activities and not fulfilling their professed objectives. Second, teacher roles concerning promotion of FI were unclear. In fact, many conflicting viewpoints were shared by teachers about the school's expectation of teachers in the promotion of FI. Third, teacher roles within the PAT organization were undistinguishable by teacher participants but not by members of the PAT board. PAT board members described a role for teachers but the role was connected to accomplishing school-centric involvement opportunities such as fundraising and volunteering. Finally, although there was a potential for teacher inclusion based on what the organization's objectives defined, the participants in the study described a disconnection between professed objectives and what the organization actually does.

Finally, research question three regarding how stakeholders promote involvement to encourage participation of culturally diverse members of the school community generated two findings. The first finding suggests that the participants in the study did not demonstrate great familiarity with culturally diverse members of the community as suggested by their understandings of culturally diverse members. Some participants expressed assumptions about culturally diverse members of the school community as they described interactions with these families. The second finding suggests a lack of differentiated activities to promote involvement for culturally diverse members of the

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community. Even though some barriers to involvement for these families were described, efforts to address the barriers were not noted in participant responses.

The overall findings in the case study suggest a lack of connection between teachers and the PAT organization. Although a role was described for teachers by PAT board members and administrators, teacher participants had trouble describing their role in the organization. Teacher participants explained their affiliation with the PAT organization as limited to membership in the organization and membership did not make their role in the organization any clearer. Further, the findings suggest uses of traditional forms of FI by PAT that fail to promote participation from teachers. Finally, the findings suggest a lack of intentional promotion of FI for culturally diverse families by any participants, although some participants were able to describe involvement barriers that culturally diverse families could experience.

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Chapter 5

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how educators view school family involvement (FI) within the context of a school's PAT, through a social capital and funds of knowledge lens. This study examined the manner in which stakeholders in a high school PAT view, promote, and explain their role in FI. The participants in this study indicated that espoused beliefs are not always translated into what is practiced and that activities thought to encourage FI often merely facilitate communication rather than actively promote broad forms of involvement. Educators' assertions about the definition of FI in this study often conflicted with their expectation of FI at the high school level. Although participants described FI as an active partnership where families are knowledgeable, informed, and an active participant in their child's education, their expectation of FI at the high school level conflicted with this description. Moreover, the manner in which participants described promoting involvement relied on technological platforms used as one-way communication rather than actively involving families. In addition, the expectation of teachers' roles in FI in the PAT was not clear. While teacher participants expressed difficulty with describing their role in the school's PAT, non-teacher members were able to describe a purpose for teachers in the organization. Finally, the opportunities created by the organization to promote FI for culturally diverse families was guided by participants' assumptions about these families. Looking at families through a lens of deficiency (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012) governs the opportunities for involvement that are created to promote involvement from culturally diverse families. The participants in this study described remediation efforts as ways that

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FI was promoted and also viewed differentiated efforts to promote FI for culturally diverse families unnecessary. Forming equitable partnerships relies on understanding a family's background, culture, and goals for children (Epstein, 2002; Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011) and the understanding that many involvement perspectives can be shaped by culture (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002) or deriving from interpretations of involvement from more dominant socio-cultural backgrounds (Daniel, 2011).

In the following sections, I will use the patterns that I developed in Chapter 4 to answer the research questions that framed my study. I will explain how stakeholders in a high school PAT defined family involvement and how they promoted FI by relying on technological platforms. I will also discuss how teachers explained their role in FI and how the disconnection between the organizations' objectives and the PAT's actions made it difficult for teachers to articulate their role in the PAT. In addition, I will explain the extent to which stakeholders promoted involvement to encourage participation of culturally diverse members of the school community and how assumptive perceptions about culturally diverse members of the school community governed the opportunities for involvement. Moreover, I will share the significance of my study and how my study fills gaps in the literature. Finally, I will discuss implications for practice, research, policy, and leadership deriving from my study.

Definition of Family Involvement

The data collected in connection with research question one, *How do stakeholders in a high school PAT define family involvement?,* generated findings which illuminated how teachers' conceptualization of FI was not congruent with how they expected involvement from families and how they sought it. Teachers described FI as an active

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partnership, which clearly connected with the goal of the Title I Statute. The Statute describes FI as the participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (USDE, 2016). On the other hand, while describing the specific practices involved in FI, the participants made distinctions between FI in elementary and high school. FI in high school was described as a hands-off approach where students received autonomy and were encouraged to be independent. Describing FI as a hand-off approach conflicts with the expectation of the Title I Statute, which describes regular-two-way and meaningful communication with families. Although the statute does not make distinctions for elementary and high school participation, the participants in the study made the distinction. However, this finding supports Henderson and Mapp's (2002) work who posit that FI is most notable in elementary school. The participation of parents in regular, two-way and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities (USDE, 2016) does not suggest less autonomy and independence for students. Although students are older in high school, the need for regular two-way meaningful communication (USDE, 2016) is still necessary even if the specific conversation topics are different. Few families persist as active partners during middle and high school years unless schools make special efforts to continue the relationship (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The assertions made by the participants did not convey that the PAT or school made any special efforts to sustain the relationship.

The hands-off approach to FI, described by the participants, conflicts with the literature. Empirical studies about FI confirm that when parents and school staff work together to create interventions for impediments to student achievement, improved

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academic performance and behavior were noted (Cox, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Epstein, 2002). The participants' expectation of FI as necessary only when something goes wrong limits what Reschly and Christenson (2012) describe as relationships consisting of two-way communication about children's academic necessities, joint problem solving, and decision making. The participants in this study did not convey any special efforts to build relationships or to engage in problem solving or decision-making. Rather, they described engaging in conversations after something went wrong, which governed the involvement opportunities created for families as described by the participants in the study.

The need to continue involvement at all grade levels is important and the responsibility of creating these partnerships is on the school (Simon, 2001). School personnel, such as teachers and administrators, have the potential to shape involvement for families (Mulford, 2003). The participants' beliefs about FI contribute to the manner in which involvement is sought and serve to explain why involvement appears to be more prevalent in elementary school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Moreover, the involvement perspective suggests that families are to assume passive roles of involvement contradicting the Every Student Succeeds Act's (ESSA) (2015) vision of conducting outreach to all parents and family members by implementing programs and activities to involve all family members. ESSA's (2015) vision relies on expertise in relationship building, creating congruency between the team members, and generating quality interactions (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) which a hands-off approach to FI impedes.

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Furthermore, when participants were asked to describe how they promoted involvement, participants described using technological platforms to keep families connected to the classroom. The manner in which school personnel promoted FI and the opportunities afforded to families to become involved are important since teachers and administrators have the potential to shape involvement for families (Mulford, 2003). The participants described email, Google classroom, twitter and other technological platforms as a way that they connected with families and how families connected with them. Although the participants described connecting with families, the manner in which the platforms were described revealed that the forums were mere information outlets and failed to actively promote two-way communication. For example, although the forums presented an avenue through which information could be disseminated, the platforms did very little to promote active involvement based upon the descriptions of how they were used provided by the participants. While an online grade book helps to provide information on the students' grades, the practice fails to communicate how the student learns, the curricular demands and expectations of the subject, and lacks the connectivity with which to have conversations about how to aid students in the learning process. Another point to consider is that exclusive use of technology erroneously excludes families without access or operational knowledge of technology (Blumenreich & Jaffe-Walter, 2015; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Moreover, merely using technology to promote involvement limits the ESSA's (2015) articulation of conducting outreach to all parents and family members and implementing programs, activities, and procedures for their involvement. Strictly using technology to disseminate information fails to foster partnerships between families and schools and can create a barrier to involvement for

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families who lack technology or the skills necessary to access technological platforms

that the school uses to disseminate information. Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011) posit that

teachers need more opportunities for meaningful experiences with students and families.

The school missed such opportunities due to their limited conceptualization of high

school FI and the narrow use of one-way, technology based communication.

Teacher Role in PAT

The results of research question number two, *How do teachers explain their role*

in the school community's PAT?, brought forth three understandings: the disconnection

between the organizations' objectives and their actions made it difficult to create a

teacher role, teachers could not articulate their role in the PAT, and although non-

teachers described a role for teachers, the description failed to give educators a pertinent

role in the organization, one that had the potential to generate authentic family-school

partnerships.

The PAT activities that the participants described were traditional and school-

based activities that primarily included fundraising. Without a desire to fundraise or

volunteer for fundraising events, teachers are faced with a non-descript role in the

organization. In fact, families with busy home schedules (Wassell, Fernandez-Hawrylak

& Scantlebury, 2015) could face the same dilemma when opportunities for involvement

are limited to fundraising and volunteering. Although fundraising aids the organization in

helping the school and students monetarily, the sole use of fundraising does little to

promote meaningful exchanges with families. Lawson (2003) found that school-centric

definitions, involvement opportunities such as volunteering, attending meetings and

helping with homework, failed to garner support by families. Moreover, volunteering and

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fundraising are not likely to have much impact on student achievement due to families' inability to participate in conventional activities (Jones, 2001). Moreover, these activities lack the necessary engagement needed to create partnerships and potentially contribute to barriers to involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2012) if members cannot participate in this manner or fail to see the activities' importance.

Another obstacle for generating clear and goal oriented participation from teachers and families were the organization's objectives. The majority of the participants were unable to connect the organization's objectives to what the organization actually does. Although the objectives described the organization's goal "to promote a clearer understanding of the mutual education responsibility of parents and teachers" (PAT objectives, 2017), the lack of teacher involvement within the organization makes the goal unattainable. Moreover, merely conducting fundraisers strongly limits the fulfillment of the other proposed objectives such as "helping parents and teachers acquire a profound appreciation of the ideas of education or helping parents reach agreement on the best solution of common problems of children's behavior" (PAT objectives, 2017). The organization's objectives in their present form have the potential to set the foundation for creating family and school conversation, but the current disconnection between the objectives and the PAT's activities makes it difficult to engage families meaningfully. Since each member of the school team is responsible for putting the school policy on communicating with families into practice (Oostdam & Hooge, 2013), the lack of teacher role in the organization strains efforts to engage families meaningfully.

Finally, although the organization was known as a Parent and Teacher Organization, teachers were unable to describe their role in the organization. Teachers

indicated that they were official members in the organization, achieved by their $10.00 donation, but admitted not participating in the organization. Some teachers expressed a willingness to be involved but very few teachers were able to articulate what their role would be in the organization. Interestingly, although teachers assumed that there might be a role for them in the organization, assertions made by PAT Board Members and administrators implied that teachers were not expected to be active members of the organization or described teacher roles that were limited to helping with fundraising and volunteering. Teachers were disempowered because of limited expectations. Neglecting to authentically engage teachers as partners in the organization significantly limits the organization's resources since teachers are influential in the attraction of families towards proper schooling and education (Aslandogan & Cetin, 2007; Caspe, 2003). Moreover, school personnel, responsible for promoting FI, play a role in establishing relationships between schools and families (Cooper, 2010; Watson & Bogotch, 2015) as such, teachers are responsible for promoting FI. Looking at school personnel specifically is of significance since educators are considered to be in a primary position when it relates to involvement and ensuring valuable exchanges of information about life at school and home (Oostdam, 2009). The limited expectations of teachers disempowers them from actively participating. Moreover, their omission from active involvement in FI organizations significantly impedes the organization from sustaining partnerships between school and home.

Participation from Culturally Diverse Members

Research question number three, *How do stakeholders promote involvement to encourage participation of culturally diverse members of the school community?*,

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generated two findings. First, assumptive perceptions about culturally diverse members of the school community existed among some participants and second, participants did not make differentiated efforts to promote involvement from culturally diverse families.

Looking at families through a lens of deficiency implies that families need remediation as opposed to viewing them as valuable resources for educational organizations (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012). In addition, teachers' assumptions about families could potentially influence participation (Kim, 2009). Although some participants in the study believed that they were promoting FI for culturally diverse families, the activities they described reflected stereotyped assumptions about these families. Some of the interactions that were created for culturally diverse families in the study's site were governed by assumptions that diverse students lacked large groups of friends or that families needed remediation. Although the willingness to help culturally diverse members of the school community that emerged from the study is recognized, believing that all culturally diverse members need help could limit the involvement opportunities that are created for these families as suggested by the participants' descriptions of FI opportunities in the study. Continuing traditional forms of involvement promotes interactions that continue an imbalanced relationship (Miretzky, 2004), where one member remediates the other, and are ineffective in creating equitable partnerships (Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011).

Forming equitable partnerships requires understanding a family's background, culture, and goals for children (Epstein, 2002; Gregg, Rugg & Stoneman, 2011) and enhancing the capacity of educators (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Believing that culturally diverse families require remediation presents the same problem as assuming that they do

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not require differentiated efforts to promote involvement. When cultural differences and beliefs influence how families participate in involvement opportunities (Chrispeels & Rivera, 2001), expectations of traditional involvement may inhibit participation from individuals whose cultural capital does not match the capital valued by the schools (Reay, 1998). The participants in this study did not make any clear attempts to promote involvement from culturally diverse members of the school community. Teachers admitted that special activities within the classroom geared towards promoting involvement from culturally diverse families simply did not exist. Even though some participants recognized that culturally diverse members of the community face barriers to involvement, the current classroom activities described by the participants and the activities promoted by the PAT are inadequate in removing barriers. Many barriers, such as differences between the language spoken at home and the dominant language spoken at school (Wassell, et al., 2015), exist but fundraising, volunteering and remedial efforts are insufficient in creating equitable family partnerships where families are viewed as equal partners. Maintaining that families should be involved more, but failing to remove barriers to involvement (Wassell et al., 2015) perpetuates traditional forms of involvement based on interpretations of involvement from the more dominant socio-cultural backgrounds (Daniel, 2011). Rather than efforts to increase FI only in school-based activities, schools should support families and build relationships between school staff and the school community (Ferguson, 2004). A strong need for school personnel to direct attention to the diverse ways in which families participate in their children's education and experiences (Wassell, et al., 2015) was suggested by the participants' assertions.

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The efforts described by the participants in the study shed light on the misconceptions of FI that could exist in educational organizations. How families participate in school activities may be a result of cultural differences regarding how families view their roles and their schools' roles in education (Tang, 2015). Interpretations of involvement deriving from the more dominant socio-cultural backgrounds (Daniel, 2011) play a role in how school personnel attempts to actively promote FI as demonstrated in the study. The need to understand a family's background (Epstein, 2002; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) and acknowledge perspectives that could lead to stereotyped assumptions (Boethel, 2003) are essential in the quest to provide opportunities for the informed participation of parents and family members as the ESSA (2015) proposes. Moreover, varying perspectives among school personnel shape the opportunities that are created to engage families and could potentially inhibit involvement based on conflicting perspectives (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

Significance of This Study

This study contributes to the body of research on educators' perspectives on school family involvement and involvement organizations. Most prior research has focused on how families view involvement, but the research is limited on how educators view involvement and how these views govern the promotion of involvement. Looking at educators' perspectives on involvement is important since teachers' expectations about involvement can influence families' participation in educational organizations (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Mulford, 2003). Moreover, missing

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from the literature are explorations of school involvement organizations and their relevancy in education today.

In particular, this study was framed by empirical research linking FI with student achievement, social capital theory, and the funds of knowledge approach to explain the importance of defining involvement. While this study attempts to contribute to an unexplored area, there is a great deal of future work to be done in this capacity, particularly in the areas of educators' perspectives in high schools, how those perceptions govern the involvement opportunities that are promoted, how educators view their role in promoting FI, and the extent to which espoused beliefs about involvement are congruent with activities used to promote involvement. In addition, work related to the role of involvement organizations today and how to maximize involvement efforts through the PAT organization in more innovative ways is missing from the literature.

Educators' Perspectives

Understanding educators' perspectives about FI is crucial since FI is linked to increased grades, test scores, enrollment in higher-level programs, attendance and graduation rates (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Malone, 2015), and the ability that school personnel has on shaping involvement for families (Mulford, 2003). Exploring educator assumptions about FI, the needs of culturally diverse families, and teacher role in promoting FI is important when attempting to build equitable partnerships. School personnel, responsible for promoting FI, play a role in establishing relationships between schools and families (Cooper, 2009; Watson & Bogotch, 2015). Schools that do not actively promote involvement or promote it by using antiquated techniques may negatively affect a family's motivation to participate in school-related activities

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(Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). In addition, unclear expectations of teacher role result in PAT's limitations in maximizing their resources to promote family-school partnerships by inadvertently excluding teacher members from active participation.

Although the literature acknowledges that family-school partnerships tend to decline over the years, the literature reports that the decline is due to high school schedules, curriculum, discouragement from students who do not want families involved, and families who do not know how to best support their children as learners (Simon, 2001). The present case study extends the reasoning by adding teacher expectation of high school involvement. This study revealed that teacher participants expected families to be less involved in high school and the PAT's use of school-centric activities to promote involvement make the formation of family-school partnerships difficult. The activities with which PAT attested to promote involvement fail to create a clear, explicit role for teachers and are deficient in creating family-school partnerships. The current study helps to explain the importance of setting clear expectations so that school personnel have the ability to work towards the same goal: meaningful school-family partnerships. The literature suggests that high schools could increase FI in partnership activities by communicating with families (Simon, 2001), but the activities that were created by the PAT in this study maintained families as outsiders rather than partners. Although the participants in the study communicated with families, the primary manner of communicating was through technological forums and the communication was not geared to engaging in activities to develop partnerships. The lack of clarity with which teachers saw their role in the organization, the activities used by the PAT to promote involvement, and the technological forums used by the participants to promote

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involvement, were insufficient to stimulate and maintain meaningful school-family partnerships.

Perceptions govern involvement. The importance of defining FI is essential since involvement perspectives can be shaped by culture (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002) or can derive from interpretations of involvement from dominant socio-cultural backgrounds (Daniel, 2011). Understanding that culture is a set of customs that are mutually understood by members of a society (Velez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1984) demands educators to understand a family's background (Epstein, 2002; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) and acknowledge perspectives that could lead to stereotyped assumptions (Boethel, 2003). In addition, understanding that school personnel shapes the opportunities that are created to engage families and could potentially inhibit involvement based on conflicting perspectives (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2012) is important. The current study confirmed that beliefs about FI shape the opportunities that school personnel create to promote involvement. When educators understand FI to mean getting involved when a problem arises or giving students the opportunity to be responsible, and then relate those actions to a hands-off approach to involvement, the manner in which educators promote involvement inadvertently keeps families from forming partnerships with the school. In addition, expectations of passive teacher roles and traditional forms of involvement also interfere with the formation of meaningful partnerships. Finally, relying on remediation-based approaches to promote involvement centered on the viewpoint that families of the non-dominant group are deficient (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992) restricts culturally diverse families from engaging in genuine involvement opportunities created for non-culturally diverse families. The

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understanding that culturally diverse families may require differentiated efforts to become involved is important but the efforts to remediate should not be confused with involvement opportunities. Culturally diverse families view involvement differently (Zarate, 2007). Tang (2015) posits that the degree to which families participate in school activities may be a result of cultural differences regarding how families view their roles and their schools' roles in education. To acknowledge and address barriers to involvement, the organization could benefit from an FOK approach to garner trust among home and school (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) and to build a stronger bond by being more cognizant of culture, familial background, and other contributions. (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Gregg, Rugg, & Stoneman, 2011). The organization must acknowledge that differentiated efforts does not imply remediation efforts. Building equity requires school personnel to attain cultural competence (Baker, Wise, Kelly & Skiba, 2016; Carbo, 1995) in an effort to build quality relationships that encompass collaboration and trust (Caplan, 2000; Cox, 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Izzo et al., 1999). Building trust between school and family is impeded by insensitivity to racial, class and cultural differences (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Peña, 2000).

The case study corroborated the literature in that encouraging traditional forms of involvement without exploring varying perspectives of involvement could force families into methods of involvement sanctioned by the school (Crawford & Zygouris-Coe, 2006; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). The participants in the study did not explicitly encourage traditional forms of involvement but tacitly expected it by limiting participation to school-centric goals such as raising money for the school through

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fundraising. Strictly focusing on school-centered definitions can create a power imbalance in the school-family-community partnerships (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). In addition, the teacher roles that were described restrict teachers to volunteering for fundraising events that do little to engage families in two-way and meaningful communication involving student education and other school events as proposed by the Title I Statute (USDE, 2016).

Roles in Promoting FI

The necessity of straightforward roles that are understood by all participants is crucial in maximizing involvement resources. The assertions in this case study lacked clarity when describing a teacher role in FI and the PAT organization. The declarations about teacher role did not suggest any intentional outreach efforts to promote family-school partnerships. In addition, the participants did not make use of any of the involvement frameworks that are available to educational organizations in their efforts to influence involvement (Epstein, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). As outlined in Chapter 2, Epstein (2002) recommends the empowerment of families in decision-making through involvement in improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1997) recommends work around family motivation to become involved. Finally, Mapp and Kuttner (2013) outline goals and conditions in their framework necessary to effectively engage families in an effort to influence student achievement and school improvement. The principle behind the framework is to build and enhance the capacity of educators, recognize a family's funds of knowledge and connect family involvement to student learning (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). These models present a starting point to creating goals and roles for the

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individuals responsible for promoting involvement. As mentioned in Chapter 2, a criticism for these models is that they fail to address the specific needs of K-8 and high schools. As demonstrated in the case study, the expectation of involvement at the high school level was different than in elementary and middle school levels. The differences between K-8 and high school in this case study pointed to students achieving responsibility and autonomy, but teachers failed to see that it could be possible for students to achieve it while families work with school personnel. The participants in this case study designated passive roles for families rather than what Ferlazzo (2011) recommends as engagement where families become partners with the school, listening to their thoughts, dreams, and worries. Ferlazzo (2011) describes involvement as something that is done to and engagement implies doing with. Ferlazzo's (2011) distinction between involvement and engagement pushes the FI conversation towards partnership building rather than traditional forms of involvement such as projects and fundraising. Engagement requires collective goals, contributions and responsibility (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Childs, 2000) in addition to quality partnerships between families and schools as they work to impact student learning (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Moving the PAT organization towards quality partnerships will require educator and family possession of the necessary skills, information, confidence, and values to create and sustain these relationships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Espoused beliefs conflict with actions. Promoting involvement for families also requires congruency among the school personnel responsible for promoting involvement. Promoting involvement requires a group of individuals working collectively toward the same objective (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). When school personnel are unclear about their

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objectives as it relates to FI, differing perspectives of FI could make promoting involvement difficult. Exasperating these efforts are espoused beliefs or unclear objectives that conflict with the actions of the individuals responsible for promoting involvement. The case study confirmed that when involvement organizations are unsuccessful in clearly articulating their goals and teacher roles, there is a lack of coherence and direction among the members of the organization.

The participants in the case study described the perfect amount of FI, yet their assertions conflicted with their beliefs about the definition of involvement. While participants defined FI as an active partnership where families are knowledgeable, informed, and an active participant in their child's education, their description of the perfect amount of FI suggested families that were informed through technological platforms but were passive participants until something went wrong. In addition, while teachers have the potential to shape involvement for families (Mulford, 2003), the teacher participants in this case study were unclear as to their role in promoting involvement or if the school wanted them to promote it.

In the organization's objectives, PAT espoused, "to help parents and teachers acquire a profound appreciation of the ideas of education and to promote a clearer understanding of the mutual education responsibilities of parents and teachers (PAT objectives, 2017)." Moreover, the organization proposed "to encourage the home and school to a greater degree of cooperation in discharging their responsibilities and to study the neighborhood's environmental conditions which influence children's behavior (PAT objectives, 2017)." Finally, the organization proposed "to help parents reach agreement on the best solution of common problems of children's behavior (PAT objectives, 2017)."

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The objectives align well with Epstein (2002) who proposes that educational organizations assist families with parenting skills and establish reciprocal communication between school and home. Although some participants described these objectives as worthwhile ones, the teacher participants lacked familiarity with these goals prior to participating in the research and did not know if the goals were being fulfilled. PAT board members discussed not fulfilling the goals or recommended not reading them too literally. Some of the organization's goals suggest objectives that lean towards participating in activities to establish expectations and objectives for meaningful FI, but the organization's primary focus on fundraising limits these objectives from seeing fruition. Moreover, building capacity among school personnel and families (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) is impeded by the espoused objectives that are not fulfilled.

Finally, when speaking about culturally diverse families, some participants explained that there is a lack of activities through which to specifically promote involvement for these families. Moreover, some school personnel did not think that specifically promoting involvement for these families was necessary. Fennimore (2017) asserts that any allusion that all families are equally received and have equal access to benefits of school-based involvement is duplicitous. In order to establish equity, all families should be provided the same opportunity to participate at the school (Daniel-White, 2002; Sil, 2007) since FI is linked to student achievement and the ESSA (2015) requires it. The participants in the study described remediation efforts to explain how FI was promoted and explained how differentiated efforts for culturally diverse members were not needed. Since the ESSA (2015) requires schools to provide opportunities for informed participation of parents and family members, erroneously thinking that

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remediating families constitutes informed participation limits involvement opportunities for these families. Believing that remediation efforts are forms of equitable forms of involvement makes the ESSA's (2015) vision hard to fulfill. Although federal policy demands districts to implement programs and activities for the involvement of parents and families (ESSA, 2015), the understanding of differing viewpoints of FI is crucial in the development of these programs and activities. Federal policy calling for active FI, the diverse ways that families view FI, and the structure that still expects traditional forms of FI creates a conundrum for schools wishing to comply with federal mandates and close gaps in educational opportunity and achievement.

Areas for Professional Development

The participants in the study expressed a need for making improvements on certain aspects of FI in the PAT organization. Efforts to promote involvement must derive from the understanding and compliance to federal policy that in order to establish equity, all families should be provided the same opportunity to participate at the school (Daniel-White, 2002; Sil, 2007). The school could benefit from raising school personnel's cultural competence with regard to families in an effort to build equitable partnerships with families. Moreover, enacting the ESSA (2015), which posits that schools must conduct outreach to all family members by implementing programs and activities to involve all family members and establish expectations and objectives for meaningful family involvement, is not only essential but also mandated by federal policy. Funkhouse and Gonzalez (1997) assert that schools must be willing to invest in professional development opportunities that support FI, provide time for teachers to work with families, and design different strategies to meet the needs of diverse communities.

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Broadly speaking, undertaking the endeavor of promoting equitable FI, schools could benefit from assessing the activities with which FI groups seeks to promote involvement and have frank, open discussions around the benefits of those activities and how they may or may not encourage culturally diverse families to participate. Utilizing a funds of knowledge approach to encourage culturally diverse students and families to participate could garner support for the FI organizations. Funds of knowledge view culture and language as benefits to learning and education (Kinney, 2015). Kinney (2015) found that students' homes possess extensive resources that are valuable and refute discussions about deficits. Educators who employ strategies to involve families and are clear about the benefits of FI are more likely to inspire FI (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Through an FOK approach, teachers have the ability to rethink students' language and culture as assets rather than issues to be remedied and use them to advance student learning (Moll & Diaz, 1987). The approach relies on teacher-student relationships that are dynamic (Moll et al., 1992) and the understanding that people are capable, have knowledge and their life experiences have contributed to that knowledge (Kinney, 2015). The FOK approach has also inspired Mapp and Kuttner's (2013) dual-capacity framework, which outlines how to build effective family-school partnerships to support student achievement and school improvement. Using professional development time to unify family-school partnerships with the designation of clear roles and expectations of school personnel and FI groups is vital. The use of professional learning communities (PLC) could help the organizations in fostering a collaborative approach to involvement with families. Since a PLC refers to a group of educators coming together purposefully to collaborate on learning for all students and holding themselves accountable to the

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outcomes (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), fostering a PLC with the FI groups could benefit schools in their quest to promote engagement of teachers and families. Moreover, extending the PLC philosophy into what Epstein and Salinas (2004) refer to as a school learning community which puts a precise focus on student learning and success is worthwhile. Following the example of the schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools (2017) that used a school learning community approach to implement many family and community involvement activities to support and extend students' reading, writing, math, and goal-setting skills (Epstein & Salinas, 2004) could aid FI organizations in creating roles for teachers and families that are designed around student learning and success. Although some of the activities would not benefit a high school setting, the writing workshops where students and parents attend presentations by local authors and celebrations of student writing could be of interest to the study site and other high schools. Moreover, the planning for college and work where educators and parents help students focus on their plans for college and careers and on the education requirements they must fulfill to meet their goals could be beneficial too. Organizing families and student personnel with the purpose to meet student learning needs would behoove schools in making strides towards fulfilling the vision of ESSA (2015). The school learning community can be the forum where school personnel raises their cultural competence and searches for families' funds of knowledge that will be instrumental in achieving the ESSA's mission.

Cultural Competence

Specifically, schools benefit from professional development targeted towards raising the cultural competence of school personnel. Building equity requires school

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personnel to attain cultural competence (Baker, Wise, Kelly & Skiba, 2016; Carbo, 1995) when trying to build quality relationships that encompass collaboration and trust (Caplan, 2000; Cox, 2005; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Izzo et al., 1999). Being cognizant that building trust is impeded by insensitivity to racial, class and cultural differences (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Noguera, 2003; Peña, 2000) is important. The National Education Association (2015) defines cultural competence as being cognizant of one's own cultural identity and views about differences, and the ability to learn and build on the different cultural and community norms of students and their families. Understanding how a family's values and beliefs contribute to their school involvement practices is essential in the quest to garnering equity in educational organizations.

Teachers' expectations and opinions about involvement can also influence families' participation in educational organizations (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011) as demonstrated in this study. Culturally competent educators are better prepared to establish connections between school and families (NEA, 2015) and the awareness that there might be a difference between the school culture and home culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995) will help educators in this school in the endeavor. Pratt-Johnson (2006) posits that instructors must understand that by living in a global society, they must teach and work with students who have very different beliefs than their own. The PAT organization presents a platform for teachers to increase their cultural competence through the experiences that they share with the families of their students within this organization.

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Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge are "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994, p. 443). Tapping into a family's funds of knowledge, awareness of culture, familial background, and other contributions helps educators build a stronger bond between home and school (Gregg, Rugg, & Stoneman, 2011). The participants in this case study were aware of the barriers to FI that culturally diverse families in the school may encounter yet, efforts to combat barriers were not made nor were differentiated efforts for FI. Funds of knowledge equips teachers with the opportunity to use family resources for instructional purposes when funds of knowledge is integrated into curriculum and instruction (Ares & Buendia, 2007). Funds of knowledge allows educators to show that they value the resources rooted in students' families and communities, therefore defying deficit viewpoints. The participants in the study demonstrated deficit viewpoints about culturally diverse families, which governed the types of involvement afforded to these families. This study has added to the importance of the funds of knowledge framework and the need to be more inclusive in involvement approaches. The study has also added to the importance of searching for interpretations of involvement that derive from the more dominant socio-cultural backgrounds (Daniel, 2011) that could exclude culturally diverse families. Establishing a sense of value will enhance how this school seeks and promotes partnerships with families and schools. This approach will make changes possible in classroom practice (Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011) that will aid this school in promoting involvement for culturally diverse families.

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Professional Learning Communities

DuFour and Eaker (1998) defines a professional learning community (PLC) as a group of individuals working collectively toward the same objective. If the goal is to conduct outreach to all family members by implementing programs and activities to involve them, a collective group who understands the goal and works towards that goal is valuable. Organizing a group where everyone recognizes the vision and their roles in achieving that goal will be instrumental. The teacher participants in the study demonstrated a desire for doing more and being more involved. Therefore, creating an FI PLC would be beneficial as the school enhances the family-school relationships that the ESSA (2015) proposes. Once the PLC has discussed and agreed upon the expectations and the vision of the group, the work towards creating objectives that the organization can and will fulfill is vital. The group can use the PLC to conduct action research to create objectives that will be understood by all and where the members of the organization demonstrate an active role in fulfilling them. The group can also examine literature on asset-based practices, policies, and programs that support meaningful FI. Moreover, by the very nature of this collaboration, relationships will be built around the work that is completed. The group ought to keep the ESSA's vision at the forefront of all work to ensure that the work that is completed is connected to that vision. The work as a PLC has the potential to give teachers the opportunity to participate in more meaningful experiences with students and families. Although some participants expressed time as a barrier to participating in the PAT organization, the school ought to be creative in how they organize the PLC work. Creating an FI PLC is as important as allowing the group the time to do the work to create a more inclusive FI group.

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Filling Research Gaps

Although research exists about the definitions of involvement and the potential impediments to involvement, there is a gap in the literature concerning how family and teacher organizations actually promote family involvement and how teachers are included or excluded from involvement organizations. Moreover, an analysis of the literature identified traditional school-centered definitions of family involvement that govern teacher assumptions about a family's level of involvement (Jordan, Orozco & Averett, 2002). On the other hand, the literature does not document how teacher perspective about high school involvement is different when compared to teacher perspective about elementary and middle school involvement. Moreover, the literature is not replete with the role of involvement organizations and how to restructure the organizations so that they are more in keeping with fulfilling federal and state policy. The literature does identify teacher perceptions about a family's role in student achievement that could potentially impact the types of involvement opportunities that the teacher initiates (Barge & Loges, 2003: Izzo et al., 1999; Lawson, 2003) and how remediation efforts could sometimes limit the opportunities for involvement from culturally diverse members of the school (Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander and Hernandez, 2013; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

Subsequently, the focus of this study, understanding perspectives on school family involvement within the context of a PAT structure, could contribute to school practice, research, policy, and leadership for school involvement organizations in pursuits of cultivating successful partnerships. Jordan, Orozco and Averett (2002) propose a movement away from traditional approaches to involvement and towards a shared

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relationship among schools and families that are advantageous and encompass the joint vision of all stakeholders. This study contributes to the literature by documenting how key players in a school's PAT view involvement and explain teacher roles in the organization. Moreover, the study adds to the discussion about culturally diverse members of a community and how schools potentially include or exclude these members in involvement opportunities. This study has the potential to aid the PAT in taking a more profound look at how the school might employ relationship building and the formation of viable partnerships to increase involvement.

Much of the research connects FI to student achievement (Coleman & McNeese, 2009; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Jeynes, 2007; Lagace-Seguin & Case, 2010) and policies governing education attempt to address the gaps in offering equitable educational opportunities for all (ESSA, 2015). Yet, to what extent do educators possess the necessary skills needed to ensure that equitable educational opportunities are achieved? And to what extent should educators expect families to help them achieve that goal? Although the literature affirms that traditional forms of involvement push school-centric goals (Green, 2015; Ishimaru et al., 2014) and do little to actively promote FI and engagement (Lawson, 2003), how do organizations challenge the status quo and view families as an extension of the school building?

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Implications

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The findings from this study have implications for the school's PAT at Common High School and for other FI organizations in similar settings. The study supports future research on moving families from involvement to engagement (Ferlazzo, 2006) to disturb traditional forms of FI. In addition, the findings have implications for policy as schools

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adhere to the ESSA (2015) and implement parent and family engagement activities. Fully understanding the mandate's intent, to raise achievement for low-income and otherwise disadvantaged children, is of primary importance when thinking about how FI could make the vision achievable. Finally, the study has implications for leadership since building capacity among educators requires leadership to make the well-being of all students the primary focus of all decision making (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). As leaders strive to inspire school personnel to take the necessary steps to engage in two-way communication, an examination of impediments to FI is essential.

This study has the potential to shape school-based practice by understanding that FI is linked to student achievement and that in order to create equitable partnerships, non-acknowledgement of the dissonance among involvement definitions could make garnering support for involvement organizations difficult. The research could aid in the creation of a more explicit involvement definition and the enhancement of the organization's objectives that are more in keeping with stakeholder beliefs and the federal policy. Moreover, this study has the potential to aid the school in conversations about the expected role of teachers as it relates to FI and the PAT organization. The creation of school-family partnerships is ineffective if the focus is on families and schools as separate entities rather than as central components of the learning environment (Christenson, 2004; Henderson & Map, 2002). The findings could put the school in the position to create professional development opportunities that include PAT board members framed around building cultural competence and partnership building. In addition, analyzing the organization's role in promoting involvement and examining the contributions that the organization makes towards improved student achievement is

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needed. Moving forward, acknowledging that culturally diverse families may require differentiated efforts to promote involvement, reframing the FI activities that we do, where and how we do them is crucial in the quest to building equitable partnerships. Moreover, the research has the potential to aid the organization in examining practices that are designed around school-centric definitions of involvement and passive roles for teachers that fail to develop quality relationships that encompass collaboration and trust.

Research

The study has the potential to inform the emerging literature on FI groups and the drive for movement away from school-centric involvement opportunities and more towards joint connection among schools, families and community members. Due to this study's focus and theoretical framework, it has the potential to bring awareness to the varying levels of social capital that are not always as recognizable in involvement organizations. Beliefs, as demonstrated in this case study, that efforts to promote involvement for culturally diverse members of the community are not necessary since culturally diverse members are not purposely omitted, or that remediation efforts count as efforts to promote involvement, could be disputed when conversations around social capital are initiated. Moreover, an extension of the topic of the funds of knowledge framework to include teachers' funds of knowledge could be beneficial. The pedagogical practices that teachers employ in a classroom and their own experiences as they relate to family involvement are significant when attempting to define family involvement. Being cognizant of classroom practices that inadvertently exclude some families could help in reformulating classroom activities to be more inclusive. Moreover, the awareness could help in the reformulation of involvement opportunities that are more culturally relevant.

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Henderson and Mapp (2007) describe FI groups as groups that rarely deviate from traditional and activity-based models of familial involvement and this study confirmed that the PAT group uses traditional and activity based models of promoting involvement. The present study has the potential to inform the emerging literature on school-centric involvement opportunities, but additional research could be done on empowering FI organizations to function as PLCs. Moreover, additional studies might be done to understand families' perspective about involvement and teacher role in the FI organizations. Finally, the study could equip researchers with the starting points to conduct an action research study to bring all stakeholders together in an effort to create opportunities for involvement that are valued by all stakeholders and more directed to the ESSA's (2015) mission.

This study supports the recommendation that schools ought to focus on changing the one-way dissemination of information and towards two-way communication about children's academic necessities, joint problem solving, and decision making (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). The study found that high school educators view FI in high school differently than elementary and middle school involvement and that teachers could not describe their role in the FI group. A recommendation is made for further research encompassing a family's view of involvement at the high school level and a family's expectation of teacher role in FI groups.

Policy

The research has the potential to contribute to policy too. Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act provides financial assistance to schools to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. In order to receive funding, schools

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must conduct outreach to all family members by implementing programs and activities to involve all family members and establish expectations and objectives for meaningful family involvement (ESSA, 2015). Since Title I requires establishing expectations and objectives for meaningful FI, the study has the potential to add to conversations about how to better support FI groups to meet Title I requirements. The study could enhance conversations about the improvement of FI groups since the allotment of funding depends on improving programs for more effective FI and revision of family engagement policies.

Although ESSA (2015) proposes implementing programs and activities to involve all, and is geared towards equalizing education for all students regardless of their background or circumstances, schools may believe that if they are not a Title I school, efforts to implement programs and activities to promote involvement are unnecessary. Supporting students through collaborative relationships among families and schools is effective (Christenson, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The study confirmed that school personnel's perspectives about involvement governs how they promote it and that involvement organizations designed to foster school-family partnerships fall short when traditional forms of involvement are encouraged. Being committed to providing all students with a high quality education relies on the formation of school-family partnerships, regardless of the socioeconomic makeup of the school. Defining clear roles for families, teachers and other school personnel could only aid schools in developing partnerships geared towards student growth and preparation. Seeing family members as equal partners in the success of students (Caplan, 2000; Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009) and being responsive to the ways diverse families want to engage is vital in establishing collaborative partnerships.

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Viewing PAT organizations and family groups organized to develop solutions that target specific needs of schools and students, as two separate entities, limits the PAT's functionality in contributing to FI. If one of the goals of ESSA (2015) is to enable parents and stakeholders to engage meaningfully in their education systems, why are FI organizations limiting themselves to conducting fundraisers and other traditional forms of involvement when much of the research indicates that families engage in different ways? Many educational reforms have influenced how schools conduct business, how teachers carry out classroom instruction, and how students are expected to learn. Why are FI organizations still conducting business by promoting involvement through traditional means when changes in education are calling families to be more involved in the education of students? The present educational dialogue and federal mandates present an overwhelming opportunity for school involvement groups to help in the formation of school-family partnerships.

This study supports the recommendation that schools ought to move away from mere involvement and towards engagement (Ferlazzo, 2006). Changing the mindset that parents are clients and towards parents as partners (Ferlazzo, 2006) supports the change from involvement towards engagement. This study found that high school educators expect families to engage in passive forms of involvement as teachers share classroom information with them. A recommendation is made for the restructuring of FI groups to encompass activities where families and teachers work together to fulfill collective goals that will benefit student achievement.

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Leadership

The professional duty of individuals within educational organizations is to support student achievement, build equity, and support families. Leaders can support families by fostering social connections among families and with teachers and identifying and building on strengths in the community and among families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). The code of profession as outlined by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) pushes the educational leader to make the education and well-being of students the central focus of all decision-making. Title I funding proposes that districts conduct outreach to all families and establish the expectations and objectives for meaningful family involvement (ESSA, 2015). Leaders have a responsibility to lead with interpersonal and communication skill, social-emotional insight, and understanding of all students' and staff members' backgrounds and cultures (NPBEA, 2015). Gorski (2013) declares that a leader's pledge to equity is a commitment to justice, equal opportunity and to impartial dissemination of resources. Cooper (2010) argues that educational leaders must profoundly comprehend the structures, policies and practices that reinforce community inequity. Henderson and Mapp (2007) recommended using an approach that attempts to build relationships among families as a basis for a community-based relational approach to family engagement. Reynolds et al., (2015) and Simon (2001) recommend that school administrators consider employing specific invitations due to its effectiveness for increasing family involvement. The findings from this study raise significant questions about how school personnel uses technological forums to promote involvement. The issue of communication between involvement groups and families is pivotal for accomplishing collaboration between school and home (Glueck & Reschly, 2014). The

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participants' assertions about a hands-off approach to FI are not consistent with a collaborative approach to relationship building. School personnel and families have the responsibility of working together to ensure children's success. In order to positively affect student achievement, the need exists to promote familial involvement by any means readily available such as, but not limited to, parent and teacher organizations. An examination of involvement perspectives that are influenced by the dominant culture (Daniel-White, 2002) and perspectives that exclude the non-dominant culture is essential. The findings from this study raise major questions about the involvement opportunities that are afforded to culturally diverse members of the school community and how differentiated efforts to promote involvement are not practiced. Kinney (2015) recommends that scholars look at differences as cultural practices in which individuals partake with other individuals in ever-changing cultural communities.

The findings from this study suggest the need for school leadership to analyze the contributions of involvement groups and to analyze the impact of said activities. An emphasis on building equity has made exploring the differing cultural perspectives about involvement (Zarate, 2007) important in the expansion of the definition, as schools attempt to support family partnerships. The study found that teachers and school administrators could not articulate active roles for teachers in the FI group. A recommendation is made for dialogue about the necessity of clearly defined roles in FI groups in order to fulfill federal mandates calling for equitable opportunity for all students and identification of the perceptions that could impede the vision.

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Final Thoughts

FI is a very complex topic since it encompasses many different perspectives influenced by experiences and culture. Moreover, the topic is worthy of continued research efforts due to its importance in student achievement. The responsibility to promote FI equitably lies on the shoulders of all the individuals such as families and school personnel dedicated to helping all students reach their highest potential. Building school-family partnerships rely on demonstrating good intent and trust that everyone is working towards a common goal: the education of our children. Expanding the definition of involvement to include engagement of families is note-worthy as school attempt to reshape FI opportunities.

While this study uncovered that there is a lack of congruency between how school personnel describe FI and promote it, the study did show that teacher participants have a desire to be active members of the PAT organization but needed guidance as to how to become actively involved. Moreover, although the efforts of the PAT organization demonstrated traditional efforts with which they promote involvement, it did expose a dedicated board and family members who attend monthly meetings to discuss and promote events. In light of this, it would benefit the organization to take advantage of the eagerness of both teachers and PAT members to work collaboratively to move the PAT organization away from traditional school-centric activities and towards a viable and fruitful partnership with teachers and families.

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Observation Protocol

Remember: Look for specific practices or conversations about promoting family involvement from culturally diverse families and teachers	Date: Time: Event: Purpose of Event:
Attendees	Do the attendees have a specific role in the organization? If so, what is their role?

Miscellaneous Notes or Drawings:

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes:
Setting:	
Agenda Items:	
Order of Events:	
Conversations/Topics discussed:	
Other observations (Be specific):	

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this interview to provide information for research that I am conducting on the PAT's communication with all teachers and the promotion of family involvement. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete and will be audio-recorded. This study will be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Eduacation at Rowan University. My dissertation chair is Dr. Beth Wassell and can be contacted at bwassell@rowan.edu. The names of the participants will not be used in the paper and I will be the only one that has access to the answers that were specifically provided by each partcipant. If at any time you do not wish to answer a question or you wish to discontinue the interview entirely, please let me know. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed and helping me in my completion of my post-graduate degree.

Today we are going to discuss the topic of family involvment and I would like to begin with:

1. How would you describe the overall climate at this school?

2. How would you describe the role of the P.A.T. at this school?

3. How long have you been involved with the P.A.T.?

4. How would you describe *your* role or involvement in the P.A.T.?

5. What sorts of things have you done with the P.A.T. in your current role (as admin/board member/liaison/teacher)?

6. How would you define family involvement in education?

7. How would you describe the role of teachers in promoting family involvement?

8. How would you describe family involvement in general at Howell?

9. To what extent does the P.A.T. promote family involvement at Howell?

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10. For teachers: How do you promote involvement in your classrooms?

11. How would you describe the role of teachers in P.A.T.?

12. How would you describe the manner in which P.A.T. communicates with teachers?

13. To what extent do you communicate with teachers about PAT in your role? How often do you do this?

14. How do you feel about the PAT's objectives (as outlined on the website)? (have a copy of the objectives)

15. How do you promote involvement for culturally diverse families in the school community?

**At the end of the interview:

Is there anything that I did not ask, that you would like to discuss or bring attention to? Would I be able to contact you for follow-up questions?