

A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY ON PARENTS' MOTIVATIONAL BELIEFS
TOWARDS INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION: THE LIVED
EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN HAVE ATTENDED A KINDER
THROUGH FIFTH GRADE FOREIGN LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAM

by

Kate Marie Kempen

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. The central research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of parents whose children have attended at least 2 years of a K-5 foreign language immersion program regarding their motivational beliefs towards involvement in their children's education? Three sub-questions addressing the specific aspects of motivational beliefs were used to further examine parent involvement. The theory that guided this study was the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of the parent involvement process, as it addressed how parental role construction, sense of efficacy, and other factors converge to influence parents' motivational beliefs and decisions to become involved in their child's education. There were 25 participants in the study that were selected using a recruitment survey. Data collection methods included in-depth one-on-one interviews, an open-ended questionnaire, and focus groups. Data analysis included: (1) coding all data using a provisional list of codes, adding codes as needed; (2) combining like codes to create themes; (3) creating a composite for each participants' experience; (4) creating a composite structural description of the group's experience; and (5) synthesizing all participants experiences in to one clear statement. Findings revealed parents were involved in a variety of ways to understand the immersion program and support their child. Participants felt their role was to support their student and most had high self-efficacy in their ability to do so. Parents were influenced by invitations to be involved as well as their own life factors of time, knowledge, and access to resources.

Keywords: foreign language immersion program, parental role construction, parental self-efficacy, parent involvement

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Leonie, Miles, and Simon. May they see that through hard work and determination, they can achieve anything. May they understand that life is for learning and growing, striving always to be open to new things and new possibilities.

To my husband, who supported me in my efforts even if he thought I was nuts.

To my mother, who provided endless support, a listening ear, and boundless encouragement when I did not feel capable.

To those few friends and family who knew what I was up to these last seven years, thank you for the support and encouragement you provided when I felt like an imposter. I may still feel that way, but hey, I did it anyway!

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List of Abbreviations

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Foreign Language Immersion Program (FLIP)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs is widely agreed to be a key factor in the success of such programs (Howard et al., 2018; Soltero, 2016). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Parent involvement in children's education has been shown to have a positive impact not only on students but on school climate and parents themselves (Berkowitz et al., 2021; Boonk et al., 2018; Fan & Chen, 2001; N.E. Hill & Tyson, 2009; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Willis et al., 2021). Despite a multitude of studies showing the benefits of parent involvement, efforts to involve parents effectively continue to be a challenge (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). A disconnect exists between parents and schools when it comes to what constitutes involvement, which illustrates the need to better understand parent perspectives (Curry & Holter, 2019; Whitaker, 2019). This study sought to examine how parents view their role and how their self-efficacy influences their motivations for involvement in their children's education in a foreign language immersion program. This introductory chapter lays the foundation for the study through a descriptive background of parent involvement from historical, social, and theoretical contexts. Then, a problem statement, purpose statement, and significance of the study illustrate the need to focus on parents involved in foreign language immersion programs. Finally, research questions that guided the study are introduced, followed by pertinent definitions and a summary of the chapter.

Background

Parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs has not been a widely

examined area (Wesely & Baig, 2012), yet a key factor in the success of such programs is strong parent involvement (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2003; Soltero, 2016). Historically, parent involvement in education has been significant, but with changing times and more women entering the workforce, along with divorce rates climbing, parent involvement declined by the 1960s and 70s (Jeynes, 2010). Research on parent involvement since that time has shown how parent involvement impacts student achievement and overall school success in positive ways (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). Even with the recognition that parent involvement can aid in the success of student achievement as well as many other positive outcomes, efforts to involve parents have remained lacking (Curry & Holter, 2019). Recent research in foreign language immersion programs shows the unique needs of parents in these particular settings. The sections that follow examine; (1) the historical foundations of parent involvement in education, (2) the societal impacts of parent involvement, and (3) the theoretical lenses past researchers have utilized to examine parent involvement in immersion programs.

Historical Context

Parent involvement in education is not a new concept but rather a return to practice centuries old that has been overlooked due to modern-day societal demands, the diversity of today's family life, and many other factors (Jeynes, 2010). Parent involvement had been of strong importance in the early days of America, but with the rise of the common schools, the standardization of education, and professional teacher training initiatives, parent involvement declined over time (Jeynes, 2010). In the 1960s and 70s, research began to recognize how parent involvement affected students and schools (Jeynes, 2010). Avnet et al. (2019) points to *The Coleman Report*, a report which determined the largest contributor to learning within the classroom was the student's family background as well as socioeconomic status, as a catalyst for

the shift in focus. Around this time, research had suggested that more parents entering the workforce, along with a decline in traditional family roles and the faster pace of modern society, all contributed to a decrease in parent involvement (Avnet et al., 2019). The foundations of parent involvement research have grown out of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, later named the bioecological theory of human development, which emphasizes the influence of different environments on the development of a child (Avnet et al., 2019). This theory indicates that a child exists within four systems—the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem—and relations within the different systems can indirectly influence the child, while interactions within the microsystem can have a direct influence on the child (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). On a basic level, this theory supports the idea that by increasing parent involvement, schools can enhance the interactions of the microsystems of the child that support their learning. Educational policies and reforms have latched onto this notion in the decades since *The Coleman Report* (Avnet et al., 2019). Additionally, decades of research on parent involvement since that time consistently has found that parent involvement translates to student achievement and school success overall (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020).

Social Context

Parent involvement has been shown to have a significant effect on student achievement, motivation, and behavior, as well as overall school success (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020; Pushor, 2018). The U.S. Government even recognizes the importance of parent involvement as both the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and, more currently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require all educational organizations that receive Title 1 funding to include clear goals for parent involvement (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). Further, in a comprehensive meta-analysis of studies on parent involvement, Barger

et al. (2019) state that research on parent involvement consistently associates parent involvement with children's adjustment—academically, socially, and emotionally. Parent involvement has also been shown to enhance parent-teacher relationships, improve school attendance and school climate, and increase parents' own satisfaction, confidence, and interest in their education as well (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018).

Despite research illustrating the positive outcomes of parent involvement, efforts to involve parents in schools are consistently lacking (Curry & Holter, 2019). Some research points to a continued disconnection between how schools and parents view parent involvement, with parents typically having a much broader idea as to what parent involvement looks like and where it occurs (Curry et al., 2019). This disconnect has researchers calling on schools to broaden their definition of parent involvement that considers cultural qualities, societal backgrounds, and parent perspectives, as well as their expectations of how parents are involved (Berkowitz et al., 2021). Further, there are calls for more research into parents' perspectives on parent involvement to better understand how parents see their role in their children's education, what supports parents need to be involved in their children's education, and what schools can do to foster more parent involvement (Curry & Holter, 2019; Preston et al., 2019; Zambrana et al., 2019). Examining this area of parent involvement may lead to a shared understanding of school and family expectations for parent involvement that in turn may bring about more effective connections and partnerships (Curry et al., 2019).

Theoretical Context

While research is limited related to parent involvement within foreign language immersion programs, several researchers have examined parent participation, perceptions, or motivation through various theoretical frameworks in dual language immersion settings.

Frameworks on parent involvement that have been applied to the dual language context include the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model, Joyce Epstein's typology on parent involvement, and the Ecologies of Parental Engagement (EPE) framework by Calabrese Barton et al. (2004). These frameworks have been examined through several theoretical lenses, including Foucault's theories of power, social capital theory, and neoliberal multilingualism.

Porter (2018) used social capital theory to investigate how traditional parent involvement models, such as Epstein's six types of parent involvement, may exclude diverse families and place limitations on dual language programs. This study was in the context of a two-way immersion program in which both English-speaking majority students and English Language Learners (ELL) learn together through the medium of the Spanish Language. It sought to create meaningful parent engagement that addressed the cultural diversity of its student population. Porter (2018) found that parents sought meaningful collaborations with other parents regardless of language group (English-native or Spanish) yet needed some support from the school to help foster collaboration.

Ee (2017) also used a social capital lens when examining a Korean dual language program. The study focused on how parent involvement is linked to parent demographic features and other parent-related variables and what obstacles may hinder parent involvement. Ee (2017) found two distinct areas of parent involvement in the dual language program: parent interactions and parent participation. Parent interactions mainly occurred between the same racial or linguistic groups, while parent participation involved parents' efforts to connect to the school through personnel and events (Ee, 2017). Ee (2017) found that, contrary to common beliefs of social capital theory, non-White, Latino parents participated in the school more than any other parent group, indicating high levels of social and cultural capital. The study also revealed that

parent involvement was not critically impacted by differing parent demographic features as one would expect, and to increase overall parent engagement, parents needed multiple and various types of networks that connected them with the school community (Ee, 2017).

One of the few parent-focused studies that looked at foreign language immersion programs, rather than the more typical two-way immersion programs, was by Wesely and Baig (2012). This study sought to explore parents' reasons for enrollment into a FLIP and how parents decided to continue or not when transitioning to middle school. Using the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of parent involvement, Wesely and Baig (2012) examined parent statements against the notions of role construction and a sense of efficacy in their decision to enroll in an immersion program. The authors found that parents had high role construction and self-efficacy, which supported the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler parent involvement model and felt this demonstrated that helping English-native students to become bilingual required more than pedagogy or policy, but also support from family and community (Wesely & Baig, 2012).

Two studies examined barriers to parent involvement, one in an Irish immersion school in Ireland and one in a French-minority language school in Canada. Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) looked at parents' perceptions of challenges that hindered their involvement in an Irish immersion school utilizing the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parent involvement process. In this study, the authors found that it was the parents who had a narrow view of involvement in their children's education that focused largely on helping children in the target language of Irish, which they felt uncomfortable doing. Beyond that, parents' sense of efficacy correlated to how they viewed their roles, which again pointed to language as a barrier in the various forms of involvement. MacPhee (2021) examined parents who did not speak French or only one parent spoke French and had students attending a French-minority language

school in Canada. The author examined what barriers existed to parent involvement for these parents. This study mirrored the findings of Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) in that parents did not feel they could be active in school due to their lack of French language knowledge, and they also struggled at home to assist students with homework. MacPhee highlighted the need for parents to understand forms of parent involvement that would support student language learning even if parents were not familiar with the language themselves, such as supporting overall language development through the development of the child's home language.

A final study that examined parent involvement at a Spanish immersion elementary school, a foreign language immersion program with a majority of English-speaking students, used the Ecology of Parental Engagement (EPE) framework and Foucault's theories of power (Aguayo & Dorner, 2017). Using a Thinking with Theory approach, the researchers examined parent perceptions of the school climate and policies. The EPE framework was designed to shift the ideas of parent involvement from "deficit-oriented foci" where schools invite parents on the school's terms, to parents as agents who seek out places and activities to engage in (Aguayo & Dorner, 2017, p. 5). Aguayo and Dorner (2017) found that there was a need to integrate more fully marginalized families in educational policy development and implementation and that to have collaborative partnerships with parents, the norm of top-down knowledge should be challenged.

The studies by Porter (2018) and Ee (2017) illustrate the need for parents in immersion settings to have social support networks in and outside of the school to foster collaboration and involvement. The studies by Wesely and Baig (2012), Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013), and MacPhee (2021) illustrate unique issues within immersion settings that affect parent involvement. The present study will add to this research by examining how parental role

construction and sense of efficacy affect parent involvement and how social influences, such as the school's leadership, teachers, and other parents, may influence parental role construction and the sense of efficacy of parents in an immersion setting. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parent involvement process as revised by Walker et al. (2005) will be extended by exploring how schools may influence parental role construction and a sense of efficacy in parents.

Problem Statement

The problem is there is a lack of understanding of parents' motivations for involvement, their experiences, and actual involvement in foreign language immersion programs (MacPhee, 2021). This understanding is needed to address any challenges parents face and identify strategies to help parents overcome these challenges (MacPhee, 2021). As their child is learning a foreign language in which parents may not be fluent, some parents may be unsure of how to construct their roles in relation to their child's education or understand how their own sense of efficacy may influence their motivations for involvement. Howard et al. (2018) have expressed that a key feature of effective foreign language immersion programs is the support and involvement of families. Soltero (2016) affirms the importance of family and community, noting it is one of three pillars that supports a successful language immersion program. Lindholm-Leary (2003) states effective programs incorporate varied methods of collaboration between home and school. In the context of foreign language immersion programs, there is a need to understand parent involvement, which in turn may build greater support and sustainability of immersion programs. The area of parent involvement, specifically parental role construction and parents' sense of efficacy in relation to foreign language immersion programs, or dual language education in general, has not previously been studied extensively. Past studies on parents within dual

language education have tended to focus on parent motivations for enrollment, parent satisfaction, parent investment in the program, or parent perceptions (Aguayo & Dorner, 2017; Call et al, 2018; Chaparro, 2019; Ee, 2017; Oliveira et al., 2020; Olivos & Lucero, 2020; Porter 2018; Ryan, 2020; Sung, 2020; Watson, 2021; Zheng, 2021). Much of these studies have focused on predominantly White, middle-class parents or on Spanish-speaking, working class parents who participated in two-way language immersion programs geared toward aiding English language learners to become fluent in English without losing their home language and helping English-speaking students become fluent in a second language (Call et al., 2018; Chaparro, 2019; Ee, 2017; Oliveira et al., 2020; Olivos & Lucero, 2020; Porter, 2018; Ryan, 2020). Studies are lacking on how parent involvement is tied to parents' role construction and their self-efficacy in foreign language immersion programs designed for majority English-speaking students, as well as research into immersion programs that offer other languages beyond the more commonly researched languages of Spanish and French, such as German or Japanese (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; Sung, 2020).

Beyond foreign language immersion programs, there is a general call to better understand parental role construction and parents' sense of efficacy in relation to their children's education (Curry & Holter, 2019; Liu & Leighton, 2021; Zambrana et al., 2019). Further, there are calls to understand how societal factors influence parent motivations for involvement (Curry & Holter, 2019; Erol & Turhan, 2018; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018; Willis et al., 2021). In this study, the lived experiences of parents whose children have attended at least two years at a K-5 foreign language immersion program is examined to understand how parents' role construction and sense of efficacy may influence their motivation to be involved. In understanding how parents decide to

become involved and how societal factors may influence their decisions to become involved, schools can better answer the needs of parents to enhance overall parent involvement.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Parental role construction was generally defined as parents' beliefs about their role in relation to their children's education, and parents' sense of efficacy was generally defined as a parents' confidence in their ability to successfully support their children's education. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parent involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005) was used in this study to examine how parents constructed their role in relation to their children's education and how their sense of efficacy affected their involvement in their children's education in a foreign language immersion program. In evaluating parental role construction and parent sense of efficacy as it relates to parent involvement within the context of foreign language immersion programs, school districts can work to ensure there are supports in place for parents to successfully engage with and support the goals of the immersion program.

Significance of the Study

This study adds to the literature in two areas by researching parent involvement and foreign language immersion programs. Parent involvement research benefits from the examination of factors that contribute to parental motivation to become involved in their children's education in the under-researched area of foreign language immersion programs. Most prior research has focused on two-way immersion programs that are geared toward a different demographic and serve a different purpose—to aid English language learners in becoming

proficient in English and allow English-speaking students to become fluent in a second language (Aguayo & Dorner, 2017; Oliveira et al., 2020; Olivos & Lucero, 2020). These studies focus on the power dynamics and roles of parents from different backgrounds, specifically middle-class parents who tend to be predominantly White and Latino parents of typically lower socioeconomic status and often immigrant origins. Understanding the contributing factors of parental role construction and sense of efficacy in relation to parent involvement in the context of foreign language immersion programs contributes to the current knowledge on parent involvement from a theoretical, empirical, and practical standpoint.

Theoretical Significance

Research on parent involvement continually finds that conceptions and practices of schools regarding parent involvement continue to focus on school-driven parent involvement, where teachers or staff set the terms for engagement and expect parents to participate (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). This approach seems to extend from a lack of understanding of parent perspectives on parent involvement (Curry & Holter, 2019; Preston et al., 2019; Zambrana et al., 2019). The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005) posits that there are several factors that influence parents' decision-making to become involved in their children's education. These include: (a) motivational beliefs of parental role construction and sense of efficacy; (b) parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from the school, teacher, or child; and (c) parents' perceived life contexts, such as knowledge and skills or time and energy (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) have expressed that understanding *why* parents become involved is necessary to gain a clearer understanding of *what* parents do and *how* their actions influence student outcomes [Emphasis in original].

The revised model of the parental involvement process illustrates the multidimensional nature of parent involvement and shows how several factors influence how parents choose to become involved (Whitaker, 2019). The motivational factors of parental role construction and parents' sense of efficacy that are examined in this present study are social constructs that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) state can change over time. In their own research, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) have found that parents' involvement decisions were influenced by schools, which suggests that schools can actively take steps to foster greater parental role construction and sense of efficacy to support children's learning. The present study extends the application of the framework by examining how parent relationships and interactions with school leadership, staff, and other parents may influence parental role construction and sense of efficacy in a foreign language immersion context. It also adapts the framework that has been used for mostly quantitative research for a more in-depth qualitative look at the beliefs and behaviors of parents in relation to involvement in their children's education.

Empirical Significance

Parent and community support is one of the essential elements of a successful immersion program (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2003; Soltero, 2016). For immersion programs to work, a high level of commitment is required by all, from individual students to policymakers, administrators to parents alike (Johnson & Swain, 1997). It is necessary to understand how parents construct their roles in relation to their children's education and how their sense of efficacy influences their involvement in relation to their children's education in a foreign language immersion program to enhance parent involvement and achieve the commitment and support necessary for immersion programs. This study adds to the existing knowledge of parent involvement and examines how parent involvement may influence the success of immersion

programs. Most schools continue to utilize a deficit model of parent involvement that positions parents as subjects to be used as school needs dictate (Ee, 2017; Olivos & Lucero, 2020; Porter, 2018). This study examines the factors that motivate parents to become involved to answer the existing calls of the need to better understand parent perspectives on parent involvement (Curry & Holter, 2019; Liu & Leighton, 2021; Zambrana et al., 2019). Researchers also call for more exploration of how social factors may influence parents' beliefs and motivations to become involved (Curry & Holter, 2019; Erol & Turhan, 2018; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018; Willis et al., 2021). This study answers that call by examining the motivational factors of parental role construction and the sense of efficacy of parents in a foreign language immersion program. Further, much of the research on dual language programs focus on two-way immersion programs designed for ELL students (Chaparro, 2019; Ee, 2017; Oliveira et al., 2020; Olivos & Lucero, 2020). This current study adds to the literature by examining a foreign language immersion program designed for English-native students from diverse backgrounds.

Practical Significance

As parent support is one of the key pillars of successful foreign language immersion programs, it is necessary to understand the factors that influence parents' decisions to become involved. The few studies that have examined parent experiences regarding their motivations for or barriers to involvement in foreign language immersion contexts show that some parents do not get involved because they do not feel able to support their children who are learning in a language the parents do not know or feel comfortable using (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; MacPhee, 2021). The current programs examined in this study, unlike the above studies, allows for English to be used throughout the school and in communications with parents. However,

most of the instructional time for students is spent using only the foreign language being learned, thus parents may still feel an inability to be involved.

Further, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) argue that the motivating factors of parental role construction and parents' sense of efficacy are influenced by social contexts, meaning that the actions or inactions of schools may influence parent involvement whether intended to or not. It is important to understand how schools may influence parents to become involved. In examining this area, schools may better act to support parents who do not feel they are able to be involved or don't believe it is their responsibility to be involved. As immersion programs seek to build sociocultural competence of their students, they must also seek to build it amongst the entire school community by understanding the factors that influence parents of diverse backgrounds to become involved in their children's education.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide the study focus on parental role construction and sense of efficacy in relation to foreign language immersion programs. To expand foreign language immersion programs, making them a more mainstream schooling option, research is needed to understand how parents view their role and abilities in supporting their children's education in immersion programs. The following research questions guide the study.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of parents whose children have attended a K-5 foreign language immersion program regarding their motivational beliefs towards involvement in their children's education?

Sub-Question One

How do parents construct their role in relation to their children's education in a foreign language immersion program?

Sub-Question Two

How does parents' sense of efficacy influence their involvement in relation to their children's education in a foreign language immersion program?

Sub-Question Three

How do parents describe the influence, if any, of social factors (leadership, staff, and other parents) on their parental role construction or sense of efficacy in relation to involvement in a foreign language immersion program?

Definitions

There are many terms used when discussing foreign language immersion programs. The below definitions assist in understanding the topic of study.

1. *Bilingual* – “the ability to use more than one language” (Bybee et al., 2014).
2. *Dual Language* – “any program that provides literacy and content instruction to all students through two languages and that promotes bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic achievement, and sociocultural competence” (Howard et al., 2018)
3. *Immersion* – “a method of foreign-language instruction in which the regular school curriculum is taught through the medium of a second language” (Lindholm-Leary, 2003).
4. *Parent involvement* – “the sum of activities parents perform with their children in the context of learning” (Freund et al., 2018).

5. *Parental role construction* – “parents’ beliefs about the actions they should undertake for and with their children, developed as a function of their membership in varied family, community, and school groups” (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).
6. *Parent sense of efficacy* – parents’ belief that they have the skills or knowledge needed to help their children, that their children will be able to learn what they have to teach, and that they can find other sources skills or knowledge when needed (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand parents’ lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children’s education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. The problem is there is a lack of understanding when it comes to parents’ motivations for involvement, as well as their experiences and involvement in foreign language immersion programs (MacPhee, 2021). Historically, there has been a downturn in parent involvement in children’s education even though research shows the positive impact of parent involvement. Socially, the low parent involvement seen in schools may be a result of a disconnect between parents and schools and what constitutes involvement. Theoretically, parents of students in foreign language immersion programs face unique challenges when it comes to involvement with their child’s education. The research questions that guide this study focus on parental role construction and parent sense of efficacy in relation to parents’ motivations for involvement. Understanding how parents view their role and how confident they are to be of help to their child will benefit schools when

recruiting families, educating parents on helping their child, and designing parent involvement within foreign language immersion programs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. To that end, this study's theoretical framework pulls from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised by Walker et al. (2005). This framework is used because it goes beyond examining general parent involvement activities to better understand the psychological processes that guide parents' involvement in their child's education. A description of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005), and why it fits, this study is discussed below. A review of literature follows that covers the topic areas related to the study that include: (1) parent involvement, including other theoretical approaches to parent involvement, parental role construction, and self-efficacy, and how social aspects may impact parent involvement; (2) an overview of foreign language immersion programs; and (3) parent involvement research in foreign language immersion programs. A summary that highlights the need for the present study concludes the chapter.

Theoretical Framework

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised by Walker et al. (2005) guided this study. The first iteration of the model was developed from a review of developmental, educational, and social psychology research. In this model, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) sought to address overlooked areas of parent involvement that included; (1) why parents become involved, (2) how they choose the specific areas of involvement, and (3) how parent involvement influences student outcomes. The original model

contained five levels. The first level described factors that determine why parents become involved, which Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) believed was influenced by parents' construction of their role in their child's education, their sense of efficacy to be successful in helping their child succeed, and from general requests from the school or their child to be involved. The second level addressed how parents choose specific forms of involvement based on their own knowledge and skills, the time and energy they have to be involved, and the specific invitations for involvement. The third level addressed the mechanisms through which child outcomes are influenced by parent involvement which include modeling, reinforcement, or instruction. The fourth level discussed the tempering variables that affect the influence of parent involvement on child outcomes such as the use of appropriate involvement strategies and how well parent involvement actions and the expectations of the school fit together. The fifth and final level addressed the child outcomes to parent involvement to include the child's own skills and knowledge, as well as their personal sense of self-efficacy for being successful in school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). At the time, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) felt the model had certain advantages over other discourses on parent involvement in that the model identified parent involvement as a dynamic process that occurred over time and suggested that a combination of parental, school, societal, and child contributions played a part in the involvement process. This model, while supportive of the end goal of improving parent involvement, was more of an attempt to explain the involvement process and its influence rather than recommend specific practice (Walker et al., 2005). While it recognized the existence of sociological factors that may influence family-school relationships, it only provided a psychological perspective of parents who were already involved in their child's schooling (Walker et al., 2005).

The current study relied on the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model for the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005). This revised model emerged from a few specific changes that the authors felt necessary based on results from research that utilized the original model. In the revised model, the first level represents the psychological foundation of parental involvement behavior, which consists of three constructs that together predict why parents become involved: (1) parental role construction and self-efficacy combine to become the overarching theme of a parents' motivational beliefs; (2) parental perceptions of general invitations from the school, as well as perceptions of specific invitations from the child or the child's teacher combine to become the overarching theme of parents' perceptions of requests for involvement from others; and finally, a third overarching theme is parents' perceived life contexts which include a parents' perceptions of the time and energy they have available and the skills and knowledge they have for involvement (Walker et al., 2005). Walker et al. (2005) also revised the second level, representing the forms parent involvement takes, either as home-based behaviors or school-based behaviors.

Motivators for Involvement

This study focused on the first level of the framework—parental motivators for involvement. While the main focus was on parental role construction and parental self-efficacy as personal motivators for involvement, the study also touched on the contextual motivators of requests for involvement and life context motivators of time, energy, and knowledge as these forms of motivation reveal the social aspects that may influence involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) believed these three types of motivators combined to predict a parent's reasons for involvement or lack of involvement.

Parental Role Construction and Self-Efficacy

Parental role construction is the beliefs parents hold about what they should do in relation to their child's education (Whitaker, 2019). Role construction is formed from a parent's own experiences and can alter over time from social influences and interactions with individuals or groups related to school (Green et al., 2007). Parents who have a more active role construction are more likely to become involved in their child's education than parents with less active role construction beliefs (Green et al., 2007). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) state that having role construction beliefs that include personal involvement in a child's education would be a necessary precursor to actual involvement but are not sufficient alone. A parent must not only have the belief that their role should be an active one in their child's education, but also then be able to act on that role belief. To do this a parent must have the belief that he or she has the abilities necessary for involvement.

Parental self-efficacy is the belief parents hold about how successful they will be in helping their child (Whitaker, 2019). It is the parents' confidence in their own ability to help their child. Perceived self-efficacy, in general, influences the activities or situations people will place themselves in, avoiding activities they feel incapable of handling successfully while engaging in activities in which they feel capable of being successful (Bandura, 1977). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) believe personal sense of efficacy comes from four things: (1) the success a parent has had in other involvement or related activities, (2) the indirect experience of others' success in involvement or related activities, (3) persuasion by social influences that involvement is beneficial and the parent can be involved, and (4) the emotional desire to help that may arise when issues of importance such as the child's academic success are in question. Parental self-efficacy toward helping their child be successful influences the parents' own goals and helps to shape their beliefs on what they should do regarding their child's education (Walker

et al., 2005) Parental self-efficacy is believed to be a necessary condition for parental involvement, and if combined with an active parental role construction, may be sufficient to elicit actual involvement.

Both role construction and a sense of efficacy can be socially influenced (Whitaker, 2019). Social influences from individuals or groups can alter parents' role construction and self-efficacy as they may learn through observation of others, witness others' successes, and may receive encouragement from others to be involved (Curry et al., 2019). Educators need to understand parents' perceptions of their own role in the educational process, the educational process itself, and the parent's self-efficacy beliefs to create beneficial partnerships (Whitaker, 2019).

Contextual and Life Context Motivators

The contextual motivators of parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement also influence parents' decisions to become involved and how they become involved. Invitations for involvement may come from the child, the teacher, or the school. Invitations from the school and teacher communicate to parents that their involvement is desired and welcomed (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Invitations from children are powerful because they reveal the need and desire for parental support (Walker et al., 2005). Research has shown that invitations from children are often the strongest predictor of parent involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green et al., 2007; Kigobe et al., 2019). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) do explicitly state, however, that invitations from the child, the school, or the teacher alone are not sufficient conditions for involvement as "they do not have the power in themselves to create either parental role conceptions that include active involvement or a positive sense of efficacy for helping children succeed in school" (p. 316).

Life context motivators such as the time and energy parents can devote to helping their child, the skills or knowledge they have to help their child, or the social capital they possess to get the help their child needs can also influence parents' involvement in their child's education. Walker et al. (2005) hypothesized that the perceived life context of parents plays a moderator role between the other two types of motivating factors (personal and contextual) and a parents' chosen form of involvement. Life context factors are not easily changed (Whitaker, 2019). Parents who do not have the time or energy to be involved are less likely to be involved. Parents who feel they lack the appropriate skills or knowledge to help their child are less likely to be involved. Parents who lack the social capital to know who or what their child may need to succeed may not be able to be involved whether the desire is there or not. N.E. Hill et al. (2016) show in their study that parental self-efficacy varied by ethnicity. While Latino parents report low levels of parental sense of efficacy, potentially as they had less knowledge on how to be involved, African American parents report high levels of parental sense of efficacy and higher involvement. These findings show the potential effects social capital and knowledge of education, in general, may have on parent involvement.

Applying the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

Utilizing the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005), several studies have examined parent involvement in a variety of contexts (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green et al., 2007; Kigobe, 2018; Zambrana et al., 2019). This parental involvement process model increases researchers' understandings of family involvement by illustrating how parent involvement efforts potentially contribute to developing and maintaining important academic behaviors and beliefs (Whitaker, 2019). It emphasizes parent involvement as a multidimensional process with multiple variables that influence how

parents become involved and what student outcomes result (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Whitaker, 2019). While the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model has several levels to parent involvement, it was not designed to be examined as a structural equation model, rather it allows researchers to examine specific questions of parent involvement, such as what motivates parents to become involved and how they choose specific forms of involvement (Green et al., 2007). It provides a framework for exploring the relationship between parents' beliefs and their actual involvement behaviors (Walker et al., 2005). It also considers the area of home-based parent involvement, which can often be overlooked by schools and policymakers (Anderson & Minke, 2007). This framework of parent involvement allows researchers to examine the processes and variables related to parents' decision-making and behaviors that underscore their choice to be involved in their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

In the present study, the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005) will be utilized to examine parental role construction and self-efficacy of parents in a foreign language immersion program. Both role construction and self-efficacy are social constructs that can alter over time (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). This study utilizes this concept and extends the application of the framework by examining how interactions with the leadership and staff of the school, as well as other parents and the community, may influence these two parental factors. Also, as the revised version from Walker et al. (2005) of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) framework is designed as a quantitative measure that may provide only limited information, this study utilizes the framework in a qualitative manner through interviews, focus groups, and a questionnaire to examine the beliefs and behaviors of parents that influence parent involvement in depth.

Related Literature

Parent involvement is a “multidimensional construct” with much disagreement over exactly what it encompasses (Anderson & Minke, 2007, p. 317; Boonk et al., 2018). This study will utilize Freund et al.’s (2018) definition that considers parent involvement to be the total of activities parents participate in with their child in their child’s education. As parent involvement is a vast, complex topic, I do not attempt to study it in its entirety. Instead, I examine two aspects that influence parents’ motivations or decisions to become involved: their role construction, or what they believe they should do in relation to their child’s education, and their self-efficacy, or their beliefs in how successful they will be in helping their child. The study of these two factors is taken further as I examine the social forces of school leadership, staff, or other parents that may influence parents’ role construction and self-efficacy. As parent involvement is a multifaceted topic, covering it in detail is not possible. Instead, this review of literature will briefly discuss the general topic of parent involvement. Much of this review will focus on the specific aspects of parents’ decision-making process to become involved in their children’s education and how social forces can influence this process. I will then discuss pertinent literature that helps illustrate the chosen setting of a foreign language immersion program and provide a synthesis of research on parent involvement thus far that has been completed in the foreign language immersion context.

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement has been the topic of research for more than 50 years. Numerous research studies and meta-analyses have shown that students benefit from parent involvement in a myriad of ways, from improved skills and knowledge, higher motivation, higher rates of graduation and school attendance, to increased self-efficacy and attitudes toward education

(Boonk et al., 2018; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; N.E. Hill & Tyson, 2009; Willis et al., 2021). In conducting a meta-analysis of parent involvement research, Barger et al. (2019) has shown that parents' involvement had a significant and positive association with children's achievement, engagement, motivation, and social and emotional adjustment. Beyond that, the strongest influencer of school climate is the social interactions that occur between parents and school staff (Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). The importance of parent involvement has been illustrated in government policies, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that emphasized parent involvement and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 that sets specific requirements for family engagement, along with numerous federal education programs including specific requirements to address family engagement (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). These policies, along with numerous state and local policies include calls for schools to work to engage all parents at school and at home in their child's education (Epstein et al., 2019). With a myriad of positive effects exhibited throughout research findings, parent involvement has become a crucial element to nearly all attempts at extensive school reform (Curry & Holter, 2019).

While research shows the positive effects of parent involvement on a child's education, along with the recent increased emphasis on parent involvement through policy and reforms, school efforts to involve parents have not been consistent (Curry & Holter, 2019). This inconsistency may be a result of schools continuing to focus their parent involvement efforts on traditional activities such as volunteering or attending school-based events. In fact, Goodall (2018) has supported this idea with the belief that the gap exists because schools continue to focus on getting parents into the school even when research findings continue to argue that the goal should be to increase parent involvement at home. Schools too often utilize a standard approach to parent involvement policies or practices that fail to address parents' unique life

contexts and viewpoints when it comes to supporting their child's education (Posey-Maddox & Haley-Lock, 2020). Outreach efforts of schools may not be effective for every parent as parents are as diverse as the students (Marschall & Shah, 2020). Beyond that, role orientations may differ from parent to parent as to how or when to be involved. What results is a disconnect between parents and schools as to what constitutes parent involvement (Curry & Holter, 2019). The disconnect between families and schools as to what parent involvement is illustrates a need to understand the perspectives of parents more clearly (Curry et al., 2019). Schools do not often consider the psychological aspects of parent involvement, yet these aspects can play a critical role in student outcomes (Froiland, 2020).

Factors Affecting Parent Involvement

Much of the parent involvement disconnect may stem from schools that are still designed to fit the White, middle-class orientation (Henderson et al., 2020). Studies reveal that parent involvement may differ depending on social-economic status (SES), household type, ethnicity, or home-school dissonance (Brown et al., 2022; Gokturk & Dinckal, 2017). Brown et al. (2022) have found that single-parents, stay-at-home mothers, or those who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds all showed reduced levels of involvement. Gokturk & Dinckal (2017) reveal in their study that though most parents studied had middle to high SES, their involvement was still low because of life circumstances such as both parents working outside of the home or were of single-parent households. In a review of studies on parent involvement, Ha (2021) notes that parent SES did have a positive relationship with children's academic outcomes. In relation to the current study, though, it is important to note that parents with more positive role beliefs tended to be more involved with their child's learning regardless of their lower SES.

Another reason the parent involvement disconnect may continue is based on the concept of home-school dissonance. Home-school dissonance (HSD) refers to the differing expectations, values, or beliefs between the home and school (Henderson et al., 2020). HSD is most associated with Latino, African American, or other racially, ethnically, or socio-economically diverse families due once again to the fact that schools may continue to promote the White, middle-class norms. Parents may also recall their own negative experiences with school, which in turn can impact their involvement (Cook, 2022). All the factors influencing parent involvement illustrate the need to understand the parent perspective in relation to involvement in their child's education. Without this knowledge, schools may be inadequately prepared to promote successful parent involvement initiatives.

Models of Parent Involvement

Other models or theories on parent involvement fail to address the psychological aspects of parent involvement in the same way as the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model as revised in Walker et al. (2005). A commonly utilized framework when researching parent involvement is Epstein's typology of parent involvement as discussed in Epstein et al. (2002). This framework focuses on six categories of involvement; (1) school-home communication, (2) school assistance for families, (3) ways families assist schools, (4) learning activities at home, (5) parent involvement in decision making processes within the school, and (6) community partner collaborations. While Epstein's typology is a good guiding framework for schools who hope to improve parent involvement, it fails to really consider parent involvement that goes beyond the school walls, does not consider the importance of social networks on parent involvement, or considers culturally, ethnically, or economically diverse families (Porter, 2018). It fails to understand the why and how of parent involvement. Teachers and school continually

focus and rely on these traditional forms of parent involvement promoted by Epstein (Preston et al., 2018). Parent involvement according to Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) consists of three types: behavioral, personal, and cognitive/intellectual involvement. Behavioral involvement includes active engagement of the parent in the school through volunteering, meetings, or other school-related activities. Personal involvement is when a parent actively discusses and seeks to communicate interest and understanding about a child's education. Cognitive/intellectual involvement includes parents engaging in educational or stimulating activities either at school, home or in the community with their child. Again, these areas of involvement focus on things parents do, but they do not adequately attempt to understand the why or how of their involvement. Studies that have utilized Grolnick and Slowiaczek's parent involvement model at least touch on the idea of parent motivations for involvement but lack significant explanation of how parents' motivations influence their involvement. Instead, they focus on the specific ways parents engage with their child, not why they do (Lerner et al., 2022). More recent parent involvement models, such as the Ecologies of Parental Engagement framework by Barton et al. (2004) or the Dual Navigation Approach by Jeynes (2018) do a job better at recognizing the complexity of parental involvement. These approaches consider parent involvement beyond the school walls to better include involvement activities at home and within the community, recognizing that the most beneficial parent involvement indeed includes home involvement. They also recognize the diverse backgrounds and life circumstances of parents, as well as give some consideration for how parents view involvement. However, Jeynes (2018) still focuses on activities parents engage in rather than motivations for involvement. While Barton et al. (2004) does include parental beliefs about engagement practices, as well as their life contexts and available resources for engagement, its main purpose is to "understand the interconnections

between ‘what’ parents engage in and ‘how’ they manage to do so” (p. 3). It does not necessarily consider their motivations, or their why, for involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parent involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005) seeks to understand why parents become involved in their child’s education and how they choose to be involved.

Engaging parents in their children’s education requires an understanding of parents’ perceptions and motivations for involvement. Such understanding comes through a process of examining parents’ motivations for involvement through their role construction and self-efficacy. Understanding parents’ perceptions of their children’s education and how they view their role regarding that education is important to foster successful partnerships (Whitaker, 2019). Studies show a majority of parents desire to be partners in their child’s education, but there is a disconnect between school and home as to where the responsibility lies in educating the child (Wilder, 2017). When schools and parents have a shared understanding of what constitutes involvement, they can facilitate effective partnerships that potentially increase parental motivations for continued involvement throughout their child’s education (Curry et al., 2019).

Parental Role Construction and Efficacy

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) posit that parents’ involvement decisions are grounded in several constructs formed by their own experiences and beliefs, as well as outside influences. It is thought that the most influential factors in parents’ decisions on involvement come from their own beliefs rooted in their own role construction and self-efficacy in support of their child’s education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or student grade levels, studies show parent involvement is influenced by parents’ perceptions of their role in their children’s education and

the self-efficacy they possess to perform that role (Curry et al., 2019). Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) share parents continually indicate they are unsure of what they need to do to be involved.

Parents' role construction is their beliefs about what they are supposed to do in relation to their child's education (Whitaker, 2019). The way in which parents view their roles in relation to their child's education is critical, as parents who view their role as simply making sure their child gets to school each day, and then the school takes it from there may not be inclined to be actively involved (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parental role construction is partially determined by personal experiences and partially by what others say their role should be (Whitaker, 2019). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggest role construction is influenced by how parents define their parental role, their notions of child development and raising children, and their ideas on what constitutes appropriate support roles for their child's education at home. Role construction in the context of children's education may develop from the parent's own school experiences and memories, from past interactions with or the expectations of teachers, and their own memories of childhood interactions with parents, teachers, and other school staff. Parents most likely combine their own childhood experiences with their current experiences of school in relation to their own child to develop their personal role in relation to their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parental role construction is viewed to be important because it seemingly establishes the range of activities parents deem important and necessary that they may do in support of their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parental role construction is not enough to predict parent involvement, however, parents who hold the belief that it is their duty to help educate their child will be more likely to be involved in their child's education (Curry et al., 2019; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995).

Parents' self-efficacy is the beliefs parents have regarding their own ability to help their child be successful in school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). In general, people will avoid situations in which they feel they lack the capability to adequately handle but will get involved in situations or activities if they feel they possess the necessary skills to handle it successfully (Bandura, 1977). Parents who believe they have the skills or knowledge to support their child are more likely to become involved, whereas parents who do not feel they are able to help their child may not feel comfortable getting involved in the school or at home (Curry & Holter, 2019; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Parents will act in a way that they believe will produce positive outcomes. If they believe their involvement will not yield a positive outcome, such as their child's success, they are less likely to become involved.

Studies support the notion that both parental role construction and self-efficacy influence the decisions parents make on whether to be involved or not in their child's education (Whitaker, 2019). For instance, Green et al. (2007) have shown that motivational beliefs (role construction and self-efficacy), along with perceptions of invitations to be involved and life contexts, predicted both school and home-based involvement. Zambrana et al. (2019) have linked higher parental role construction and parental self-efficacy to higher reading scores in a study of Latino parents and their young children. Liu and Leighton (2021) have found that parental self-efficacy positively predicted mathematics achievement in students. More interestingly, Liu and Leighton (2021) have discovered that parental self-efficacy beliefs positively predicted parental role construction. This finding suggests the intertwined nature of the two constructs, in which parents who believe they can help their child with school are more likely to feel that it is their role to help their child with school. This is in line with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) who posited that parental role construction was not a sufficient condition alone to predict parent

involvement, but when combined with parents' sense of efficacy, it did provide a good indicator of parent involvement motivations. The Zambrana et al. (2019) study also found this to be true in that there was no direct relationship between parental role construction and parent involvement. Gruchel et al. (2022) also found that parental role construction is strongly related to parental sense of efficacy, showing the two concepts can be combined to form motivational beliefs. In a study on the mediating effects of parental self-efficacy and parent involvement on the link between parents' socioeconomic status and their child's academic achievement, Tazouti and Jarlegan (2019) show that there is a strong link between high parental self-efficacy and parent involvement. This fits the notion Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) posit that states parents who possess higher sense of efficacy have a better understanding of their parental role and tend to be more involved. Finally, Kigobe et al.'s (2019) findings in their study on parental involvement in Tanzania show that parental role construction can be influenced by social and contextual factors.

It is important to note that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) recognized that parent involvement could occur beyond the school walls. Parents may engage in either school-based involvement, home-based involvement, or both. Role construction and self-efficacy not only influence whether parents become involved or not, but also how, when, and where they become involved. For example, in a recent study by Yamamoto et al. (2022) examining Chinese immigrant parents' forms of involvement, the authors show how school-based involvement is less common for this demographic, but they possess strong role construction in their duty to support learning at home. The authors illustrate how cultural values and norms play a part in parental role construction and in the ways in which parents choose to become involved. Marschall and Shah (2020) confirm this notion, stating that role orientations that differ from the

majority may place minority parents at a disadvantage when schools work to enhance their parent involvement due to a lack of understanding of such role orientations. It is important for schools to include home-based involvement in their parent involvement strategies as studies continue to show that home-based involvement is a higher predictor for student academic achievement than school-based involvement (Puccioni et al., 2020).

Beyond where parent involvement may occur, either at school or in the home, it can also differ based on the age of the child. In general, parent involvement shows a decline as the child gets older (Green et al., 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Part of this decline may be attributed to parents no longer receiving requests from the child or school to be involved (Wei et al., 2019). Parental role construction and self-efficacy may also change over time as the child gets older. This may be the case, as research by Boonk et al. (2018) shows that parent involvement does not necessarily decline, but the form of involvement may change as the child gets older. Children in their early elementary years may benefit from active involvement from their parents such as reading to them or attending school activities. In middle or high school, however, children may benefit more from parents who set high academic expectations and provide the environment for children to develop their own academic motivations (Boonk et al., 2018).

While parental role construction and self-efficacy have been shown to play a part in parents' decisions to become involved, research is still scant on understanding the factors that increase role construction or self-efficacy beliefs (Curry et al., 2019). Results from studies like Kigobe et al. (2019) show the need to further address the potential social influences on parental role construction and sense of efficacy. Understanding the factors that enhance role construction

and self-efficacy beliefs in parents may assist in understanding the motivations of parents to be involved and thus lead to creating supports that help increase involvement.

Social Influences on Parental Role Construction and Self-Efficacy

Parental role construction and self-efficacy beliefs are not set in stone. These variables are subject to change or grow over time and may be influenced by outside forces (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Qualitative studies that have sought parent perspectives on parent involvement have shown that often parents want to support their child's education, but they simply don't know what to do (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020). Research shows that parents' beliefs on what they can do or should do for their child's education may be shaped by outside forces such as communication from school or invitations from teachers (Liu & Leighton, 2021; Park & Holloway, 2018). Parent behaviors can be directly influenced by their social environment as well as indirectly by the social environment effects on their role beliefs (Çetin & Demircan, 2022). Parental role construction is socially constructed and generally grounded in the norms, expectations, and attitudes of other participants within the social setting of the school (Whitaker, 2019). Kigobe et al. (2019) support this statement as their study revealed that parental role construction is a socially based concept which can be influenced by other contextual factors. For instance, while parental role construction may not have a direct effect on parent involvement, at least when discussing school-based involvement, there is an indirect effect when combined with specific invitations from the child or school, as well as parental perceived time and energy (Kigobe et al., 2019). Educational roles frequently form from observing and modeling others, thus parents may construct their roles and build their self-efficacy through the social contexts related to the school (Curry & Holter, 2019; Park & Holloway, 2018). Empirical research shows that parents get their cues from the school, other parents, and the community (Park & Holloway,

2018; Liu & Leighton, 2021). Park and Holloway (2018) show that schools can “create a social context in which parents construct their role and build their capacity” to help their children succeed (p. 27).

As Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) note, two aspects that form a parent’s sense of efficacy are the vicarious experience of others’ successes in being involved in their child’s education and the verbal persuasions of others that call for the parent to become involved. Several studies have shown that specific invitations from children or teachers often have a positive relationship with parent involvement, showing the impact that social cues or requests from others can have on parents to become involved (Freund et al., 2018; Puccioni et al., 2020; Wei et al., 2019). Too often, it is assumed that parents understand their roles and responsibilities, however according to N.E. Hill et al. (2016), this is exactly the information parents desire most from schools. Consistent with previous research, N.E. Hill et al. (2016) have found that parents continually share their desire for more information on how to support their child, indicating that parents would be more involved if they were given the tools and direction as to how best to support their child. The Park and Holloway (2018) study confirm this notion. Parents who feel that the school is welcoming and engages in informative communication practices have a stronger sense of involvement and responsibility and participate in more actual involvement. Research shows that when schools have concerted efforts to engage parents through opportunities for involvement or providing resources and incentives that support and promote parent involvement, overall parent involvement is higher (Marschall & Shah, 2020). This is especially true of Black and Latino schools in which the parent population may not have the same socioeconomic resources or social capital that predominantly White school parents may have. In this case, schools that have more policies and initiatives, such as childcare or

transportation assistance, show higher parent involvement percentages (Marschall & Shah, 2020). In a study of Title 1 or urban schools, Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013) have shown three predictors of parental role construction towards involvement included; (1) the perceptions parents had of school expectations, (2) the climate of the school, and (3) student invitations for involvement. These predictors indicate that the actions schools take to foster overall parent involvement also contribute to the parents' positive role construction regarding their child's education.

When school administrators create an environment of trust and respect, when teachers treat parents as partners in a student's education, and when parents can connect with other parents, parent role construction and self-efficacy are enhanced (Curry & Holter, 2019; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018; Willis et al., 2021). Jung and Sheldon (2020) discuss how principals have both direct and indirect impacts on family engagement through their actions and attitudes. Ratliffe and Ponte (2018) support that argument by saying that principals have a critical role in fostering relationships between families and educators through the participation culture they create. Marschall and Shah (2020) concur, stating that the school leadership has a very crucial role in engaging parents as they can design and execute school policies promoting parent involvement, as well as shaping the school's culture, norms, and expectations. Erol and Turhan (2018) found a significant, positive relationship between schools that practiced distributed leadership and parents' involvement perceptions, showing that providing parents with a role in the school enhances parent involvement overall. Parents who feel the school has a welcoming environment feel more inclined to become involved, indicating that school context can impact a parent's role construction (Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). Oswald et al. (2018) supports this statement as their findings show that higher parent involvement is associated with a higher satisfaction of the

school staff and environment. Parents are more motivated to be involved and actively participate in their child's education when schools build partnerships with parents and create relationships with care and trust. On the opposite end of this, schools that did not communicate their policies on parent involvement or had a lack of policies related to parent involvement created an environment that deterred parents from getting involved, whether intentionally or not (Preston et al., 2018).

Parents who feel teachers treat them as partners feel more empowered to become involved, indicating that a parents' self-efficacy is enhanced through positive interactions with school staff (Jung & Sheldon, 2020). Curry and Holter (2019) confirm this stating parent confidence, or their self-efficacy, is bolstered when teachers treated them as partners in their child's education. Teacher invitations for involvement, even involvement that occurs in the home, can boost parent involvement (Yulianti et al., 2022). Research shows that parents desire to work in partnership with teachers to educate their child, yet some studies continue to show that teachers view the responsibility of educating the child primarily on themselves and only shared with parents to a certain degree (Wilder, 2017). Beyond the school administration and staff, parents who can form relationships with other parents feel empowered by the support these relationships provide in understanding the school, teachers, and other aspects of the educational process (Curry & Holter, 2019). In a study on coparenting effects on parental role activity beliefs and self-efficacy beliefs, Çetin and Demircan (2022), show that the support of the partner predicted significantly and positively the parental role construction and sense of efficacy beliefs of parents. By having the positive support of the coparent, parents were influenced to be involved in their child's education and had higher feelings of being able to successfully support

their child's education. Thus, parents' high role activity beliefs and high self-efficacy positively predicted their school- and home-based involvement.

Relationships parents form with the school, teachers, and other parents can foster involvement as parents increase their access to various resources that may increase their confidence in their abilities and their role to be involved (Curry & Holter, 2019). These relationships increase a parents' social and cultural capital through the social relationships they form surrounding the school, which in turn may lead to increased involvement in their child's education (Whitaker, 2019). Without social and cultural capital built from these relationships, parents may not know how to be involved, even if they desire to be. Increasing parents' social capital allows parents to be better prepared to support their child's education because they can provide the resources their child may need to succeed (Barger et al., 2019). Unfortunately, research that considers how social influences may impact parents' motivations to become involved are few (Curry & Holter, 2019). This study aims to fill that gap by addressing the specific social context of a foreign language immersion program on parents' motivations to become involved.

Foreign Language Immersion Programs

In an ever-increasing globalized world, there is a growing need for individuals in the United States to speak more than one language. For centuries, people around the world have desired to learn another language or languages for many reasons, including colonization, trade, intermarriage, and more (Genesee, 2004). Today, beyond historical reasons, there are new incentives for learning more than one language that includes: (1) a growth in globalization in business and commerce, (2) the increase and advancements in technology that make global communication fast and easy, (3) the immigration of unprecedentedly large numbers of

individuals moving from country to country, and (4) the movement into a socio-political era in which linguistic domination of more common languages over less common languages is waning (Genesee, 2004). Immersion programs, a form of bilingual education, offer a way for monolingual English speakers to learn a second language to high degrees of fluency that may not be obtained through traditional language programs at the middle and high school levels. Rubio (2018) argues this point, stating that the characteristics of “large-scale, state-supported” immersion programs are the “most appropriate” way to achieve “universal access to language education and equip a significant percentage of American citizens with the necessary level of bilingualism and biculturalism” that will help them to perform higher academic or professional work in a second language (p. 101-102).

Foreign language immersion programs originated in Canada in the 1960s as a community experiment started by parents who were unsatisfied with foreign language teaching in public schools. To increase their knowledge of the French Language, parents, along with the help of two McGill University researchers, formed an experimental French immersion program. This experimental method of teaching used the target language of French as a medium in which to teach the regular school curriculum (Call et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2003; Johnson & Swain, 1997). Students were fully immersed in the French Language until Grade 2 when literacy skills in the student’s first Language of English were introduced in the curriculum. By Grade 6, students spent half their time learning in French and the other half in English. Since this first iteration of a foreign language immersion program in Canada, various takes on language immersion have spread throughout the world, many of which the target language of study is not spoken by the surrounding community. Examples of these programs include Mandarin immersion in Canada and the United States or Japanese and Indonesian in Australia (Johnson &

Swain, 1997). While immersion programs vary, many typically start in kindergarten or first grade and continue through elementary school. Some programs start or continue at the secondary level. The two most common types of immersion are early total immersion, in which 90 to 100 percent of the instructional day is in the foreign language, and early partial immersion, in which instruction is provided in the foreign language for 50 percent of the day and English for the other portion of the day. The three main goals of immersion programs are (1) bilingualism and biliteracy, (2) a high level of academic achievement, and (3) sociocultural competence (Howard et al., 2018).

Research to date illustrates that immersion programs can have a positive impact on students' academic achievements, potentially outperforming their peers in mainstream programs (Watzinger-Tharp et al., 2021). Collier and Thomas (2004) have completed extensive longitudinal studies on student achievement in dual-language immersion programs. Dual language immersion includes foreign language immersion programs but generally refers to two-way language programs in which there is an equal mix of English language learners and English-majority students. Their research has shown that students in dual language immersion programs achieve at grade-level or above-grade-level in the second Language (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Collier and Thomas have generally focused on English language learners in immersion programs, but similar results have been seen in foreign language immersion programs. Research has shown grade-level or higher achievement can be seen in all academic areas, from English language skills, second language skills, and math (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Fleckenstein et al., 2019; Watzinger-Tharp et al., 2021). In a meta-analysis of 10 foreign language immersion programs, S. Hill (2018) shows a small, positive effect for immersion program learners over traditional classroom learners. Even if there were no differences, argues Hill, immersion

programs are beneficial as students in immersion programs perform at the same or higher level than peers, but can do so in two languages rather than only one. In their study on student outcomes in foreign language immersion programs, Lindholm-Leary and Genesee (2014) echo this sentiment as they show that students achieve the same, if not more advanced, level of competence in their primary language, generally English, as students who attend non-immersion programs. Beyond that, students perform significantly better than non-immersion students in the target language of instruction. Watzinger-Tharp et al. (2021) support this finding in their study of Utah's dual language programs, in which they found students obtained Intermediate to Advanced levels of proficiency in their target language by eighth grade, outperforming students in traditional language learning environments. Students also perform at the same or higher level in other academic areas than their non-immersion peers (Lindholm-Leary and Genesee, 2014). Watzinger-Tharp et al. (2018) have found in their study on student outcomes between third and fourth grade that students showed more growth in math between third and fourth grade than their non-immersion peers. Fleckenstein et al. (2019) have also come to similar results when they found that immersion students showed more mathematics growth over four years in elementary school than non-immersion peers, which they attribute to participation in immersion programs.

Beyond academics, foreign language immersion programs have several other positive aspects that continue fuel their growth. Parents with students in foreign language immersion programs note a number of reasons for choosing immersion for their child, including; (1) learning a second language, (2) building empathy and respect for diversity, (3) becoming more culturally competent, (4) creating opportunity for future employment, (5) global awareness and competitiveness, and (6) to connect with their own culture or heritage (MacPhee, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2020; Ryan, 2020; Sung, 2020). Parents recognize the benefits of learning a second

language, which mirrors the goals of foreign language immersion programs that include; (1) bilingualism and biliteracy, (2) high academic achievement, and (3) sociocultural competence. Students of immersion programs also recognize the benefits. First-grade students in Block and Vidaurre's (2019) study have shown higher levels of multiculturalism than non-immersion peers, as well as a stronger desire and interest in speaking a second language beyond the school. Eighth-grade students in Marshall and Bokhurst-Heng's (2020) study on Canadian Immersion students' investment reveal that they understand and recognize the economic capital that learning French will provide them, potentially providing them with more employment opportunities in the future.

Immersion programs continue to grow and multiply in the United States, with a major shift occurring in the last decade in which state-funded initiatives have been created to establish and promote immersion programs within the public school system (Watzinger-Tharp et al., 2018). The state in which this study will be conducted has more than 200 dual language or foreign language immersion programs and is a state that has shown a commitment to immersion education for more than 30 years (Roberts, 2021). The continual growth of immersion programs illustrates the popularity and desire for these programs within the United States as they offer a unique opportunity for English-majority students to become bilingual in a variety of other languages. Focusing this study within the foreign language immersion context will contribute to the literature on these programs as they continue to expand, with an emphasis on how these programs can foster parent involvement through the understanding of what motivates parents to become involved.

Parent Involvement in Immersion Programs

Parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs is a key feature that is critical to the program's success (Grivet et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2018). In fact, parents have been a key feature of foreign language immersion programs since the very beginning, as it was a parent-led collective that pushed to form the first iteration of an immersion program in the 1960s (Kristmanson & Dicks, 2014). Haj-Broussard et al. (2019) argue parents are critical in implementing and sustaining foreign language immersion programs. Parents are the gatekeepers to initial student enrollment, and their continued commitment to the program sustains it. Parents who become involved in foreign language immersion programs become advocates and supporters of the school's academic, cultural, and linguistic goals (Grivet et al., 2021). The Grivet et al. (2021) study has shown that administrators of foreign language immersion programs feel parent and family support is a crucial feature, while research by Lindholm-Leary (2015) has found an association between parent involvement and higher academic achievement, linguistic skills, and student grades, as well as enhanced social skills. Effective foreign language immersion programs include various methods for collaboration between the school and home to support the goals of the program (Lindholm-Leary, 2003).

While parent involvement in general educational settings has been the topic of research for decades, examining parent involvement specifically in a foreign language immersion program has been limited (Aguayo & Dorner, 2017; Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; Wesely & Baig, 2012; Zheng, 2021). In general, as immersion programs are generally schools of choice, parents who enroll their children are more likely to hold specific values that guide their choice, which may also move them to be more involved in their child's education in general, like that of private school parents (Oswald et al., 2018). The parents Wesely and Baig (2012) had surveyed in their study fit this idea as they showed high role construction and self-efficacy in their choice

to enroll their child in an immersion program. Overall, though, existing literature, argues Haj-Broussard et al. (2019) does not consider parental concerns or the issues they may encounter as participants in foreign language immersion programs. The few studies that address parents show there are some unique challenges for parents that may inhibit effective parent involvement. For instance, in their study on parents of students who attended an Irish immersion program in Ireland, Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) found that parents' perceived inability to support their children in learning Irish hindered their overall involvement. Parents' lack of confidence in their own Irish language skills and fear of using Irish incorrectly affect their perceived abilities to help their children with homework. Other parents have expressed not feeling confident in going to their children's school because of language barriers and the promotion of using the target language within the school as much as possible. Parents not comfortable speaking Irish mention they do not want to disrupt the learning environment of the school by speaking English. Ultimately, Kavanaugh and Hickey's (2013) study has revealed that parents had a narrow idea of what parent involvement in the immersion setting was- to support their children's language acquisition by teaching their children in the same ways they are taught in school- which caused parents to not be involved at all and leave the education of their children up to the school. The study of French Immersion parents by MacPhee (2021) shows similar issues as parents who did not speak French or knew minimal French did not feel they were able to participate in the school because of the language barrier, which also hindered them from assisting their child at home. Results of the MacPhee study reveal that parents value parent involvement, have a desire to be involved, and believe their own involvement could make a difference, but more than half of those surveyed did not feel they had adequate skills to help with the French language. Enhancing parent knowledge as to how they can support their students at home and what skills transfer

between languages would be helpful toward increasing parent involvement. To foster more active educational partnerships with parents, the authors of both studies suggest immersion schools may need to assist parents in defining the roles they can play in their children's education. Wesely and Baig (2012) show similarities in their findings as they believe educators need to prioritize building up parental self-efficacy in immersion program settings. This may be due to the authors' findings that parental self-efficacy is occasionally founded on incorrect or ill-informed understandings of important features of immersion programs. In helping parents understand their role, schools may help parents increase their sense of efficacy to engage in that role and with the immersion setting. This idea is reflected in Zheng's (2021) study on parents of children participating in a Mandarin immersion program and Ryan's (2020) study on parents in a French immersion program. While parents may have felt unable to support their children through their own knowledge of Mandarin or French, they actively sought support from outside sources to foster their children's target language development. Parents from the study show that it is their role to seek the support they personally could not provide to their children. This aspect of immersion programs in which parents see the need to support their child's target language development outside of the classroom is critical, as researchers have argued that exposure to the target language beyond the school walls through family and community support is necessary to achieve true proficiency in a foreign language (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013). Helping English-majority students acquire bilingualism must go beyond pedagogy or policy but requires the inclusion of parents and the community (Wesely & Baig, 2012).

Another area of parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs is the role that social networks and parents' past experiences play in choosing immersion for their children. Several studies have examined parents' reasons for enrollment in immersion programs (Call et

al., 2018; Sung, 2020; Wesely & Baig, 2012; Zheng, 2021). These studies reveal ways in which parents view their role in their child's education, one in which they seek out opportunities for their child's education and their child's potential future. Watson (2021) states that most parents become aware of immersion programs through informal peer groups. While immersion programs are growing, their existence is still not widely known. Therefore, social networks with other parents or educators influence parents' decisions to seek out immersion programs, illustrating the impact outside forces have on parent involvement in immersion programs (Wesely & Baig, 2012). Increasing awareness of immersion programs through social networks and concerted efforts by the school include providing information on the benefits of participating in the program, which in turn may reduce barriers parents face when considering the program (Call et al., 2018). Building up social networks among parents and the school community is not only for potential parents' benefits but for current ones as well. Several studies show that parents desire parent-to-parent support networks as well as school support networks to help navigate through their child's immersion program experience (Ee, 2017; Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; MacPhee, 2021). Fostering strong relationships between school and home within immersion programs may result in parents using their voices to promote the program and, in turn, helping to grow and sustain immersion education (Wesely & Baig, 2012). Increasing and promoting diverse social networking opportunities among parents is crucial to increasing parent involvement and engagement in the school and in creating a positive parent to parent relationships (Zheng, 2021).

Finally, immersion programs can be impacted by high attrition rates (S. Hill, 2018). If parental support is lacking and students leave the program prior to completion, immersion programs cannot easily recover those students, as typical programs only allow for students to enter in the first year or two. One recommendation to combat attrition is to educate parents more

fully, both current and potential, on bilingualism and biliteracy, the specific methods and theory of immersion education, how continuation programs work, and the overall benefits of immersion programs (Wesely & Baig, 2012). In doing this, schools may strengthen the relationships with parents and promote the necessity of their child's continued enrollment through the entirety of the immersion program.

Summary

Parent involvement studies form a significant body of research, yet parent involvement practice continues to lean toward the more traditional parent involvement notions of school-centered or school-initiated involvement activities even though research continually shows there is a disconnect between parents and schools on the construct of parent involvement (Curry & Holter, 2019; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). There are numerous calls for more understanding into parents' beliefs about their own involvement in their child's education (Curry & Holter, 2019; Liu & Leighton, 2021; Zambrana et al., 2019). Too often, the psychological aspects of parent involvement are ignored, yet there is a need for schools to understand these aspects to create more effective parent involvement practices (Froiland, 2021; Zambrana et al., 2019). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) posit that when parents have a high role construction and high self-efficacy related to their child's education, they are more likely to become involved in their child's education, yet research is scant on understanding these two motivational factors (Curry & Holter, 2019). This study addressed these two factors by utilizing the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) framework as revised in Walker et al. (2005) in a new way—as a guide for in-depth qualitative inquiry. This study also addressed the lack of understanding as to how social influences may enhance these two motivational factors (Curry & Holter, 2019; Erol & Turhan, 2018; Park & Holloway, 2018; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018; Willis et al., 2021). School

administrators, teachers, and other parents may all potentially play a role in enhancing parental role construction and parental self-efficacy (Curry & Holter, 2019; Jung & Sheldon, 2020; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018; Willis et al., 2019).

Finally, this study examined the motivational factors of parents within the context of a foreign language immersion program because parent support of these programs is crucial. Research situated in the immersion context as of late suggests there is more emphasis on academic achievement, with little attention given to parental inclusivity or collaborations with the community (Porter, 2018). This fact is concerning as parent involvement is an important feature of successful immersion programs (Howard et al., 2018). What little research exists within the foreign language immersion setting reveals that parents are eager to understand how to best support their students but often do not know how (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; MacPhee, 2021). Understanding the motivational factors of parents as to why they become involved (or not) will help foreign language immersion programs understand their role in influencing parent involvement, as well as understand the barriers parents face to becoming involved.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Phenomenology on a basic level is a reflective method that requires bracketing out or reducing the noise that prevents a researcher from making true contact with the very nature of the thing in question (van Manen, 2014). In a phenomenological study, a researcher puts aside presuppositions or judgements, examines a topic anew, creates a question to guide the study, and extracts findings that lead to further research and exploration (Moustakas, 1994). Chapter three provides a clear articulation of the research design, research questions, the setting, and chosen participants. Next, the positionality of the researcher is illustrated through both the chosen interpretative framework and the role of the researcher. Finally, the data collection and analysis procedures are discussed.

Research Design

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. The research design of this qualitative study was transcendental phenomenology. A qualitative study was appropriate as parent involvement is complex and multifaceted. An in-depth examination was required to clearly articulate how parents view their role in their children's education and how their sense of efficacy may impact their involvement in a foreign language immersion program. Qualitative research is conducted to have a complex and detailed understanding of the case, which can only be discovered through directly talking to individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using a

qualitative research method allows for creating a holistic picture of the problem by reporting several perspectives, identifying the various factors of the problem, and illustrating the overall picture at hand (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A qualitative research method seeks to understand complex relationships rather than explain and control, as is the case of quantitative research methods (Stake, 1995). Quantitative research methods seek cause-and-effect relationships and attempt to establish generalizations that may translate to other contexts (Stake, 1995). Put another way, quantitative researchers, in an attempt to generate explanations, discern an event based on descriptive variables represented by scales and measurements, whereas qualitative researchers search for understanding from testimonies and observations represented through narrative (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research methods involve research within a natural setting that gathers multiple perspectives from participants, is dependent on a specific context, and uses multiple forms of data gathering (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study examined the lived experiences of parents whose child has completed at least two years in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Specifically, their parental role construction and sense of efficacy was examined through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and a questionnaire which helped to create a holistic picture of parental motivations for involvement in foreign language immersion programs.

This study used a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that seeks to understand the essence of an experience that a group of individuals has lived through (van Manen, 2014). Phenomenology focuses on discovering how individuals make sense of an experience, individually and as a shared meaning with others (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological studies can examine the meaning of a variety of experiences, from human emotions or feelings to events, situations, objects, relationships, and more (van Manen, 2014).

To examine a lived experience of an individual or a group of individuals requires a careful and detailed capture and description of “how people experience some phenomenon—how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). While there are other qualitative research designs, a phenomenological research method was the best fit for this study as I sought to understand in detail the lived experiences of parents of children in a foreign language immersion program, how they view their role in their children’s education, and how their sense of efficacy impacts their involvement.

Transcendental phenomenology, the specific research design for this study, examines the phenomena just as it is seen and appears to individuals (Moustakas, 1994). It is a variation of phenomenological studies that “engage in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22). It is a study design that requires eliminating as much as possible biases, prior knowledge of the phenomenon, or beliefs, and being completely open and naïve to listening to participants as they describe their experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology is grounded in the work of German philosopher Edmund H. Husserl, who considered phenomenology the study of how individuals describe things and how they experience a phenomenon through their senses (Patton, 2002). Husserl believed we could only know what we experience (Patton, 2002). Transcendental phenomenology, in each phase, seeks to reduce or eliminate anything that represents prejudgment, set aside presuppositions, and work to reach a transcendental state that is fresh and open with “a readiness to see in an unfettered way” that is “not threatened by the customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience”

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 41). A transcendental phenomenology design worked for this study as I have prior experience, opinions, and beliefs as a parent of a child in a foreign language immersion program that I need to carefully consider and bracket out to examine the lived experiences of other parents. This method requires in-depth interviews with individuals who have direct experience with the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The main method of data collection for this research was through in-depth interviews with parents of children who have completed at least two years in K-5 of a foreign language immersion program.

Research Questions

This study focused on the lived experiences of parents whose children have completed at least two years in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. For foreign language immersion programs to be truly successful, it is important to have parent support (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2003; Soltero, 2016). To promote parent involvement and support in foreign language immersion programs, it is necessary to understand parents' experiences and motivations for involvement (MacPhee, 2021). The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005) was the guiding theory for this study.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of parents whose children have attended at least 2 years of a K-5 foreign language immersion program regarding their motivational beliefs towards involvement in their children's education?

Sub-Question One

How do parents construct their role in relation to their children's education in a foreign language immersion program?

Sub-Question Two

How do parents' sense of efficacy influence their involvement in relation to their children's education in a foreign language immersion program?

Sub-Question Three

How do parents describe the influence, if any, of social factors (leadership, staff, and other parents) on their parental role construction or sense of efficacy in relation to involvement in a foreign language immersion program?

Setting and Participants

The setting and participants chosen for this transcendental phenomenological study represented a typical one-way foreign language immersion program. The sites chosen were foreign language immersion schools of choice, within the public school district, that offer multiple target languages, rather than a single language focus. Much research on foreign language immersion programs involves schools in which the whole school community is focused on one language of immersion (Ee, 2017; MacPhee, 2021; Olivos & Lucero, 2020; Ryan, 2020; Sung, 2020; Zheng, 2021). The schools in this study bring in a diverse community of parents who each have different language goals for their children. This may lead to findings that differ from previous research that focused on a single language of immersion, and potentially may reveal parental differences due to the chosen language of study.

Site

The schools chosen as the site for research are one-way foreign language immersion schools within a large, urban/suburban school district in the South. The school district is home to more than 140,000 students of varying ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. The student makeup within the district includes 36.3% Black, 28.5% Hispanic, 24.8% White, 7.1% Asian,

and 3.3% other ethnicities (School District Data, 2021). The socioeconomic status (SES) of families is evenly split with 35% low SES, 36% medium SES, and 29% high SES (School District Data, 2021). As the county in which the school district resides includes a major city, the total population in the area is approximately 1.1 million.

School A is a K-8 magnet school with 1226 students, originally established in 2003, though some of its language programs opened as early as 1993. The school offers language immersion in Chinese, Japanese, German, and French, with an option to study Spanish as a third language in middle school. Students participate in the district-wide lottery to enter the language immersion program of their choice. Student demographics of the school include 37% White, 22% Black, 32% Hispanic, 7% Asian, and 2% two or more ethnicities (School District Data, 2023). The socioeconomic status of the students includes 24% low SES, 39% medium SES, and 36% high SES (School District Data, 2021). The leadership structure of the school consists of one principal and two assistant principals.

School B is a K-8 magnet school with approximately 750 students in its third year of operation. The school offers students language immersion in Chinese, French, or German in Kindergarten through third grade, with exploratory language classes in fourth through eighth until the school is full immersion by 2025. Students participate in a district-wide lottery to enter the language immersion program of their choice. The student makeup of the school is 42.5% Black, 25% White, 23.5% Hispanic, and 9% Asian or other ethnicity (School District Data, 2023). Nearly 20% of the student population comes from low SES households, 53% from medium SES households, and 26% from high SES households (School District Data, 2021). The leadership structure of the school consists of one principal, one assistant principal, and a dean of students.

The chosen schools fit the parameters of the study which sought to examine the lived experiences of parents whose children have completed at least two years in a K-5 foreign language immersion program, specifically examining their parental role construction and sense of efficacy as they relate to parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs. The chosen schools are schools of choice which parents must actively seek admission to through a district-wide lottery. Most families who attend these schools are English-native speakers, though with the demographics of the school, it may be possible that some students have other home languages. If students have home languages other than English or the partner language chosen, it would be an interesting element to explore within the study. The demographics of the schools may also allow for more varying perspectives than previous studies which tend to only focus on students whose heritage language is the language of study (ex. Korean students in a Korean dual language program), or English-speaking students who tend to come from higher SES, predominantly White families (Ee, 2017; Sung, 2020; Watson, 2021; Zheng, 2021).

Participants

The participants in this study were parents of students enrolled in a foreign language immersion program. Specifically, this study utilized parents whose children completed at least two years in K-5 in the foreign language immersion program. The term parent in this case can refer to mothers, fathers, caregivers, or legal guardians of the child enrolled in the foreign language immersion program. Parents participated in an individual interview, a focus group, and a questionnaire to understand the lived experiences of parents in relation to their parental role construction and sense of efficacy for involvement in the foreign language immersion program. To adequately represent the demographics of the school, parents of each ethnicity and SES were sought out for in-depth interviews and/or focus group participation, for a minimum of 12

participants. Patton (2002) recommends establishing a minimum number for sampling which later may be altered as fieldwork progresses. Ultimately, there are no specific rules regarding sample size when it comes to qualitative inquiry but are based on what the purpose of the method is and what the available time and resources allow (Patton, 2002). van Manen (2014) stresses that sample size is variable in phenomenological studies, from some studies not utilizing any empirical data, where others may need a few or many data sources. Rather, when considering how many data sources to obtain, the researcher should keep in mind that the goal is to collect enough sources that provide rich accounts of the experience so that the researcher can form strong examples that illustrate the experience (van Manen, 2014). Having a minimum of 12 to 15 participants complete all data collection methods was the goal for this study.

Researcher Positionality

Foreign language immersion programs play an important role in my current life. I am a former English Language Arts teacher at a German immersion school. Two of my three children are currently enrolled in a German immersion program. As a teacher, I have previously witnessed the power that foreign language immersion programs may have on students. I have watched as second graders spoke with fluency in a second language. I have seen the possibilities that foreign language immersion programs offer in the form of becoming bilingual to a level that could positively impact students in their futures.

Interpretive Framework

The research paradigm that guided this study was pragmatism. Hammond (2013) summarizes the complex nature of pragmatism by stating that it “offers a view of knowledge as generated in action and reflection on action in order to address particular problems” (p. 607). A pragmatic approach to research focuses on investigating the meaning and value of the data to

determine its practical applications, a focus which can be useful when researching organizational settings “where practice is closely intertwined with the ways in which knowledge is produced” (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020, p.1). The pragmatic researcher uses multiple methods and sources of data collection, focuses on the potential significance of the research, and stresses employing research methods that fit the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Coming from a pragmatic interpretive framework, I sought to understand parents’ lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children’s education in a foreign language immersion program. I was interested in finding out how to create meaningful family-school connections and examining how parents may support the goals of the program. Using several methods and sources of data collection from interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups, I combined all data collection methods to paint a picture of how parents’ motivational beliefs may influence their involvement in their children’s education in a foreign language immersion program.

Philosophical Assumptions

Every researcher brings her own beliefs, values, and assumptions to her research. These ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions can knowingly or unknowingly guide the researcher in the creation of the research design, purpose, and goals. I share my beliefs below to articulate how I have approached this study.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumption deals with beliefs regarding the nature of reality. From a pragmatic perspective, reality falls somewhere in between a postpositivist perspective of a single reality beyond ourselves and a social constructivist perspective in which there are multiple realities that are constructed through human experiences and interactions (Creswell & Poth,

2018). Instead, “our experiences in the world are necessarily constrained by the nature of that world” while at the same time “our understanding of the world is inherently limited to our interpretations of our experiences” (Morgan, 2014, p.1048). John Dewey, a premier scholar of pragmatism, essentially says that the arguments between the nature of the world around us and the world of which we conceive is really “two sides of the same coin” (Morgan, 2014, p.1048). Ontologically, reality is what is practically understood of the issues and problems of the concrete world (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020).

In this research study, I worked to understand the interpretations parents have in relation to parental role construction and sense of efficacy as it affects their parent involvement. It was my goal to determine how parents construct their roles in relation to their children’s education and how their sense of efficacy in supporting their student can influence their involvement. Pragmatism guided me to seek multiple perspectives on the issue because everyone’s account of parent involvement is restricted to his or her own conceptions. In that way, I sought out the perspectives of numerous parents to grasp the centrality of parent involvement.

Epistemological Assumption

From the viewpoint of pragmatism, research should grow out of the motivation to identify “actionable knowledge” (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020, p. 3). In classical pragmatism, researchers focused on knowledge and types of knowing with practical consequences, with more recent pragmatic thinkers highlighting the importance of acting on problems (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Morgan (2014) describes knowledge as an “active process of inquiry that creates continual back-and-forth movement between beliefs and actions” (p.1049). This process of inquiry guides the researcher to choose multiple methods of data collection, seek out multiple perspectives, and works to guide inquiry to solve real-world problems. In this study, multiple

methods of data collection were used, both objective and subjective, to create a complete picture of how parents' motivational beliefs contribute to their involvement within foreign language immersion programs.

Axiological Assumption

As a pragmatic approach to research requires seeking multiple perspectives to create a clear picture of the issue, it pushes the researcher to continually reflect during the research process to ensure the methods being used will yield the richest picture of the issue. In this approach to research, the subjects of research are not passive participants who simply describe the issue, but rather are active participants whose values and beliefs can be tools for problem solving (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Research occurs within a social context, with the researcher and subjects working together to identify the issue and practical solutions (Morgan, 2014). In this study, multiple perspectives were utilized to examine parental role construction and parental sense of efficacy. Together with the subjects, I sought to identify how parental role construction and sense of efficacy may impact parents' motivations to become involved in their children's education in a foreign language immersion program.

Researcher's Role

While I am an invested member of the foreign language immersion community, in the capacity of this research study, I acted solely as the human instrument through which data was collected and analyzed to present a rich, thorough description of the issue. Using a transcendental phenomenological approach, I sought to bracket out my own experiences, prejudgments, and prejudices to understand each parent's account of their lived experiences. In doing so, I share my background. I am the parent of two students who attend a foreign language immersion program. I am also a former teacher in a foreign language immersion program. I hold the belief that foreign

language immersion programs are one of, if not the best way to learn a second language to fluency short of living in a foreign country and being truly immersed. I believe that all students should have the opportunity to learn a second language, and that there are benefits to knowing a second language beyond language abilities such as academic achievement, enhanced cognitive abilities, and multicultural understanding. I also recognize, however, that foreign language immersion programs are difficult to build, implement, and sustain effectively, therefore I sought as a researcher to identify issues within foreign language immersion programs that hinder growth.

With the background that I have, I am aware of my inherent bias. However, using a pragmatic approach to this transcendental phenomenological study, I focused on the outcomes of the research; the “actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry” that lead to discovering what works and what does not (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In working to discover what works and what does not, working to understand my own bias and its influence on my research, I followed Moustakas’ (1994) methodology to transcendental phenomenology: (1) I used epoché, or bracketing out my everyday judgments and understandings so I could examine the topic as if new; (2) I used transcendental-phenomenological reduction to consider each individual’s account singularly without influence from other sources or prior knowledge; (3) I then used imaginative variation to help form the structural essence of the experience in question; and (4), I combined the two to create a synthesis of the essence and meaning of the topic. In this way, I can create a rich description of how parents’ motivations for involvement are influenced by their parental role construction and sense of efficacy.

Procedures

The procedures for this transcendental phenomenology included three methods of data

collection— a questionnaire, individual interviews, and focus groups— which were necessary to create a rich description of the case as well as to triangulate the data and enhance reliability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection began with a questionnaire distributed to all accessible parents, who signed a consent form and were chosen for the study, of children who have completed at least two years in K-5 in a foreign language immersion program. The second, and main source of data came from the individual interviews. In phenomenological studies, interviews serve as the typical method of data collection through an informal and interactive process involving open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, focus groups were utilized as a third method of data collection. Focus groups are an excellent way to obtain large amounts of quality data from several participants at once (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). Prior to research, approval from the school district’s research review panel was required, as well as Institutional Review Board approval from Liberty University. The study involved human subjects and therefore care was taken to ensure their protection. Each participant was informed of the perimeters of the study, required to sign a consent form, and informed that audio recording would take place during interviews and focus groups. The necessary permissions, participant solicitation procedures, and specific data collection and analysis plans are illustrated below.

Permissions

To conduct research in the school district, specific application procedures were followed. Initially, I contacted the executive director of the district’s magnet programs to gain initial interest approval (Appendix A) in the study. Once the study was deemed beneficial to the district by the executive director of the district’s magnet programs, I submitted a formal online application to conduct research in the district. Before the approval can be obtained from the district’s Research Review Panel, I obtained IRB approval (Appendix B) from Liberty

University. With IRB approval included in the district application, the district's Research Review Panel examined the application to determine if the study fits the following criteria: (1) the study adheres to all district research request guidelines; (2) the study demonstrates a high level of rigor in methodology and data analysis plans, with clear alignment among them and the research questions; (3) valid and reliable data collection tools are utilized; (4) the research has direct benefits to the district and the benefits outweigh the requirements on school staff and parents, and (5) results can be generalized to larger groups (District Office of Accountability, 2022). Approval from the Research Review Panel (Appendix C) did not secure specific site approval. Site approval was granted from the principals of each school site.

Recruitment Plan

The focus of the study, specifically on foreign language immersion programs limited the sample pool of parents. The sample pool included any parents of students, past or present, who have completed at least two years in K-5 in the foreign language immersion program. Recruitment letters (Appendix D) were distributed by the principal or designated school official through ParentSquare, a two-way communication platform in which parents can receive school communication through email, text, or an app. Participants were also sought through the schools' Facebook group for parents. Those who clicked the link within the recruitment letter were directed to a site that included information on the study, consent to participate (Appendix E), and a demographic data inquiry. The initial demographic data inquiry (Appendix F) was used to confirm parents fit the perimeters of the study. The consent form acted to inform parents as to the full nature of the study, their role within the study, and a request for volunteers to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Once parents completed the consent form and initial demographic questionnaire,

purposeful sampling was utilized to select 12-15 individuals who expressed willingness to complete all three data collection methods. The aim of purposeful sampling was to select information-rich cases that lead to learning a great deal about the phenomenon in question (Patton, 2002). Specifically, I employed maximum variation sampling to a variety of individuals with the goal of finding common or shared meaning that cuts across individual differences. Maximum variation sampling follows the logic that any similar patterns that emerge from the large variation are particularly interesting and valuable as those patterns may allude to the core experience of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Past research argued there is at times a common misconception that minority parents are less engaged in their child's education, and engagement may vary by ethnicity or SES status (Ee, 2017; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Criteria for selection included ethnicity, SES, and home language, seeking to get a representative sample of Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian parents of varying SES that correlates to the ethnic makeup of the school. Home language was considered if there are any respondents who speak a language other than English at home to add another perspective on parent motivations for involvement in their children's education in a foreign language immersion program that is typically sought out by English-native parents. Utilizing maximum variation sampling could elicit two types of findings: (1) detailed descriptions of each individual's experiences, and (2) the shared meanings of experience that come from the heterogeneity of the sample (Patton, 2002).

The 12-15 selected individuals were sent a link to complete the first data collection method, a questionnaire that addressed how parents view their role in their children's education and how confident they feel they can assist their children with their education. After completion of the questionnaire, parents indicated how and when they were able to participate in an in-depth, individual interview and a focus group. Interviews and focus groups were in-person or via Zoom

depending on participant availability.

Data Collection Plan

In transcendental phenomenological studies, in-depth interviews are the main method of data collection to gather information from individuals who have direct experience with the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Individual interviews, along with a questionnaire and focus groups, are the data collection methods that were used in this study. After the selection of participants from those who completed the consent form and the demographic inquiry, the first data collection method was sent to those selected via purposeful sampling. Selected participants were sent a link to complete a Google Forms online questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, participants indicated availability for their individual interview and focus group participation. Participation for interviews and focus groups were in-person or via Zoom depending on participant availability and preference. In using three methods of data collection, this study achieved triangulation. Triangulation provides a way to look at a phenomenon in diverse ways and adds to the credibility of the study by strengthening confidence of the conclusions (Patton, 2002). Essentially, data from one source corroborates or illustrates inconsistencies in evidence from another source. For this transcendental phenomenological study, information obtained from the questionnaire, interviews, and focus groups helped to build a deep and rich illustration of the lived experiences of parents of children in foreign language immersion programs, how those parents construct their roles in relation to their child's education, and how their sense of efficacy influences their involvement in their children's education in the foreign language immersion program.

Questionnaire Data Collection Approach

One method of data collection was in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix G). This

questionnaire was distributed to the 25 selected parents who fit the criteria for the study, which required participants to be parents of students who have completed at least two years in K-5 in a foreign language immersion program. I chose a questionnaire as my first data collection method as initial answers from parents on how they view their role and how confident they feel to help their children in the school could help guide questions and areas of research when completing one-on-one interviews and focus groups with parents.

The questionnaire for this study was adapted from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005). Walker et al. (2005) stated the scales utilized in the revised model are a framework to examine the relationship between parents' subjective experiences of involvement and their actual involvement. The original scales have Likert-scale responses. The authors acknowledged that the scale responses are limited and suggest using them in conjunction with other measures and with other research methods, such as interviews and observations, to gather a more complete picture of the parent involvement process. To best fit a qualitative design, the questions were adapted to be open-ended questions.

Survey/Questionnaire Questions

All questions in this study related to the first construct of parents' motivational beliefs and mirror Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's original quantitative survey. Questions in the initial questionnaire, the interview, and the focus groups were adapted from the quantitative survey in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parent involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005). Questions were opened-ended; however, prompts were included on some questions to help open the parent's thoughts when answering.

1. What do you see as your responsibility in relation to your child's education? Possible areas of discussion are home activities, school activities, or communication. (SQ1)
2. How do you describe your own experiences with school as a student? Consider your feelings in relation to the school itself, the teachers, other students, and your overall feeling of your experience. (CRQ)
3. What do you feel you are able to do to support your child as they learn in the foreign language immersion program? (SQ2)
4. How confident do you feel in your ability to support your child in the program? (SQ2)
5. What aspects of your current life situation (time, energy, knowledge, skills) may impact how you support your student through the program? (SQ3)
6. What aspects of your current life situation (time, energy, knowledge, skills) may impact how much you are involved in your child's learning? (CRQ)
7. What various ways are you involved with your child's education at home? Answers may relate to homework, communication, activities, etc. (CRQ)
8. What various ways are you involved with your child's education at School? Answers may relate to volunteering, communication, attending events, etc. (CRQ)
9. How does your school support parents become involved at the school? (SQ3)
10. In what ways might the school help you support your child more effectively? (SQ3)
11. In what ways might other parents from your school help you support your child? (SQ3)
12. What ways do you feel you could be more involved? (CRQ)

13. What do you think your most important responsibilities are for ensuring your child/children have a successful school experience? (SQ1)

Questions two, six, seven, eight, and 12 pulled from the central research question of the study in that each touch on the parent's experiences of the foreign language immersion program or their own educational experience. Questions one and 13 related to sub-question one of the research questions by seeking the parent's input on their role in relation to their child's education. Question three and four related to sub-question two of the research questions as both discuss how the parent feels they can help their child in the foreign language immersion program. Questions five, nine, 10, and 11 related to sub-question three of the research questions as each discusses social aspects that may influence a parent's role or their self-efficacy towards involvement.

Survey/Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

Questionnaire data was transferred into Microsoft Excel. First, I used transcendental phenomenological reduction to examine each respondent's answers, looking for key statements. Transcendental phenomenological reduction requires the researcher to consider each experience in its individuality and form a textural description of the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). To aid in the process, I utilized a provisional list of codes that were created from the theoretical framework of the study. Having a provisional list of codes generated prior to the study requires that I tie research questions and the theoretical framework directly to the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This list does not have to be finite, and codes may be revised, or new codes may develop throughout the fieldwork portion of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Once codes were assigned to the data of the questionnaires, I worked to identify broader themes that cut across all participants.

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

In phenomenological studies, interviews are the main method of data collection (Moustakas, 1994). In-depth interviews are used to gain the participant's perspective and description of the experience in question, with follow-up interviews often being conducted (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested no more than 10 participants to interview as the goal is to describe in detail the experience of a small group of people, however, van Manen (2014) stated the number of participants depends on the question being studied. The goal of the interviewing process should be to collect enough participant's thorough accounts of the experience to form a powerful collection of examples that illustrate "life as it is lived" (van Manen, 2014, p. 353). Interviews in phenomenological studies are long interviews that are informal and interactive using open-ended questions and comments that draw out the participants account of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Semi-structured interviews include specific questions in a specific order, but also less structured questions that are "guided by the encounter with the participants and is based on a list of questions or issues to be explored" (Merriam & Grenier, 2018, p. 14). For this study, a semi-structured interview approach was used to ensure each participant was initially asked the same questions, but also allow for exploration of topics that arise during the interview process. Interviews for this case study were conducted one-on-one with parents from School A. A minimum of 12 to 15 parents were sought for interviews, but interviewing continued until no new or different accounts emerge. An interview protocol is included under Appendix H. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. If interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, then interviews were recorded using the Microsoft Teams record function, which records video and audio. Interviews conducted in-person were recorded using the audio recording feature in Microsoft OneNote. Transcription was completed utilizing

the transcript function of Microsoft Teams and were reviewed for accuracy. Participants were informed, and consent was requested prior to recording the interviews. Each interviewee received a copy of the transcribed interviews. This allows for interviewees to clarify comments or confirm contents in the form of member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Individual Interview Questions

1. How do you describe your overall experience with the school? (CRQ)
2. What aspects of your involvement with your child and their foreign language immersion program stand out to you? (CRQ)
3. How did/does being a parent of a child in a foreign language immersion program affect you? (CRQ)
4. How do you view your role as a parent in your child's education? (SQ1)
5. What motivations did/do you have for involvement in your child's education with the foreign language immersion program? (CRQ)
6. How did/do you feel your sense of efficacy, your ability be successful in helping your child, was in relation to the foreign language immersion program? (SQ2)
7. What resources did you feel you had that supported your involvement? (SQ3)
8. What, if any, experiences with the school and staff may have influenced your involvement? (SQ3)
9. How did you feel in your child's school? (SQ1)
10. How would you describe your relationships with your child's teachers over the years? (SQ3)
11. Describe any influences on the part of teachers that affected how you were involved? (SQ3)

12. What experiences or interactions did you have with other parents at the school? (SQ3)

13. Is there anything else you would like to share about being a parent with a child involved in a foreign language immersion program? (CRQ)

Questions one, two, three, five, and 13 focus on the central research question as each question sought to understand the parent's experiences of involvement with their child's education in the foreign language immersion program. Questions four and nine support sub-question one of the research questions as they discuss the parent's role within their child's education. Question six supports sub-question two of the research questions as it focuses on a parent's self-efficacy or ability to be involved. Question seven, eight, 10, 11, and 12 relate to sub-question three of the research questions as each focus on social influences on parent's involvement.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

The first step in the analysis of interviews was to transcribe each interview's audio recording using Microsoft Teams transcript function. This was completed simultaneously while interviews took place. Each transcription was evaluated to check for accuracy. Once interviews were transcribed, a phenomenological analysis approach was taken to sort through the data. This process is called transcendental-phenomenological reduction, a process in which each individual's account is considered on its own and the researcher works to understand and describe the complete experience (Moustakas, 1994). Interview analysis begins by examining the transcribed interviews and using horizontalization, a method of examining each statement that is relevant to the topic or question as equal in value (Moustakas, 1994). Horizontal statements are examined using the provisional list of codes created utilizing the theoretical framework, and new codes are added if needed throughout analysis. Coded data is then combined into common

themes or categories (Moustakas, 1994). From each individual's interview and subsequent examination and identification of horizontal statements, a textural description is created to describe the phenomenon as participant experienced it.

Focus Group Data Collection Approach

The third data collection method that was used was focus groups. Focus groups are interviews, but ones in which participants can hear other's responses and add comments beyond what they may have originally shared in their own response (Patton, 2002). Focus groups have a few advantages: (1) they allow for a large amount of data to be collected in one sitting; (2) participant interactions can add to the quality of data collected; and (3) shared or diverse views can be assessed quickly (Patton, 2002). In this study, two to three focus groups will be conducted with 4 to 6 participants each. A focus group protocol is included under Appendix I. All focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Participants were informed, and consent requested prior to recording each focus group. Each participant received a copy of the transcribed focus group sessions to confirm or clarify their own comments as a part of member-checking. Focus groups were used in this study to potentially elicit information that may otherwise not arise in individual interviews.

Focus Group Questions

1. What motivations did you have for enrolling your child in a foreign language immersion program? (CRQ)
2. What is it like to parent a child learning a foreign language? (CRQ)
3. What, if anything, surprised you about the immersion program as your child progressed through it? (CRQ)
4. How did...

- a. the school help you support your student? (SQ3)
 - b. your child's teachers help you support your student? (SQ3)
 - c. or other parents help you support your student? (SQ3)
5. Can you recall instances where interactions (with school, teachers, parents) made you feel more or less confident in helping your child? (SQ3)
 6. Are there instances where you sought outside help to support your child's education? (SQ3)
 7. Overall, what challenges did you face in supporting your child's education? (CRQ)
 8. Overall, what successes do you feel you had in supporting your child's education? (CRQ)
 9. What additional supports, if any, do you think would improve or enhance the parent experience in foreign language immersion programs? (SQ3)

Questions one, two, three, seven and eight relate to the central research question of the study as each focus on participant's experiences of involvement in their child's education.

Questions four, five, six, and nine focus on sub-question three of the research questions as each relates to a social aspect or influence on parent involvement.

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The focus group data was transcribed utilizing Microsoft Teams transcribe function and evaluated to confirm accuracy of transcription. For member checking, participants received their portion of the focus group transcription to check for accuracy of statements. Focus group data was examined utilizing a similar approach to analysis as that of the interviews. Using transcendental-phenomenological reduction, the participant's accounts of the experience were examined, and horizontal statements were identified. Participant statements were coded utilizing

the provisional list of codes created prior to research, and new codes were created as the data warranted. This type of open coding allowed, as Patton (2002) described it, to be open to the data. From these coded statements, common themes were identified. As focus groups involved more than one participant, a composite textural description was created rather than individual textural descriptions.

Data Synthesis

After each data collection method was examined individually utilizing transcendental-reduction and composite textural descriptions of each participant were created, a composite structural description of the entire group's experiences was put together (Moustakas, 1994). In the composite structural description, imaginative variation was used to look for possible meanings, examining the phenomenon from different perspectives and positions, to determine the underlying factors that account for the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Once both the individual textural descriptions and the whole group composite structural descriptions were formed, the final step in the transcendental phenomenology analysis approach was the synthesis of meaning and essence (Moustakas, 1994). In this portion, the textural and structural descriptions were integrated into a singular statement discussing the very essence of the experience of the phenomenon. In this case, it was a unification of participants' experiences that illustrate the essence of being a parent of a child in a foreign language immersion program.

Trustworthiness

Several techniques are available to validate the study and establish trustworthiness. Guba and Lincoln (1982) use the four terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as criteria for establishing trustworthiness. Steps were taken in the research

design, proposed methods, and in the planned data analysis that aid in establishing trustworthiness based on the four terms listed.

Credibility

Credibility deals with whether what the researcher presents is an accurate description of reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). In this study, credibility was established through: (a) triangulation; (b) researcher reflexivity; (c) member checking; and (d) creating a rich, thick description of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation, using multiple methods, sources, and theories, is the process of corroborating findings to illuminate perspectives and themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Both prior to and during research, I practiced reflexivity to acknowledge my own bias, understanding, and judgments. Reflexivity, or as Moustakas (1994) takes the term from Husserl of epoché, requires the researcher to set aside any biases, preconceived ideas, or judgments and look at the research naively with fresh eyes. Member checking was done throughout the data collection and analysis process, whereby participants checked data and interpretations to judge accuracy and credibility of the report (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the possibility that the findings of the study may be applicable to other contexts under certain circumstances (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). To increase the study's transferability, I first used maximum variation sampling to maximize the "range of information collected and to provide most stringent conditions for theory grounding" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 248). I also sought to create a thick, rich description in my analysis and report of the study. A thick, rich description requires providing enough detail about the context for the reader to experience it vicariously and to make it possible to judge how the context may transfer to similar

contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). While I have utilized methods that support transferability, I can only create the conditions for transferability. I cannot guarantee transferability as that can only be determined by the reader.

Dependability

Dependability deals with replicability, whereby another researcher should be able to repeat the study using the same procedures in a similar context (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). An auditor will examine “whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 262). Through a thorough review of the study process and product, the auditor will examine the “audit trail” that illustrates all methodological steps and decisions, as well as the data in its raw forms (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). In this study, the audit trail was in the form of field notes (Appendix J) kept throughout the study. The dependability of this study was an inquiry audit by the dissertation committee and the Qualitative Research Director.

Confirmability

Confirmability does not rely on the objectivity of the researcher, but rather the objectivity of the data and its confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). To establish confirmability, triangulation and reflexivity were used in this study. Triangulation, previously discussed, included multiple methods of data collection that included a questionnaire, individual interviews, and several focus groups. Further, I engaged in reflexivity when I established my philosophical assumptions and illustrated my role as a researcher, describing any inherent bias and background I have that may pertain to the study. Throughout the study, I continued to practice reflexivity by keeping a field notes journal (Appendix J) during data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study were considered to professionally execute this study, as well as protect the participants and the site of study. To obtain site and research approval, I followed the district's procedures for obtaining permission to conduct research, first achieving IRB (Appendix B) and district approval (Appendix C), and then soliciting approval from the site principals. For participants, I obtained informed consent from each participant (see Appendix E for example), ensuring they were aware that participation was voluntary and that they may have chosen to withdraw from the study. It is important that participants know they had a right to withdraw from participation in the study at any time. To protect the confidentiality of the participants and the sites, pseudonyms were used. Also, confidentiality was maintained in the collection and storage of data, which was kept on a password-protected computer. Any physical documents obtained were converted to PDFs to store on the computer, and original documents were shredded. All data will be destroyed within three years of the study completion.

Summary

Parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs is considered a key feature of a successful program (Howard et al., 2018; Lindholm-Leary, 2003; Soltero, 2016). However, little is known about the factors that influence parent motivations for involvement in their children's education in general, nor in foreign language immersion programs specifically (Curry & Holter, 2019; Liu & Leighton, 2021; Porter, 2018; Wesely & Baig, 2012; Zambrana et al., 2019). This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of parents of children who have completed at least two years in K-5 in a foreign language immersion program. Participants for this study included at least 12 parents of children who have completed at least two years in K-5 in two foreign language immersion programs in the Southeast United States. Data collection in the form of a questionnaire, individual interviews, and focus groups, helped to

create a rich, in-depth portrait of the essence of the experience of parent involvement in their children's foreign language immersion education. Utilizing these three methods of data collection allowed for triangulation of data that strengthens the validity of the study and confirm the findings. Data analysis followed Moustakas' (1994) method of phenomenological analysis, including: (1) epoché or bracketing out personal experience or prior knowledge; (2) transcendental phenomenological reduction to consider each individual's account of the experience; (3) the formation of textural descriptions of each individual's experience; and, finally, (4) a structural description that illustrates the experience for the group as a whole. Trustworthiness was established through researcher reflexivity, member checks, creating a detailed, thick description of the essence of the lived experience, and review by committee members. Participation in this study was voluntary, and all participants and schools received pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. To date, there is a lack of understanding in regard to parent motivations for involvement, experiences, and actual involvement in foreign language immersion programs (MacPhee, 2021). This chapter discusses the participants recruited for the study using purposeful sampling. Then, the results of data analysis are discussed as related to each research question. Finally, a brief summary is given to conclude the chapter.

Participants

Participants for this study were parents whose children had attended at least two years in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Recruitment letters (Appendix D) were sent out via ParentSquare, an app for schools to relay messages to parents, as well as on each school's Facebook parent community groups. One reminder message for each school was sent out two weeks after the initial recruitment. Sixty-six parents expressed interest in participating in the study. Thirty-five participants were contacted to complete the consent form. In total, 25 individuals completed the consent form to participate and all three data collection methods. Seventeen participants were from School A and eight were from School B. There were less participants from School B as the potential participant pool was much smaller given that the school had only been in operation two whole years at the time of this study. At that time, only parents of rising second and third grade students were eligible. To the extent possible, participants were selected using maximum variation sampling to get a representative sample of

parents of each school based off ethnicity, SES, and home language. While SES is not easy to determine, participants household income and highest degree completed were used to help identify potential differences in SES.

Student demographics for School A include 37% White, 22% Black, 32% Hispanic, 7% Asian, and 2% two or more ethnicities (School District Data, 2021). Parent participants from School A consisted of 47% White, 35% Black, and 6% each of Hispanic, Asian, and two or more ethnicities.

Table 1

Parent Participants – School A

	Relation to Student	Household Income	Ethnicity	Highest degree	Spoken Languages
Parent A	Mother	More than \$150,000	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's	German, Hungarian, English
Parent B	Mother	More than \$150,000	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's	English
Parent C	Mother	More than \$150,000	Mixed race - White/African	Doctorate	German, English
Parent D	Mother	\$100,000-\$150,000	Black/African American	Master's	English
Parent E	Mother	Less than \$50,000	Hispanic/Latino	Bachelor's	English, Spanish
Parent F	Mother	Less than \$50,000	Black/African American	Bachelor's	English
Parent G	Mother	Prefer not to answer	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's	English
Parent H	Mother	\$100,000-\$150,000	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's	English
Parent I	Mother	\$50,000-\$100,000	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's	English
Parent J	Mother	\$50,000-\$100,000	Black/African American	Master's	English, German, French

Parent K	Mother	More than \$150,000	White/Caucasian	Master's	English
Parent L	Mother	Prefer not to answer	Asian/Pacific Islander	Prefer not to answer	English, French, Chinese
Parent M	Mother	\$50,000-\$100,000	Black/African American	High school degree/equivalent	English
Parent N	Father	\$50,000-\$100,000	White/Caucasian	Master's	English
Parent O	Father	\$100,000-\$150,000	White/Caucasian	Master's	English
Parent P	Mother	Less than \$50,000	Black/African American	High school degree/equivalent	English
Parent Q	Mother	More than \$150,000	Black/African American	Bachelor's	English

School B student makeup included 42.5% Black, 25% White, 23.5% Hispanic, and 9% Asian or other ethnicity (School District Data, 2023). Parent participants from School B consisted of 50% White, 37.5% Black, and 12.5% Hispanic. School B participants did not include any of the Asian ethnicity, therefore this population is not represented.

Table 2

Parent Participants – School B

	Relation to Student	Household Income	Ethnicity	Highest degree	Spoken Languages
Parent R	Mother	\$100,000-\$150,000	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's	English
Parent S	Mother	More than \$150,000	Black/African American	Master's	English
Parent T	Mother	\$50,000-\$100,000	Black/African American	Master's	English
Parent U	Mother	\$50,000-\$100,000	Hispanic/Latino	Master's	English, Spanish

Parent V	Mother	\$50,000- \$100,000	White/Caucasian	Master's	Russian, English, Belarussian
Parent W	Father	Prefer not to answer	Black/African American	High school degree/ equivalent	English
Parent X	Mother	\$50,000- \$100,000	White/Caucasian	Bachelor's	English
Parent Y	Mother	\$100,000- \$150,000	White/Caucasian	Master's	English

Parent A

Parent A is a mother to two children who attend School A's immersion program, as well as one child in high school who previously attended the program through eighth grade. Spoken languages in the home include English, Hungarian, and German. Her children are learning the German language through immersion.

Parent B

Parent B is a mother of four children, with two of those children having attended School A's immersion program. The youngest of the two transferred out of the program in the middle of third grade. Both children participated in the Japanese immersion program. Only English is spoken in the home.

Parent C

Parent C is a mother of two children in School A's immersion program, with another child soon to be in the program. Parent C is of American and German descent and speaks German fluently. Her children participate in the German immersion program.

Parent D

Parent D is a mother with two children who have attended or are currently attending School A's immersion program. English is the only spoken language at home. Her oldest child

completed the French immersion program, while her youngest is in the Mandarin immersion program.

Parent E

Parent E is a mother with two children who have attended School A's immersion program. Spoken languages in the home include Spanish and English. Both children have participated in the French immersion program.

Parent F

Parent F is a mother who has one child attending School A's immersion program. The only language in the home is English. Her child is participating in the Japanese immersion program.

Parent G

Parent G is a mother who's four children have all attended School A's immersion program. The only language spoken in the home is English. Three of the four children completed the French immersion program, while the youngest transferred out to another school after second grade.

Parent H

Parent H is a mother to three children who have attended or are currently attending School A's immersion program. English is the only spoken language at home. All three children have participated in the German immersion program.

Parent I

Parent I is a mother to two children in School A's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home, though the father does speak German. Both children attend the German immersion program.

Parent J

Parent J is a mother to one child in School A's immersion program. Languages spoken in the home include English, French, and German. Her child is in the German immersion program.

Parent K

Parent K is a mother to two children in School A's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home. Her two children participate in the Mandarin immersion program.

Parent L

Parent L is a mother who has four children who attend or attended School A's language immersion program. Spoken languages in the home include English, Chinese, and French. French is not a native language to the family. Her oldest participated in the Mandarin program, with the three other children participating in the French program.

Parent M

Parent M is a mother who has one child in School A's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home. Her child is currently in the Japanese immersion program.

Parent N

Parent N is a father to two children in School A's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home. Both children are currently in the German immersion program.

Parent O

Parent O is a father whose two children have attended or are currently attending School A's immersion program. Spoken languages at home consist of only English. Both children participated in the Mandarin immersion program.

Parent P

Parent P is a mother to two children who have attended or are currently attending School A's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home. Both children participated in the French immersion program.

Parent Q

Parent Q is a mother to two children who have attended or are currently attending School A's immersion program. English is the only spoken language in the home. Both children participated in the Mandarin immersion program.

Parent R

Parent R is a mother with one child currently attending School B's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home. Her child is participating in the German immersion program.

Parent S

Parent S is a mother to one child currently attending School B's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home. Her child is participating in the French immersion program.

Parent T

Parent T is a mother with one child currently attending School B's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home. Her child is participating in the Mandarin immersion program.

Parent U

Parent U is a mother with one child currently attending School B's immersion program. Spoken languages in the home include English and Spanish. Her child is participating in the French immersion program.

Parent V

Parent V is a mother whose first child attended three years at School A before transferring into the exploratory program at School B when it opened. Her other child began School B's immersion program as a kindergartener. Both children are or were in the German immersion program. Main languages spoken in the home include English and Russian.

Parent W

Parent W is a father whose two children attend School B's immersion program. His oldest is in the exploratory program as she came to the school in an older grade. His youngest is in the French immersion program. The only language spoken in the home is English.

Parent X

Parent X is a mother to one child currently attending School B's immersion program. English is the only language spoken in the home. Her child is participating in the French immersion program.

Parent Y

Parent Y is a mother with one child currently attending School B's immersion program. The only language spoken in the home is English. Her child is participating in the Mandarin immersion program.

Results

Utilizing questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, this transcendental phenomenological study illustrates the lived experiences of parents whose children have attended at least 2 years in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Through the process of transcendental-phenomenological reduction, each individual interview along with participant's individual questionnaire responses and focus group responses were read through multiple times

to extract data that fit within the provisional list of codes, and new codes were created as needed. This process of transcendental-phenomenological reduction allowed for each participant's experience to be examined in its singularity (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation was then utilized to examine individual participant's experience to identify possible meaning and the underlying factors that account for that experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Once each participant's experience had been thoroughly examined, the entirety of participant data was examined to create a whole group composite description of the shared experience. This composite, broken down by themes based on the research questions, illustrates the lived experiences of parents within the foreign language immersion program context. Table 3 shows the themes and subthemes that resulted from the data. The participant descriptions and quotes that follow in each theme and subtheme were compiled from all three data collection methods including questionnaire responses, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Sub-Themes
Lived Experiences	Motivations for Enrollment Motivations for Involvement How Parents are Involved Challenges to Involvement Desired Resources to Aid Involvement Outcomes
Parental Role Construction	
Parent's Sense of Efficacy	

 Influence of Social Factors

Community

Teachers

Parents

Time

Barriers to Involvement

Demotivators

Lived Experiences

When it comes to the foreign language immersion program, parents recognize the gift they are giving their child in seeking out this opportunity. Parent D noted “I really feel like language immersion schooling for children is just...it's just a gift for everybody. I mean, there's really no... I don't see the downside.” Parent W described it by saying,

It makes me very proud of when I, you know, tell other parents who are not involved with the program where our kids are going to school and what they're doing and they're eyes kind of just light up and umm they always say that is such a great thing for them to do and they wish they had the opportunity for their kids to do that.

Along with this gift, though, comes work. As Parent T stated, “This is a dedicated program which does impact life, like any other school, however, setting aside dedicated time for language and non-language-based activities and cultural exploration at home and around the world are a must in our household.” The why and how of parents’ involvement with their child in a foreign language immersion program is examined in this theme. The subthemes in this section include parents’ motivations for enrollment, their motivations for involvement in the program, how specifically they are involved, the challenges they face with being involved, and what the results

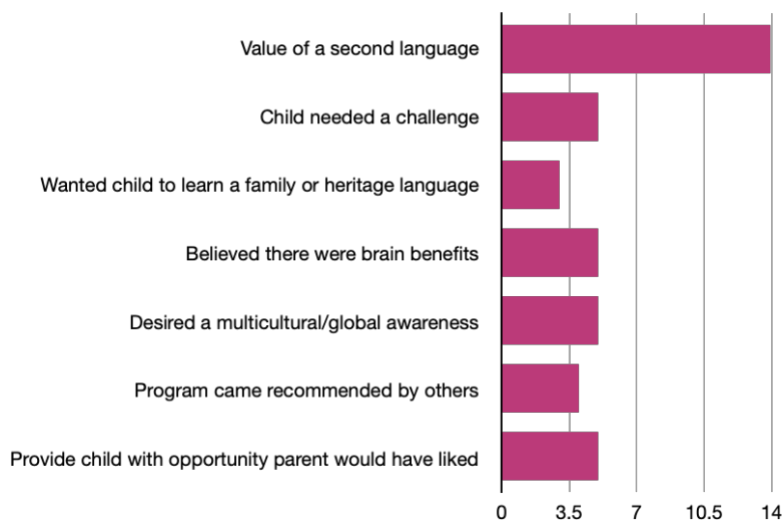
are of their involvement and the program. Some of these topics may be discussed in further detail in subsequent themes related to the research sub questions.

Motivations for Enrollment

During the focus group portion of this study, parents at both School A and School B shared similar reasons for enrolling their child in a foreign language immersion program. Reasons varied, but all parents mentioned at least one of the following: (1) the value of learning a second language, (2) their child needed a challenge, (3) they desired their child to learn a family or heritage language, (4) they heard of the brain benefits to learning a second language at a young age, (5) they desired their child to have a multicultural or global awareness, (6) the program came recommended from others, or (7) desired their child to have an experience they wished they could have had when they were young.

Figure 1

Motivations for Enrollment



The most frequently listed reason was the value of learning a second language. With 25 participants, the value of learning a second language was mentioned 14 times. Parents described wanting their children to have a different school experience, like Parent X who desired her son to

“get more than just a basic education” whereby learning a second language by the time he exits school, “the opportunities he has may grow exponentially.” Other parents, five mentioning it specifically, felt it important because they wished the opportunity had existed for them, such as Parent S who feels she may be “living a little vicariously” through her son, or Parent T who feels they “may have missed out” on an opportunity that “would have benefited me in the industry that I’m in now.” Five parents specifically noted the value of being multilingual in today’s world, especially parents who grew up outside of the U.S. school system, such as Parent V who questioned why all schools don’t have language learning from early on, an assumption she had made having grown up in Europe where learning more than one language is the norm. Overall, for many parents, the result of having a bilingual child was a strong motivator to pursue enrollment.

Beyond the value of learning a second language, another strong motivator for parents was recognizing that their child needed a challenge. Parent U desired to push her child through learning a second language, because “she needs to be challenged, otherwise she will act out.” Other parents voiced similar feelings, such as Parent O, whose son “needed something to push him well beyond the bounds of a traditional education because he was just going to run away with it.” Five parents in the study specifically discussed the recognition that their children were intelligent or perhaps performing higher than their peers and if they were bored in class, they would act out. For these parents, learning the regular curriculum through a second language challenged their children in ways they would not have been otherwise at a neighborhood school.

Further motivations for enrollment included having their child learn a family or heritage language, whether the parent knew the language or not. Three parents discussed this reason for enrollment. Parent C who grew up speaking German and English, attending School A provided

an opportunity to have “additional support in developing their German language skills” when at the time she was the only one who could regularly speak German with her children. Parent J sought out a German immersion program when returning to the states from overseas because her husband’s first language was German and finding School A was “why we moved to [the city]. For this program.” Parent H enrolled her children because she saw the value in a second language, but also felt it would be neat to carry on a language that was her husband’s heritage, though he did not learn the language himself. For these parents, the importance of carrying on a family language or sharing a lost heritage through learning a second language motivated them to enroll their children.

Further reasons for enrollment for parents included exposing their children to a multicultural perspective to promote global awareness, the brain benefits of learning another language, and recommendations of others. Five parents specifically mentioned developing a multicultural perspective as a motivator for enrollment. Parent A already had a multicultural and multilingual home, so she desired not only to have her children learn another language, but to “learn a different perspective, become multicultural and global” and she appreciated the “diversity and different perspectives” of School A. Parent Y also felt it was important to expose her daughter to other cultures and “people of varying backgrounds.” She recognized that neighborhood schools these days seemed to be regressing and becoming segregated again, and in attending a magnet school that pulls from all over the county her child could experience all the different cultures of the area. Five parents discussed the brain benefits to learning another language at a young age. Parent H described attending an open house for a foreign immersion program where she learned what learning another language “does to your brain when you’re a little kid with all those pathways being formed that even if you never use the language again, it

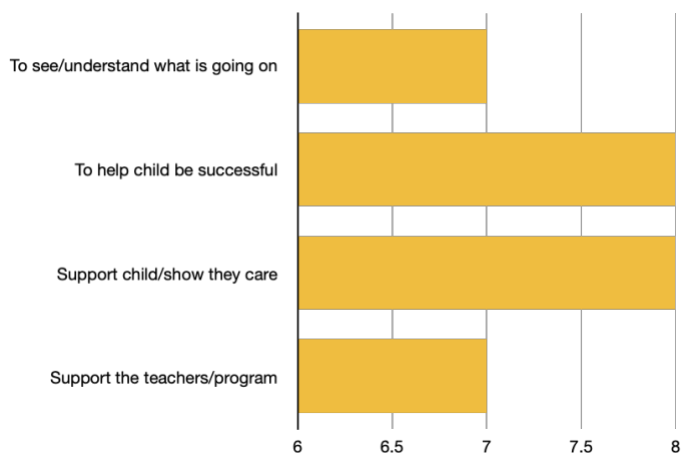
just exponentially helps your brain develop in ways that it just can't otherwise develop." Parent D and Parent O also echo the potential brain benefits of learning through another language. Lastly, parents discussed how they learned of the school through others and that encouraged them to pursue enrollment for their own child. Four parents mentioned how they were influenced by others to enroll their child. Parent P had a best friend who enrolled their child several years prior to Parent P seeking out a school for her own child. Parent Q as well as Parent N learned of the school and the opportunity through work colleagues and friends. Parent M had a friend from church encourage her to enroll her daughter in the immersion program, stating this friend had spoken of the history and science behind immersion learning, and how it'd be "this extra language that, you know, no one would even expect a little brown girl to have." Word of mouth and knowing others who were already enrolled in the program motivated these parents to seek it out for their own children.

Motivations for Involvement

After enrolling their children in School A or School B's foreign language immersion program, parents continued to stay engaged. Their motivations for involvement varied but centered around four main ideas: (1) they desired to see and understand what was going on in the school, (2) they wanted their child to be successful, (3) they wanted to support their child and show they care, and (4) they wanted to support the teachers and the overall program.

Figure 2

Motivations for Involvement



One of the first reasons parents gave as a motivation to be involved was to see and understand what was going on in the school. Seven participants specifically mentioned this reason. For some parents, like Parent K, that desire came because she felt the parents in her child’s class were “really disconnected” and they “didn’t get to see what’s going on in the classroom,” in part due to starting Kindergarten during a virtual remote year during the COVID-19 pandemic and in part due to lack of communication between the teacher and home at the time. Due to this, she stated she is “really clawing at any volunteer opportunity at the school” to have an idea of what is going on. For others like Parent M, motivation came from wanting to “know the staff more, get to know the teachers, putting my presence more there and assisting where I can.” Similarly, Parent J wanted to be involved to see what her son was doing, but also to ensure the teacher “would understand that we’re parents who were involved, that we cared about our son, A, but also about his education.” Learning all required content through a foreign language was all new to Parent Q, so her reasons for being involved geared toward “trying to keep abreast of, you know, how that was happening.” For Parent T, being disengaged from an environment where her daughter spends 80% of her time was a nonstarter. She felt “the need to know each other on a personal level” and “to know what’s going on.”

Another motivator for parents was the success of their child. Eight participants discussed this reason for involvement. Parent C was motivated to be involved because she wanted her kids to be successful, and “in order for them to be successful, the program has to be successful.” Parent E felt by participating in School A’s immersion program, she was setting her children up to have the opportunity to go to college. Similarly, Parent I desired to set her children up for “the most success possible.” Parent G recalled being motivated by words she heard in a parent meeting that discussed how “parents that are involved in their kid’s education...there’s a correlation to student success.” Other parents expressed similar sentiments of wanting their children to be able to take their education as far as they desired, to do well in life, or to be self-sufficient contributors to society. As Parent W put it, “our job is to grow them into successful citizens and the well roundedness of that really hinges on their education” so a parent’s job is all aspects of their child’s education with “school being a major function of that.”

Along the lines of wanting to help their child’s overall success, parents desired to be involved to show they cared and supported their child. Eight parents specifically mentioned this reason for involvement. Parent Y considered her involvement as leading by example, where she stated, “like with anything kids do, if you show interest in it and you show how it’s important and how they can use it and how it’s interesting, that gives them an external motivation.” She hoped her involvement helped to promote her own child’s desire to learn through immersion. Parent V and Parent U recognized the influence their involvement had on their children, noting how happy it made the children when they saw Mom come to school for one reason or another. The importance of being involved for Parent F was for her daughter “to know that somebody cares...I want her to do well.”

Finally, parents were motivated to be involved because of the teachers and the program itself. Seven parents discussed this reason for involvement. Parent B was motivated to support the school community because she felt it was “a really special environment and it, to me, I think it shows the kids what a truly diverse community can look like and should look like.” Not only that, seeing how engaged the teachers were added to her motivation to be involved, stating that “if they’re going to be here, like, they need as many parents to be here as well.” For Parent V, the understanding of how difficult it is to be a teacher motivated her to be involved, noting “whenever they need, like anything, I try to make it happen.” The commitment to immersion on the part of the teachers motivated Parent D to be involved. She recalled a time early on in kindergarten when she was helping in the classroom and the teacher told her what needed to be done in French. As Parent D did not understand French, the teacher called her son over and had him translate what the teacher was asking Parent D to do, which for her solidified her “belief in the program.” For Parent G, the motivation to be involved was due to “the energy that they have and the openness that they have and the gratefulness that they have when people and parents come help.” Parent T described the “inclusive environment” she said that the principal set the tone for as motivation for her to be involved from the start. Along the same lines, Parent I mentioned the “really phenomenal teachers” as a reason for wanting to be involved, she noted that on the flip side, poor experiences with individual teachers also made her want to be more involved to advocate for her child. Parent U was also motivated to be more involved by an issue with a teacher when within a week of the start of school, the teacher left. While there was no permanent teacher for the first half of the school year, Parent U stated the incident “showed a lot of collaboration between the parents and fairly good communication from the school,” but pushed her to want to be aware and involved with what was happening.

How Parents Are Involved

Parent involvement within the foreign language immersion programs appeared strong among those interviewed. Each participant identified multiple ways they work to stay involved in their children's education. Unique to the immersion setting, however, was the fact that the majority of parents' lacked ability to help their children with a common form of involvement: homework assistance. While Parent B found multiple ways to be involved, when it came to assisting with schoolwork, she stated she "just couldn't get overly involved in her schoolwork" because she "really had no idea what she was doing." This sentiment was shared by many parents. Parent Q reported that because she didn't know the language, she was unable to "directly help them with doing the assignment or understanding the assignment," but found ways to assist, such as consulting other parents who may be native speakers. Other parents felt they were less involved with their children's education. "I felt like I was less involved than I would have been had we been in an English-speaking school. I don't speak French, so I wasn't able to help with anything," Parent G stated. Parent D mentioned she would be involved with her children's education no matter what, but "with the language immersion piece, you kind of have to do a little bit more. You have to be a little bit more creative; I think." The other forms of involvement parents expressed participating in below speak to that creativity.

While most parents could not directly assist their children with homework each night, they did find other ways to be involved with their children's education at home. Because the children are learning all day long in a foreign language, and for the first several years receive minimal to no instruction in the English language, both schools promote the necessity of parents to foster their children's English reading and writing abilities. Parent N felt their only responsibilities at home really centered around making sure his children did their homework and

in “developing their English reading.” Parent M expressed how she would normally read with her child in English no matter what school her daughter was attending, but being in an immersion program, she felt this “added pressure” to make sure she made time to fit it in her schedule. Not only that, but she also felt the reading itself was more “intentional” and required more “targeted reading” rather than simply reading for reading’s sake. Another area of importance for at-home involvement for many parents involved finding appropriate resources to help support their children’s language development. Many parents discussed seeking out books and materials in the immersion language for their children, watching shows or listening to audiobooks and music in the immersion language, or finding camps or tutors to assist their children. Further involvement support at home included communicating with teachers or the school, making real world connections by finding cultural events and other opportunities in the area to support the immersion language and culture, and utilizing the various Facebook and classroom-specific parent groups for support.

When it comes to in-school involvement, parents noted many opportunities to get involved. School A “has the most involved and like welcoming and diverse community. So, it was really easy to get involved” Parent B noted. Parent G had similar thoughts when speaking about her involvement stating “how much the school welcomed parents and how much the teachers appreciated parents” had an influence on her to be involved. Parents gave several ways to be involved in the school, with the most common mentions being volunteering in the classroom, attending classroom and school events, chaperoning field trips, and providing resources for the classroom. Other forms of involvement included being the designated room mom for their child’s class, proctoring exams, being a member of the parent teacher organization or on the School Leadership Team, providing school support for things like supply drives,

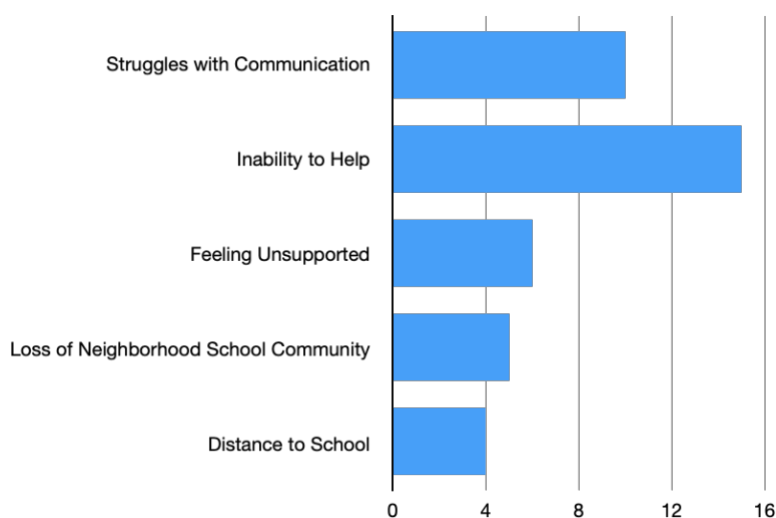
helping support teachers with academic lessons or as a native speaker of the immersion language, or being one of the immersion language ambassadors who helped when special guests visited the school. Whether stay-at-home parents or working parents, those who wanted to be involved in the school found ways to be involved. Parent G expressed, “I felt like the school was very welcoming. The parent body was very welcoming. There’s plenty of communications on needs and everyone’s willing to have a helping hand.”

Challenges to Involvement

Being involved in their children’s foreign language immersion program for many parents did come with challenges. The most common challenges parents faced included (1) the inability or feeling unable to help their child, (2) communication struggles or lack of communication with teachers and the school, (3) feeling at times unsupported when issues arose, and (4) the effects of not being part of a neighborhood school community. Other challenges mentioned included the distance to school and frequent changes in teachers. Figure 1 below illustrates the number of participants who mentioned each challenge.

Figure 3

Involvement Challenges



Fifteen of 25 parents discussed the inability to help their child as being a challenge to their involvement. The inability to help or the feeling of being unable to help their children at first caught some parents off guard. “It’s not something you can just wing” stated Parent K, “so that’s our biggest challenge. It’s just trying to figure out how to support her.” Parent Y echoed the challenge was simply “being able to read the homework. Like at all.” She noted she could decipher some, “I know that’s math because there’s a plus sign, but I don’t... none of the rest of this is accessible to me.” Many parents shared similar feelings as Parent K and Parent Y, and as Parent M mentioned it opened her eyes “to try to, you know, make sure that she gets what she needs” indicating that because of the language her daughter was learning, “it’s hard to find help sometimes.” Along with the struggle of not being able to personally help their children with work, parents also had issues finding the resources that could help their children which added to their feelings of not being able to help. Parent P discussed the extra effort it took her to find French books to support her children, noting she “had to invest more time in trying to search for these books because I know like a lot of them aren’t like just in the local library.”

The second largest challenge to involvement for parents related to communication issues with the teachers or the school. Ten of the 25 participants mentioned communication challenges. For some, like Parent X, the challenges stemmed from not being able to communicate with the teacher. “The communication with the teacher was not very good and we didn’t get newsletters every week like we did in first grade. We didn’t get emails and messages from the teacher” that discussed what her son was working on in and out of class, which is why Parent X felt like she “missed out on a lot of what he was learning and being able to offer help.” Parent U echoed these sentiments as she recalled, “I just remember like those being my concerns in kindergarten that first semester not knowing what she was doing, not knowing what to even talk to her about to

find out what she was doing and support her.” For one parent, the lack of communication stemmed from the teacher not being able to communicate in English well, and for the other it was due to the teacher leaving a week into the school year. Parent F experienced a similar problem when one year her daughter went through multiple teachers and Parent F received little to no communication on what was happening in the classroom or why there was such fluctuation in her daughter’s teachers. Parent J also struggled with communication, stating she often reached out to teachers when she noticed issues with her son or his grades to which she received little to no response. Further, Parent M and others noted that communication really starts to fall off around fifth grade and through middle school. While that may be by design, in efforts to have students take more of the responsibility, Parent M mentioned, “some kids do need support and help, and how can you given them support and help if you don’t know what they’re doing?”

Another challenge parents faced was feeling unsupported by the school at times when issues arose. For some parents, those feelings arose when issues in the classroom did not seem adequately addressed by the administration. Parent X and Parent S both experienced issues in their children’s class, in part due to their teacher’s inability to communicate in English. This “very big communication barrier” between the teacher and students as well as the teacher and parents led to there being “a lot of communication we didn’t know about and there were a lot of issues going on with the kids due to the language barrier that were causing multiple problems,” Parent X mentioned. When parents tried to address their concerns with administration, they felt they did not receive the support necessary to resolve the issue. Other parents had issues arise when it came to discovering their children had learning disabilities such as dyslexia or hearing issues that impacted their learning. When she came to discover her son may have dyslexia, Parent B “never felt like I got a response from anyone at the school that was eager to make sure

he got what he needed.” From her experience, she did not “think they do a good enough job of really identifying if there’s a kid struggling in the non-target language cause it’s not their focus.” As children do not really start learning English until the third grade, Parent B felt that was much too late for identifying potential learning disabilities. While Parent I and Parent Q did not have direct experience themselves, they had heard of other parents who struggled to get the supports they needed for their children who had potential learning disabilities, showing how well known this issue may be.

“They’re like the kid that nobody knows,” Parent D lamented when talking of the challenge of losing out on the neighborhood school community. As School A and B are magnet schools, students come from all over the county, which means most students “don’t have that experience of getting off the bus with all of their classmates” which leads to them being “a little bit of an outsider,” Parent D stated. This created a challenge for her child, Parent D said, which was “how to fit in socially when you’re not part of the neighborhood the way other people are.” Other parents noted similar challenges, such as Parent E who stated, “they can’t just... have their best friend walk with them down the street.” With both schools being countywide magnet schools, getting together with friends from school could also be a challenge. Parent C noted, it’s “a little bit difficult to meet some of the students and parents outside of the school because you know they live all over [the city].”

Desired Resources to Aid Involvement

One of the biggest challenges parents faced was their inability to help their children, mostly due to their lack of language knowledge, but also because they had difficulties finding resources that helped them adequately support their children. In discussing their experiences, many parents described resources they felt could help them support their children more

effectively. Whether parent supports or student supports, parents felt there were many ways to enhance their experience with the immersion program.

Parental Supports. Parents felt there were many supports they would like to see that would assist parents in the immersion program. Ideas ranged from simply providing parents instructions for projects and assignments in English so they could at least understand what their child needed to be doing, to having ways for parents to learn the language to an extent as well. Some parents felt overwhelmed in the beginning and wished that the school had some way to provide necessary information up front to ease parents in, such as providing information on the apps the school uses, understanding the different school resources available, and more. “I think that’s a really good point for inclusion, because you can’t just assume that everyone knows what a counselor is and you don’t know what you don’t know,” said Parent T. Parent K, in part due to starting during a COVID remote year, felt like many parents were lost and struggled to understand what was going on in the program to a point in which a friend created a Kindergarten Liaison position within the school to help new parents navigate and figure out what they don’t know. Many parents mentioned having a centralized location to find information on all the apps used, a place to find resources, information on the school, and classroom materials such as textbooks. “The amount of apps that we have to use with this school can be a bit overwhelming...if there was a way to, I don’t know, if there’s a way to streamline it or minimize...” Parent T discussed, “but there’s just a lot of different apps that you have to go soul searching for different things.” Not finding the resources needed, such as information on what they should be working on or textbook materials, Parent A stated has, at times, “kept us from being able to help our kids when they were struggling in certain areas.” Parent M shared how having one centralized resource would keep parents from getting overwhelmed. “I don’t know

about anyone else; I know that I get so overwhelmed with all the emails and the ParentSquare” and the several Facebook groups, said Parent M, that having a localized resource where you can find everything with links would help. Other supports parents would like to see included things that support their understanding of how the program works. When asked how the school may assist parents, Parent T shared,

Organize regular workshops or seminars to educate parents about the language immersion program's goals, teaching methodologies, and effective ways to support their child's language learning at home. These workshops could cover language learning strategies, cultural integration, and tips for creating a language-rich environment.

Other parents shared similar thoughts. They also felt having strong connections with other parents would be helpful. While many parents did participate in strong communication channels among other parents, not all did, and it seemed to come down to whether there was any established parent leadership for the classroom. Parent K and E discussed that having parent support groups that allowed parents to get together and share experiences would be helpful. Linking new or incoming parents with seasoned parents could help in navigating the uncertainties of the program. Having more parent interaction, according to Parent K, could ease parent worries, especially those who are just beginning. Parent E felt there should be clear guidelines on room parents and how that should be handled so there were not such big differences in classroom communication, where some were very active, and others were not. Finally, parents wouldn't mind having ways, outside of online language apps, to learn the immersion language as well. While most knew they would not be able to keep up with their child's learning, they would have loved the opportunity to learn even the basics.

Student Supports. For their children, parents wanted to see more immersion language support beyond the classroom. They desired more summer camp options, in each target language, and options that were more affordable than the few occasionally provided. In addition, parents wanted to see more before and after school programs that supported language learning. Other suggestions for student support included utilizing a pen pal system so students could converse with target language native speakers, and maybe have more interaction between grade levels who are learning the same language, such as fifth grade to first grade reading buddies. A big support several parents discussed included helping parents find tutors for their children when needed. They described a desire to see the school facilitate tutors so that parents knew they were using someone supported by the school and perhaps even able to meet at the school. One parent suggested the novel idea of creating a middle school club in which students were able to be tutors to younger grade students. Another support parents felt was critical was having better supports in place to identify students who may have learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Due to the nature of the program, many children do not receive English instruction until third grade, which several parents felt was too late when it came to identifying potential learning challenges. Finally, most if not all the parents in the study discussed wanting some assistance in obtaining target language books for their children. “Nobody keeps Chinese books here in person, like there’s no bookstore that has that, so that’s been the only struggle is finding books for her that will help,” Parent Y discussed, saying “I wish we had a book list that we could buy from.” Other parents reiterated this desire to be able to purchase language books at home and wishing the school facilitated a way for that to happen. They also desired for the school’s own library to carry more target language books or instead of using Scholastic for the book fair, finding a vendor who can sell target language books.

Outcomes to Involvement in FLIPs

While a major goal of foreign language immersion programs is for students to become bilingual, parents were still amazed to see it happen. “It just blows my mind how much they learn and how quickly they pick it up and how easy it is for them to just kind of fall into that,” Parent X said. Parent S had similar astonishment, “when you go to their classroom, and you hear them all speak, and the teachers are talking to them... I have no idea what’s being said, but I know he understands it and I know he can respond, and to me, that’s just pretty amazing.” Many other parents echoed how easy it seemed to be for their kids and how amazing it was that they picked up the language so quickly. In fact, the word amazing was mentioned 38 times among parents when discussing the successes and outcomes of the program. From the ability to speak at least two languages once done with the immersion program, parents could see the opportunities that lie ahead for their children. This program “gives them the opportunity to dream and imagine and have imagination in regard to a focus point on what they can do with their language,” according to Parent M. Parent G echoed this when she stated, “it’s pretty successful because when I look at them, they’re really curious, grounded students who love having this language and the culture and the opportunities it provides.”

Along those same lines, another outcome parents described was how through the program their children became more globally minded, critically thinking, and appreciative of diversity. Parent C attributed this to the fact her children were “exposed to different cultures. They’re exposed to different languages. They’re exposed to, I think, a more diverse group of kids.” Several parents agreed with this statement, speaking to the diversity of the school, especially as compared to the neighborhood school their children may have attended otherwise. Parent I said that her neighborhood school “would have been honestly very vanilla, all the kids

kind of the same” and that the camaraderie and inclusiveness she experienced at School A was a joy. The exposure to different cultures, different languages, and the diverse student and teacher body contributed to creating a larger, more global mindset in their children according to parents. Parent H said her daughter had a “whole new view of the world like it is larger than [the state],” to which Parent D agreed when she stated her son had the mindset that “you’re supposed to go and see the world and see these different places and speak to different people” and that he really saw “the world as to be explored.”

A similar outcome parents noticed in their children was how much confidence their child built up throughout their time in the program and beyond. “They become more confident” Parent Q stated, when “they realize that they have a skill that not many of their friends” have. Parent B believed the confidence came from “when they do something that’s hard and can get through that and feel successful” as her children did in the immersion program. Parent C noted she noticed the confidence after her daughter took the German language fluency exam in fifth grade and realized she had the potential to go to school in Germany one day. Parent F agreed, saying that her daughter turned around the situation of not quite fitting in the neighborhood as she went to a different school into a positive and realized that not all kids were like her and did not get the same opportunity that she did to speak a second language. This built a confidence in her daughter that sometimes Parent F stated, “sometimes I have to look at her, like okay, you can calm down a little bit.”

Parental Role Construction

The role construction of parents refers to what a parent feels they should be doing when it comes to their children. Essentially, what is their job? In relation to sub-question one of the research questions, this study examined how parents viewed their role in relation to their child’s

education in the foreign language immersion program. Parent T succinctly summarized the parental role by stating, “parents play a vital role by fostering a supportive home environment, promoting a positive attitude towards learning, and maintaining open communication with teachers.” Parent D had similar views, but added “with the immersion piece, you kind of have to do a little bit more. You have to be a little bit more creative.” Among the 25 individuals who participated in the study, there was one main role parents took on, with four areas that supported that main role. The main role included acting as a support in all areas of their children’s education. The four supporting roles included (1) helping foster skills that built self-reliance and responsibility in the children, (2) reinforcing the value of an education, (3) advocating for their children when necessary, and (4) having a deep knowledge and understanding of their children.

When discussing their role, many parents noted how little they were able to help their child with their daily assignments or projects. A role that many parents generally take on was not possible for these parents, which led to most parents taking on a supportive role. Parent B described that she “really had no idea what [her daughter] was doing” which meant that she “couldn’t get overly involved in her schoolwork.” This led to her taking on a support role, where she was there “if they have something that they’re struggling with to kind of help them figure out how to do it for themselves.” Parent G referred to her support role as one of guidance and encouragement. While Parent H felt she would be the typical involved parent, instead she found herself taking more of a back seat, stating “I’ve like literally really done nothing that’s beyond like making sure they’re like sitting down with their homework and, you know, reading in the evening.” Parent X stated her role included supporting her son, but “not making him feel like he has to be perfect but giving him the support to understand how important his education is.” Echoing what many parents felt, Parent C summarized her supportive role as:

My responsibility is to support my child in their learning, to collaborate with their teachers to ensure my child has the tools and resources to be successful, to communicate openly about expectations, to celebrate their successes, to encourage them to do their best, and to love them through all of the ups and downs school can bring.

These parents took on the supportive role in many forms, including ensuring their children had the necessary resources to be successful, supporting the teacher and the school through involvement and communication, providing guidance and encouragement, and ensuring their children had their basic needs fulfilled. All other areas of the parental role for these parents stems from this supportive role.

As parents did not understand what their children were doing each day in the foreign language immersion program, they found that their role had to include helping foster skills in their child that promoted self-reliance and responsibility for themselves. For Parent A, this included “instilling confidence and their ability to solve their own problems” and making sure “that they have their own voice and that they can speak up” for themselves. “I don’t speak French, so I wasn’t able to help with anything... so in terms of, you know, what my role was, I felt like I was much more hands off than I needed to be. It forced them to be a lot more independent and proactive” and advocate for themselves, said Parent G. Parent Y felt that not understanding what her child was doing was actually an advantage, because then she was “actually teaching them what we’re supposed to be teaching them, which is how to learn how to ask questions, how to figure [it] out.”

Also included in that supportive role parents described came reinforcing the value of an education for their children. Parent O described his role by saying, “I kind of feel like my job is to show them the reality of what they’re learning” which included making sure “they see the

opportunities they have ahead of them.” Parent D had similar sentiments, stating that her role as a parent was to instill in her children “the value of their education to kind of set yourself up so that what you’re doing with your life is meaningful to you.” For Parent F, she wanted to ensure her daughter realized the opportunity that she had in the immersion program, stating that it’s “slim to none that you can get it, especially for free” and her daughter needed to “take it serious and do everything she can do.” Parent T noted that part of her role included motivating her daughter because “she’s doing something that is very different. The kids in the neighborhood don’t speak another language. Our family members, for the most part, don’t speak another language,” so motivating her and ensuring she knows “it’s okay to being doing something different” is important.

While parents felt it important to foster their children’s own advocacy skills, it was also important for these parents to know when to step in and advocate for their children. Advocating for her children included “making sure if there are patterns of struggle that I’m noticing it and picking up on it quickly and, you know, bringing it to the appropriate folks’ attention,” stated Parent I. For Parent K, who felt like her child was struggling with the language, her role included advocating for her daughter and communicating with the teachers to get her daughter the help she needed. Parent M felt similarly, stating that her role was to “advocate when there’s things that [her daughter’s] not able to express.”

Finally, a role parents felt important included knowing and understanding their child. This included communicating with their child often, spending time and being present, fostering growth in non-academic areas, and understanding their child’s strength and weaknesses. Parent F put it simply, stating “you should pay attention to your kid.” By this simple statement, she elaborated by stating “it is very important to learn what they like, how they’re learning, what

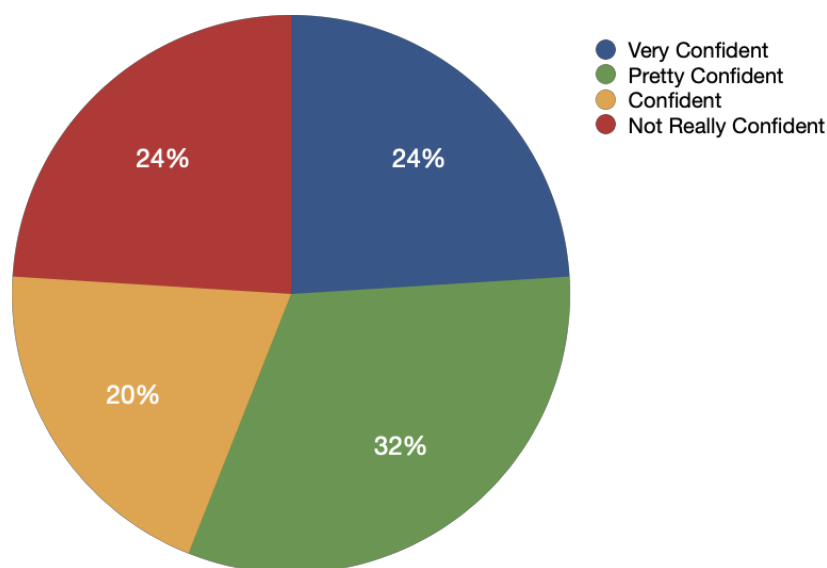
their learning style is” in order to help them succeed. Parent R described it in terms of knowing her daughter’s strengths and weaknesses, “so that we can... work on her weaknesses and make her strengths shine more.” For Parent T, her role included being an “extra set of eyes” for her daughter and “making sure that if I see something that she’s interested in, that I cultivate that and kind of narrow in on it and not ignore it.” For these parents, it was important to know and understand their children so that they may help foster growth in both academic and non-academic areas.

Parent’s Sense of Efficacy

Though most of the parents in this study did not know the language their child was learning, overall, they had high levels of confidence in supporting their child through the program. Figure 2 shows the level of confidence each participant felt they had in helping their child successfully complete the immersion program.

Figure 4

Levels of Confidence



Nineteen of the 25 participants stated they were confident or very confident. Only six individuals felt not too confident in helping support their child through the program. For many this confidence grew over time as they settled into the program. “I was really dubious; I have to be honest...I knew I didn’t know any German. I was just kind of like, how is this going to work...but I feel like I just saw every year it working,” Parent H stated. Parent Q felt similarly, expressing she was unsure in the beginning, but once she saw how quickly her children picked up the language and how comfortable they were becoming in the program, her feelings subsided. She stated, “it’s hard in the beginning, especially because this is completely unfamiliar from anything either of us ever grew up experiencing” and at first, she felt like she was “winging it,” but now she and her husband were more confident in themselves and the program.

Many parents who stated they were confident in helping their child through the immersion program may have expressed that they were not confident in their ability to help with the language, but they were confident in their ability to help their child find the help he or she needed. Parent M expressed she didn’t have “a lot of confidence” but she was “quite confident that, you know, if I do need something that it will come to me.” Parent N echoed this feeling when he described his confidence:

As far as actually helping them with getting answers right on a German assignment, low, but as far as hopefully providing them the tools to succeed or providing them the space and the tools to succeed, I think hopefully pretty high.

For other parents, their confidence came from the school and teachers, knowing they had support there if they needed it. Parent U stated:

I think as long as we have good communication and support with the school, then that's going to be key because there are going to be things that I can't help her with... but I know that I can support her in other ways or find resources to help her.

Parent B felt the same, stating she would often have her children go back to the teacher to clarify things they did not know. Parent D expressed her confidence in the program when she stated, "our program, I feel like, it's run pretty well, it's well established and I feel like as long as you make sure they do their portion, you know, make sure they're staying up with their homework," then she can be confident in her children's success.

A key element to these parents' confidence came from their trust in the program. "So, I think there's a lot of trust that's involved in sending your child to another, to an immersion program where they're learning another language where you can't support that academic learning in the same way," Parent U described. She went on to describe how it was a struggle at first to let go of those things she felt she should be helping with as a parent and that it required a "high level of trust" in the program. Parent H described how with her first child, she really had to wait and see, trusting that the process worked because she did not have any evidence. She did not hear her daughter speak the language. She said, "I feel like I did not hear her speak fluently until like fifth grade. And that's when I was like, oh, wow! Like, you can really do this" whereas before that moment Parent H, herself, was unable to "engage" with her daughter, "so it was a lot of praying and trusting the process for lack of a better word." Parent F shared a similar account of not knowing how her daughter was doing with the language until about 7th grade. Before that time, all she could go on were the grades her daughter was getting. "Of course, we see the grades and you'll talk to the teachers, and they'll say like, oh yeah, they're doing great...but since it's not a language of course we speak at home, I'm just going by what they say." In 7th grade

though, her daughter had to record a presentation on video, and it was at that time that Parent F “was just blown away and amazed that she [spoke] it fluently.”

Parent G stated that it was a unique set of parents who sent their children to the immersion program, because those parents were trusting that “their kid is going to learn everything they need to learn in life in a different language that they don’t know, and it is because there is a value and a trust within the parents about what that can do” for their children. For some parents who were less confident in helping their children, like Parent K, this might feel like blind trust. Her daughters participated in the Chinese program, and she spoke frequently of how her eldest daughter seemed to be struggling with the language. She stated,

we don’t know Chinese, and so I feel like there’s just a lot of blind trust that they’re actually learning it and that things are going okay...we just kind of get the feeling that we have no idea what’s going on. We hope it’s well.

Parents of the study overall had high confidence in helping their child. Those who felt low confidence in their ability to help with the language piece, felt more confident in their ability to help their children get what they needed to be successful. For many parents, their confidence grew over time as they saw the program working and their children navigated through it. Parents expressed they relied on a lot of help from the school, teachers, family members who knew the language, other parents, and resources they could find. Many parents stated it required a lot of trust in the process, believing that the school knew what it was doing and that their children would learn all they needed to know while being immersed in a foreign language.

Influence of Social Factors

Sub-question three of the research questions asked, how do parents describe the influence, if any, of social factors (leadership, staff, and other parents) on their parental role

construction or sense of efficacy in relation to involvement in a foreign language immersion program? While parents had personal motivation to be involved in their children's education with the immersion program, this study did reveal instances where outside factors affected parental involvement, both positively and negatively. Table 4 illustrates the aspects of social factors that influenced parental involvement.

Table 4

Social Factors that Influence Parental Involvement

Theme	Sub-Themes
Social Factors	Community
	Teachers
	Parents
	Time
	Barriers to Involvement
	Demotivators

Parents spoke of various aspects of the community created within the school that influenced their involvement. They also described how teachers and other parents affected their involvement. Further, they described how time influenced their involvement, including it as one of the barriers to their involvement at times. Finally, parents mentioned times when they felt demotivated to be involved.

Community

Parents described a robust, supportive, welcoming community among the immersion programs. For many parents, the community built around the school motivated them to be

involved. “Truthfully, it’s an environment that I don’t think you find anywhere else in [the district]” Parent O mentioned comparing School A to other schools his children had gone to, “you see a much higher level of support and engagement, involvement and activity with parents, which I think really resounds through the kids.” Parent B felt similarly, describing School A as being a “unique little microcosm” that she had not seen in any of the other four district schools her children have attended. “You just don’t get the same level of engagement from both the school and the parents.”

Parent N felt the community may have been born through the shared experiences parents have with their children attending the school, describing how most parents don’t speak the language, “so we’re kind of all in that same boat and our kids are in the same boat.” Along those lines, Parent Y believed the fact that parents chose to enroll their children in the immersion program automatically built a community, stating that, “you just can’t be a certain type of person and put your kid in a language immersion school. Like you have to have a respect for other cultures.” Parent S agreed with this, stating the school attracts a community of parents who are like-minded in the desire to be inclusive of others.

For other parents, the community feel came from the inclusion of all languages and the multiple ways the school provided students and families to learn of all the languages and cultures at the school. Parent F stated that even though her daughter was in the Japanese program, there were programs and events to attend for every language, which made the school feel inclusive of everyone. Parent B also felt that the school events were “a huge part of, I think, what made school more engaging, but also just that community was so much tighter because you got so many opportunities to see what the other kids were learning in their languages.”

Other parents attribute the community to how involved parents are and how the school promotes opportunities for involvement. Parent Y said she purposefully put her children into a community of “parents who care about their kids and I can see the difference. Most parents are very involved.” Parent T described the close-knit community among her child’s class, where parents are “very supportive of one another. We’re always very responsive to the needs of the classroom.” Similarly, Parent O described how “parents participate in ways that I haven’t seen in any of the other public schools” believing that parents would not put their children into a language immersion program if they were not going to be really involved. Strong involvement does not happen, though, without opportunities to be involved. For the most part, parents described the multiple ways the school and teachers utilized to keep parents informed about what was happening at the school and what opportunities there were for involvement. “There’s plenty of communication on needs and, you know, everyone’s willing to have a helping hand,” Parent G described. Parent P echoed these words, stating she liked “how open they are to ask for help with anything, you know, and that just makes me feel like...they’re just really wanting parents involved.” Parent Q described the number of ways the school used to communicate needs, “whether it be email, or the ParentSquare, or the Facebook page. There are different ways for parents to stay involved...If you want to know, you can know.”

Teachers

The teachers are the backbone of the immersion program. They are the first resort parents go to when navigating through the program. Parents in this study described how good communication from teachers encouraged their involvement and eased their worries. They also described how teachers were their number one source for resources that could help them support their students. Further, parents described how teachers were very supportive of the students. On

the flip side, parents also discussed how poor communication with teachers could lead to feeling disconnected.

Parents in this study felt, in general, that they had good communication with the teachers. They spoke of how responsive teachers were when parents had questions, how the teachers were very happy to explain assignments, how they provided parents with numerous resources, and how willing teachers were to reach out when they needed support. Parent I stated, “having a number of, like, really phenomenal teachers in the German program has made me want to be involved and stay involved.” Parent N described his experiences with his daughters’ teachers, stating how helpful the teachers had been, which in turn made him “want to help them out to improve things for their classes and make things easier on them.” Parent P discussed how her relationships with her daughter’s teachers made her feel comfortable enough to approach them whenever an issue arose. “I can go to that teacher and, like, say, hey, you know, this is an issue that, you know, my daughter’s having, and we need to have a conversation about it, and it’s dealt with... whatever any issues that it was could be resolved through that conversation.” Parent T felt her daughter’s teachers had wonderful communication, usually weekly, in which they talk about what the students are working on and what is coming up. She felt the teachers were “very open and transparent about the journey.” Parent O described how the teachers were supportive no matter the issue. “When we were having trouble, they were great. They really tried everything. When we weren’t having trouble, I mean, they really just gave us positive feedback when it was necessary.” Parent A echoed the words of Parent O, stating that “we’ve had really, really strong, wonderful, supportive German teachers, especially throughout the elementary school. So really just willing to help and assessing my kids’ needs.” When teachers had frequent communication that allowed parents to know what was going on in class and what their child

was learning and informed them of the needs of the classroom and how parents could help out, parents felt more motivated to be involved.

When discussing the teachers in the immersion program, many parents described how helpful the teachers were, especially in the younger grades, at providing resources for parents to utilize so they could support their child's learning at home. Parent U said about one particular teacher,

We've had an amazing teacher that was extremely communicative, had a ton of resources available, videos that she would do...would include her pets in the video, so that, you know, the kids would engage with that... she was just really, really, amazing at providing all of those resources and support and feedback whenever it was needed.

Similarly, Parent X felt her son's first grade teacher was extremely helpful in providing resources, stating she would often provide "a lot of different websites that she used both for the lessons that they were doing in class as well as kid friendly apps that they could use on their own." While Parent T could not help with the language learning, she was happy to receive resources that helped her support her daughter in subject areas outside of the language, like math and science. Within the Mandarin immersion program, Parent D appreciated that teachers often sent home a lot of cultural enrichment things that allow her to see "the big picture and really appreciate more... the closeness of the language and the culture." Parent P described how unsure she felt when it came to assisting her daughter in the language learning, but that she was able to email the teachers and they would respond right away with websites to look at or other resources that could help her support her daughter. When teachers provided resources for parents that allowed them to support their child, whether in the immersion language or in other academic areas, parents felt better able to be involved in their child's education.

The way in which teachers showed interest and care in their students motivated parents to be more involved. When reminiscing about her children's teachers over the years, Parent G stated,

I just can't say enough about how the teachers made my kids feel and made us feel. I think they were very motivating. They were always there for their best interest. They were patient, and they understood that they were kids, so they were going to do things right and do things wrong, but never...came across as anything but wanting the best for them.

Parent F also felt that the teachers would "take the time to learn the kids" and if they ever had any issues, they would contact her right away and not wait. "They take initiative immediately to get the meetings together, get the help they need," which Parent F appreciated. Parent V spoke of her appreciation for her son's teachers, who even when they approached her with an issue they may have been having, it never felt like a conflict, but rather "let's figure out what we can do to help him be better." This resonated with Parent I, who felt the teachers "always approached in a helpful manner and not in a judgy or, you know, putting all the onus on us. It was like, how can we work together to accomplish A, B, or C?" Parents who felt their children were supported and cared for by their teacher spoke of being or wanting to be more involved.

On the other side, parents who experienced poor communication from teachers were negatively influenced. Some parents found issues arose when their child's teacher struggled to communicate. Parent V had issues with a teacher, stating "we tried talking and solving the issues" but the teacher was not receptive, and Parent V felt the lack of communication "lost this connection with her." The issues she faced with this teacher demotivated her to be involved, saying "we did our minimal part" and instead supported her son more emotionally and found

ways to help him learn outside of school. Parent J also felt turned off when she struggled to get responses from teachers. She felt more than once she would reach out to the teachers and receive no response, saying, “we should be a team, you know, and I felt like some of the teachers got that and others... didn’t seem to as much.” For Parent X, poor communication impacted her involvement when her son’s teacher struggled to communicate in English. She stated the teacher could not communicate with the parents in English or even the students when English might be necessary. The communication “was minimal and sporadic at best, and so there was a lot of stuff that we didn’t know that was going on in the classroom,” she said, “we didn’t know what their projects were or what they were learning at the time... the communication last year was lacking quite a bit and that was one of the biggest problems the parents had.” Parent S shared this experience with Parent X, stating, “the teacher wasn’t able to communicate...clearly, therefore, I didn’t always know, and we didn’t know what needed to be done or we would find out after the fact.” Parent K described how challenging it is to communicate with her daughter’s teachers at times as most are native Chinese speakers. “The Chinese teachers are very hard to understand when they’re speaking English, so that can be challenging because you’re sitting there and you’re, like, I’m getting every other word and trying to, like process what she’s exactly saying.” Communication challenges with teachers could result in parents feeling disengaged and less likely to be involved.

Parents

Participants in the study appreciated having the support of other parents through the immersion program. They spoke of how they utilized the various communication channels to keep in touch, how other parents were a source of support in helping their child with the program, and how they were an additional resource that parents could lean on when needed.

Parents also described how the parent leadership of each class affected the community of the classroom, discussing how important the room parent program was for parents to navigate and understand the immersion program.

Many parents in the study described how parents kept in touch with each other. Parents utilized Facebook groups created for each class or graduation year, WhatsApp groups formed by a parent leader, class email lists, and other group text thread applications. The communication channels parents participated in varied greatly, often depending on who took the initiative to set up the communication channel. While some parents may have participated in strong communication with other parents from their children's classes, other parents reported a lack of communication among parents in their children's classes. The likelihood that parents participated in a strong communication network with other parents depended greatly on the year their child started, what teacher they may have had, and whether there was any parent leadership in the class to head the creation of a parent communication channel.

Through these communication channels, parents found a source of support from the parent community as they navigated through the immersion program. In having a messaging group among parents, Parent C felt "that's been really helpful, because, you know, usually someone else has the same question as you do and it may not be something that, you know, you necessarily need to reach out to the teacher." By using a parent communication channel first, Parent C felt it cut down on burdening the teacher with questions. Parent H felt the communication channels served as a way for people to get help. "Anytime people need something, like somebody needs a tutor...I feel like I always [knew] I could ask another parent in the school or in the class for help finding what I need," she said. The smaller, closer-knit

group chats that parents formed among classrooms gave parents a quick way to get questions answered. Parent Q stated,

If you've got a specific question...related to the language...is your kid going to do this summer program, it's easier to find the information as opposed to trying to send a message out to everyone, you know on the school Facebook page, and just send it to, you know, a group that's for your child's particular age and language.

Through these communication channels, parents also found support from the few parents who did speak the immersion language. "We have a couple of native French speaker parents, so they are a great resource for support whenever something like that is needed and then again if a child needs something," Parent U mentioned. "It wasn't uncommon for a parent to, like, pop into the Facebook group, post a picture of the homework and be, like, we don't understand anything that this says," and one of the native speakers in the class chat would chime in to assist according to Parent B. Having other parents only a message thread away for many participants was a key element of support in their experience with the immersion program.

In finding support from other parents, participants in this study also discussed how that support sometimes came in the form of resources. Like Parent B and U discussed above, parents utilized native immersion language speakers whenever they or their children were faced with an assignment they did not understand. Having access to native immersion language speakers allowed parents to not fall back on Google Translate or other translation software that is not always accurate. Beyond native immersion language speakers, participants discussed how parents could provide other resources that could help support their children. For Parent K, anytime a group of parents from her daughter's Chinese immersion cohort get together, "they're talking about things they are using to help their kids learn Chinese a little bit better, either tutors,

or like Lingo Bus... so it's good to like kind of get what all the other parents are using to kind of supplement what's going on in school." Parents as a resource can also be as simple as providing a copy of the homework, according to Parent D. When her son didn't bring it home one day, she was quickly able to send out a message on chat and another parent quickly scanned and emailed her a copy. Parent P found other parents as a resource when she received French books for her daughter from another mother whose child had outgrown them. Finding books in the immersion language is not easy for most parents, so knowing other parents who can provide this resource can prove invaluable for many parents.

Communication channels among parents generally get started by the room parent. The room parent is a parent who volunteers to oversee organizing events, volunteers, and other needs of the classroom. They often serve as a resource of information for other parents in the class, providing information about upcoming events and important dates, and as a link between the teacher and parents. Many participants discussed how impactful the room parent could be, as well as how it affected the class when there was no room parent or no real communication channels had been set up. Parent O referred to the room parents as a "bridge" for teachers to "get their thoughts through. They communicated...exactly what was going on or what was needed in the classrooms" and they "really pushed the agenda" in support of the teachers. For Parent C, getting those notes from the room parent about what volunteers were needed or what the classroom needs were directly impacted her involvement. It "definitely impacted my involvement, because I, you know, I'm a working mom, a working parent, so...unless I'm asked like I'm not necessarily going to know to ask," she said. Parent T stated the room parent communicated with the teacher on the needs of the classroom and then brought those needs to the attention of the other parents through their WhatsApp group, and "once we get word from the

room parent, then we divide and conquer.” If there was no room parent, no specific parent leadership in the class, parents found connecting and communicating with other parents more difficult. “You can tell the difference within the atmosphere based on the amount of parent leadership,” Parent G stated. “I had four kids there and in some years we had really active parent leadership...it just made it a lot easier to get questions answered when you have like strong leadership within the grade trying to connect people in.” Parent S recalled the previous year where parents struggled to know what was going on in the classroom, feeling that was in part due to not having a room parent that year. Parent K struggled last year when the room parent for her daughter’s classroom was not easily accessible, nor was she willing to be the link between parents as the only one given access to the classroom parents’ information. Parent E agreed, stating it “depends on who the room parent is at the time” and she wished “there was guidelines that every program follows...instead of being more of a room parent” choice. Having clear guidelines for the room parent role as well as the ability to ensure all parents are connected through some communication channel could help strengthen parent bonds.

Overall, interactions with other parents, the ability to communicate frequently and easily, and opportunities to form bonds all had an impact on how parents felt in the program, how they viewed the program, and how involved they were in the program. “The collaboration and the willingness of other parents to get together and talk and really communicate with each other and have their kids create bonds outside of school...that’s very important,” Parent W stated. Parent C found it nice to form relationships with the other parents in her child’s cohort, “because it’s not a neighborhood school and kids come from all over the county, you know, it can be hard to connect with some of those parents.” Not only did it help with the social aspect of school for the kids, as Parent W said, but it also helped build relationships for the parents, creating a

community centered around this common bond of being a part of an immersion program. “When you have other parents that are super involved, it brings the participation level and communication up,” Parent G discussed, illustrating the idea that parents influence other parents to be involved. Parent T echoed this view, stating “it’s easier when you’re connected with another parent and it’s like, oh, I’ve got to go volunteer at the book fair, but at least I know someone who’s going to be there.” Connections among parents whose children were going through an immersion program could be a strong source of influence when it came to parent involvement. “Having a strong, supportive parent community...helps support the school, supports the teachers, and by supporting the school and supporting the teachers, that also supports the success of our students,” Parent L stated.

Time

Another key influencer for parents was their ability to make the time to participate and be involved in their child’s education. Many parents emphasized the fact that they had the time because they were a stay-at-home parent, or they had a flexible work schedule that allowed them the time. “People make time for the things they find important...because I wanted to be involved in my son’s education, I chose to be involved in his education,” Parent J expressed. Other parents mentioned they had financial stability which allowed them to make time for being involved. “Not having that stress, we could, you know, adjust and take time off here and there to do things,” Parent G stated. When discussing having or taking the time to be involved, most parents referred to it in terms of being able to be involved in school-based activities.

Barriers to Involvement

Just as there are factors that influence parents to be more involved, there were several factors that hindered being more involved. One of the most mentioned factors to not being as

involved was parents' lack of immersion language knowledge. "I felt like I was less involved than I would have been had we been in an English-speaking school. I don't speak...I don't speak French, so I wasn't able to help with anything," Parent G stated. Parent D also mentioned lack of language knowledge being a hinderance. "I don't know the languages, so you know there are some parents that have come in and like they'll read to the kids...in the target language and I can't do any of that," she said. Parent I expressed that it took more effort to help her children because of the language. "The hardest part is having things come home in a different language and not being able to help right away as easily as I could if it were a math word problem" in English she stated. For Parent Y, she felt her lack of the immersion language could impact her daughter's ability to learn it, stating,

I do think she could learn much better if one or both of us could speak Chinese at the level she could, so that we could speak it at home, and it would become second nature to her instead of something she has to think about.

Beyond not knowing the language, parents described time as a hinderance to their involvement. While some parents had flexible schedules that allowed them to make the time to participate, other parents described work schedules as a factor in their being less involved. "Time is my biggest enemy, but I try to make it so someone is always there to support and help," stated Parent F. Similarly, Parent N mentioned, "as work has gotten busier in the past 2 years, I haven't been in school supporting as much." For Parent U, time is also an issue with at-home involvement. "Time is always a constraint... the school schedule has such a late start/dismissal, that by the time she gets home, there's only enough time for dinner, a little play, and violin practice," she said. Many parents lamented about lack of time and lack of knowledge in the same breath. "Time is always a challenge. I work full time, as does my partner and we have 4 school-

aged children...I'm attempting to learn Japanese, but it's hard to support them sometimes when I'm clueless about what they're learning," Parent B described. Parent D expressed the same issues, stating, "my work hours prevent me from volunteering as often as I like. I am unable to assist with many homework assignments, I can only ensure they are completed."

Another factor that impacted parents' involvement, mentioned by a few parents, was the distance to the school. As the school is a county-wide magnet school, many families do not live near the school. "It's really hard to do anything with the school on a regular basis because it involves so much timing and it means, like, we have to stay down there and traffic in [the city]..." Parent H lamented, stating the distance from the school was a "huge hindrance" to participating in anything during or after school. Parent Q shared similar feelings about the distance, stating it was difficult to be at school for events due to the logistics of just getting there in a timely manner. Parent A also discussed the distance, stating "the school is farther than we would like, and commute time is an issue" and that working from home was key to being able to support their children in the immersion program.

Demotivators to Involvement

Apart from barriers to parents' involvement like lack of knowledge or lack of time, parents also discussed experiences they had that affected their desire to be involved or altered how they were involved. For Parent J, the struggle to communicate with teachers demotivated her. She felt it was "unnecessarily difficult" to reach certain teachers, often remarking her emails would go unanswered, which she found "very, very frustrating and so then it makes me not want to go to the school." Parent A found that she did not agree with some choices or actions on the part of the administration, including how issues were handled with her children when brought to the attention of the administration. Due to this, she said, "I've just decided I'll just focus on my

son's class and help there because they need help," but she would not get more involved at a higher level. Similarly, Parent B, Parent J, Parent S, and Parent X all felt issues with their children were not addressed properly by administration, which in turn affected their desire to be involved in certain ways. For Parent B, she felt an issue she had that was not adequately addressed surrounded learning of her son's dyslexia and the difficulties that came with getting support from the school. For Parent J, her son experienced bullying on the bus at a young age to which she felt it was not adequately addressed and this "tainted her view" on the school and her overall involvement. For Parent S and Parent X, the inability to communicate with their children's teacher and the affect it was having on the classroom did not feel adequately addressed. In addition, Parent S discussed how her son was attacked by a classmate that same year, to which she did not feel supported by the school. While the response from administration for support was not as they desired, it was the overall lack of communication they experienced that affected how they could be involved. Feeling supported by the school and administration when issues arose was important for these parents. The responses and support they did or did not receive impacted their involvement.

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Research questions were explored through one-on-one interviews with participants, as well as an open-ended questionnaire and focus groups. Responses to each question, discussed in more detail previously, are described below.

Central Research Question

What are the lived experiences of parents whose children have attended at least 2 years of a K-5 foreign language immersion program regarding their motivational beliefs towards involvement in their children's education? Parents described a range of experiences, with at least 13 participants describing a release of responsibility in educating their child and relying on the school to do the work, while they supported as best they could in other ways. Parent N shared,

This is going to sound bad, maybe you like taking a lot of the school stuff off our hands, like, and maybe it kind of had to be, because like I said, we don't speak German. We couldn't help with a lot at home, but I mean it was kind of like, well, we have school and you go home and read with them in English and all that...we got the school thing and that kinds of made me feel a little bit...they made us feel really good about what was going on in school, so then at home it could be like developing English reading and then just make sure they do their homework.

Parent D shared,

I think I would have been involved whether they were in immersion or not. I just feel like that's my responsibility as a parent, you know, because I come from, you know, a family of educators. Education is really important in our family...I feel my role would have been the same either way. It's just a little bit I feel like with the language immersion piece, you kind of have to do a little bit more. You have to be a little bit more creative.

Parents in the study felt that the immersion program provided a unique experience for their children that at times came with challenges, but overall parents felt that their children greatly benefited from being a part of the program. Parent U stated, "Even through not being sure of how to support her sometimes, and maybe feeling like I'm not doing enough to enrich everything

that she's doing, I mean something's working because she wants to be there... I'll consider that a win."

Sub-Question One

How do parents construct their role in relation to their children's education in a foreign language immersion program? Parents described engaging in a mostly supportive role in which they helped their children find the necessary resources to learn, they advocated for their children with teachers or the school when needed, they encouraged and motivated, and they fostered self-reliance and responsibility in their children. What they did not do, for the most part, was help or assist their children in doing their actual work, beyond supporting their English learning at home. Of the 25 participants in the study, 18 of them had little to no knowledge of the language their children were learning and thus could not assist in their learning.

Parent S shared,

I guess I just...I feel like my role is to just make sure that he is learning and that he's enjoying it, that you to be there for him for support cause it's not always going to be easy, and you know, he's going to have struggles. I don't want him to grow up being stressed through school the whole time. I don't think that's healthy, but I want him to believe in himself that he can do hard things and that if he works hard and pushed through it, even though he may not feel like it, that he could...he could accomplish some really good things.

Parent U shared,

I think supporting them is like the biggest thing that I come back to. So, supporting them in whatever way it is that they need. Like if it is academic enrichment because they are struggling with something then that would be something that I would see as an important

piece of what I need to do and figuring out how to provide that enrichment whether it is by talking to her teacher or finding more resources or finding, like, tutoring. I think giving them downtime is important too. Like protecting their downtime and protecting their time to be children.

Sub-Question Two

How do parents' sense of efficacy influence their involvement in relation to their children's education in a foreign language immersion program? Overall, parents had confidence in their ability to support their children's education in the immersion program. Parents, even those who did not speak the immersion language, felt capable of being able to support their child in multiple ways and trusted in the program and the process of learning through immersion. Those who were less confident in their ability to assist their child were confident they could find resources needed to support their child.

Parent T shared,

I feel very confident. I mean, we've had an amazing first two years at [School B]. I have not felt in any way at a disadvantage because I don't speak Mandarin...I help her with the thing that I can, and that's all they ask of me. So, for example, the math, the reading, I'm good at that. We can handle that. So, I feel very confident and the teachers that they hire, that they are able to, you know, teach her what they're there for, and so they got their part and I have mine.

Parent U shared,

I think that as long as we have good communication and support with the school, the that's going to be key because there are going to be things that I can't help her with when it comes to the language, but I know that I can support her in other ways or find the

resources to help her if I need to, but I think as long as I'm aware of her needs, I can be responsive to those.

Parent H shared,

At first, I was very nervous about being able to support them in a language I did not know but now I have a child that has successfully done German immersion through elementary, middle, and high school, I feel very confident with my 3rd grader being successful.

Sub-Question Three

How do parents describe the influence, if any, of social factors (leadership, staff, and other parents) on their parental role construction or sense of efficacy in relation to involvement in a foreign language immersion program? Parents discussed how the community of the school, the interactions with teachers, and the relationships parents formed with other parents all impacted how they were involved. They also discussed how certain barriers to involvement such as time or lack of language knowledge impacted their involvement.

Parent G stated,

I felt like the school was very welcoming. The parent body was very welcoming. There's plenty of communication on needs and you know, everyone's willing to have a helping hand...The gratefulness and the kindness and openness of the school makes you want to be there more. When you see how they work with you and your child, you literally want to be there more.

Parent Q shared,

There are different ways for parents to stay involved... If you want to know, you can know. So there really isn't any excuse or I didn't know what was going on. Well, either

you didn't sign up or didn't give your information to be kept into the loop. So, it's been very easy to stay engaged, which we appreciate.

Summary

Participants in this study illustrated the unique experiences parents have when their children attend a foreign language immersion program. Parents were motivated to enroll their children and participate in the immersion program because they understood the value of the program and what it could do for their children. They desired to be involved, in whatever ways they could, because they wanted to understand the program better and they wanted to ensure their children were successful. While there were challenges along the way, such as not being able to support their children in anything immersion language related, struggles to find adequate resources that would help them support their child, losing out on a close community of a neighborhood school, or at times feeling unsupported when issues arose, nearly each and every parent expressed how grateful they were for their children to attend the immersion program. They described the outcomes of the program, such as how globally-minded their children became, how their children developed an appreciation for diversity and a confidence in themselves, and how their children learned not only a second language but learned all of their core academics through a second language. In constructing their parental role, most parents took on a supportive role with their children in which they assisted in finding resources to support learning or advocated for their children when necessary and helped foster their children's own self-reliance and responsibility skills. Most parents sense of efficacy was strong, feeling they could help their children even if they did not know the language. Those who may have been unsure in the beginning, grew in their confidence as they learned how they could support their children and saw the successful progression of their children through the program. For these

parents, social factors did influence their involvement in their children's education in the immersion program. Parents described the unique community feel of the school and how communication played a key role in parents knowing what was going on and how they could be involved. The communication and support of the teachers was key as well as they were the first resort for parents to know what was going on, to be aware of opportunities for involvement, and find resources that could help them support their children. Parents also found other parents within the program to be a great resource and support when they had strong communication channels that linked them together. Having other parents to bounce questions off, to share resources, and collaborate gave the parents in this study another source of support when navigating a program that was as unique as immersion programs. Parents also shared how certain barriers, like lack of time or knowledge, impacted their involvement. For most, these two factors were the biggest factors that affected their involvement. Finally, some participants discussed how certain situations they experienced, whether with teachers, administration, or other parents demotivated them to be involved in certain ways. Overall, parents expressed positive experiences within the foreign language immersion program and most expressed the wish that anyone who wanted this type of education for their child could have the ability to access it.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand parents' lived experiences in relation to their motivational beliefs for involvement in their children's education in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Twenty-five parents whose children have attended at least two years in a foreign language immersion program shared their experiences of involvement within the program. Understanding parent experiences in foreign language immersion programs is crucial to creating an environment that supports the unique needs of parents, so they are better equipped to support their children. The immersion program experiences participants had in this study solidify past literature on parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs as well as the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parent involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005). This chapter begins by discussing interpretations of the findings, implications for policy and practice, theoretical and methodological implications, the limitations and boundaries of the study, and recommendations for future research. A study summary concludes the chapter.

Discussion

The discussion section begins with an interpretation of the major thematic findings. From there, the discussion leads to implications for policy and practice that emerged from the results, as well as any theoretical or methodological implications. Then, the discussion will touch on the limitations and delimitations of the study. Recommendations for future research will close out the discussion.

Interpretation of Findings

Five key interpretations emerged from the results of the study discussed in detail in Chapter Four. These findings mirror current literature on parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs as well as the theoretical framework by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) as revised in Walker et al. (2005). Prior research touched on the need to understand the psychological aspects of parent involvement, including their motivations for involvement, but overall, there was little research in this area. Findings from this study discuss parents' motivations for involvement as well as the under-researched area of parents in the foreign language immersion context.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The results of this study led to thematic findings that illustrated the lived experiences of parents in foreign language immersion programs, the development of their roles as parents, their sense of efficacy throughout the program, and the social factors that influenced their involvement. Within the immersion program, parents were involved in a myriad of ways both in school and at home. Their motivations to be involved stemmed from a desire to understand the program and support their child's success. Parents faced several challenges to their involvement, including the inability to help with anything related to the immersion language and an inability to find resources that could support their child, as well as a lack of understanding when communication was lacking. Parents constructed their role as a role of support for their child, one in which they may not be able to directly assist in the work, but were able to support through encouragement, finding resources, advocating when necessary, and fostering their child's own self-reliance and responsibility. Most parents had high levels of confidence when it came to successfully supporting their child through the immersion program, and those who did not at first, built up their confidence over time by learning ways they could support their child and by

putting their trust in the process of immersion. Parents discussed how the community of the school, their communications with the teachers, the calls for help from the school, and their connections to other parents all promoted their involvement with the program. They also revealed that time and their lack of immersion language knowledge were their two biggest barriers to involvement. Finally, parents discussed how poor communication and feeling unsupported when issues arose demotivated some to be involved.

Strong Role Construction and Sense of Efficacy Affected Involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) framework for parental involvement as revised in Walker et al. (2005) considers that the most influential factors in parents' deciding to become involved in their child's education stem from how they construct their parental role and their own sense of efficacy to be successful in helping their child. The parents of this study all appeared to have a clear understanding as to their role when it came to their child's education, and most all parents possessed a high level of self-efficacy.

The nature of the foreign language immersion program did influence how parents constructed their role in regard to their child's education. Like several studies on parents within FLIPs, the challenges of not knowing the immersion language affected how parents were involved (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; MacPhee, 2021; Ryan, 2020; Zheng, 2021). As in the MacPhee (2021) and Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) studies, many parents were unsure of how best to support their child when they first enrolled in the program, with many noting they did not know the language, so it was difficult for them to get involved. However, most parents found their role to be a supportive role, one in which they did not directly assist with work, but they found outside resources to help support their child's immersion language development. This result mirrored the findings of the Zheng (2021) and Ryan (2020) studies which showed parents

were not able to support their children in their Mandarin or French learning, but they were able to find outside resources that could. While both schools in the study do not actively promote assisting children with their immersion language development outside of school, most parents felt the need or desire to support their children's language learning through found resources such as tutors, camps, immersion language books, and online tools. Research has shown that it is critical for children to receive exposure to the immersion language outside of the school in the form of family or community support to achieve real proficiency in the immersion language (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; Wesely & Baig, 2012). Parents of this study recognized a need to support the immersion language development of their child and worked to find resources to do that if they themselves were unable. Parent S summed up how most parents viewed their role when she shared,

I feel my responsibility is to be supportive of his education, assist with home activities, support the teachers and administrators, have strong communication about how we can support my son and the teachers and staff, try to identify opportunities for learning, and support his reading in both English and his immersion language.

Parent S succinctly described the parents' supportive role as encompassing all aspects of their child's education, not just the immersion program piece, but other academic areas, non-academic areas, and their social education.

Parents in this study, for the most part, exhibited high levels of self-efficacy. Nineteen parents described themselves as confident, pretty confident, or very confident. Most felt confident in their ability to be successful in helping with their child's education. It is important to note that parents exhibited different levels of self-efficacy when considering their own lack of language proficiency in the immersion language. Six parents rated their self-efficacy quite low

when thinking in terms of their lack of immersion language knowledge and ability to help in that regard. This finding agreed with Kavanaugh and Hickey's (2013) study that showed parents' self-efficacy was significantly impacted by their lack of immersion language skills, which in turn constrained their overall involvement. For parents of this study, however, the low self-efficacy did not seem to impact their overall self-efficacy in being able to successfully help their children. Parents who may not have been confident at first, showed that their confidence built up over time as they learned how the program worked, trusted in the process, and found ways they could support their child. This finding supported Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) notion that the variables of role construction and sense of efficacy can change over time and be influenced from external forces. Previous studies have shown a link between parents with high self-efficacy and their role construction toward involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Liu & Leighton, 2021; Zambrana et al., 2019). The results of this study could also support this link, as the parents of this study had both clear understanding of their role of support for their child as well as the confidence to help their child.

Challenges Limited Involvement. This study revealed parents faced a few challenges, some unique to foreign language immersion programs, that impacted how they were involved with their child's education. The most notable challenges parents faced included their inability to help in the immersion language and their struggle to find resources to support their child in the immersion language. A lack of communication, which will be discussed in the following section, also contributed to parents' involvement challenges.

Similar to previous studies, parents in this study spoke often of their inability to speak the immersion language and how they felt that impacted their ability to be involved with their child's education. "I feel like I was less involved than I would have been had we been in an English-

speaking school,” Parent G admitted. “It was just different of not knowing necessarily what they were doing or being able to help them,” Parent Q remarked. “I think it can be a little bit hard than if we were in a neighborhood school. You know, they’re bringing home homework that’s in a different language...” Parent I described. “I know zero Chinese, so I try to do my best,” Parent K said. “My knowledge is the largest hindrance...having Google Translate is the biggest life saver for situations where my child needs help and we don’t have the answers,” Parent H detailed. “I don’t have a strong knowledge of the language, but maybe I could try to learn some of the language on my own,” Parent S remarked. “I’m attempting to learn Japanese, but it’s hard to support them sometimes when I am clueless about what they’re learning,” Parent B stated. For these and other parent participants of the study, not knowing the language felt like a hindrance to their involvement. Parents in the Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) study seemed to subscribe to a typical view on parent involvement that “differed little” from how a parent might be involved with a child who attended a regular English-speaking school. Rather than adapting to the unique nature of an immersion program, these parents seemed to feel that parent involvement meant parents needed to teach their child “in the same way the school presents” and help them with homework “through the language of the school,” which most parents did not feel capable of doing. The Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) study suggested that parents needed help to expand their role definition of parent involvement when it came to supporting the immersion language by including non-school activities and understanding the value of their support in developing their child’s native language and their immersion language skills. While the parents of this study exhibited similar notions that their inability to speak the language hindered their involvement to support the immersion language, they also illustrated an understanding that they could find alternative ways to support their child, in both their immersion language learning and their

overall education. Parents described finding outside tutors, searching libraries for immersion language books, watching shows and movies in the immersion language, and seeking out opportunities for their children to speak the language outside of the classroom. Like the Zheng (2021) and Ryan (2020) studies, parents who did not speak the language still felt it important to support the immersion language learning and therefore sought outside support to fill the gap in their own inability to help.

While parents seemed to understand the importance of utilizing outside resources to support their children's immersion language learning, locating adequate resources proved difficult for many parents. "Because of the language that we're in, I can find that sometimes it's hard to find help a lot of the time, so sometimes I get stressed out about her not having the help that she needs," Parent M expressed. "Nobody keeps Chinese books here in person, like there's no bookstore that has that, so that that's been the only struggle is finding books for her that will help," Parent Y described. Even Parent A who did speak the immersion language stated, "I don't really have any really big challenges other than at times trying to find the educational resources...helping them find them and getting access to it." Many parents noted the extra time they spent trying to find resources to support their child's learning and lamented over what seemed to be a lack of resources. This finding mirrored the Ryan (2020) study on parents in a French immersion program, where parents "deplored the limited opportunities for children to practice or be exposed to French outside of school" In that study, the author noted that systemic solutions- things already embedded in the existing structure of the language immersion program- that were accessible to all students that parents could utilize to assist in developing their children's immersion language knowledge outside of school were limited, and that most parents acted alone in seeking out and using resources to support immersion language learning. In the

current study, this area of support was one many parents felt the schools could help with by either providing immersion language support beyond the classroom in the form of tutors, after-school clubs, summer camps, and access to immersion language books, or by helping families in locating the resources they needed. As Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) stated, to achieve a real proficiency in the immersion language, children need exposure to the immersion language outside of the classroom. Many parents, whether they knew it or not, attempted to support this by seeking out resources that would enhance their children's immersion language learning. But, like Ryan (2020) wondered, knowing the importance of "environmental support" to immersion language development, how can children attain "high levels of proficiency" in the immersion language if the "contexts in which this language is used are limited?" To successfully produce immersion language proficient students, schools may need to focus more on providing or helping parents find resources that enhance their children's immersion language development.

With full immersion in K-2 and English not added until grade 3, both schools told parents to focus on their child's English reading and writing skills at home because they will not learn either at school. While this was slightly different for the Mandarin and Japanese tracts as children had some English lessons beginning in kindergarten, exposure in school was still minimal. Some parents embraced this directive, such as Parent N who spoke of how the school essentially took the learning off his plate, stating "it was kind of like, well, we have school and you go home and read with them in English." Other parents, as expressed above, felt it necessary to support their child's learning in all areas, including the immersion language. Parents who desired to support the immersion language would benefit from explicit recommendations on how to support their children's learning in English and how aiding their development of English would in turn support the immersion language development. As MacPhee (2021) wrote, "it

would be useful for parent to know what skills can transfer between languages.” Simply telling parents to read in English with their children may not be enough for some. Parents could benefit from clear recommendations on how to develop English reading and writing skills as most parents are not educators themselves with the knowledge on how reading and writing are developed.

Communication is Key. With parents unable to speak the immersion language and rarely knowing what their children were working on, communication from teachers and the school proved to be a critical feature parents in this study relied on to know what was going on with the immersion program, what their children were learning, and how they could be involved. Further, parents also described how they relied on having open communication channels with fellow parents that helped them navigate the program, find answers, and become involved. When communication was lacking from the teachers or school, or parents did not have strong connections to fellow parents, their overall involvement was impacted.

Similar to the Ratliffe and Ponte (2018) study, parents in the present study considered communication crucial, noting that when communication was good it helped parents know what was happening in school, what volunteer opportunities or events there were, and helped develop relationships with teachers and other staff. Parent E expressed that “through ParentSquare the school shares information about my students and it really helps to have the ability to communicate with staff, teachers and other parents.” Parent T described how School B “fosters open communication with teachers and parents through emails, meetings, or other communication channels, such as social media.” According to parents, both schools used a variety of communication methods to reach parents including: ParentSquare, an app with announcement capabilities as well as direct messaging to and from teachers and other staff;

emails; automated phone calls; Facebook groups; and information sent directly home with the student. Parents also mentioned that many teachers had their own websites and weekly newsletters. It was clear that both schools understood the need to communicate with parents and in a variety of ways. Parents in this study really benefited from having open two-way communication with teachers and staff. Parents especially described how helpful it was when communication was strong on the part of teachers, noting that it was often the teachers they would go to when unsure of how to help their child. With regular communication with teachers, parents better understood what their children were working on, what resources they could access to assist their children, and they learned of opportunities to volunteer. It appeared many parents better understood their role in supporting their children's education and had higher confidence in being able to support their children because of the communication they had with teachers. Parents' confidence may be enhanced when they feel treated as equal partners by teachers in the education of their children (Curry & Holter, 2019). Parents in this study showed that regular, purposeful communication from teachers had a positive impact on their involvement. A caveat to the varied communication strategies both schools utilized is the potential for overcommunication. Several parents mentioned in interviews and focus groups that at times the communication could become overwhelming, in part due to volume, but also due to it coming from so many different sources. According to Park and Holloway (2018), informative home-school communication can be a strong predictor of parental involvement, so it would do well for schools to examine their communication plans to ensure their use of communication channels is purposeful and informative, rather than superfluous and overwhelming.

Another avenue of communication parents spoke of throughout the study involved their communication with other parents. Parents utilized class emails, WhatsApp groups, Facebook,

and other text-to-text apps to stay connected with fellow parents. Similar to the parents in the Curry and Holter (2019) study, participants in this study described how connections with other parents experiencing the immersion program was an important aspect of their involvement. They described how their connections to other parents helped them navigate the program, find answers to questions, locate resources, receive support, create connections for their children, and form relationships of their own. Findings in this study mirrored the Ee (2017) study which showed parents developed multiple networks in order to interact with fellow parents and participate in events. The Ee (2017) study showed that “parental interaction and participation were positively associated with each other and had a reciprocal impact.” This implies that it is important for parents to be engaged in strong networks that can connect them with the school community which in turn may increase overall involvement. Results from this study seem to indicate the same.

The notion that communication is key for parents in immersion program settings was further emphasized when discussing the impact that a lack of communication had on parents, whether that lack was between school and home or parent to parent. When teachers were either unable to communicate with parents due to English not being a strong language for them or they appeared to just not communicate, parents struggled to be involved as they did not know what was going on in class, what their children were working on, or where to find the information to assist their child. Parents detailed trying to connect with teachers through email, but they did not receive responses in a timely manner or at all. They discussed not knowing that their child had a new teacher, or several, in the same year because the change was not communicated to them, so not only did they not know what was happening in class, but they did not know who the teacher was to contact. Parent J describes how it was “unnecessarily difficult” sometimes to get

responses from teachers when she emailed and that she felt she had to spend time “chasing” teachers around. For some parents, whether due to teacher turnover mid-year or from teachers’ inability to speak English well in order to communicate with parents, the lack of communication meant they did not know what their child was learning or what was happening in class. This led them to feeling disconnected and unable to support their child with their learning. Relationships were listed as an essential element in the Kelty and Wakabayashi (2020) study in which respondents listed lack of communication as the second biggest contributor to ineffective parent engagement. The findings in this study seemed to confirm that finding as a lack of communication led parents to feel disconnected when some were already feeling unsure of the immersion learning process. A lack of communication with other parents had similar results. The strength of parent communication channels varied from grade to grade, language to language, and classroom to classroom. Some parents detailed strong communication channels where parents had easy access to other parents in the classroom and were able to ask questions, discuss issues, and have another source of support. For others, strong communication channels did not exist, usually due to not being set up by the room parent, and they did not feel very connected to the other parents of their child’s classroom and were unable to form relationships. This was an important finding as Curry and Holter (2019) detailed how parents learn from one another on how to interact with teachers and the school, rely on other parents for support in efforts to assist their child, and can influence involvement through parent-to-parent invitations for involvement. Like the Curry and Holter (2019) study, parents in this study also felt making connections with other parents was a part of their parental involvement, and for some it was essential in navigating the unique setting of immersion learning.

Social Factors Play an Important Role. In this study, parents showed that social factors do play an important role in foreign language immersion programs when it comes to motivating parents to be involved. The factors of having time, receiving invitations for help, feeling welcomed in the school, and having strong connections with teachers and parents led to stronger involvement.

Both parental role construction and self-efficacy are socially constructed, with the school and other social groups like parents possessing the ability to be significantly influential on parents' decisions to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The findings of this study seemed to confirm this as parents learned what they could do with their children from the school and other parents. Parents described shifting their role as one of direct assistance to more support in which they helped their child find what they needed to be successful, whether that was physical resources, answers to questions from teachers, assistance from native parents of the immersion language, or getting connected with classmates. They also built up their self-efficacy to assist their child through the connections they formed with teachers and parents. Parents described utilizing teachers to clarify assignments or provide resources so they could better support their child. They discussed how keeping in contact with other parents provided an opportunity to see that they were not the only ones experiencing a struggle and allowed them to have another avenue of support when needed. The relationships and communication parents had with teachers and other parents allowed them to see how they could be involved and gave them tools to be involved. These findings show the importance of schools recognizing the influence they can have on parental involvement by helping parents define their role in relation to their child's education. This is especially important in the immersion program setting as parents may come into the program unsure of how they can help their child. These findings also show the

importance of providing opportunities for parents to form connections with other parents to create support networks. Helping to facilitate parental networks of connection allows parents to “gain access to resources and gain confidence for involvement” which in turn may facilitate more involvement overall (Curry & Holter, 2019).

The contextual motivations of invitations to be involved as well as the life context factors of time, knowledge and social capital also had an impact on parents’ overall involvement. Invitations to be involved are a strong predictor of involvement as “they suggest to the parent that participation in the child’s learning is welcome, valuable, and expected by the school and its members” (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Most parents spoke of how the schools often requested help and showed a desire for parents to be engaged. Parents discussed how invitations from teachers requesting volunteers directly influenced their involvement. Parents also described how welcoming the schools felt, supporting the notion that school climate has an impact on parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). The life context factors of time, knowledge, and social capital are all personal variables that may influence parent involvement and can also directly impact involvement as they limit or enhance the involvement options parents feel they have to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). It is clear through this study that these variables had great influence on how parents felt they could be involved. Parents described how time either aided in their ability to be involved because they had flexible work schedules that allowed them to be more involved, or how time hindered their involvement because they did not have flexible work schedules, or they had other commitments that prevented certain types of involvement. Besides time, the largest variable parents mentioned that they felt hindered their involvement was their own lack of knowledge of the immersion language. Similar to the Ryan (2020) and Kavanaugh and Hickey (2013) studies, parents felt

their own inability to assist their children with anything related to the immersion language impacted when and how they could be involved. In assisting parents with clear ways they may support their student without knowing the language, schools can increase parents' sense of efficacy and potentially their overall involvement. One way that parents made up for their own inability to help with the immersion language was in their use of social capital. Social capital refers to who parents know and the material or immaterial resources those people possess (Whitaker, 2019). Parents used their social capital by engaging with immersion language native speaking parents, by finding tutors to support their children, by discovering resources through teachers and fellow parents, and by taking their children to cultural events they learned of to support their children's immersion language development. When parents were unable to find resources to help, their involvement was impacted. As Whitaker (2019) stated, "with limited access to social capital, and the consequent information that comes with it, some families may not know how to be involved in their children's education even if they want to be involved." Increasing parents access to social capital through providing or helping find human and physical resources, schools can increase parents' ability to be involved and in turn influence their overall involvement.

Build Strong Connections with Parents to Keep Parents Engaged and Avoid

Attrition. Some parents of this study felt unsupported when issues arose with their children, which in turn affected their involvement. Some pulled back from being involved, some only stayed involved on a classroom level, and others felt compelled to get more involved to advocate for their child and others. For some, the issues themselves, like being unable to communicate with their child's teacher, prevented them from being involved. One parent strongly considered, and may still be considering, pulling her son from the program because she felt an issue was not

adequately addressed. Like the Ratliffe and Ponte (2018) study suggests, administrators should be aware of “the direct and indirect effects of their actions and attitudes” that may influence parent engagement and participation. A notable area parents felt unsupported in was when it came to light that their child may have a special educational need. Those who felt the school was not appropriately set up to identify and support students with special education needs, such as dyslexia, found leaving the school was the only answer. Those parents expressed a desire to stay in the program, but felt the program lacked the necessary resources to support their child. This mirrors a Nic Aindriú (2021) study which showed parents felt they had no choice but to transfer their child from an immersion program into an English-speaking school because they felt the immersion school was not able to provide the right accommodations for their child. Parents in that study felt the English-speaking schools their children transferred to were more inclusive and better equipped at meeting the needs of students with special education needs. In conjunction with that study, the similar findings of this study suggest it would be beneficial for immersion programs to undergo professional development that addresses the identification of, inclusion of, and provisions needed for students with special educational needs.

Immersion schools, like most schools, have typical student attrition when families relocate. However, unlike most schools, immersion schools struggle to fill those spots as it is not possible for students to enter an immersion school after kindergarten or first grade as those students would not be proficient in the immersion language (S. Hill, 2018). To combat the typical attrition, immersion schools should work to decrease other reasons for students leaving the school by adequately addressing parent concerns or issues and building up supports for student with special educational needs. While Wesely and Baig (2012) recommend immersion educators should provide potential and current parents thorough information on the bilingualism

and biliteracy goals of immersion education, as well as benefits of immersion education to strengthen the relationships with parents involved in immersion programs, this current study suggests schools should examine how they address parental concerns and issues as well with a goal of keeping them involved and enrolled in the program.

Implications for Policy or Practice

There are several implications for policy and practice from this study that can enhance parent experiences in foreign language immersion programs, which in turn may enhance their overall involvement. The results of this study, which show an overall positive portrait of parent experience in foreign language immersion programs, do illuminate some areas of improvement in which the school, staff, teachers, and parents may benefit.

Implications for Policy

A difficulty in retaining teachers due to their Visa status had some impact on parent experiences. Changing of teachers during the school year caused parents to become disconnected from their child's education because of the communication gaps that arose from the situation. Parents stated the schools had to continually search and recruit teachers in the immersion languages because the teachers the school does employ that come from foreign countries are only allowed to stay three years. This related to the government policies on foreign worker Visas. A recommendation from this study is to adjust the policy on immersion teacher Visa limitations so they may stay. This would reduce the burden on schools to find qualified candidates during a time when it is already difficult to find teachers, let alone having to consider the necessity of being immersion language proficient.

Implications for Practice

The implications for practice in this section focus on efforts immersion programs can make that would enhance parent experiences and potentially improve overall parent involvement. From examining the challenges parents faced and the barriers to involvement they described, there are five recommendations for practice.

First, it may prove beneficial for immersion programs to have or create clear guidance on how parents may best assist their children in their immersion language development by emphasizing how developing their English-language skills will aid in their immersion language development. Not only should schools emphasize aiding children's English-language development, but they should also provide explicit ways in which parents can support this development. Parents would benefit from understanding what skills transfer between English and the immersion languages when assisting their child's English-language development (MacPhee, 2021). They would also benefit from an understanding of how they can utilize their own strengths to support their child (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013). If immersion programs focus on educating parents on specific ways they can support their child, parental role construction and parents' sense of efficacy would be enhanced, which in turn may enhance their overall involvement.

A second implication for practice includes helping parents build up their social capital to better support their student. Like the Ryan (2020) study, parents expressed difficulties in finding resources to help their child as well as opportunities for their child to practice or be exposed to their immersion language. The immersion programs of this study, and potentially other immersion programs as well, should work to increase the supports embedded within the school that would be accessible to all students. Parents suggested several potential supports that

included affordable summer camps, providing or helping find tutors, provide ways parents can purchase immersion language books, create ways children can practice immersion language skills such as pen pals or a buddy system that connects younger and older students, and create more after school programs that allow students to continue the development of their immersion language skills. Increasing the resources parents have access to increases their ability to be involved and feel connected to their children's experience in the immersion program.

As communication proved to be key in parents' experiences, a third implication for practice suggests schools may benefit by examining their communication policies and practices to ensure all parents can send and receive clear communication from teachers and the school. While parents felt that most teachers they had experience with provided regular communication that aided them in their involvement, some parents reported difficulty with teachers who were not strong English speakers or felt communication fell off as students reached upper-elementary and middle school. When communication was lacking, parents felt disconnected and unable to be involved. Immersion programs should have clear communication policies that all teachers follow. According to parents, both schools in this study did well with the variety of communication styles they utilized to reach parents, though some parents felt the numerous methods could become overwhelming and redundant. Parents suggested trying to streamline communication methods or creating a centralized location to find what they needed so they could use just one source, rather than search through the various platforms to find what they needed. Included in improving communication with parents is the need for schools to be clear on the role of room parent, especially when it comes to creating communication channels among parents. As the room parent is the only one given parent contact information for all parents in a classroom, it would be beneficial to have a clearly stated policy that the room parent set up a communication

channel for parents, such as WhatsApp or similar app, if one does not already exist. As this was not a clear role of the room parent, it took concerted effort on the part of other parents to find contact information and set up a link between parents, thus some classrooms of parents did not have a way to communicate with each other easily. As previous research has shown the importance of parent networks in fostering parent involvement, it may be wise for immersion programs to facilitate the creation of such networks so that no parent is left out.

In this study, parents showed a desire to know what was going on with their children's education and to understand the immersion language process. Parents felt they would benefit from have parent support groups, ways to learn the language, and more programming to educate parents further on the immersion process. Parent E stated, "it would be excellent if I could've attended a class on foreign language expectation yearly in order to have a greater understanding of where they are and need to be to succeed during the school year." Parent T took this idea further by suggesting schools do the following,

Organize regular workshops or seminars to educate parents about the language immersion program's goals, teaching methodologies, and effective ways to support their child's language learning at home. These workshops could cover language learning strategies, cultural integration, and tips for creating a language-rich environment.

Parent T's idea mirrored Wesely and Baig's (2012) suggestion that immersion programs educate parents on bilingualism and biliteracy, goals of the immersion program, the methods and theory behind immersion education, and the benefits of the program. Parents of this study showed a desire to understand as much as they could about the immersion program, a desire immersion programs may capitalize on by providing more opportunities to educate parents and share how they can play a pivotal role in their children's success as well as the program's success.

A final implication for practice that emerged from this study is the need immersion programs may have to better support students with special educational needs. Immersion programs may benefit from examining the supports in place for students with special education needs, including earlier identification of issues. As students with special educational needs tend to leave immersion programs because parents do not feel these programs are adequately set up to accommodate their children, immersion programs may need to include professional development that focuses on the unique needs of these students (Nic Aindriú, 2021). Immersion programs may also benefit from having more teachers and support personnel certified to identify the special educational needs of students. Parent B, who did have to pull her child from the immersion program due to special educational needs, stated,

Even in the community that I'm in with folks that have had kids struggling with dyslexia or whatever, like all of them said, I wish I would have done this one thing differently, but no one has said I wish I wouldn't have gone to the school.

For parents like Parent B, more support for their children, including earlier identification of issues, may have allowed them to continue in the program.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

Past research described a disconnect between the school and home as to what parent involvement is, arguing that schools need to understand the psychological aspects of parent involvement as parents play a crucial role in student outcomes (Curry et al., 2019; Froiland, 2021). This study added to the research in this area by examining the psychological aspects of parental role construction, parents' sense of efficacy, and the contextual and life factors that may influence their involvement. The findings supported the notion of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005) by

showing that parents' involvement was influenced by how they view their role, how confident they were in helping their child, the invitations they received for involvement, and their own life context variables of time, knowledge, and resources.

In relation to parental role construction and parents' sense of efficacy, past research was lacking on understanding how social factors may impact these two aspects of parent involvement. Theory and past research showed that parental role construction and parents' sense of efficacy could be influenced by outside forces such as communication from the school, invitations from teachers, or the expectations of others (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kigobe et al., 2019; Liu & Leighton, 2021; Park & Holloway, 2018; Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). The findings of this study confirmed this by showing how strong communication from teachers, invitations and calls for help from the school, and parents' connections with other parents all impacted how they were involved. When teachers provided ideas and resources for parents to use in assisting their child, parents' sense of efficacy increased, and their role was more clearly defined. When parents connected with other parents, they had another avenue of support and resource to access when in need. When parents were specifically invited to be involved, they were more likely to be involved. The findings of this study supported the idea that the relationships parents form with the school, teachers, and other parents may enhance overall involvement as parents gain more access to various resources that enhance their own self-efficacy and role to be involved (Curry & Holter, 2019). Specifically in the immersion program setting, research described parents' desire to have parent-to-parent support networks and school support networks to help navigate through the immersion process (Ee, 2017; Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; MacPhee, 2021). This study showed the impact those parent-to-parent connections can have through the various classroom WhatsApp or Facebook groups.

When parents had those connections, they felt more connected to the school and felt they had another avenue of support that aided in their involvement. Even with some established connections to parents, the parents of this study confirmed past research showing they desire more connections and support from the school and other parents.

This study added to the research on foreign language immersion programs as research examining parent involvement specifically in foreign language immersion programs has been limited and existing literature did not consider parental concerns or issues they may face in immersion programs (Aguayo & Dorner, 2017; Haj-Broussard et al., 2019; Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; Wesely & Baig, 2012; Zheng, 2021). This study showed that parents are involved or want to be involved in a variety of ways, which schools may want to consider, including being able to help with immersion language development and finding opportunities to use the immersion language beyond the school context. The schools in this study told parents not to worry about the immersion language but assist their child in improving their English-language development. It was clear from this study that parents, even without immersion language knowledge themselves, desired to be involved in that aspect of their child's learning. This confirmed previous research in which parents in other immersion settings showed a desire to help but either felt they could not due to the language or struggled to help through the resources they could find (Kavanaugh & Hickey, 2013; MacPhee, 2021; Ryan, 2020). Research suggested schools needed to help parents in defining their role in the immersion language setting by educating parents on how they can help in the development of their child's native language skills. This study suggests that even with the schools' emphasis on English-language development at home, some parents still desire to support the immersion language learning, thus

schools may want to consider ways in which parents could support that development without causing harm due to their lack of immersion language knowledge.

Finally, research that touched on attrition from immersion programs indicates these programs can suffer from high rates of attrition as students lost are not easily regained due to the need to have immersion language proficiency in grades beyond kindergarten (S. Hill, 2018). While one recommendation to combat attrition suggested schools need to educate parents more fully on the goals of immersion, the methods and theory, and the overall benefits of the program, this study noted an additional recommendation (Wesely & Baig, 2012). Schools may need to consider how they address parent concerns and issues in efforts to build relationships and retain students. In this study, parents who felt their concerns were not addressed adequately considered leaving the program, and others, who felt the school did not appropriately address their child's special educational needs nor had adequate accommodations in place to support those needs, did transfer from the program to schools that were more equipped to address such needs.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations in the design of a study are the “systematic bias that a researcher did not or could not control and which could inappropriately affect the results” (Price & Murnan, 2004, p. 66). The limitations of this study pertain to the sample of the study. Due to the percentage of students at School A who are Hispanic, as well as the lack of Asian participants at School B, I feel these two ethnicities are not adequately represented in this study. To combat the lack of Asian and Hispanic voices in the study, more participants were included, increasing the original sample size goal from 15 to 25. Having more Asian and Hispanic voices represented in the study could have had an impact on the findings as in past studies these two groups have shown lower levels of involvement (James et al., 2019; N.E. Hill et al., 2018). Due to this, the results of the

present study may not transfer to Hispanic and Asian parents who are involved in foreign language immersion programs. Another limitation related to the sample is participants who volunteered for the study may be individuals who are already prone to volunteering and being involved. This factor may skew the results as parents who are less involved may have chosen not to participate in the study and are therefore not adequately represented. To combat this, future studies need to find ways to recruit participants that do not rely solely on parent initiative to participate.

Delimitations are aspects of the study intentionally placed in the study design by the researcher (Price & Murnan, 2004). Delimitations of the study include participant criteria, the research method, and study design. Participants were limited to parents of children who had attended at least two years in a foreign language immersion program. As the focus of the study was on parent experiences in immersion programs, the study did not include teacher, student, or school perspectives. Parents with less than two years in the program were not included as I felt they lacked enough time involved in the program to have adequate experiences to reflect on. The research method of this study was qualitative in nature. This allowed for an in-depth look into parent experiences that I may not have gotten had I used a quantitative method, such as the survey derived from the original Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) model on the parental involvement process. Further, the study design was a transcendental phenomenology. As the goal was to understand parent experiences in the unique setting of a foreign language immersion program, this type of study allowed for examining the lived experiences of a specific group of individuals through in-depth interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and focus groups.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided an in-depth look at the lived experiences of parents with children in foreign language immersion programs. Additional research could include expanding the scope of the study in the form of a case study that includes perspectives from teachers, school members, and students to better understand the impact of parent involvement. This study showed parent perspectives, but addressing how immersion programs approach parent involvement may help in understanding both school and home views to heal the disconnect research suggests there is between schools and parents regarding parent involvement. Further research could also include a mixed-methods study, as Walker et al. (2005) suggest, that combines the revised quantitative survey of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) framework alongside interviews and observation to gain a more complete picture of the parental involvement process. Further research is also suggested into the specific areas of parental issues and concerns, as parents who feel their needs are unmet or their child is not receiving a proper education may decide to transfer from an immersion program. As research specifically on one-way immersion programs like those included in this study are few, with more research addressing two-way immersion programs, expanding this study to include programs across the country may add to the findings. Finally, more research into ways parents can support immersion language learning, as well as how schools can assist with providing or finding resources for parents to support their child's immersion language learning, would help to improve parent experiences and parents' overall involvement in foreign language immersion programs.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study examined parent experiences within the setting of foreign language immersion programs. The study utilized the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model of the parental involvement process as revised in Walker et al. (2005) to examine parental

role construction, sense of efficacy, and the social factors that may influence those two constructs and parents' overall involvement. The findings of this study supported the literature on the psychological aspects of parental involvement that indicate parents with a strong role construction and high sense of efficacy are more likely to be involved in their children's education. It also supported and added to the literature on how the school, teachers, and other parents can have an impact on parent involvement. Further, the findings supported and added to the literature on parent involvement in foreign language immersion programs that indicated parents desire to be involved in their child's immersion language experience but may feel unable to due to lack of language knowledge or inability to find resources. Parents need help understanding how they may support their child outside of school in their immersion language development. This study showed the importance of strong communication from the school to aid parents in knowing how to help their child and in understanding the immersion program overall. It also showed the importance of having networks in place between parents as another avenue of support in assisting their child and navigating through the immersion program. Overall, parents in foreign language immersion programs revealed a strong desire to be involved in any way they can, a fact schools may capitalize on by building up parent supports within the program.

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Appendix A

Initial Interest Approval



[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

March 29, 2023

Kate Kempen
Re: Request for Research Letter of Support

Ms. Kempen,

After careful review of your research proposal, we would like to support your request for your research study.

1. What are the lived experiences of parents whose children have completed a K-5 foreign language immersion program regarding their motivations beliefs towards involvement in their children's education?

This study will benefit the office of student assignment and school choice because it will help provide some insight and understanding around parent motivations to be involved in the foreign language immersion programs. These findings may aid the district in better understanding the difficulties parents may have in supporting their child learning a foreign language, which will help the school and district to provide better supports for parents as well as be able to better inform parents as to what is needed from them for their child to be successful.

The proposed methods and materials include open-ended questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups with parents only.

If this research is approved, we look forward to using the results to shape support for Language Immersion in [Redacted] programs.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
[Redacted]



Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval



March 22, 2023

Kate Kempen
Jose Puga

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-1086 A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY ON PARENTS' MOTIVATIONAL BELIEFS TOWARDS INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS WHOSE CHILDREN HAVE COMPLETED A KINDER THROUGH FIFTH GRADE FOREIGN LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAM

Dear Kate Kempen, Jose Puga,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

Appendix C

Research Review Panel Approval

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

June 1, 2023

Kate Kempen

[Redacted]

RE: A Transcendental Phenomenology on Parents' Motivational Beliefs Towards Involvement in Their Children's Education: The Lived Experiences of Parents Whose Children Have Attended a Foreign Language Immersion Program

Dear Kate Kempen,

Thank you for your interest in conducting research in [Redacted]. Your proposal summary and application for "A Transcendental Phenomenology on Parents' Motivational Beliefs Towards Involvement in Their Children's Education: The Lived Experiences of Parents Whose Children Have Attended a Foreign Language Immersion Program" has been reviewed and approved by the [Redacted].

Please register at [Redacted] for clearance if you plan to enter any school for research-related purposes at any time. The Researcher must also verify in [Redacted] that all of their research staff and volunteers are registered, have received the required clearance status for the activity and, are active at the appropriate schools before starting the research activities. The Organization must remain in continuous communication with the District Volunteer Coordinator and report changes (school assignment, roles and responsibilities) in volunteers and staff as soon as possible.

Given the increasing level of accountability placed upon schools, using research- and evidence-based practices is of paramount importance. [Redacted] asks that you share your results within 30 days of completion, including any recommendations for the district based upon your findings. Note that your submission can be a published article, a submitted manuscript, conference presentation, and/or executive summary. If you have not written any of these, please briefly describe why the study was not finalized or the findings were not presented/published. We understand that you may plan to present/publish in the future, but have not done so yet. Please note that if we do not receive a completed report or explanation, we may decide to no longer allow research from your organization.

Please sign and return one copy of the enclosed [Redacted] "Data Sharing Agreement" indicating your agreement with its terms. Should you have any questions or future needs, please feel free to contact [Redacted] at [Redacted]. Best wishes for continued success as you begin your study.

If applicable, when you submit your data request, please include your Research Application Number [Redacted].

Sincerely,

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Appendix D

Recruitment Form

The following will be sent to parents through the school's ParentSquare app. The researcher will request the principal disseminate the recruitment notice through the app.

ATTENTION PARENTS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to understand parent experiences regarding their involvement within foreign language immersion programs. To participate, you must be a parent of a child who is currently or formerly enrolled in a foreign language immersion program who has completed at least 2 years in K-5. Interested participants will be asked to complete a demographic screening questionnaire in an effort to select a diverse group of participants. Those selected for participation must be willing to complete an online open-ended questionnaire, a one-on-one interview, and participate in a focus group. All procedures should take a total of approximately 2 hours to complete. Interviews and focus groups may be conducted via Zoom or in-person and will be audio- and video-recorded. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please click [here](#). Individuals chosen to participate will receive an Amazon gift card upon completion of participation.

This study has been approved by [REDACTED]; however, it is not a [REDACTED] research study. Kate Kempen is the sole researcher responsible for this study. Please direct all inquiries to her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Appendix E

Consent

Title of the Project: PARENT EXPERIENCES WITHIN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IMMERSION PROGRAM

Principal Investigator: Kate Kempen, doctoral student, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a parent of a student who has completed at least two years in a K-5 foreign language immersion program. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand parent experiences within a foreign language immersion program context. The goal is to illustrate why parents choose foreign language immersion and how they are involved in the program.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an online questionnaire that includes questions on enrollment, experiences, and involvement. This survey should take 15-20 minutes to complete.
2. Complete an one-on-one interview on your experiences and involvement in the program. This interview should last about 30-45 minutes. This interview would be audio recorded for data analysis purposes.
3. Participate in a focus group with other participants via Zoom or in-person. Focus groups will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Focus groups will be audio recorded for data analysis purposes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a clearer understanding of the involvement of parents in foreign language immersion programs and how their involvement shapes the program. This information could aid foreign language immersion programs to make definitive efforts to foster meaningful parent involvement and assist parents in their active involvement with their child.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Names and identifying information of participants who complete the questionnaire, interview, and focus group will remain confidential. Participant responses on the survey and interview portions will be kept confidential with pseudonyms. The interviews and focus groups will be conducted in private locations or via Zoom where conversations cannot be overheard.
- Data will be stored on a password-protected personal computer of the researcher, with one backup copy being stored on a password-protected external hard drive. Data may be used for future presentations but will be deleted no later than three years after completion of the study.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. All recordings will be stored on a password-protected personal computer of the researcher. These recordings will be erased no later than three years after completion of the study. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will receive an Amazon gift card for participating in this study. Participants will only receive the compensation after completing the questionnaire, interview, and focus group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with [REDACTED] or Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Kate Kempen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Jose Puga at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix F

Demographic Data Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?
 - 18 – 24
 - 25 – 34
 - 35 – 44
 - 44 – 54
 - Over 55
2. What is your gender? – Male - Female
3. What is your ethnicity?
 - a. White/Caucasian
 - b. Hispanic/Latino
 - c. Black/African American
 - d. Native American/American Indian
 - e. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - f. Other
 - g. Prefer not to answer
4. What is your level of education?
 - a. Did not complete high school
 - b. High school degree or equivalent
 - c. Bachelor's degree
 - d. Master's degree
 - e. Doctorate
5. Did your child complete at least 2 years in K-5 of a foreign language immersion program at [School A] or [School B]?
 - Yes
 - No
6. What is your level of education?
 - Did not complete high school
 - High school degree or equivalent
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Doctorate
 - Prefer not to answer
7. What languages are you personally able to speak (on a conversational level or higher)?
8.

What languages are spoken in the home? (May check more than one)
 - English

- Spanish
- French
- German
- Chinese
- Japanese
- Other _____
- Prefer not to answer

9. What is the main language spoken in the home?

10. Please provide your name and email address in order to contact you about participation.

- a. _____
- b. _____

Appendix G

Parent Questionnaire

Parent Involvement Questions

1. What do you see as your responsibility in relation to your child's education? Possible areas of discussion are home activities, school activities, or communication. (SQ1)
2. Describe your own experiences with school as a student. Consider your feelings in relation to the school itself, the teachers, other students, and your overall feeling of your experience. (CRQ)
3. What do you feel you are able to do to support your child as they learn in the foreign language immersion program? (SQ2)
4. How confident do you feel in your ability to support your child in the program? (SQ2)
5. What aspects of your current life situation (time, energy, knowledge, skills) may impact how you support your student through the program? (SQ3)
6. What aspects of your current life situation (time, energy, knowledge, skills) may impact how much you are involved in your child's learning? (CRQ)
7. What various ways are you involved with your child's education at home? Answers may relate to homework, communication, activities, etc. (CRQ)
8. What various ways are you involved with your child's education at school? Answers may relate to volunteering, communication, attending events, etc. (CRQ)
9. How does your school support parents become involved at the school? (SQ3)
10. In what ways might the school help you support your child more effectively? (SQ3)

11. In what ways might other parents from your school help you support your child?

(SQ3)

12. What ways do you feel you could be more involved? (CRQ)

13. What do you think parents' most important responsibilities are for ensuring that their child/children have a successful school experience? (SQ1)

Appendix H

Parent Interview Questions

Individual Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your own experience with education? (CRQ)
2. What aspects of your involvement with your child and their foreign language immersion program stand out to you? (CRQ)
3. How did being a parent of a child in a foreign language immersion program affect you? (CRQ)
4. How do you view your role as a parent in your child's education? (SQ1)
5. What motivations did you have for involvement in your child's education with the foreign language immersion program? (CRQ)
6. How did you feel your sense of efficacy, your ability to be successful in helping your child, was in relation to the foreign language immersion program? (SQ2)
7. What things might have hindered your participation or involvement? (SQ3)
8. What resources did you feel you had that supported your involvement? (SQ3)
9. What, if any, experiences with the school and staff may have influenced your involvement? (SQ3)
10. How did you feel in your child's school? (SQ1)
11. How would you describe your relationships with your child's teachers over the years? (SQ3)
12. Describe any influences on the part of teachers that affected how you were involved? (SQ3)
13. What experiences or interactions did you have with other parents at the school? (SQ3)

14. Is there anything else you would like to share about being a parent with a child involved in a foreign language immersion program? (CRQ)

Appendix I

Parent Focus Group Questions

1. What motivations did you have for enrolling your child in a foreign language immersion program? (CRQ)
2. What is it like to parent a child learning a foreign language? (CRQ)
3. What, if anything, surprised you about the immersion program as your child progressed through it? (CRQ)
4. How did...
 - a. the school help you support your student? (SQ3)
 - b. your child's teachers help you support your student? (SQ3)
 - c. or other parents help you support your student? (SQ3)
5. Can you recall instances where interactions (with school, teachers, parents) made you feel more or less confident in helping your child? (SQ3)
6. Are there instances where you sought outside help to support your child's education? (SQ3)
7. Overall, what challenges did you face in supporting your child's education? (CRQ)
8. Overall, what successes do you feel you had in supporting your child's education? (CRQ)
9. What additional supports, if any, do you think would improve or enhance the parent experience in foreign language immersion programs? (SQ3)

Appendix J

Field Notes Excerpts

March 22 - Received IRB approval via exemption.

March 29 - Received the letter of support from the Director of Magnet Programs with [the district] required to submit an application with the [the district] Office of Accountability.

March 30 - Initial application to the [the district] Office of Accountability's research review board. Board meeting set for April 18th.

April 19 - Received initial rejection for conducting research with [the district]. Office of Accountability requested I make changes to the study plan and resubmit materials for the next review board.

April 28 - Resubmitted application to the [the district] Office of Accountability's research review board. Board meeting set for May 3rd.

May 10 - Research review board requested more information in support of my application to conduct research with the district.

May 19 - The participant flyer was distributed via ParentSquare to parents at [School A] by the administrative secretary. [The district] requested I cut off submissions as they had not formally approved the study.

June 1 - Received approval from the [the district] Office of Accountability's research review board for completion of my study.

June 2 - Submitted a modification request to the IRB for changes made to the study required by the [the district] Office of Accountability.

June 7 - Resubmitted documents for the modification request with the IRB.

June 9 - Completed the Data Sharing Agreement with [the district]. Allowed to move forward with research.

June 12 - Initial contact made via email with both principals. Awaiting responses...

Beginning Data Collection

July 7 - Sent out first data collection method to 7 participants with [School A].

July 8 - Received one questionnaire back.

July 9 - Received another questionnaire back.

July 10 - Currently have 9 consent forms returned, 2 questionnaires completed.

July 11 - Sent consent forms to 5 more potential participants. 1 sent back. Total of 10 signed consent forms.

July 12 - Received 1 more questionnaire response - total 3. Re-sent questionnaire email to 5 participants. Total 6 questionnaires.

July 13 - Received 3 more questionnaires - total 9. Scheduled 9 interviews.

July 16 - First missed interview, sent email to reschedule. Selected 10 potential participants from [School B] and send information and consent forms out to all.

July 17 - 5 completed consent forms from [School B]. Two completed questionnaires. 1 new interview scheduled for [School A] - total 10.

- Completed first interview. Need to ask clarifying questions to draw more information out. Need to figure out how to make it more conversational and less like question after question.

July 18 - Completed second interview. Went better as a conversation. Have to rephrase a few questions to clarify meaning.

July 20 - Third interview complete.

July 21 - Interview four and five complete. Starting to feel like I am getting a good picture of the program and parents within it.

July 24 - Interview six complete.

July 25 - Interview seven and eight complete.

August 2 - Continuing with research. I have completed 19 interviews between the 2 schools. I have submitted a modification with the IRB in order to increase my participants to no more than 30. I am learning that there is a lot of organization and tracking that I had not considered beforehand when creating the study. I have had to create participant trackers to see what stage of the study each person is in, or when I emailed them last and for what. I have created availability forms in order to determine when I can schedule focus groups and actually have several participants be available at a given time.

August 10 - Received approval from IRB to increase participants to 30 and revise focus group questions. I should have a total of 25 participants, with a few additions if needed.

Aug 11 - Sent out focus group times to all participants. There will be 7 groups with 3-5 participants in each group. Created a focus group moderator guide to use to ensure each focus group is conducted the same. Currently, the focus groups are separated by school, but may need to mix a bit in order to accommodate participants with scheduling conflicts.

Aug 14 - I have completed the remaining one on one interviews for a total of 25 interviews.

Aug 15 - Today is the first two focus groups. While I was concerned that the focus groups may not yield results, or that I may not execute them well thus making any information discovered minimal, I have found that the focus groups do work well. I think the smaller groups work best, especially in a virtual setting. Individuals are more comfortable to talk, and they are more likely to make it into a conversation than an interview. I was pleasantly surprised by the focus groups and am glad that I did end up choosing it as a method of data collection. I think it will bring in additional information and details that parents alone may not have thought of in just a one-on-one interview.

Aug 16 - Third focus group. The smaller groups (3 individuals) do seem to work well. The difference in schools is very apparent when doing a focus group as the school that has only been in existence for 2 years, parents struggle to come up with answers/information as they simply don't have enough time in the program to pull from. The other school however, parents have not only been there 2 years, but many have children late in the program if not already graduated from the program. They have much more depth in their answers and more experience to pull from.

Aug 28 - All focus groups are complete. Three individuals did not make it to the focus groups, and I am unable to match their availabilities to one time. I will send each individual the focus group questions to answer on their own. Today, I began checking transcriptions and readying them for uploading to NVivo. I have changed names to pseudonyms and will begin going through recorded video to ensure the words match what was said.

Sept 5 - The last three participants completed the final focus group today. I have begun preparing transcripts for NVivo. Currently, I am working on making sure the transcript matches the recorded video.

Sept 16 - I have completed editing all transcripts for interviews, focus groups, and the questionnaire. Now, I am beginning to import data into NVivo and prepping for coding.

Oct 1 - I have completed coding of all data. Now I am working on rechecking codes before I begin categorizing codes and working to establish themes.

Oct 15 - I have worked through each code again, and more specifically separated them into sub-codes. Such as the code "influences of social factors" includes the sub-codes, "time," "parents," "community," "communication," etc. Once I did this, I categorized the codes based on the research questions.

Oct. 18 - Having organized the codes into the categorized themes, I created an outline of the results in order to aid in arranging the topics that resulted from data collection. I have begun writing chapter 4, starting with participant demographics and descriptions.