

The Lived Experiences of Parents and Their Perceptions of Preschool in One
Neighborhood in Eastern Virginia

Catrina Manigo

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
In
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Carol S. Cash, Chair
Michael D. Kelly
Ted S. Price
Travis W. Twiford

March 23, 2016
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Lived experiences, preschool, preschool and parent involvement, attitudes and beliefs about preschool, quality of preschool, history of preschool, impact of preschool attendance, phenomenological research and qualitative studies in preschool, kindergarten readiness, school readiness, early literacy and language development.

The Lived Experiences of Parents and Their Perceptions of Preschool in One Neighborhood in
Eastern Virginia
Catrina Manigo

ABSTRACT

According to the United States Department of Education, approximately 4,172,347 four year olds are eligible to attend publicly funded preschool programs. Of this number, only 1,709,607 of those eligible are enrolled in a publicly funded preschool program (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Because of a lack of quantitative and qualitative data regarding parents' positive and negative attitudes and beliefs about preschool, misconceptions arise regarding parental decisions to support or not to support their child's academic, social and emotional development prior to kindergarten. In a large urban district in the southeastern part of the United States, this qualitative phenomenological study investigated the perceptions of 12 parents, six of whom elected and six of whom did not elect to send their children to preschool, and the lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Unanswered questions linger about why so few children attend preschool. Further, the study examined the relationship between parent attitudes and beliefs about preschool and whether or not their lived experiences contributed to their perceptions of the values of preschool.

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Glasser's (1998) concept of an individual's quality world. Data were collected from initial and follow up interviews. Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam (2011) method was used to analyze the data, including listing and preliminary grouping, reduction and elimination, clustering and thematizing, and for a final identification of the invariant constituents and themes. Findings from the study revealed that participants encountered both positive and negative experiences that contributed to their decisions about preschool. Participants also believed that academic readiness skills, social emotional development, and parental involvement were values of preschool.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the most important people in my life: my sons Christian and Cahmauri who sacrificed so much, including giving up the attention of their mother during the time I spent attending graduate classes and conducting research in the library. Their unselfish love and sincere desire for me to complete my goal is priceless.

Every child is a reflection of his or her parents. When I see my parents, I see strength and determination. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my daddy John T. because he taught me how to be strong in my stance and confident when I look into the eyes of others. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother because she taught me how to build a fire of determination and keep it burning in order to “stay in the race until I have finished the course.”

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my brother Daryl, nicknamed “Sugar Bear,” who supported me with broad shoulders to lean and cry on when times seemed too difficult to bear. Also, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my sister-in-law, Ebony, who was kind enough to share my brother with me when I called him to my rescue at the most inconvenient times.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my niece Trinity, who motivated me to obtain this doctoral degree. This dissertation is proof that she, too, can pursue her dreams and meet her challenges with promise and success.

As the first person in my immediate and extended family, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Grandmother Roseanna Etheridge, the Etheridge Family, the Cherry Family, aunts, uncles, cousins, and distant relatives.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my God-Mother Vanessa, God-Sister Ime God-Sister Delphina and God-Brother Michael, church family, friends, colleagues, and students for their support and prayers over the years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I give all honor and all praise to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for everything. By His grace, wisdom, power, strength and authority, I was blessed to pursue and finish my doctorate degree at the school of my dreams, Virginia Polytechnic and State University. Thank you, Jesus, for blessing me with an extra special gift. With it, I plan to impart knowledge to others with the same love and mercy you have given me.

Thank you, to the members of my committee, Dr. Cash, Dr. Twiford, Dr. Price, and Dr. Kelly, all of whom inspired me to strive to reach my fullest potential.

Dr. Cash, my committee chairperson, you did an amazing job coaching me through the process and encouraging me to never give up. When I presented you with an obstacle that was going on in my life, you gave me hope and the push I needed to become courageous enough to press through the difficult times. Thank you, Dr. Twiford, for being an awesome visionary who motivated me to be the leader that I am today. I will never forget the motivational speeches you shared with me from our first meeting until now. Your words of wisdom are highly respected and greatly appreciated. Thank you, Dr. Price, for being a keen listener. You taught me the importance of asking “why” and showed me how to search deeper in the articles to find the answers to particular questions. Thank you Dr. Kelly for accepting the invitation to join my committee and for your insightful thoughts about conducting my study. You, too, were instrumental to my successful journey.

To my cohort, I would especially like to thank all of you for the love, support, and “pulse checks” throughout all of our classes. Together, you all have been the “wind beneath my wings.” I will never forget the life changing experiences we shared at the extraordinary Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background to the Study.....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Conceptual Framework.....	4
Research Questions.....	6
Nature of the Study.....	6
Definitions.....	6
Assumptions.....	7
Delimitations of the Study.....	7
Limitations of the Study.....	7
Significance of the Study.....	8
Summary and Organization of the Study.....	8
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
Historical Overview of Preschool Education.....	9
Implications of Preschool.....	13
Preschool programs.....	13
School readiness.....	15
Literacy development.....	16
Achievement gap.....	17
Social emotional development.....	18
Parental involvement.....	21
Parent Attitudes and Beliefs about Preschool Education.....	22
Opposing Views of Preschool Education.....	23
Parents Who Did Not Enroll their Children in Preschool.....	23
Choice Theory.....	24

Desire to own or experience things.....	24
Beliefs that govern behavior.....	25
Summary.....	25
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	27
Purpose of the Study.....	27
Research Questions.....	27
Research Approach and Design.....	28
Context of the Study.....	28
Invitation to Participate.....	29
Validity.....	30
Data Collection Procedures.....	30
Selection of Participants.....	31
Instrumentation.....	31
Initial Interview.....	32
Follow Up Interview.....	33
Coding of the Data.....	33
Data Analysis.....	34
Timeline for Completion.....	34
Methodology Summary.....	35
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS.....	36
Overview.....	36
Explanation of Data Findings.....	36
Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions for Interview Data.....	37
Parent 0001 (PS0001).....	37
Parent 0002 (PS0002).....	37
Parent 0003 (PS0003).....	38
Parent 0004 (PS0004).....	38
Parent 0005 (PS0005).....	38
Parent 0006 (PS0006).....	39
Parent 0007 (PD0007).....	39
Parent 0008 (PD00008).....	39
Parent 0010 (PD0010).....	40

Parent 0011 (PD0011).....	40
Parent 0012 (PD0012).....	40
Composite Textural-Structural Descriptions	41
Social emotional development.....	47
Preparedness for kindergarten.....	48
Participants' views.....	58
Socioeconomic challenges.....	61
Parents unpreparedness.....	62
Parents want to teach and prepare their own children for school.....	67
Parents believe that preschool is repetitive and redundant.....	70
Past experiences of attending or not attending preschool as a child.....	77
Influences from others' attitudes and beliefs about preschool.....	79
Parents' satisfaction and or disappointment with preschool/kindergarten outcomes.....	80
Participants valued their children being successful in school.....	86
Parents take ownership in the responsibility for preparing children for kindergarten.....	87
Parents being able to trust teachers and school leaders.....	87
Summary.....	89
CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	90
Findings.....	90
Implications.....	97
Recommendations for Further Study	100
Researcher's Reflection.....	101
Conclusions.....	101
REFERENCES	105
APPENDIX A APPROVAL LETTER.....	113
APPENDIX B INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE.....	114
APPENDIX C CONSENT FORM	115
APPENDIX D INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	117
APPENDIX E FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS	118
APPENDIX F INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	119
APPENDIX G MEMBER CHECKING FORM.....	120
APPENDIX H RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW MATRIX	121

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 <i>Participants' Comments on the Value of Preschool</i>	43
Table 2 <i>Social Emotional Development as a Value of Preschool</i>	48
Table 3 <i>Preparation for Kindergarten as a Value of Preschool</i>	50
Table 4 <i>Participants' Comments on Why Parents Send their Children to Preschool</i>	51
Table 5 <i>Views of Why Parents Send their Children to Preschool</i>	61
Table 6 <i>Socioeconomic Reasons Why Parents Send Children to Preschool</i>	62
Table 7 <i>Parents Unpreparedness: Why Parents Send their Children to Preschool</i>	63
Table 8 <i>Participants' Comments on Why Parents Decide Not to Send their Children to Preschool</i>	64
Table 9 <i>Why Parents Who Did Not Send their Children to Preschool Want to Prepare their Own Kids for School</i>	68
Table 10 <i>Why Parents Think Not Sending Children to Preschool Prevents Negative Behaviors</i>	69
Table 11 <i>Preschool Teachers Lack Expertise in Instructional and Behavioral Strategies</i>	70
Table 12 <i>Parents Believe Preschool is Repetitive and Redundant</i>	71
Table 13 <i>Participants' Comments on what Contributed to Parents' Attitudes and Beliefs about Preschool</i>	72
Table 14 <i>Participants Comments about Parents Past Experiences of Attending or Not Attending Preschool</i>	79
Table 15 <i>Participants Comments about Influences from Others Attitudes and Beliefs about Preschool</i>	80
Table 16 <i>Satisfaction or Disappointment in Preschool/Kindergarten Outcomes</i>	81
Table 17 <i>Participants' Comments about Reflections on Intrinsic Values when Enrolling Children</i>	82
Table 18 <i>Views of Being Successful in School</i>	86
Table 19 <i>Parent's intrinsic value of ownership and responsibility for preparing children</i>	87
Table 20 <i>Parents' Being Able to Trust Teachers and School Leaders</i>	88

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1. Conceptual Framework</i>	5
<i>Figure 2. Achievement Gap as Children Begin Kindergarten</i>	17
<i>Figure 3. The Achievement Gap Starts Early</i>	19

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Current research reveals that preschool programs have made a positive impact on early literacy, social emotional learning, and academic success (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012; Cunningham, 2010; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013; Invernizzi, Landrum, Teichman, & Townsend, 2010; NIEER, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In 2004, the U.S. Department of Education conducted an Early Childhood Longitudinal Study that identified a 60% school readiness gap between preschool aged children in the highest socioeconomic group and the lowest socioeconomic group, before entering kindergarten (Robin & Schulman, 2004). The National Institute of Early Education Research (2015) confirmed that students who start school prior to kindergarten are more likely to do well academically and socially throughout their educational career. Don Owens, Director of Public Affairs for the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYP) stated

It's not the same kindergarten we went to. It's not the same kindergarten it was ten years ago. Kindergarten used to be preparation for school, but now it *is* school. That's why school districts and boards of education are paying attention to what happens *before* the kids arrive at school. (2007, p. 1)

The skills obtained from preschool attendance include pre-reading strategies, such as oral language and phonological awareness, and pre-writing skills. Exposure to these skills and practice of them prior to kindergarten increased the possibility for students to have successful reading experiences in school (Barnett et al., 2012). Educators agree that children between the ages of three and five are in vital phases of academic and social emotional development (Burchinal et al., 2010; Cunningham, 2010; Dearing et al., 2009). Additional research supports the focus of preschool programs to include activities that are predictors of future school success (Barnett, 2008; Weber-Stratton, Reid, & Stoolmiller, 2008).

Consequently, school leaders across Virginia are looking for ways to promote the importance of getting children ready to learn before entering kindergarten and are seeking parents who have preschool aged children with whom to share information about the benefits of preschool (Smart Beginnings, 2013; Williford, Downer, & Hamre 2014). Government officials,

research companies, school districts across the country, and professionals in many disciplines have collected a myriad of data to support or reject the importance of mandating preschool attendance for all children regardless of economic, social, or racial background (Casio & Schanzenbach, 2013). These data have been used to examine the impact preschool has on student achievement, both short and long term. Additionally, in his 2014 State of the Union address, President Obama called for expanding “high-quality” preschools to improve the outcome of learning and academic success (2014). Gordan et al. (2015) examined the benefits of attending several preschool programs and identified the following outcomes: improves social and emotional development, increases school readiness, and raises school performance. Current research continues to suggest that the impact of preschool attendance on student achievement is significant and a priority for the United States of America to address.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation required that children be proficient in reading and math by 2014. President George Bush’s early childhood education initiative, *Good Start, Grow Smart*, was developed “to help states and local communities strengthen early learning for young children” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Preschool education was made an important part of NCLB and continues to be supported by Title I, a federal grant program used to fund educational programs for poverty-stricken students.

Slaby, Loucks, and Stelwag (2005) indicated that children who are at risk are targeted due to the educational attainment of the mother and family income level. Additionally, Slaby et.al, noted that “practitioners and researchers alike contend that the enrichment of preschool makes a difference especially for children living in poverty” (p.53).

Problem Statement

According to the United States Department of Education (USDOE), there are approximately 4,172,347 four year olds who are eligible to attend publicly funded preschool programs. Of this, only 1,709,607 four year olds are enrolled in a publicly funded preschool program (USDOE, 2014). The USDOE also indicated that it is likely that a significant portion of young children attend these types of programs, but no system exists to track enrollments in privately funded programs (USDOE, 2014). Additional data suggests that there are approximately 2.5 million four year olds who are not enrolled in any type of preschool program. Current research indicates that parents feel there is a need for additional preschool programs that

will help prepare students for kindergarten (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan, & Barnett, 2010). Quantitative research has been conducted on the attitudes and beliefs of parents who have enrolled their children into preschool programs, revealing that a high quality preschool education impacts not only a child's academic success, but enhances his or her social skills. The perceptions parents have about preschool dictate attendance rates, future enrollments, and the likelihood of parent involvement during a child's beginning years of learning. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), "qualitative research is not simply learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied" (p. 15). Few qualitative studies have explored and described the daily lived experiences of parents who chose not to enroll their children in preschool or how those lived experiences may have influenced their attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool. Therefore, it is important to capture the major factors that impact parents' decisions about preschool because research verifies that attending preschool helps create opportunities for academic success in kindergarten.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to investigate the perceptions of parents who have or have not elected to send their children to preschool and the lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Further, the goal of this study is to explore the attitudes and beliefs of parents who did and did not enroll their child in a preschool program. Parental involvement must be an entrenched principle in the influence of classroom and home environment developmental skills of preschool children (DeMulder & Stribling, 2012). This study is designed to capture the parents' perceptions of preschool and to discover their reasons for sending or not sending their children to preschool school prior to entering kindergarten. Educators' understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, and the role of parents is important in making decisions about future early learning literacy programs (Smart Beginnings, 2013). This study is designed to collect data to assist preschool leaders and policy makers in their understanding of parents' involvement in the academic and social emotional development of their 3- or 4-year-old child(ren) enrolled or not enrolled in a preschool program.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the work of Glasser (1998) in relation to choice theory. Duncan, Ludwig, and Magnuson (2007) found that educators and parents are key components in determining the academic outcomes of children who are enrolled in preschool programs. Additional research conducted by Fan and Williams (2010) noted that parents who are actively involved and inspire their children to excel in academics feel more connected and have a sense of parental fulfillment as it relates to their child's educational journey. Included in this concept is the parents' ability to choose preschool because they don't feel competent in their young child's quality world, which for this qualitative phenomenological study is discussed as a preschool learning environment. Glasser's (1998) choice theory defines an individual's quality world as a "small personal world which each person starts to create and re-created throughout life through a small group of specific pictures" (p. 45). Ultimately, these pictures fall into three major categories, including "the people [they] want to be with, the things [they] want to own or experience, and the ideas and beliefs that govern [their] behavior" (p. 45). According to Glasser, "building strong relationships with individuals can only foster the quality world of a person" (Allison, 2011, p.8). Glasser's theory also concluded that individuals were responsible for their own views and actions. Figure 1 depicts the concept that the parents' attitudes and beliefs about preschool and the academic, social, and emotional development in their child(ren) lead to the decisions about preparing their children for kindergarten.

The interlocking connection among parents' experiences, attitudes, and beliefs also influences the choice of whether or not to send their child to preschool. In other words, as parents' attitudes and beliefs about preschool influence their decision to send or not to send their child to preschool, the growth and development of their child's school readiness skills also depend upon the parents' actions simultaneously.

Glasser's (1998) concept of a quality world forms the conceptual framework of this study because Glasser's theory suggests that individuals choose to develop attitudes and beliefs based on lived experiences. Thus, parents' attitudes and beliefs about preschool may be determined by their experiences with the teaching staff, the preschool curriculum, or even the way parents themselves were treated by preschool educators. Glasser's (1998) concept of a quality world correlates to this study because the goal of this study is to understand how the lived experiences of parents influence their choices to allow their children to attend or not attend preschool.

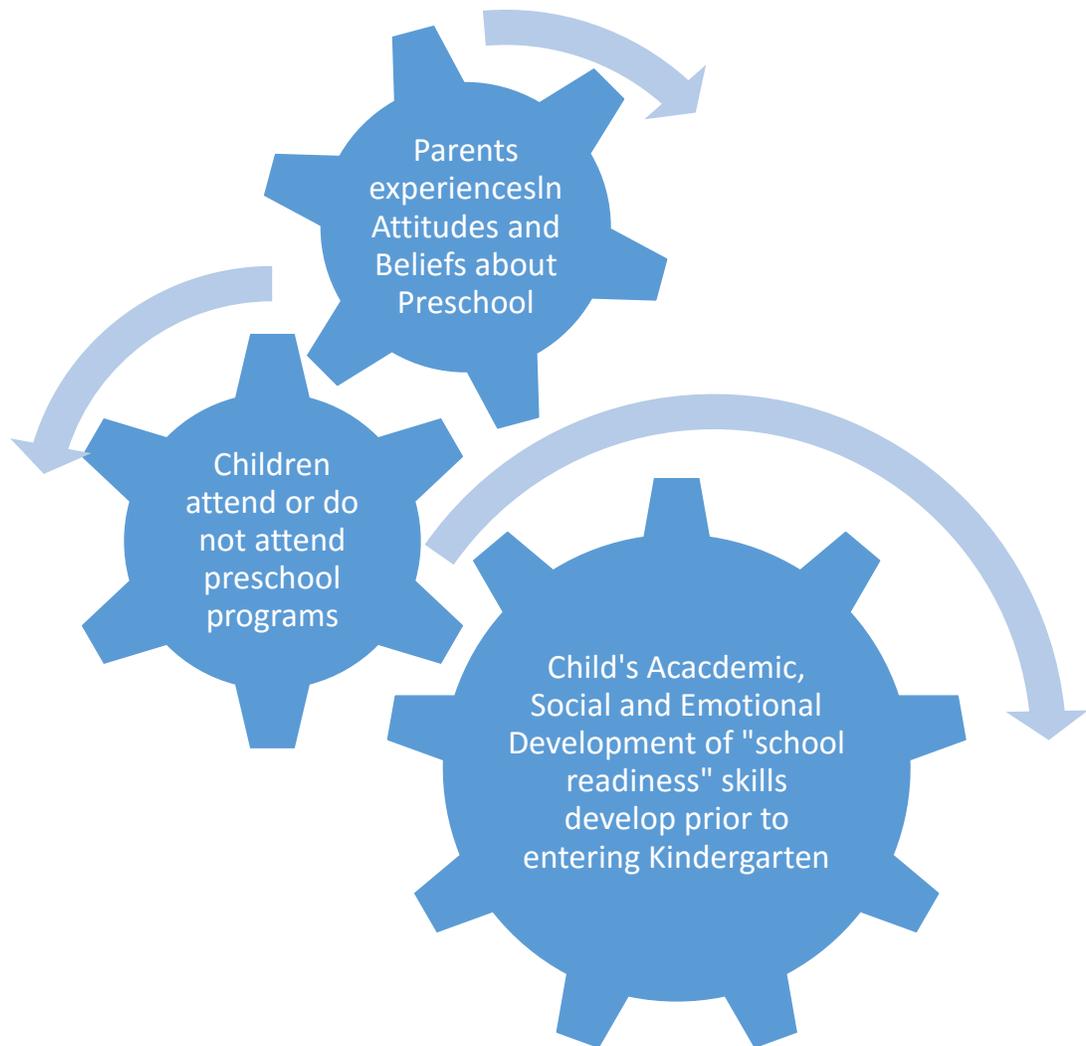


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

In summary, Glasser's (1998) choice theory examined the following three conceptual constructs in relation to an individual's quality world: (a) the people whom individuals want to be with, (b) the things that individuals want to own or experience, and (c) the ideas and beliefs that govern an individual's behavior (pp.45-46). Glasser noted that positive interpersonal and personal relationships foster the quality world of an individual (Glasser, 1998). Therefore, Glasser's theory and other current research studies support the conceptual framework for this study because parents choose the people they want their children to be with and what they want

their children to experience during their preschool years. Thus, attitudes and beliefs about preschool may be based upon their lived experiences.

Research Questions

1. What do parents believe are the values of preschool?
2. Why do parents decide to send their children to preschool?
3. Why do parents decide not to send their children to preschool?
4. What lived experiences do parents indicate contributed to their attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool?
5. Based upon their lived experiences, what intrinsic values do parents reflect upon when enrolling their child in a preschool?

Nature of the Study

Researchers gather data to search for the implications of attending preschool, the quality of early childhood educators, and the relationship between preschool attendance and student outcomes. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of four parents who have children in preschool and four parents who have elected not to send their child(ren) to preschool how those lived experiences impacted their attitudes and beliefs about preschool.

A more in-depth discussion of the methodology is addressed in chapter 3.

Definitions

For this study, the following definitions were used:

The Achievement gap: According to National Association of Education Policy (NAEP), an “achievement gap” is the disparity between two or more subgroups indicated by standardized testing (NAEP, 2004).

Attitude: An individual’s degree of liking or disliking something. Attitudes can be either positive or negative towards a thing or event (Becker & Wiggins, 1992).

Preschool: An educational facility that serves children who are four years of age before they enter kindergarten (USDOE, 2004).

Parent Involvement: A parent’s role in educating his or her children at home and in school. (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).

School Readiness: A child's ability to meet the academic, social, and emotional expectations of kindergarten, indicating whether or not a student can express his thoughts and feelings, is healthy, able to play and work with others, is interested in learning, and has acquired basic pre- reading, pre-writing, and pre-math skills (Magnuson, et al, 2004).

Assumptions

The goals of this phenomenological study are to examine the lived experiences of four parents who did not enroll their students in a preschool program and to describe the daily lived experiences of four parents who did enroll their child(ren) in a preschool program but who enrolled their child(ren) in a public school kindergarten classroom. The study is based on the assumption that all parents who agreed to participate were open-minded and honest with their responses to the interview questions and were active participants of the focus group. Additionally, I assume that they will represent their point of view with truth.

Delimitations of the Study

Twelve participants were asked to participate in this study and give their perceptions about preschool. No teacher or educational leader input was sought because the researcher was only interested in the attitudes and perceptions of parents. The targeted group is delimited because the participants were selected from the researcher's church in the Southeastern area of Virginia.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to parents who attend church in the Southeastern part of Virginia. Thus, the study will not be generalizable to other populations. Twelve parents who agreed to participate in one-on-one interviews with the researcher include six who elected to send their children to preschool and six who elected not to send their children to preschool, but eventually enrolled their child(ren) in a public kindergarten. Creswell (2013) defined limitations of a study as anticipated limits that make it difficult to simplify the findings of the study because of possible weaknesses. Validation of these findings may be limited because parents may be motivated by experiences of other parents who sent their children to preschool, or they may lack the knowledge of what defines "preschool": additionally, parents may not provide the truth in their responses, or they might not respond fully or at all.

Significance of the Study

Parent involvement (PI) in education is associated with positive outcomes for students; however, little is known about how parents decide to be involved in the early years of their children's education, prior to kindergarten. A lack of data exists among quantitative and qualitative data in regards to parents' both positive and negative attitudes and beliefs about preschool, preschool attendance, and parental involvement that is reflective of parents' lived experiences.

Summary and Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the preschool experience and of the importance of parental input. The absence of current research regarding parent perceptions about the benefits of preschool creates a need for this study. Thus, the purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of parents who have or have not elected to send their children to preschool and the lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Further, the purpose was to examine the relationship between parent attitudes and beliefs about preschool and determine whether or not their lived experiences have contributed to their perceptions of the values of preschool. This study is significant in that it provides qualitative data that captures the perceptions of preschool parents as they relate to kindergarten readiness. Chapter 2 includes a review of existing literature as it relates to historical background of preschool, supporting and opposing views of preschool programs, and parental positive and negative attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool education. Chapter 3 includes details about the methodology and instruments used to conduct interviews with parents who have chosen not to enroll their children in a preschool program and a collection of data from a parent focus group indicating their perceptions of preschool based on their lived experiences.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focuses on the perceptions of why parents did not send their child(ren) to preschool. This section will discuss the historical background of preschool education, supporting and opposing views of preschool programs, and positive and negative parental attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool education.

A number of search strategies were used for this study. Scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and documents were located using various search engines, including EBSCO, Sage, ERIC, and Research Navigator. The following key words were used to conduct this search: *preschool, preschool and parent involvement, attitudes and beliefs about preschool, quality of preschool, history of preschool, impact of preschool attendance, phenomenological research, qualitative studies in preschool, kindergarten readiness, school readiness, early literacy and language development.*

Historical Overview of Preschool Education

Beatty (1997), an associate professor of education at Wellesley College, described the history of preschool from the Colonial Era to the present. She determined that the history of preschool started in the early nineteenth century when parents began to question the role of mothers as teachers. The belief that mothers were the best “teachers” to educate their young continued to be prevalent in the early twentieth century.

In the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), President Johnson’s “WAR on Poverty” provided additional funding for schools and funded the initial Head Start Program, an early intervention preschool program for economically disadvantaged students (USDOE, 2004). President Johnson stated, “It will offer new hope to tens of thousands of youngsters who need attention before they ever enroll in the first grade” (USDOE, 2004, p. 2)

In 1994, Congress supported Goals 2000 by increasing funding in an effort to support school readiness (Gallagher, Clifford, & Maxwell, 2004). The goals for Early Intervention and Reading were as follows:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn,
2. All students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter,

3. High school graduation rates will increase to at least 90%,
4. U. S. students will be first in the world in science & math, and
5. Every school will promote partnerships with parents (Gallagher, Clifford, & Maxwell, 2004).

However, those goals were not met.

In 1994, the Commonwealth of Virginia established a preschool program for at-risk four-year-olds based upon the recommendations of the Commission on Equity in Public Education to the General Assembly in 1994. The Omnibus Education Act (HB2542) and the Appropriation Act secured the expansion of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). In 2001, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandated that all public school children should be proficient in reading by the end of the 2013-14 school year. According to the U S Department of Education (2001), NCLB reading and early intervention programs are divided into the following areas:

1. *Title I-A*- allows local education agencies (LEA's) to improve preschool programs without non regulatory guidance from US Department of Education;
2. *Early Reading First* - covers early intervention for preschool aged children;
3. *Reading First* - a program that helps support kindergarten through third grade students with phonemic awareness, phonics and fluency;
4. *Reading is Fundamental* - An inexpensive book distribution program, funded to help provide students with books to take home, provides parents with additional home support for reading practice; and
5. *Improving Literacy through Libraries* - A community based program that provides material that promotes the importance of reading is sponsored by the NCLB library initiative. (USDOE, 2004, p.2)

Barnett (2008), researcher for National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University, conducted several studies and completed numerous reports on Early Childhood and preschool programs in America. In one of his reports, *Preschool Education and Its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications*, Barnett (2008) indicated that ten percent of the nation's three and four-year-olds were enrolled in a preschool program in 1960. The findings from this report suggest that ninety percent of children eligible to attend a preschool program did not attend. Less than fifty years later, nearly seventy-five percent of children who were age four enrolled in preschool early learning programs. Fifty percent of children who were

age three also enrolled in a preschool program. Barnett (2008) explains that the growth in preschool attendance was caused by the “achievement gap.” Barnett, Hustedt, Robin, and Schulman (2004) presented significant differences between those students who attended preschool and those who did not.

Current trends in preschool early learning programs in the United States include the following: Pre-K, Kindergarten & Extended Day Kindergarten, and Preschool Children “at risk.” According to the USDOE (2011), all of these programs were developed as a result of the following initiatives that were passed by the federal government: HEAD START, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Title I, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Universal Pre-K, and Full-Day Kindergarten. Barnett (2008) claimed, “These trends have been accompanied by growth in private preschool education and child care, state-funded pre-K, preschool special education, and the federal Head Start program” (p. 3).

Over forty-five years ago, politicians were knowledgeable about the disparity between children from the middle class and children from low socio-economic backgrounds. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson used the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to establish the Head Start program (Kagan, 2002). This program served over 560,000 children across America. The administrations of President Nixon, President Carter and President Reagan supported the Head Start initiative and continued the upward battle toward expanding preschool programs. In 2003, The USDOE described Title 1 preschool as a program that served children under age five who suffered from poverty. In 2004, NCLB forced state educational leaders to be accountable for meeting the needs of all students. This act was instrumental in focusing public attention toward underachieving students in kindergarten and forcing school leaders to attend to the achievement gap. Also, legislation required that children be proficient in reading and math by 2014 (NCLB, 2004). Arne Duncan (2013), United States Secretary of Education, stated that Universal Preschool gives equal access to all three and four year olds in America (Duncan, 2013).

In 2013, President Barack Obama encouraged an increased focus be drawn to the investments in early intervention and high quality preschool programs for all. In his State of the Union address, President Barack Obama stated, "I propose working with states to make high-quality preschool available to every child in America... Let's do what works, and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance" (Obama,

2013, p. 3). Many states agreed to implement President Obama's "Preschool for All" initiatives and volunteered to participate in grant programs like *The Race to the Top Challenge* to support early learning by increasing the number and percentage of enrollment in high quality preschools. Awards for *Race to the Top* participants go to states that are ambitiously leading the way to developing plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive early learning education reform efforts. Forty states participated in the first phase of implementation and more states are seeking to join the early education reform programs (USDOE, 2009).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, and represents good news for our nation's schools. This bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. (USDOE, 2015)

According to the USDOE, ESSA was designed to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to ensure that every child achieves. It also replaced the old NCLB by raising student outcomes and increasing educational opportunities for all, emphasizing actions to achieve high quality preschool in the United States. Although other components of this act address equal access for all students, ESSA includes pre-K, as the NCLB's revision in 2007 did not. (ESSA, 2015)

From the history of preschool's earliest origins to present expansion initiatives, multiple stakeholders debate the benefits and drawbacks of children attending preschool. Federal and state officials, educators, and parents continue to examine the purpose and value of preschool both short and long term. Numerous data explain the importance of sending children to preschool. Expansion of preschool initiatives have taken multiple pathways to help improve school readiness and academic success in a child's educational future. However, current research reveals that many children still are not enrolled. Why are parents choosing not to send their children to preschool? The lack of qualitative data to explore the reasons that parents choose not to send their children to preschool creates a gap in the research. The role of parents is an important factor that could assist in making decisions about future early learning, literacy, and preschool programs (Zivotic, Tanasic, & Mikanovic, 2013). Parents' perceptions and beliefs about preschool, based upon their lived experience and outlined in this study, will provide an understanding of why parents did or did not choose to send their child(ren) to preschool.

Implications of Preschool

According to the California Department of Education (2008) attending preschool provides three and four year olds with greater academic and social success throughout their schooling and adult life. Also in 2008, the USDOE studied the effect of preschool curriculum on children's academic and socio-emotional outcomes in kindergarten (Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium, 2008). This study indicated that the quality of care and academic achievement in preschool programs serve as indicators of learning. However, parent interviews were not listed, and parent perceptions about preschool programs were not explored.

According to Stebbins and Knitzer (2007), "At age 4, poor children are 18 months behind their more affluent peers" (p. 5). This quantitative data indicates that the level of socioeconomic status impacts student achievement in the early years.

To seek causal effects of maintaining positive preschool outcomes, Ramey et al. (2011) conducted a study that evaluated the impact preschool teachers have on the effectiveness of preschool. He and his colleagues discovered that professional development for preschool teachers is essential to ensure that quality instruction takes place in the classroom and to consistently support children's success in school, both academically and behaviorally.

Preschool programs. Risley and Hart (2006) reviewed experimental and quasi-experimental studies about early childhood interventions and identified the following four essential components of quality preschool programs that have lasting benefits for children who attend: a) rate of attendance per week, per day, and per year, b) the timing principle which includes the earliest age of attending preschool and continuing to show more gains, c) the principle of academic language development related to "daily learning experiences that directly alter a child's learning and produce greater effects than those indirect routes that primarily depend on parent education or family supports to change children's development" (p.312), and d) the principal of continuity of educational supports for children who receive educational enrichment prior to entering public school.

Ramey et al., 2004; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Ramey et al., 2009) also replicated numerous studies that aligned to the findings of Risley and Hart (2006). The Ramey et al. (2009) quasi experimental study also found that the longer children attend preschool, the greater the gains children will have in kindergarten.

Tanner (2008) conducted a causal-comparative study, which involved 242 preschool age children, in a rural county in Tennessee. The data revealed that children who attended a private preschool program scored higher on standardized tests than their public preschool counterparts. Five different preschool experiences revealed that students who attended private preschool (87.910) and day care center preschools (85.409) scored the highest. Head Start (83.591) ranked third on the screening, public preschool (75.924) ranked fourth, and home care preschool (64.583) scored the lowest. There was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the following:

1. children who attended private preschool compared to students who attend public preschool,
2. children who stayed at home with their parent or babysitter compared to children who attended public preschool,
3. children who attended private school and children who stayed at home, and
4. children who attended Head Start and children who stayed home.

There was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of children who attended private preschool and children who attended Head Start, or children who attended Head Start and children who attended day care. There was a statistically significant difference between mean scores of females who attended preschool and females who did not. Tanner's findings revealed that children who attended either a public or private preschool program tended to be more academically and socially competent upon their entrance into kindergarten. Although, Tanner's study revealed the benefits of preschool education, he neither interviewed nor conducted focus groups with the participant's parents to discover why they chose to enroll their child(ren) into a preschool program.

According to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Office of Head Start (OHS) (2014), Head Start programs in the state of Virginia employed and contracted 239,000 staff, 24 percent of which were parents of current or former students of Head Start programs. The follow indicators from OHS (2014) provide an overview of staffing requirements and intervention that took place in Head Start preschools of Virginia:

- About 116,000 staff members provided child development services to children, including teachers, assistant teachers, home visitors, and family child care providers.

- Among child development staff, 30 percent were proficient in a language other than English.
- Seventy-one percent of all Head Start center-based preschool teachers had a baccalaureate degree or higher in early childhood education or in a related field with experience. The Head Start Act specifies that 50 percent of center-based preschool teachers nationwide should have had these credentials by 2013. (DHHS, OHS, Fact Sheet, 2014)

In response to these data, Paulsell et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study on Early Head Start preschools that included researchers, administrators, and practitioners. The study was designed “to understand whether these partnerships provide continuity of care; meet families’ needs for child care; and improve outcomes for providers, families, and children” (p. 15). The study found that all stakeholders have an integral part in helping preschool students be successful in school.

School readiness. “School readiness means supporting and protecting the developing brain in such a way that the brain creates a strong physical foundation for learning” (Petersen, 2012, p.10). Leary (2007) suggested that preschool programs can support early learners by providing students with “school readiness” skills needed in order for them to gain equal access to kindergarten curriculum. According to Konerza in 2012, “kindergarten readiness is a complex and multidimensional construct influenced by many early childhood experiences” (p.14). Klein and Knitzer (2007), researchers for the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), found that early childhood is an opportune time to use resources to promote healthy childhood development and school readiness in young children. In an effort to close the achievement gap, renewed emphasis has been placed on preschool programs (Klein & Knitzer, 2007, p. 2) The National Center of Children in Poverty (NCCP) study of early intervention programs indicated that preschool is key to closing the achievement gap (2005). This national set of data revealed that age four children who attend preschool succeed better in kindergarten and 1st grade than those who do not attend preschool. Additionally, this report indicated that preschool had a significant impact on pre-reading and pre-writing development and the growth of phonological skills. However, data from both NCCP reports failed to include why parents decided not to send their children to preschool, nor did the research explore qualitative methods to support interviewing parents about the achievement gap.

Literacy development. Preschool programs tend to focus on the valuable concepts of shared reading and the development of phonological sensitivity and oral language development (Burgess, 2002). Burgess discovered that many students' literacy development starts before kindergarten. Slaby, Loucks and Stelwagon (2005); Dickerson et al. (2006); Hoff (2006); Cunningham (2010); Williford, Downer, and Hamre (2014) agreed that the literacy achievement gap begins before students attend kindergarten and that many reading deficiencies can be prevented in preschool and the early grades. These studies also note that providing children with access to preschool programs positively impacts their literacy development. In addition, the U. S. Department of Health and Human services, along with the Office of Head Start, sought to revamp the academic outcomes from Head Start framework (2010) to include a comprehensive body of research.

According to the Office of Head Start (OHS) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Head Start Resource Center (2015), by 60 months, a child should be able to meet the following literacy expectations:

- Retells or acts out a story that was read, putting events in the appropriate sequence, and demonstrating more sophisticated understanding of how event relate, such as cause and effect relationships.
- Tells fictional or personal stories using a sequence of at least two or three connected events
- Identifies characters and main events in books and stories
- Answers questions about details of a story with increasingly specific information, such as when asked, "Who was Mary?" responds, "She was the girl who was riding the horse and then got hurt."
- Answers increasingly complex inferential questions that require making predictions based on multiple pieces of information from the story, inferring characters' feelings or intentions, or providing evaluations of judgments that are grounded in the text
- Provides a summary of a story highlighting a number of the key ideas in the story and how they relate
- Provides one or more words that rhyme with a single given target, such as "What rhymes with log?" (HHS & OHS, pp. 46-49)

The literacy components listed in the Head Start Framework (2015) were created to outline foundational learning experiences for all young children and prepare them to be ready for school (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2015).

Achievement gap. The economic disparity between children from low socio-economic backgrounds and students from average income families is much greater than that of the racial gaps (US Department of Education, 2004). In 2004, the U.S. Department of Education conducted an Early Childhood Longitudinal Study that identified a 60% school readiness gap between preschool aged children in the highest socioeconomic group and the lowest socioeconomic group before entering kindergarten (Barnett, & Hustedt, 1996; Robin, & Schulman, 2004).

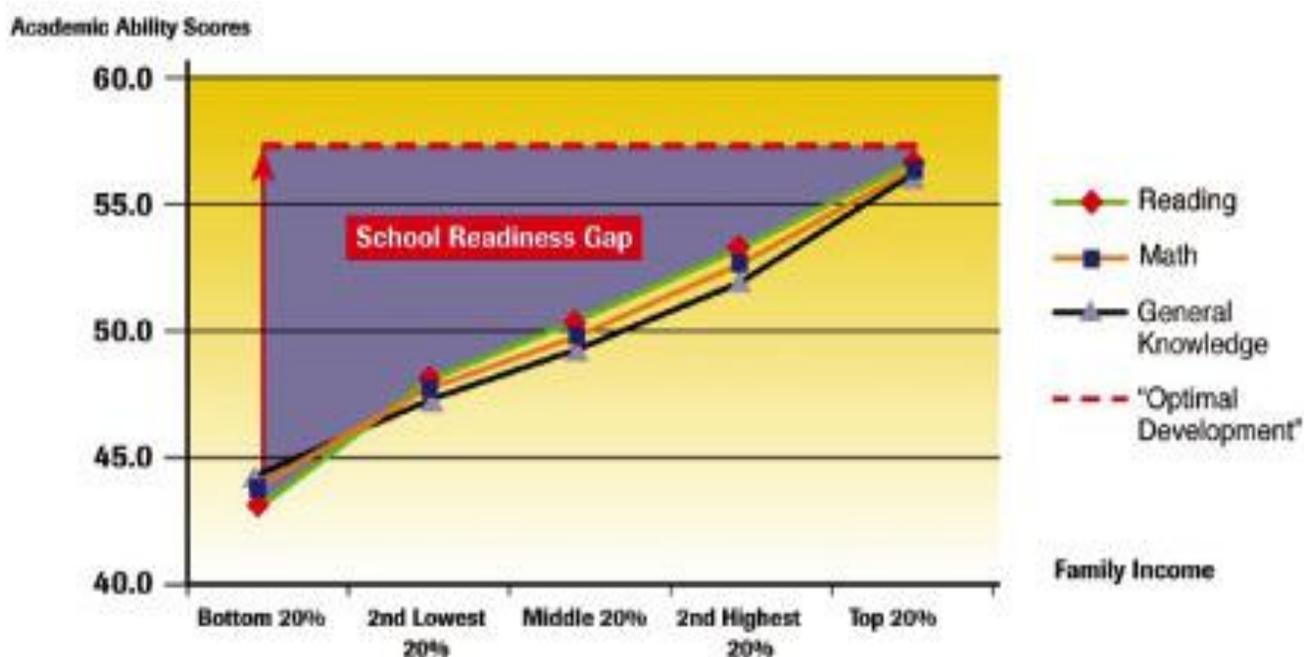


Figure 2. Achievement Gap as Children Begin Kindergarten.

These data indicate that a small number of children who were living in poverty and who attended preschool were ready to learn. Leary (2007) stated, “In order to close the achievement gap that exists when students start kindergarten, at-risk students must be on a level playing field when they begin kindergarten,” (p. 88). Leary (2007) also indicated that early intervention programs, such as preschools, have had lasting results on literacy skills and reading competencies. From this study, though, little is known about how parents feel about the achievement gap and economic disparity between children and their experiences prior to entering

kindergarten. In addition, Hart and Risley (1995) indicated that learning gaps do exist prior to children entering kindergarten. Another “achievement gap” was exposed through their study including preschool aged children, language development, and the disparity among three different socio-economic families. The quality of language in professional families, working-class families, and welfare families was described in a report on *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American* (Hart & Risley, 1995). These results indicated that during a period of one year, the exposure to words among the families and their children showed a discernible difference within the interaction, as measured and compared in minute intervals (Hart & Risley, 1995). Within the professional family, twice as much time was spent communicating with children as opposed to time spent by families living in poverty. According to Hart and Risley (1995), eleven million words were heard in the homes of professional families, six million words were heard in the homes of working-class families, and only three million words were heard in the homes of welfare families (Hart & Risley, 1995). A child residing in a professional family hears approximately five times the number of words that a child residing in a welfare family hears. This report suggested that the amount of dialogue that takes place in preschool programs enhances vocabulary skills and oral language development.

The graph reveals the correlation between vocabulary development and three categories of family interaction. However, more empirical data is needed to uncover parents’ perceptions about preschool and prevention.

Social emotional development. DeMulder and Stribling’s (2012) qualitative case study examined nine parents with low income and their involvement with their child’s preschool program. Data from the study included parents’ perceptions of their child’s social and emotional development in regards to preschool attendance and its impact on the family. Positive outcomes identified the following themes: affiliation, increased self-confidence, development of skills to support self-sufficiency and goal setting, and empowering children through positive parenting. The findings suggested that the effects of children attending preschool improved the family unit by supporting relationships and building positive feelings about self-pride and imagery. According to DeMulder and Stribling (2012), these attributes support a child’s success in school. Although this study found significant themes that revealed parents’ perceptions about how preschool impacts family relationships, little information is known about why these parents chose to send their children to preschool. Additionally, OHS (2015) stated, “Positive social

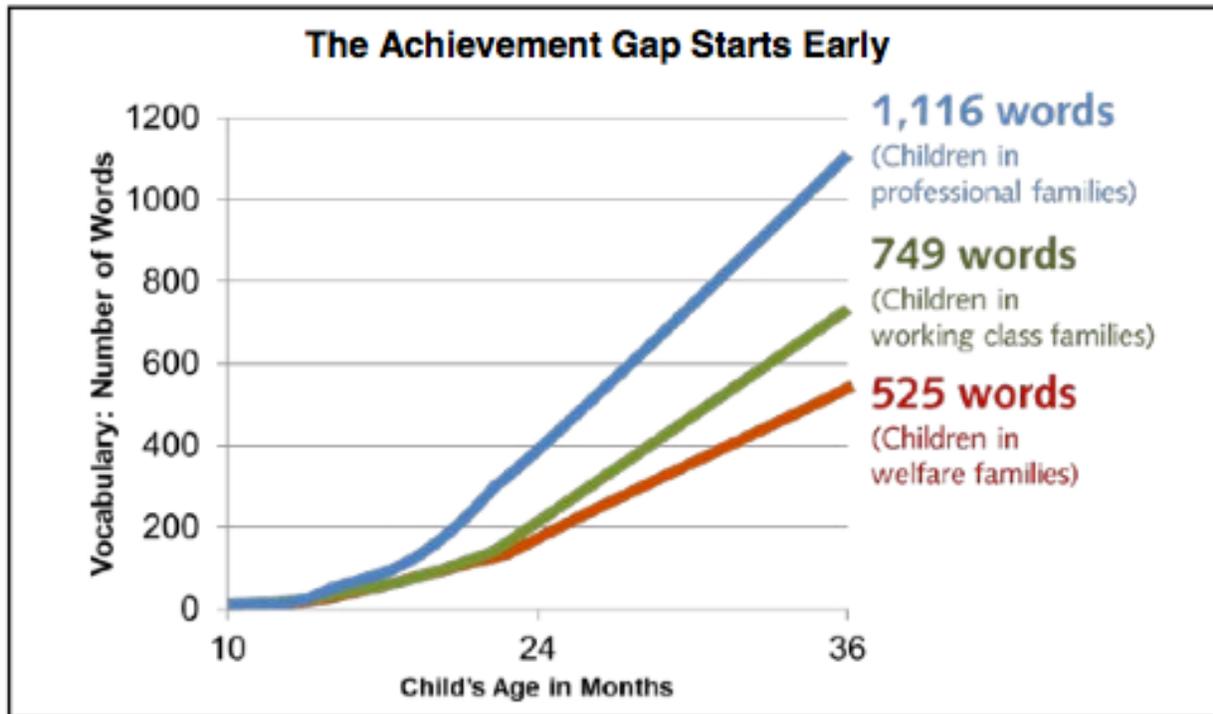


Figure 3. The Achievement Gap Starts Early. Source, (2013). Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young, American Children. Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley. Brookes Publishing, 1995.

and emotional development in the early years provides a critical foundation for lifelong development and learning” (p. 22). Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (2015) outlined the following social emotional indicators that a child who is 60 months or five years of age should have before entering kindergarten:

- **Goal P-SE 1. Child engages in and maintains positive relationships and interactions with adults.**
 - a. Interacts readily with trusted adults.
 - b. Engages in some positive interactions with less familiar adults, such as parent volunteers.
 - c. Shows affection and preference for adults who interact with him or her on a regular basis.
 - d. Seeks help from adults when needed.
- **Goal P-SE 2. Child engages in prosocial and cooperative behavior with adults.**

- a. Engages in prosocial behaviors with adults, such as using respectful language or greetings.
 - b. Attends to an adult when asked.
 - c. Follows adult guidelines and expectations for appropriate behavior.
 - d. Asks or waits for adult permission before doing something when he or she is unsure.
- **Goal P-SE 4. Child engages in cooperative play with other children.**
 - a. Engages in joint play (such as using coordinated goals, planning, roles, and games with rules) with at least one other child at a time.
 - b. Demonstrates willingness to include others' ideas during interactions and play.
 - c. Shows enjoyment of play with other children, such as through verbal exchanges, smiles, and laughter.
 - d. Engages in reflection and conversation about past play experiences.
 - **Goal P-SE 5. Child uses basic problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts with other children.**
 - a. Identifies problems in books or pictures, such as both children wanting the same toy, and during interactions with other children, such as "Why do you think your friend might be sad?"
 - b. Uses basic strategies for dealing with common conflicts, such as sharing, taking turns, and compromising.
 - c. Expresses feelings, needs, and opinions in conflict situations.
 - d. Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts.
 - **Goal P-SE 6. Child expresses a broad range of emotions and recognizes these emotions in self and others.**
 - a. Recognizes and labels basic emotions in books or photographs.
 - b. Uses words to describe own feelings.
 - c. Uses words to describe the feelings of adults or other children
 - **Goal P-SE 7. Child expresses care and concern toward others.**
 - a. Makes empathetic statements to adults or other children.
 - b. Offers support to adults or other children who are distressed.
 - **Goal P-SE 8. Child manages emotions with increasing independence.**

- a. Expresses feelings in ways that are appropriate to the situation.
- b. Looks for adult assistance when feelings are most intense.
- c. Uses a range of coping strategies to manage emotions with the support of an adult, such as using words or taking a deep breath.
- **Goal P-SE 9. Child recognizes self as a unique individual having own abilities, characteristics, emotions, and interests.**
 - a. Describes self using several different characteristics.
 - b. Demonstrates knowledge of uniqueness of self, such as talents, interests, preferences, or culture
- **Goal P-SE 10. Child expresses confidence in own skills and positive feelings about self.**
 - a. Shows satisfaction or seeks acknowledgment when completing a task or solving a problem.
 - b. Expresses own ideas or beliefs in group contexts or in interactions with others.
 - c. Uses positive words to describe self, such as “kind” or “hard-worker.”
- **Goal P-SE 11. Child has sense of belonging to family, community, and other groups.**
 - a. Identifies self as being a part of different groups, such as family, community, culture, faith, or preschool.
 - b. Relates personal stories about being a part of different groups.
 - c. Identifies similarities and differences about self across familiar environments and settings. (p. 23-26)

Thus, social emotional development involves a plethora of skills that support academic development through self-awareness, accountability, and communication with others. All of these characteristics are dependent upon exposure and opportunities to practice these skills in a variety of ways.

Parental involvement. Parental involvement influences positive educational outcomes (Arnold et al., 2008; Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkins, 2010). Additional researchers found that children, from birth to age five, have an essential need for their parents to be a part of their physical, social, emotional, and academic development to help prepare them for kindergarten (Fielding, 2009; Fielding et al., 2004; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006).

Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015), studied the impact of parent involvement in their children's preschool and child care settings on the parent-educator communication and educational activities. This qualitative study provided nationally representative information from parents, children, and educators in Australia in relation to the effectiveness of parental involvement during preschool in comparison to school years. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data. According to Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015), socio-economic status, ethnicity, and home educational activities were predictors of effectiveness of parent involvement and of communication strategies for families with children who attended preschool. They also found that English-speaking families communicated most often with educators, that parental involvement decreased as the child(ren) entered school, and that parents who were more involved in home activities with their children were more involved in their child's preschool education.

Parent Attitudes and Beliefs about Preschool Education

Davis-Kean. P. (2005) found that parents' beliefs and expectations of their children's academic achievement was related to the level of education parents had achieved as well as socio-economic factors. Across the globe, researchers gathered data to determine parents' views and beliefs about preschool. In Turkey, Şahin, Sak, and Şahin (2013) interviewed 35 parents whose children attended private preschool institutions to seek their views about preschool education. Four themes emerged: (a) the importance of preschool, (b) age of preschool, (c) characteristics of preschool institutions, and (d) the expectations of parents. Şahin et al. (2013) concluded that the majority of the parents believed preschool improved their child's social skills and understood the characteristics of preschool programs. They did not find a consistent view of the age at which a child should start preschool. In addition, data from this study suggested that further research is needed to determine parent views about both private and public preschool programs.

Baroody & Diamond's (2011) qualitative study examined the relationship between parent and child characteristics, such as the parents' level of education as it related to children's literacy interest. Parents in this study indicated they wanted their children to succeed in school and to exhibit positive social behaviors. Parents of 61 preschoolers from predominately low-income families who were enrolled in local preschool completed questionnaires reporting their

expectations of preschool. Parents' expectation of their child's achievement in school was significantly correlated with their child's literacy interest. Saçkes et al. (2015) suggested that parental beliefs about children's literacy motivation are associated with their literacy practices at home. A sample of 315 parents of preschool-aged children participated in this qualitative study. The results revealed that parental perceptions of their children's literacy motivation was significantly related to their home literacy practices (Saçkes et al., 2015).

Opposing Views of Preschool Education

Huang et al. (2011) investigated the differential and persistent effects of a state-funded preschool program. The study was conducted to determine whether or not preschool program Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) participants have a differential effect and whether or not the effect persist over time. A longitudinal sample-cohort of over 60,000 students in 1000 schools from the beginning of Kindergarten through the end of 1st grade was included in the study. Two level hierarchical logistical regression models revealed that attending preschool was beneficial. Students who attended preschool had a lower likelihood of repeating kindergarten. The largest benefit of attending preschool was measured in the first half of the school year. However, Huang et al. (2011) also found that “by the end of first grade, the effects’ sizes in all ethnical subgroups were relatively smaller than those measured in the beginning of Kindergarten” (p. 42). This data suggests that over time, the effects of preschool begin to decrease and are not sustained. These researchers used the term “fading out” to label the claim that preschool has no measurable effect on children’s academic performance later on (Magnuson, Ruhn, & Waldfroegel, 2007a). We conclude from both studies that long term effects of preschool appear to dwindle as children grow older. Neither of these reports, however, points to parents’ beliefs regarding the effects of preschool on long-term achievement. Qualitative research has not addressed what parents believe about their child’s academic future as a result of preschool.

Parents Who Did Not Enroll their Children in Preschool

School law does not impose a federal mandate to hold parents accountable for not sending their child(ren) to preschool. Cascio (2009) said that little significant evidence exists to determine long-lasting effects of preschool. Her empirical approach to the study included information from four decennial Censuses collected from the years of 1979 to 2000, an event-

study model that compared the high school drop-out rate of white and black students and the vector which included a series of dummy variables for five year olds in each year the initiative was implemented (p. 8). She concluded that the current preschool programs do not produce gains that are long lasting. Additionally, Cascio (2009) affirmed, “There is little empirical evidence to date of the benefits of early education, particularly over the long term” (p.1). Her study revealed that short-term benefits measured significantly in primary grades.

Kocyigit (2015) conducted a qualitative study that examined parent’s perceptions of preschool in relation to problems with and solutions for preschool programs and family involvement. Her findings revealed that parents’ perceptions of family involvement with preschool activities were affected by time, cost, interaction, transportation, technology, school facilities, security, control, requirement, and participation size. In addition, data from this study indicated that poor child attendance and family participation was caused by the unpleasant interruption of surprise home visits and the negative attitudes of preschool teachers and/or administration. According to Kocyigit (2015), encouraging parents to ask for help, improving parent-teacher-administrator communication, planning for time, and increasing participation were observed as solutions to the problems identified in her study.

Choice Theory

As indicated in Chapter 1, the conceptual framework for this study is based on Glasser's (1998) choice theory. Just as research indicates that parents’ roles and decisions about preschool are critical to the success of their children, understanding the quality world of these parents is also important. When an individual’s quality world is interrupted, Glasser (1998) argued, frustrations and chaos may occur. Choice theory explores the concept of an individual’s quality world, which Glasser (1998) argued is the “reason why [individuals] perceive reality different from others” (p. 44). Glasser (1998) noted that individuals create pictures or beliefs related to the following three categories: (a) who people want to be with, (b) their desire to own and experience things, and (c) ideas or systems of beliefs that govern behavior.

Desire to own or experience things. When children are born, parents immediately take possession of their children and become part of the experiences they choose to explore with their children. When parents are required to share their involvement with preschool programs, Glasser (1998) notes that feelings of invasion and the need to adapt to a new situation may “go

against the basic wants and needs” (p. 51). In a preschool situation, parents must be involved in their child’s education, create a home environment conducive to learning, lose their learned behaviors, and partner with educators to whom they may not want to expose their educational shortfalls. In other words, feelings are perceived emotions that are stimulated by experiences that toggle between needs and wants. Therefore, the experiences of parents and their impact on decisions about preschool attendance add depth to the literature by disclosing why parents desire a preschool program for their child or not.

Beliefs that govern behavior. Glasser (1998) notes that an individual’s belief system governs who and what a person will or will not tolerate in his or her quality world “core of life” (p. 53). According to Glasser (1998), a person is more willing to believe and adapt to a situation when there is established benefit for the individual. Otherwise, the person will reject the belief and abandon any behavior that will interrupt his or her quality world.

Summary

The review of literature began with identifying the historical background of preschool in America and how federal policies and early childhood initiatives have shaped the quality and the expansion of preschool programs over time. The call for examining the benefits of short and long term outcomes of preschool are also enclosed in the literature and reflections from school leaders, educators, government officials, parents, and researchers across diverse disciplines. Next, the literature uncovered the disparity in reading achievement outcomes between children who are at risk of educational failure and those who are less likely to read below grade level. In addition, coverage of national and state reports was included in the literature to explain how achievement gaps exist before students enter kindergarten.

The relationship between attending a preschool program and early literacy development revealed statistically significant implications for students who attend and who do not attend preschool programs. Predictors for future school success were also identified in the literature. Language acquisition, preschool experiences, achievement gaps in reading, and language impact student performance and reveal that early intervention is essential to future student achievement. According to the literature, children who are exposed to pre-reading and pre-writing skills early significantly improve their chances to succeed in school over those who do not. Also, parents’ perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about preschool surfaced in the

literature. The literature review concluded by considering the research that addresses the effects of parent perceptions and experiences on school readiness, social emotional development of children, and parental involvement and briefly described the impact of socioeconomics on parental involvement and language development.

It is clear that early intervention and preschool programs have some impact on student learning based on quantitative studies, longitudinal data, and qualitative research presented in this literature review. Conclusions from the literature determined that there is a relationship between preschool attendance and school readiness, parental involvement and child development, and federal policy and preschool expansion. However, the literature only briefly describes parents' perceptions and decisions about preschool.

The reasons that parents send or do not send their children to preschool were explored through the lived experiences of parents in this study, and the data collected will add to the literature to inform school leaders of new or supporting themes that may help with the advancement of preschool programs and the improvement of parental involvement programs for parents of preschool aged children.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

Presented in this chapter are methodologies and procedures that were used to explore parents' attitudes and beliefs about preschool education. The purpose of my study was to investigate the perceptions of parents who have or have not elected to send their children to preschool and the lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Further, the purpose was to examine the relationship between parent attitudes and beliefs about preschool and determine whether or not their lived experiences contributed to how much or little they value preschool. This qualitative study used the qualitative research design to understand the meaning people have constructed; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). A qualitative research design was selected for this study in order to describe the lived experiences of parents who had or currently have children in a preschool program and how those experiences impacted their decision to send or not to send their children to preschool. Many quantitative studies capture the data of both teacher beliefs about preschool and how the impact of high quality preschool programs predict learning outcomes in children, and these studies exposed the impact that parental involvement has on children attending preschool (Barnett, et al., 2012; Cascio & Schanzenbach, 2013; Gordon, et al., 2015; Kocyigit, 2015). Further research is needed to describe the experiences of parents and how their attitudes and beliefs about preschool impact their decisions to send their children to preschool or not.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study explored the following primary questions:

1. What do parents believe are the values of preschool?
2. Why do parents decide to send their children to preschool?
3. Why do parents decide not to send their children to preschool?
4. What lived experiences do parents indicate contributed to their attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool?

5. Based upon their lived experiences, what intrinsic values do parents reflect upon when enrolling their child in a preschool?

This chapter provides an explanation of the research design, why it was chosen for this study, and a depiction of the participants. In addition, it includes the sampling technique used to select the participants. The role of the researcher is described in the setting for which both the participants and the researcher will exchange data for the study. The data collection is presented along with the plan for data analysis. Validity and reliability of this study is also presented, and ethical issues in relation to this study are discussed.

Research Approach and Design

A qualitative research approach was followed for this study. The theoretical perspective most often associated with qualitative researchers is phenomenology (Bodan & Biklen, 2007). In relation to the methodology of this qualitative study, the research design of phenomenology was selected as an appropriate method of inquiry because this research design emphasizes the exploration of human experience. According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology is “the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience” (p. 26). Therefore, during the data collection process, the researcher conducted an initial interview and follow-up interviews with twelve parents regarding their experiences related to preschool education.

Following the phenomenological approach, the researcher sought to understand meaning in events and in human interactions (Creswell, 2013). This approach required that the researcher attempt to achieve a sense of the meaning that others give to their own situation (Creswell, 2013). The goal of qualitative research is to explore and interpret meaning (Merriam, 2009). A sample is chosen for this design based on the willingness and the proximity of the participants.

Context of the Study

The study took place in a community centrally located in a large urban school district. The participants were solicited from a church population of approximately 1200 that is located in the community. The Amen Church is the pseudonym that is used throughout the study to maintain the confidentiality of the church.

Sixty-two parents responded. Of the parents who reported their willingness to participate in this study, 37 elected to send their child to preschool, while 25 parents elected not to send their child to preschool.

According to Guest (2006), “studies with a high level of homogeneity among the population, a sample size of six interviews may be sufficient to enable the development of meaningful themes and useful interpretations” (p. 78). Therefore, twelve participants were randomly selected from the returned consent forms to interview. The researcher randomly selected six parents who sent their child to preschool and six parents who did not.

Invitation to Participate

Prior to the initial invitation to participate (see Appendix B), the researcher contacted the pastor of a local church located in the central location of an urban school district to gain permission to send survey requests in the weekly bulletin to solicit parent participation. The researcher also asked for permission to place a flyer in the fellowship hall to highlight participation requirements. This church was purposefully selected as the research site for three reasons: (a) participants were accessible because it is in a central location of the school district where the researcher has been employed as a teacher and administrator for over 18 years (b) the school district’s strategic plan included expanding preschool interventions in this community, with aims to close the literacy achievement gap between students who lack school readiness skills when entering kindergarten and those who are prepared to meet kindergarten expectations, thus prompting the need to understand these parents’ perceptions of preschool, and (c) because this was a local community area within the zone that offered preschool, it was appropriate to understand local issues regarding preschool attendance decisions. After permission to conduct research was granted by Virginia Tech Institutional IRB Review Board on December 23, 2015 (approval #15-1202), a letter of invitation was sent in church bulletin and placed on church bulletin board to solicit participants for the study (see Appendix A). The letter provided criteria of participation, explanation of confidentiality and proposed instruments (initial and follow up interviews), and a description of voluntary consent.

Validity

A draft copy of interview questions was reviewed by peers to make sure the interview questions were written to answer the research questions presented in the study. After the peer review was completed, the interview questions were revised as necessary. In addition, the interview questions were formatted in a way that allowed the participant to speak without being confined to “yes or no” statements. The structure of the interviews included the following: protocol, a quiet and secure setting to maintain confidentiality of the participant, and back-up recording devices to eliminate the risk of losing data. The researcher ensured that data collection and data analysis were reliable. Coded responses and questioning were reviewed for consistency, and the member-checking process was used to avoid mistakes during transcriptions (Creswell, 2007). Transcripts and notes from the interviews are stored in a secure, locked filing cabinet in the home office of the researcher for safety and to maintain confidentiality. Transcription data and notes will be destroyed after completion of the dissertation.

Data Collection Procedures

After the dissemination of invitations, the researcher purchased two accordion files, one green for parents who sent their kids to preschool and one blue accordion file for parents who did not send their children to preschool. As the potential participants turned in consent forms, the researcher asked if their children attended preschool and noted their response on the back of the forms. In a private room in the church, the researcher sorted the potential participant consent forms into two groups. The first group was labeled, “Parents who sent their child to preschool.” The second group was labeled, “Parents who did not send their child to preschool.” From each group, the researcher randomly selected six participants to participate from each accordion file; two from the front, two from the middle and two from the back. The selected participants were then contacted via phone and face-to-face to arrange the time and location for both the initial and follow up interviews. An informed consent form was reviewed with each participant prior to conducting the interview to ensure that the participants understood the expectations, minimal risks, and purpose of the study.

Selection of Participants

Purposeful sampling works when individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Participants in this phenomenological study were randomly selected from a group who meet the criteria. Merriam (2009) suggested that good respondents are those who are able to express their feelings, clarify their thoughts, and give insight into their perspectives on the topic being studied. The letter of invitation asked parents to volunteer to be in a study that would explore their perceptions of preschool. Each person who agreed to interview was asked to read and sign an informed consent form prior to participating and assure their complete anonymity (see Appendix C). Participants in this study (a) are at least 18 years of age and (b) have children who attended preschool or (c) have children who did not attend preschool. Twelve parents, six who did enroll their children in preschool and six who did not enroll their children in preschool, were randomly selected from the pool of consent forms that were completed and returned to the researcher.

Further interviews were not conducted because saturation was reached after six interviews. Saturation of that data means that the researcher can stop collected data when noticeable themes, findings, concepts or problems become repetitive (Creswell 2013). All participants agreed, scheduled, and followed through with the initial and follow up interview processes. Interviews were set up two hours apart at the convenience of the participant. The interviews took place in the participant's home. The protocol for the interviews was systematic with each participant (see Appendix D).

Instrumentation

The researcher is often the sole person responsible for data collection in phenomenological research and the design of the instrument that was used to collect the data (Creswell, 2013). The wording or focus of the question determines what is primary in pursuing the topic and what data are collected (Moustakas, 1994). Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested the use of interview forms or conversational guidelines to help keep the "interview focused and on track" (p.147). Qualitative interviewing "explores experiences and uncovers meaningful structures which can be obtained from participants by designing interview questions that are open ended" (Hatch, 2002, p. 86). According to Weiss (1994), "interviewing is an especially

important means for data collection because interviewing gives us a window to the past” (p. 1). Therefore, both initial and follow-up interviews were conducted for this study.

The interview questions that the researcher designed were based on the research questions, related to the conceptual framework, and aligned with the review of the research literature for this study. The purpose of the questions was to uncover parents’ attitudes and beliefs about preschool through the exploration of their experiences and decisions to send or not to send their children to preschool. A copy of the interview questions has been peer-reviewed and confirmed for having clarity to insure that the instrumentation was reliable. (see Appendix E).

The interview began by asking participants to state their age, ages of children, and name of school district their children are zoned to attend. The school district was not used in the research but was identified so that the researcher could compare and look for similarities and/or differences in the experiences and perceptions of parents from different school districts. All interviews were recorded using a digital and a back-up digital recorder. All dialogues were transcribed into a written document.

Initial Interview

The initial interview began with the background questions related to the participant’s demographics of the family. Nine of the initial interviews took place as scheduled. Three of the initial interviews had to be rescheduled due to the participant’s personal emergency. The time span of the initial interviews varied from 30 minutes to 1.5 hours. Next, the researcher asked descriptive questions that had been designed to encourage participants to provide detailed information about their experiences. Participants were asked 10 open-ended questions regarding their attitudes and beliefs towards preschool and reflections of how those lived experiences formed their attitudes and beliefs about their children attending preschool. Open-ended questions were asked by the researcher in order to allow the participant to expand on his or her responses. Also, these questions allowed the researcher to gather information that described the parents’ understanding of the phenomenon of preschool. Then, the researcher asked questions that explored how the participants’ experiences formed their attitudes and beliefs about preschool. All interview questions and responses were recorded using an audio device, backed up on flash drive, and transcribed. The researcher kept a reflective journal to write notes after

each interview. After completing the initial interview, participants were asked to schedule their follow-up interview within the following two weeks.

Follow Up Interview

The purpose of the follow-up interviews was to allow participants the opportunity to ask any additional questions related to the study, as well as to disclose any additional information that would support the study. Questions for the follow-up interview allowed the participants to share additional information regarding their personal experiences with preschool education and the opportunity to confer any changes in their reflections about preschool (see Appendix F). The time span of these interviews ranged from 10 to 20 minutes. The follow-up questions were recorded and transcribed into a written document in the participants' "own words." Participants reviewed the transcriptions as a step in the member-checking process.

Coding of the Data

Field notes and transcripts were kept confidential, protected on a flash drive that was encrypted and password protected, and stored on an audio recording device. Each transcription included the interview using ten initial interview questions, three follow-up interview questions that followed the interview protocol, and written field notes that were taken during and after the interviews. Interviews were audio taped, and then transcribed resulting in 1167 lines of text. All of the interviews were transcribed and assigned a continuous line number for reference. The line numbers for each quotation that is directly cited or referenced can be located in the transcription using that line number and the first letter and number of the participant's pseudonym. The researcher coded each line in the transcriptions. A coding system is provided for direct quotes from a participant and used when summary comments from the 12 participants are included. The code for data retrieved from the interview transcript includes a capital P indicating the participant, a capital S noting that the parent sent his or her child to preschool or a capital D noting that the parent did not send his or her child to preschool, and the four-digit number identifying the participant's pseudonym. Next, the code includes the line number in the transcribed text. For example, the transcription code (PS0004, ln23), or (PD0007, ln323) indicates that the data was cited using the transcription.

Data Analysis

The interview questions served as the primary source for interpreting and analyzing data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a member-check is one trustworthiness technique the researcher may use to ensure that data collected during a qualitative study is reliable. Member-checks occur when the “the final report or specific description or themes” are given back to the participants for review (Creswell, 2009, p. 191).

Each participant had the opportunity to review his or her transcribed interview for accuracy before the researcher began to analyze the data. This procedure provided the researcher the immediate opportunity to reflect and make necessary corrections and ensure that the participant’s words on the tape and transcript captured exactly what the participant wanted to convey to the researcher. Member-checking forms (see Appendix G) were completed by the participant before the researcher analyzed the data from the transcriptions.

During the data analysis phase, the researcher used a modification of the van Kaam method of analysis recommended by Moustakas (1994) for phenomenological data. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher placed aside her own personal judgments and preconceptions about preschool, using a process described by Moustakas (1994) as bracketing, which would “assist in the development of universal structures based on what people experience and how” (p.34). Using this method, the researcher described personal experiences. The researcher also identified and listed every significant statement relevant to the topic and gave them equal value, known as horizontalization. According to Seidmann (2006) a more conventional way of presenting and analyzing interview data is to organize excerpts from the transcripts into categories. Therefore, the researcher searched for linking threads and patterns.

The significant statements from the participants were clustered and organized into meaningful units and themes. Next, the researcher described the themes in forms that were both textural and structural. Finally, the researcher constructed a combined description of the meanings and the cruxes of the experiences.

Timeline for Completion

Once IRB approval was received, interviews were scheduled within two weeks. In order to concentrate on the interview process and the data collected; the researcher completed the interviews within a two-week period. The goal was to have all interviews and follow-up

interviews completed during the end of the fall break of 2015. The results, analysis, findings, and recommendations (chapters four and five) were completed by early spring 2016 semester. The goal was to have the final defense completed during the spring semester of 2016.

Methodology Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify the perceptions of parents regarding the value of preschool and factors that influence their decision to send or not to send their children to preschool. According to the current compulsory laws in America, parents have the choice to decide whether or not they should send their child(ren) to preschool because in many states, it is not mandatory for children to attend any school until they are five years of age (NCES, 2015). The goal for preschool programs is to help foster school readiness and expose children to social and academic development (USDOE, 2015). Parents' perceptions can be a valuable conduit for change (McEwan, 1998). Parents' perceptions of what preschool is or is not will inform educators and government officials about ways to support parental involvement prior to their children entering kindergarten and provide insight about why so many preschool aged children are currently not attending preschool.

The first phase of data collection began with the selection of participants who met the criteria to participate in this study. Data collected from initial interviews included answers to open-ended questions which addressed a description of parents' lived experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about preschool. The second phase of the data collection included follow-up interviews, which involved asking the participant three questions. The final stage of data collection provided participants with an opportunity to review the transcripts of their own words to verify accuracy and consistency through the "member-checking" process.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to investigate the perceptions of parents who have or have not elected to send their children to preschool and the lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Further, the purpose was to examine the relationship between parent attitudes and beliefs about preschool and determine whether or not their lived experiences contributed to what they perceived as the values of preschool. In exploring the lived experiences of parents with preschool aged children, five research questions were posed:

1. What do parents believe are the values of preschool?
2. Why do parents decide to send their children to preschool?
3. Why do parents decide not to send their children to preschool?
4. What lived experiences do parents indicate contributed to their attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool?
5. Based upon their lived experiences, what intrinsic values do parents reflect upon when enrolling their child in a preschool?

The data in relation to these research questions were collected by conducting initial and follow-up interviews. Results of the phenomenological analysis of the participant interviews are reflected in this chapter. As noted by Gray (2014), there are several advantages to phenomenological research and data collection. Those advantages include (a) thematic characteristics allow new information to emerge from more than one research question, (b) the interviewee is not confined to narrow answers, (c) and individual perceptions, beliefs, and lived experiences can be analyzed in more than one context.

The lived experiences of parents become prominent in the context of this study because these experiences provide an understanding of what factors impact the decisions parents make about sending or not sending their child to preschool.

Explanation of Data Findings

The Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam's method of phenomenological analysis was

utilized which included the following: (a) listing and grouping, (b) reduction and elimination, (c) clustering and thermalizing, and (d) final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application. The researcher used transcribed interview data to list the participants' responses relevant to the experience of parents and their perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about preschool. As recommended by Moustakas, each response statement was tested for two requirements:

- (a) "Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?"
- (b) Is it possible to abstract and label it?" (p. 121).

Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions for Interview Data

This section presents a summarized description of parents' attitudes and beliefs about preschool and how their lived experiences impacted their attitudes and beliefs towards preschool attendance. Individual textural and structural descriptions provide the fundamental depictions for each participant's perceptions in relation to the thematic categories that arise throughout the analysis of the participant interviews. The data are organized by participant.

Parent 0001 (PS0001). PS0001 is a Caucasian female, 25-year-old single parent, who struggled in school most of her life. She did not go to preschool but was sure to send her daughter to preschool at age three. PS0001 reported that she did not want her daughter to "be like her momma" (PS0001, ln61). PS0001's personal life experience caused feelings of disappointment and embarrassment because she had such a hard time when she first started school (PS0001, ln52-52). PS0001's mother could not afford to send her to preschool because there was a lack of money in the home, lack of transportation, lack of parental education, and no time for her to work with her children at home. She blamed her mother for not allowing her to attend preschool. PS0001 felt she was inadequate when trying to teach educational things to her daughter (PS0001, ln37-38). PS0001 praised the idea of sending her daughter to preschool and feels that sending her was the only reason she became successful in kindergarten (PS0001, ln60-63).

Parent 0002 (PS0002). PS0002 is an African-American female, a 36-year-old registered nurse, a single parent, and a very involved mother who "applauds children attending preschool" (PS0002, ln490). She feels that the parent "is the first teacher" and should support learning at

home and in the school (PS0002, ln97-98). She encourages parents to get involved and be visible to help build trusting relationships. PS0002 reports that she had an excellent preschool experience and wanted her son to gain socialization skills and learn in preschool the way she did. She reported that teachers were very positive and helpful but some were not prepared (PS0002, ln105-106). Her disappointment with the instructional delivery from a few instructors and influence from other parents motivated her to support his needs, as well (PS0002, ln94-95). PS0002's son was "very successful in kindergarten, reading on a second grade level, and doing fractions" (PS0002, ln105-107).

Parent 0003 (PS0003). PS0003 is an African-American female, 32-year-old parent, who is married, and who attended preschool. She reported "having fond memories of preschool" and that she "wanted the same for her two children" (PS0003, ln236-238). PS0003 spoke about "remembering the name of her preschool teacher because she was so kind" (PS0003, ln230-231). Also, she stated, "Preschool is definitely needed because it socializes the child" (PS0003, ln161-162).

Parent 0004 (PS0004). PS0004 is a Bi-racial American female, a 40-year-old mother of three children, and a substitute teacher assistant at a middle school. She was age 33 when her first child started preschool. Although PS0004 did not attend preschool, she reported that her children attended and were successful (PS0004, ln276). PS0004 indicated that she believes "preschool is a good thing for kids" (PS0004, ln260-261). She also indicated that parents should be involved with their child's learning, and parents should praise their children and nurture what their kids are interested in (PS0004, ln286-287). PS0004 also stated that preschool is good for socialization (PS0004, ln269).

Parent 0005 (PS0005). PS0005 is an African-American female, a 38-year-old divorced mother of two children, who attended preschool. She indicated that she worked as a teacher in a Head Start preschool for several years. PS0005 reported that because one of her children was sick a lot, she taught "preschool at home," for a while (PS0005, ln308-310). In addition, PS0005 defined preschool as "foundational, nurturing, and the most important part of a child's life" (PS0005, ln303, 307). She indicated that a "Head Start preschool is good for impoverished students" and "for those parents who can't afford to send their child to a private preschool." PS0005 also stated, "Preschool helps nurture those elements that may be missing in a child's life" (PS0005, ln338-339).

Parent 0006 (PS0006). PS0006 is a married African-American female, a 28-year-old mother who reported that she was an assistant in kindergarten more than seven years. PS0006 did not attend preschool but stated that her mother, who was a homemaker, had “play school” at home (PS0006, ln360). Also, PS0006 indicated that she was very pleased with the outcome of preschool for both of her children and stated that they both had an “awesome kindergarten experience” (PS0006, ln397-398).

Parent 0007 (PD0007). PD0007 is a 37-year-old African-American male single father, who did not attend preschool longer than three weeks. His son did not attend preschool at all. He works from home as a computer engineer. PD0007 indicated that his son outperformed all of the kids in his kindergarten class. He reported that he learned all the basic skills before ever going to school and never really saw preschool as necessary (PD0007, ln443-446). In his opinion, parents should educate their child, first. PD0007 stated that preschool should be “offered to the kids whose parents don’t have the time to spend with their child to acclimate them to school” (PD0007, ln458-459). Also, PD0007 defined “school” as a “tool and not a place” (PD0007, ln981).

Parent 0008 (PD0008). PD0008 is a married 40-year-old African-American male, Captain in the military, who chose not to send his child to preschool. His wife is a homemaker and supports the learning at home when he is absent. He indicated that he does not believe that preschool is necessary (PD0008, ln490). In addition, PD0008 stated, “Preschool is redundant” (PD0008, ln491). His perception is that going to preschool creates problems when children learn the same thing in preschool and the same thing in kindergarten (PD0008, ln491-492). PD0008 indicated that teaching children how to focus, pay attention, and interact with others were key elements (PD0008, ln503-504). He also believed that parents should be responsible for preparing their children for elementary school (PD0008, ln480-482). PD0008 did not go to preschool and was taught at home primarily by his mother; he was very successful throughout his educational career and his child performed well above peers his age (PD0008, ln509-514).

Parent 0009 (PD0009). PD0009 is an African American female, married 28-year-old mother who did not attend preschool. She stated, “Preschool is optional because some families, like my own can do a good job instructing at home” (PD0009, ln526-527). For this reason, PD0009 decided not to send her child to preschool. However, PD0009 indicated that “preschool could benefit those children who don’t have exposure or family support” (PD0009, ln551-552).

Also, PD0009 reported that “some children become really sick while attending preschool centers and my children were much healthier, having not attended” (PD0009, ln560).

Parent 0010 (PD0010). PD0010 is an African American married female, 30 years old, who attended preschool for three weeks. PD0010 shared her memories of crying because she did not want to go to preschool and told her mother, “All they do is play and color but I want learn” (PD0010, ln606). PD0010 reported that her mother took her out of preschool because she felt that the teachers were not teaching enough (PD0010, ln607). Also, PD0010 indicated that she did not send her daughter to preschool because she believed, “Preschool was not necessary. It’s a babysitting service” (PD0010, ln605). PD0010 stated, “Parents and the family are responsible for teaching things that your particular child needs” (PD0010, ln617-618).

Parent 0011 (PD0011). PD0011 is an African-American female, a married 35-year-old mother, who did not attend preschool. She defined a child’s preschool years as being “the most important years of a child’s education” (PD0011, ln646-647). PD0011 indicated that her son was very prepared for kindergarten because she “taught him all of the basic sounds, numbers, colors and everything” (PD0011, ln695). PD0011 also reported that she did not send her son to preschool because she did not believe that preschool teachers were equipped to teach the children. She believed that “preschool teachers only have a high school diploma or something equivalent and don’t have a drive to go to college and learn more” (PD0011, ln654-655). Although PD0011 reported that she believed preschool was good for “learning social skills,” she reported that preschool had been “unsuccessful for some kids whose teachers sweep things under the rug and don’t know how to address behavior problems” (PD0011, ln665-666). PD0011 also reported that in a preschool center near her job, she learned that “some children who were attending were teachers’ kids or friends of staff members’ kids who enrolled students in the preschool” (PD0011, ln684). She indicated her awareness of the requirements in order to be accepted in the preschool but in her opinion, “the children attending were not the ones who really needed to be there” (PD0011, ln683).

Parent 0012 (PD0012). PD0012 is an African American male, a 32-year-old married father, who did not attend preschool. Although he did not send his daughter to preschool, PD0012 defined preschool as “a place where children get ready for school” (PD0012, ln755). He indicated that he spent time teaching his child the basic skills and was excited about her success in kindergarten. PD0012 did not send his daughter to preschool because he believed that

“preschool was repetitive and redundant” (PD0012, ln780). He stated, “I was successful without it so I didn’t see the need to send her” (PD0012, ln761). PD0012 shared the story of his mother and father teaching him at home and not sending him to preschool. He indicated that because of the success he had with his parents, he “just makes sure that he and his wife do the same things” (PD0012, ln767-771). In addition, PD0012 stated, “You can’t depend on the schools to do the work for you. That’s our job. The school just adds to what we do” (PD0012, ln1164-1166).

Composite Textural-Structural Descriptions

According to Moustakas’ (1994) modified van Kaam procedure, composite descriptions create the last level of representation of the data. When the findings of the textural structural descriptions are condensed into themes that mirror the participants lived experiences, composite textural-structural descriptions are developed. These descriptions are raised in order to summarize the lived experiences of the participants, using data from the participant’s initial and follow-up interview transcriptions.

The initial interview questions included the following:

1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?
2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?
3. Based upon your experiences, do you feel that preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?
4. What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten?
5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?
6. To what extent do you feel preschool has been successful and why?
7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child’s academic and social development during their preschool years?
8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?
9. What do you believe are the key elements to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?
10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their

attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?

The follow up questions included the following (F1, F2, F3):

1. Since our last interview, have any of your perceptions about preschool changed?
2. Based upon your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to a preschool program?
3. Is there anything else you would like to ask me?

These interview questions applied to more than one research question, so the responses may be repeated in more than one research question area, or shared as they apply to a research question.

Research Question 1: What do parents believe are the values of preschool? To respond to this research question, participants were asked:

- Based on your experience, how do you define preschool?
- What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten?
- To what extent has preschool been successful and why?
- What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?
- How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?
- What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?

Table 1

Participants' Comments on the Value of Preschool

Participants	1. Based on your experience, how do you define preschool?	4. What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten	6. To what extent do you feel preschool has been successful and why?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social behaviors?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?
PS0001	"In preschool, I think children tend to learn a lot...count, ABC's, talk to other children" (ln9-10)	"Parents don't really need to do much...I think the teachers do a wonderful job!" (ln25)	"If children don't go to preschool, how will they have the 'know how' with basic things they need to learn?" (ln41-42)	"I talk to her when she comes home" (ln47)	"If I would have gone to college...I would have been smarter... wouldn't have had a hard time... feel better" (ln50-54)	"Talk to the teacher, find out what you can do at home" (ln57)
PS0002	"Prepares them for kindergarten... learn to read, to write...basic reading comprehension and sounds (ln84-86) "Helps them make a smooth transition to elementary school (ln86)	"I say 110 percent" (ln97)	"It made the transition easier and he felt confident" (ln119)	"He developed health friendships with the students in preschool" (Ln124)		

(continued)

Table 1 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based on your experience, how do you define preschool?	4. What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten	6. To what extent do you feel preschool has been successful and why?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social behaviors?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?
PS0003	<p>“Preschool socializes the child” (ln163)</p> <p>“Preschool plays a role in learning... in educating the kids” (ln193,194-195)</p>	<p>“exposure to different things” (ln100-101)</p> <p>“ I think parents have to be very active” (ln190)</p>	<p>“there were no challenges as he entered school...he understood the process” (ln116-117) and “It made the transition easier (ln119)” “teacher gave me chart paper to help my son practice writing things on a chart at home because he struggled with writing in class” (ln171-172).”</p>	<p>“From preschool he has been a social butterfly” (ln222-223)</p>	<p>“I can remember that I was very happy” (ln234)</p>	<p>“Gave her confidence and a boost” (ln206-207)</p>
PS0004	<p>“It is a good thing for kids to get them ready for school” (ln260-261)</p>	<p>“Parents should be involved... helping children meet those around their same age...” (ln269-270)</p>	<p>“fearful” (ln270)</p> <p>“Nervous” (ln283)</p>	<p>“Learning both is so important” (ln280)</p>	<p>“Fun...excited” (ln281)</p>	<p>“be focused and being a keen listener in preschool is so important when the teacher gives instruction” (ln286-287)</p>

(continued)

Table 1 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based on your experience, how do you define preschool?	4. What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten	6. To what extent do you feel preschool has been successful and why?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social behaviors?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?
PS0005	"I define it as preparing kids to understand the foundation of education" (ln303-304)	"Support from parents and community support so it's like a full circle of support needed" (ln318-319)		"Exposure to different cultural experiences with others...different things" (ln329)		"Give them what they are missing in their family life like social and emotional skills" (ln339-340)
PD0007	"A place where kids go to school before they go to regular school" (Ln409-410)	"Preschool should be a place where [they] interact or socialize with strange children" (ln421-422)		"How to get along with people and behave" (ln441)		"Communicating" (ln451)
PD0008	"It or 1 st grade." (ln470)			"I was very involved in his social development" (ln494-495)	"big school" (ln236 and ln391)	"prepares children for the academics" (ln507)

(continued)

Table 1 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based on your experience, how do you define preschool?	4. What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten	6. To what extent do you feel preschool has been successful and why?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social behaviors?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?
PD0009	<p>“They get exposure to school life before going, if parents don't have time to teach them at home.” (ln525-526)</p> <p>“It's optional for some families like my own, can do a good job instructing from home.” (ln526-527)</p>			<p>“It may help them learn how to share get along with others” (ln546-547)</p> <p>“I teach them how to speak to others” (ln555)</p>		<p>“Communicating with your child verbally” (ln571)</p>
PD0010	<p>“Preschool is supposed to prepare kids for elementary school.” (ln601-602)</p>			<p>“Family, grandparents, aunts and uncles have given her the tools to interact with others and to learn more...”(ln626-627)</p>		<p>“Having play groups with other children” (ln631)</p>
PD0011	<p>“Preschool is most important for a child's social development” (ln646-647)</p>			<p>“We are very involved with helping him meet these goals” (ln677)</p>		<p>“Play with other children” (ln685)</p>

(continued)

Table 1 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based on your experience, how do you define preschool?	4. What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten	6. To what extent do you feel preschool has been successful and why?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social behaviors?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?
PD0012	"I guess it helps get a child ready for school" (ln708-709)	"knowing how to act when they go to school" (ln718)	"only good for socialization...the parents who don't have time to put into their kid's education" (ln727-729)	"It's me and my wife's responsibility to teach him how to socialize..." (ln730-731)		

In the participants' responses to the interview questions associated with Research Question 1, they talked about their child's social emotional development and their child's preparedness for school. The data gathered from the interview question related to this research question will be presented within those two broad areas.

Social emotional development. PS0002, PS0003, and PS0006 agreed that preschool helps children build "healthy friendships" (PS0002, ln124), "socializes the child" (PS0003, ln163), and helps students "enjoy being around other children" (PS0006, ln394), while PD0008, PD0009, and PD0012 felt that parents could teach of these skills (PD0008, ln494, PD0009, ln555, PD0012, ln730). Participants PS0001, PS0002, PS0003, PS0004, PS0005, PS0006, PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011, and PD0012 believed that socialization was a big part of preschool, although some of these participants did not send their children to preschool.

Also, PS0003 named her child the "social butterfly" (ln223) because the child didn't begin to speak until he attended preschool (PS0003, ln223). PS0001, PS0004, PS0006, PD0007, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011, PD0012 noted the importance of being able to communicate with other preschool children their age. PD0012 felt that preschool was "only good for socialization" (ln727-728), but made note that it would be good otherwise for "the parents who don't have time to put into their kid's education" (PD0012, ln728-729). In addition, PS0004, valued the listening practice children are provided in a preschool when they are given directions to follow (PS0004, ln276-277). PS0002 and PS0003 noted that their children gained a boost of confidence, and

PS0001, PS0004 and PS0006 agreed that it was important for children to feel good about themselves. PS0003, PS0004, PS0005 and PS0006 spoke about the value of developing positive emotions or “happy” (PS0003, ln234) feelings towards preschool and preschool teachers because they leave good impressions on the children. PS0003 stated that she could still remember her childhood preschool teacher and remembers the joy she felt while going to school (PS0003, ln231-236). PS0003, PS0004, and PS0006 also stated that preschool helped decrease negative emotions of being “nervous” (PS 0004, ln283) or “fearful” (PS0004, ln270) about going to the “big school” (PS0003, ln236 and PS0006, ln391) or elementary school. Again, PS0003, PS0004, and PS0006 attributed the decrease in children’s negative emotions about preschool to the exposure of attending a preschool environment (PD0003, ln234, PD0004, ln281, PD0006, ln394). PS0006 stated, “My children were excited to go to school” (PS0006, ln382). Table 2 below presents a summary of the data about participants’ views on social emotional development as a value of preschool.

Table 2

Social Emotional Development as a Value of Preschool

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Get along/socialize/communicate with others	12	100%
Develop positive emotions about school	9	75%
Exposure helps ease feelings about transitions to kindergarten	7*	58%

*6 of the 7 responses were from those parents who sent their children to preschool

Preparedness for kindergarten. PS0001, PS0002, PS0003, PS0004, PS0005, and PS0006, who sent their children to preschool, agreed that being prepared academically for kindergarten is the most important value of preschool (PS0001, ln41-42, PS0002, ln84-86, PS0003, ln193, PS0004, ln260, PS0005, ln303, PS0006, ln393). PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD10, and PD0011 contended that preparing children academically for kindergarten is valued, but preparing children socially and emotionally for kindergarten was as important as the

academics. For instance, PS0002 stated that preschool “prepares them for kindergarten... learn to read, to write...basic reading comprehension and sounds” (PS0002, ln84-86). PD0007 stated, “Preschool should be a place where [they] interact or socialize with strange children” (PD0007, ln421-422). Also, PD0011 stated, “Preschool is most important for a child’s social development” (PD0011, ln646-647). PS0006, PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, and PD0012, who did not send their children to preschool, agreed that knowing how to act when they go to school (PD0006, ln394 PD0007, ln441, PD0008, ln507, PD0009, ln446, PD0010, ln525, PD0012, ln718), and learning “how to share and get along with others” (PD0009, ln546-547) were important values of preschool which “prepares children for the academics” (PD0008, ln507). PS0001, PS0002, and PS0003 noted that preschool valued children being able to transition from preschool to kindergarten with the appropriate skills. PD0001 stated, “In preschool, I think children tend to learn a lot for kindergarten. They learn how to count, do their ABC’s, talk to other children (PD0001, ln9-10). PS0002 indicated that preschool “helps them make a smooth transition to elementary school” (PS0002, ln86). PS0003 stated, “there were no challenges as he entered school...he understood the process” (PS0003ln116-117) and “it made the transition easier” (PS0003, ln119). PS0003, PS0005, and PS0006 valued the opportunity to expose children to “new” (PS0006, ln90) and “different things” (PS0003, ln101, PS0005, ln329). PD0008 noted that preschool “prepares some children to go to school before transitioning smoothly to kindergarten” (PD0008, ln470). PD0009 indicated that preschool offers “exposure to school life” (PD0009, ln525). PS0006 stated that preschool taught her children what tools to use when transitioning from preschool to kindergarten, like “how to hold a pencil and cut with scissors” (PS0006, ln395). PS0001, PS0003, PS0005, PS0006, who sent their children to preschool valued the provisions from and the partnerships they gained from preschool teachers to help them support their child’s learning at home (PS0001 noted that parents should, “Talk to the teacher, find out what you can do at home” (PS0001, ln57). PS0003 stated that her son’s “teacher gave me chart paper to help my son practice writing things on a chart at home because he struggled with writing in class” (PS0003, ln171-172). PS0003 valued the “partnership with the preschool teacher at the preschool because she identified strengths and weaknesses of my son so I could better prepare him at home” (PS0003, ln193-194). PD0005 mentioned that “it takes support from parents and community, so it’s like a full circle of support needed” (PS0005, ln318-319). PS0006 stated, “Preschool teachers help us as parents help our kids” (PS0006, ln371).

PD0007, PD0008, PD0011, and PD0012 agreed that preparation for kindergarten was a value of preschool but that parents should prepare their own children for kindergarten at home. PS0001, PS0002, PS0003, PS0004, PS0005, PS0006, PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011, PD0012 agreed that parental support is essential to preparing children for kindergarten. Table 3 below presents a summary of the data about participants' views on preparation for kindergarten as a value of preschool.

Table 3

Preparation for Kindergarten as a Value of Preschool

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Prepares children for academics	12	100%
Teaches children how to behave	7*	58%
Prepares kids to transition	8**	66%
Parental Involvement in their child's preparation for school	12	100%

*5 of the 7 responses were from those parents who did not send their children to preschool.

**6 of the 8 responses were from those parents who sent their children to preschool.

Research Question 2 asked, why do parents send their children to preschool? In response to research question 2, participants were asked:

- Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?
- What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?
- Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?
- How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?
- What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?
- Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?

Table 4

Participants' Comments on Why Parents Send their Children to Preschool

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged parent?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of these experiences?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?	F2. Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PS0001	<p>“In preschool, I think children tend to learn a lot...count, ABC’s, talk to other children” (ln9-10)</p> <p>“really good experience” (ln11)”</p>			<p>“I have to work.” (ln480)</p> <p>... “My baby went to Head start..., I wouldn’t have had such a hard time...like when I started school...”</p> <p>“...with assistance my child will get a quality education and be able to find a good job...” (ln50-54)</p>		<p>“I would say they should do that because it really helps their children” (ln817-818)</p>

(continued)

Table 4 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged parent?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of these experiences?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?	F2. Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PS0002	“Helps them to read, to write, some basic reading comprehension” (ln85)					“For the parent who doesn’t send their child... I would say for the parent who decides to send their child I’d say Bravo!” (ln845)
PS0003	“Preschool socializes the child” (ln163) “Preschools play a role in learning... in educating the kids” (ln193,194-195)	“Teach what is to come like your ABC’s and your numbers” (ln192)	“Taught him to read on a second grade level,...two foreign languages...doing fractions... when he attended preschool” (ln106-108)			“I would absolutely tell parents to send them to preschool”... (ln 865-869)

(continued)

Table 4 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged parent?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of these experiences?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?	F2. Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PS0004	“I think it is a good thing for the kids...” (ln260)					“They should send their child to preschool... be involved. Go to the meetings... find out what the child is going to learn about...read to the child every night” “Programs like head start helped me when I couldn’t afford to send my children to private school” (ln892-896)

(continued)

Table 4 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged parent?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of these experiences?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?	F2. Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PS0005	"I define it as preparing kids to understand the foundation of education" (ln303-304)		"State agency help"			"...They should send their child to preschool ...because they will learn...and be around other children..." (ln 918-925)
PS0006	"Preschool is a place where children learn to talk, how to sit, how to act and learn before kindergarten." (ln359-360)			"I think preschool is a wonderful thing." (ln388) "I applaud preschool... It allows children to explore new things and things that are interesting them..." (ln388-390)	"...preschool... teach correct speech literacy, sight words, sounds... how to enjoy being around other children... Be open to new people new things...how to how to hold a pencil and cut with scissors" (ln393-395)	"...how valuable..." (ln942-946)

(table continued)

Table 4 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged parent?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of these experiences?	8. How have these experiences played a role in your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?	F2. Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PS0007	“A place where kids go to school before they go to regular school” (Ln409-410)					“If you really don’t have the time to spend with your child to acclimate them to school then I think it would be a good suggestion” (ln973-975)

(continued)

Table 4 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged parent?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of these experiences?	8. How have these experiences played a role in your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?	F2. Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PD0008	<p>“Preschool is preparatory for school” (ln469).</p> <p>“It prepares a child for before kindergarten and first grade so... I would say it was pre-kindergarten where you would be able to get foundational skills...basic counting and the beginning of his ABC’s but basically preparing them for 1st grade (PD0008, ln470-471).”</p>					

(continued)

Table 4 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged parent?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of these experiences?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?	F2. Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PD0009	“get an understanding of how to count and read and write” (ln525)					“...I would tell parents who can't afford to stay home with the child to send their child to preschool so they at least get something” (ln1059-1060)
PD0010	“Preschool is supposed to prepare kids for elementary school.” (ln601-602)					

(continued)

Table 4 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged parent?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful? What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of these experiences?	8. How have these experiences played a role in your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?	F2. Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PD0011	"...the most important years of a child's foundational education (PD0011, ln646)."					"You can't go wrong... preschool. They are going to benefit in some aspect..." (ln116-117)."
PD0012	"I guess it helps get a child ready for school" (ln708-709)					

In the participants' responses to the interview questions associated with Research Question 2, they talked about the benefits of preschool, parents' socioeconomic challenges, and parents' feelings of not being prepared to teach their children. The data gathered from the interview questions related to this research question will be presented within those three broad areas.

Participants' views. Some participants agreed that preschool is the foundation of a child's education (PS0005, ln303-304, PD0011, ln646) and that it provides children with academic readiness skills that prepare them for academic success in areas such as reading and writing PS0001, ln9-10, PS002, ln85, PS0003, ln192, PS0004, ln216, PS0006, ln393-395, and

PD0009, ln525). PS0005 stated, “I define it as preparing kids to understand the foundation of education” (ln303-304). PD0009 stated that preschool is where children can “get an understanding of how to count and read and write” (ln525). PS0001, PS0002 and PS0005, whose children attended a preschool, noted that preschool is a “really good experience” (PS001, ln11) and the “foundation for education” (PS0005, ln303-304). Although PD0011 did not send his child to preschool, the participant contends that preschool is the “most important years of a child’s foundational education” (PD0011, ln646). PS0004 and PS0006 commented that preschool is a really “good” (PS0004, ln260) and “wonderful thing” (PS0006, ln388) children should do before going to kindergarten. PD0007, and PD0011, who did not send their children to preschool also contended that preschool is the “foundational education” (PD0011, ln646) and “a place where kids go to school before they go to regular school” (PD0007, ln409-410). PD0008 stated that “Preschool is preparatory for school” (PD0008, ln469). PD0008 also stated, “It prepares a child for before kindergarten and first grade so... I would say it was pre-kindergarten where you would be able to get foundational skills...basic counting and the beginning of his ABC’s but basically preparing them for kindergarten” (PD0008, ln470-471). PD0009 also agreed that children attend preschool to “get an understanding of how to count and read and write and [children] get exposure to school life before going if parents don’t have time to teach them at home” (PD0009, ln524-525). From the follow up interviews, all participants noted their advice to parents who would be making a decision about sending their child to preschool.

PS0001 stated, “Well from my experience, I would say that they should do that if they really need to send their children to public school...I think they should send them because it really helps their children” (PS0001, ln815-818).

PS0002 offered the following advice to parents about preschool:

For the person who has decided not to send their child I would suggest that they do some home schooling to help that child be prepared for school. The mind is open to learning at that time. I believe it’s a good idea to utilize that time. For the parent who decides to send their child to preschool, I’d say Bravo! (PS0002, ln841-845).

PS0003 stated, “I would absolutely tell parents to send them to preschool...I think in the long run it will prepare them for the big school and their readiness to perform will definitely be in place” (PS0003, ln 865-869).

PS0004 stated, “They should send their child to preschool and be involved. Go to the meetings and find out what the child is going to learn about...read to the child every night” (PS0004, ln892-894).”

PS0005 noted the following reasons why parents should send their child to preschool:

They should send their child to preschool ...because they will learn...and be around other children. Sometimes you have kids who don't have siblings. You also have kids who are around adults all the time. So you want them in an environment suitable for them. Also, between ages one and five are the most important years in learning. So why not send your children? They will start on time. If you don't, they will learn but they may not learn as fast (PS0005, ln918-925).

PS0006 stated,

I would tell them how valuable preschool is and the difference it makes. It strengthens socialization skills, motivation to learn, vs sitting at home and not having anyone to chat with or read with. Preschool is the way to go. It would help little people become big people and teach them to become independent (PS0006, ln 942-946).

PD0007 contended,

Well depending on the child. If you really don't have the time to spend with your child to acclimate them to school, then I think it would be a good suggestion. But if not, I feel that the parent should be the one to educate their child at first (PD0007, ln973-976).

PD0011 stated, “You can't go wrong with sending your child to preschool. They are going to benefit in some aspect...just by attending (PD0011, ln116-117).”

PD0012 stated,

Send your child to preschool if it is the last resort. Parents should teach their own kids anyway. If they can't, ask for help so they can help the kids out. Teachers can't do everything. You know, you have to work with the kid too (PD0012, ln1163-1166).

Therefore, PD0007, PD0009, PD0011, and PD0012 agreed that sending a child to preschool would be a good idea if the parents could not stay at home and teach them.

Table 5 below presents a summary of the data about participants' views on why parents decide to send their children to preschool.

Table 5

Views of Why Parents Send their Children to Preschool

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Preschool is the foundation of learning	9	75%
To prepare children for kindergarten	11	91%
Parents should send children to preschool because it's beneficial	9	75%

Socioeconomic challenges. PS0001, PS004, and PS0005, who sent their child to preschool noted that due to being single parents they “had to work hard” (PS0001, ln48) and “take care of two kids and teach them from home” (PS0005, ln308-312). PS0004 stated, “Programs like Head Start helped me when I couldn’t afford to send my children to private school” (PS0004, ln895-896).

PS0005 also stated,

The reason why I took my kids out of Head Start and taught from home was for one, I was a single parent...I had two kids and they were one year apart but I had to work. I worked at Head Start for several years as a teacher so I just decided to teach them from home... I didn’t know a lot of people to babysit at the time. I just used assistance when I needed it and taught the kids more than nursery rhymes and riddles (PS0005, ln308-312).

Additionally, PS0001, who is a single mother who did not go to preschool because her mom could not afford to send her, stated that she received state assistance which has helped her child get a quality education.

I think preschool played a big role because if I would have gone to preschool, I probably would have gone to college. You know...I wouldn’t have had such a hard time. My baby went to Head start preschool. Without assistance, my baby would have such a hard time like when I started school that was a major block for me. My baby went to Head start and with assistance, my child will get a quality education and be able to find a good job. I would have been more active in my baby’s school life (PS0001, ln50-54).

PS0005 noted that people who cannot afford to send their children to preschool can “get assistance.” PS0001 stated that to ensure that their children have “everything they need and want,

they have to work” (PS0001, ln52). PS0003, who is married contended that even though it is a “financial strain to send their children to a quality preschool program, it is worth the cost” (PS0003, ln135-136). PS0003 also noted that they wanted their children to eventually grow up and obtain a better paying job than [they] have (PS0003, ln215). In addition, PS0006, who is married, recalled reading about children who are successful in preschool usually do better in school and get better jobs (PS0006, ln400-401). Table 6 summarizes the data noting the socioeconomic reasons why parents send their children to preschool.

Table 6

Socioeconomic Reasons Why Parents Send Children to Preschool

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Single Parent	3	50%
Wanted better opportunities for their children opportunities	3	50%

Note: The N for this table is 6, as there were six parents who did send children to preschool, only indicated responses in this table.

Parents unpreparedness. PS0001, PS0002, PS0003, PS0004, four of the six participants, who did send their child to preschool, conceded that they did not possess the knowledge or skills to teach their preschool aged children. PS0001 stated, “I don’t have the time to sit with her and teach her” (PS0001, ln31). PS0001 also stated that, “teachers go to college because you don’t want to get anybody of the street like me to go in and teach the children because they wouldn’t learn a darn thing if you did that” (PS0001, ln38-39). PS0003 stated, “I didn’t know I needed to teach my daughter the rhymes and riddles” (PS0003, ln198). PS0006 stated that preschool teachers are “college educated and learn from experience to prepare children for kindergarten” (PS0006, ln364-365). PS0003 and PS0004 conveyed that in their experiences, the preschool teachers are more knowledgeable about the new curriculum and strategies than they were (PS0003, ln106-107, PD0004, ln106-108). PS0005 also agreed that preschool teachers today are teaching more than “nursery rhymes and riddles” (PS0005, ln312).

Table 7 summarizes the data noting unpreparedness as a reason parents send their children to preschool.

Table 7

Parents Unpreparedness: Why Parents Send their Children to Preschool

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Parents lack the knowledge or skills to teach Preschool curriculum	4	66%
Preschool Teachers attend college and are more trained to prepare children for kindergarten	3	50%

Note: The N for this table is 6, as there were six parents who did send children to preschool

Research Question 3 asked, why do parents decide not to send their children to preschool?

In response to research question 3, only the responses of the participants who did not send their children to preschool are shared in this section regarding the following interview questions.

- What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?
- Based upon your experience, do you feel that preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?
- Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements contributed to the outcome of the experience?
- How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?
- What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness?
- How do you feel your child performed in a public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?
- Based on your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?

Table 8

Participants' Comments on Why Parents Decide Not to Send their Children to Preschool

Participants	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?	3. Based upon your experiences do you feel preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements contributed to the outcome of the experience?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are key points to focus on... with school readiness skills?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?	F2. Based on your experiences ..., what suggestions would you give someone... who... may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PD0007	“I teach more than what the actual school does...reading, math...all those things.” (ln411-412)		“What a child...learned at home is not used the same...in the same atmosphere” (PD0007, ln426-427) “could pick up negative traits” (ln430). “bad habits as spitting, hitting, touching...you know” (P0007, ln430-431).”	“you learn the same thing in preschool” (ln443)		“I took the responsibility of teaching my child. Preschool...That for people who don't have the time...”(ln458-459)	

(continued)

Table 8 (cont.)

Participants	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?	3. Based upon your experience s do you feel preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements contributed to the outcome of the experience?	8. How have these experience s played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are key points to focus on... with school readiness skills?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?	F2. Based on your experiences ..., what suggestions would you give someone... who... may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PD0008		“Preschool teachers are inept, some of them... have no rules in the class, (ln478)	“don’t understand how to work with minority children and don’t have a desire to learn” (ln486-487)	“you learn the same thing in preschool (ln499)”	“parents are the ones who teach kids how to focus, to pay attention, and listen” (ln502-503)		
PD0009	“My role has been to do everything. To be the first teacher, leader, respondent to my children.” (ln528-529)						“Preschool is optional because some families like my own can do a good job instructing from home... It doesn’t make sense not to get help if you need help” (PD0009, ln1058-1061).

(continued)

Table 8 (cont.)

Participants	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?	3. Based upon your experiences do you feel preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements contributed to the outcome of the experience?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are key points to focus on... with school readiness skills?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?	F2. Based on your experiences ..., what suggestions would you give someone... who... may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PD0010		“Preschool is not a necessity as long as you have support... I am my child’s first teacher and disciplinarian” (ln 607-611)					
PD0011	“I am the most important teacher” (ln648-649)		“don’t have a high school diploma or an equivalent, in most cases” (ln654-655). “Preschool teachers don’t know what to do when the classroom gets out of control” (ln668). “preschool teachers aren’t trained to work with different children” (ln669)		“like saying bad words at home but coming to school” (ln691)		

(continued)

Table 8 (cont.)

Participants	2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?	3. Based upon your experiences do you feel preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements contributed to the outcome of the experience?	8. How have these experiences played a role in your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are key points to focus on... with school readiness skills?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?	F2. Based on your experiences ..., what suggestions would you give someone... who... may have to make a decision to send their child to preschool?
PD0012	“I teach my daughter everything she needs to know. I mean, I’m her first teacher” (ln756-757)						

In reviewing the participant’s responses to the interview questions associated with Research Question 3, they talked about how parents want to teach their own children, parents want to prevent negative behavior that may be learned in preschool, parents feel that preschool teachers lack the expertise in instructional and behavioral strategies, and parents believe that preschool is repetitive to kindergarten. The data gathered from the interview question related to this research question will be presented within those four broad areas.

Parents want to teach and prepare their own children for school. PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011 and PD0012, all of whom did not send their children to preschool, agree that parents are the first teachers. PD0009 stated, “My role has been to do everything; to be the first teacher, leader, respondent to my children” (ln528-529). As indicated in Table 8, PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011, and PD0012 also believe that it is the parents’ responsibility to teach their child. PD0012 noted that he teaches his daughter everything she needs to know (PD0012, ln710). PD0008 stated that “parents are the ones who teach kids how to focus, to pay attention, and listen” (PD0008, ln502-503). PD0008 advised parents to “do the

research so that it won't be a waste of time...Don't rely on someone else to do it for you. They are not going to have the same level of engagement that you would have" (PD0008, ln1001-1004). PD0009 agreed,

Preschool is optional because some families like my own can do a good job instructing from home. I would tell parents who can't afford to stay home with the child to send their child to preschool so they at least get something. It doesn't make sense not to get help if you need help (PD0009, ln1058-1061).

PD0010 mentioned that "learning has a lot to do with the parent because you are your child's first teacher. So you should want to teach your child everything...I would not send them" (PD0010, ln1083- 1085). Table 9 below presents a summary of the data about participants' deciding not to send their child to preschool because they want to prepare their own kids for school.

Table 9

Why Parents Who Did Not Send their Children to Preschool Want to Prepare their Own Kids for School

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Parents believe they are the "first" teachers	6	100%
Parents feel responsible to teach own kids	6	100%
Parents teach kids how to focus, sit, and Listen	1	16%

Note: The N for this table is 6, as there were six parents who did not send children to preschool

Parents want to prevent negative behaviors that may be learned in preschool. PD0007, PD0008, PD0011, and PD0012 agreed with the decision of not sending their children to preschool because they might learn bad habits. PD0007, who attended preschool as a student for one week, named some of those bad habits as "spitting, hitting, touching...you know" (P0007, ln430-431). PD0007 also stated, "What a child...learned at home is not used the same...in the same atmosphere" (PD0007, ln426-427). PD0007 also reported that he believes other children don't have the same rules as his child who "could pick up negative traits" (PD0007, ln430). PD0011 believes if parents don't send their child to preschool,

You won't have to worry about those environmental factors that keep things in an uproar...like saying bad words at home but coming to school and thinking it's not bad because you were allowed to say them at home (PD0011, ln690-693).

Participant 0008 noted that preschool teachers have no rules in the classroom for children to follow (PD0008, ln478). Table 10 summarizes the data that explains how parents decide not to send their children to preschool in order to prevent negative behaviors that may be learned in preschool.

Table 10

Why Parents Think Not Sending Children to Preschool Prevents Negative Behaviors

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Bad habits at school	5	83%
Bad habits at home	1	16%

Note: The N for this table is 6, as there were six parents who did not send children to preschool

Preschool teachers lack expertise in instructional and behavioral strategies. Participants who didn't send their children to preschool felt that preschool teachers have difficulty meeting the needs of all children. PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010 and PD0012 reported that they don't send their children to preschool because "preschool teachers lack the knowledge" or expertise "to meet the needs of their children." PD0011 reported that preschool teachers aren't trained to work with different children (PD0011, ln669). In addition, participants feel that preschool teachers struggle to deal with minority students. PD0008 stated, "Preschool teachers are inept, some of them" (PD0008, ln478). In addition, PD0008 suggested that preschool teachers don't understand how to work with minority children and don't have a desire to learn (ln486-487), while PD0011 also indicated that some of [them] only "have a high school diploma or an equivalent, in most cases" (ln654-655). PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, and PD0011 also believe preschool teachers have inadequate classroom behavioral management strategies. PD0011 stated, "Preschool teachers don't know what to do when the classroom gets out of control" (PD0011, ln668). Table 11 summarizes the data showing that parents decide not to send their child to preschool because preschool teachers lack the expertise to adequately prepare all

children for kindergarten.

Table 11

Preschool Teachers Lack Expertise in Instructional and Behavioral Strategies

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Difficulty meeting needs of all kids	6	100%
Struggle to deal with minority children	1	16%
Low requirements to be a preschool teacher	1	16%
Inadequate behavioral management	4	66%

Note: The N for this table is 6, as there were six parents who did not send children to preschool.

Parents believe that preschool is repetitive and redundant. Some participants do not send their children to preschool because they believe it is repetitive and redundant in comparison to what is taught and learned in kindergarten. PD0007, PD0008 and PD0012, fathers who did not send their children to preschool, stated that they make time to teach their children all the basic skills at home. PD0007, PD0008, and PD0011 indicated that parents teach their own kids the same basic skills as preschool. However, PD0010, a mother who attended preschool for three weeks as a student, agreed that “preschool is not a necessity” (PD0010, ln607-608,). PD0007 and PD0008 also agreed that preschool is “unnecessary” (ln456)” and “redundant “(ln500) because they believe “you learn the same thing in preschool (ln443, 499)” and the “same thing in kindergarten (ln444, 491).” PD0007 and PD0008 both agreed that children should start school in kindergarten. PD0008 stated, “If the parents are working to prepare their child to go to kindergarten...your child doesn’t need to go to preschool. It’s repetitive” (PD0008, ln498-499). Table 12 summarizes the data which explains how parents decide not to send their children to preschool because it is repetitive and redundant.

Table 12

Parents Believe Preschool is Repetitive and Redundant

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Parents wanted to teach own kids	6	100%
Preschool is the same as kindergarten	2	33%
Children already know kindergarten skills before going to preschool	1	16%
Preschool is not necessary	3	50%

Note: The N for this table is six, as there were six parents who did not send children to preschool.

Research Question 4 asked, *what lived experiences do parents indicate contributed to their attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool?* In response to research question 4, all participants were asked:

- Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?
- Based upon your experiences, do you feel that preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?
- Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?
- What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?
- How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?
- How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance in a preschool program?

Table 13

Participants' Comments on what Contributed to Parents' Attitudes and Beliefs about Preschool

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	3. Based upon your experiences, do ...preschool teachers have the expertise...to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements ...contributed to the outcome of the experiences?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance in a preschool program?
PS0001	“good experience” (ln11)	“I think preschool teachers are just fantastic! They have all the experience in the world to teach my baby!” (ln15)			“So I thought it would be a really good experience” (ln11)	“I think my child performed as well with other kids” (ln60)
PS0002		“Talked to parents about preschool teachers and preschool references to find out what the strengths and weaknesses were” (PS0002, ln94-95)	“I can't think of a time preschool wasn't successful for me” (ln110-111)			“He was advanced” (ln135)

(continued)

Table 13 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	3. Based upon your experiences, do ...preschool teachers have the expertise... to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements ...contributed to the outcome of the experiences?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance in a preschool program?
PS0003					<p>“I think, for myself, I wanted both of my kids to go to preschool.... very important to me when I was younger” (ln231-232”</p> <p>“My friends who did go to preschool...I don't think they were as fond of school as I was...Those memories are dear to me and my kids” (ln233-236).</p> <p>“I can remember my preschool graduation and how proud I was” (ln235)</p>	<p>“My son was average...My daughter was above average” (ln246-247)</p>
PS0004	<p>and “a good thing for kids” (ln260-261).</p>			<p>“I appreciate what they are learning in preschool” (ln280)</p>		<p>“They did not have to catch up” (ln290)</p>

(continued)

Table 13 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	3. Based upon your experiences, do ...preschool teachers have the expertise... to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements ...contributed to the outcome of the experience?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance in a preschool program?
PS0005					“Children who did attend Head Start had time to catch up” (ln334-335).	“My child did good” (ln342)
PS0006					“My child... able to pick up the language... teachers were interested in the children...excellent patience with them” (ln376-378)	“My child did awesome, wonderful kindergarten experience” (ln397-398)
PD0007		“My child learns the majority of things from me” (PD0007, ln416).		“Mom taught me to read, write my name and how to count 10 to 20...every thing” (ln446)	“I remember being bored. I already knew the letters; I already knew how to count (ln446).” “My mom felt like he wasn't learning enough” (ln447)	“My child performed beyond expectations” (ln453)

(continued)

Table 13 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	3. Based upon your experiences, do ...preschool teachers have the expertise... to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements ... contributed to the outcome of the experience s?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance in a preschool program?
PD0008				“My mom taught me to count and how to read... My parents prepared me. Primarily my mother” (ln513-514)		“Did fine”(ln509)
PD0009				“I turned out very successful. I think that was because of the teaching and the push from my mother.” (ln562-563)	Dissatisfaction “children, who attend preschool, are sick more often than those who do not attend”(ln560-561)	“My child did really good in kindergarten” (ln575) “Children learn in an environment that is comfortable to them...home... where they can learn in their own space (PD0009, ln577-578).”

(continued)

Table 13 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	3. Based upon your experiences, do ...preschool teachers have the expertise... to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements ...contributed to the outcome of the experiences?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance in a preschool program?
PD0010		<p>“My mom stayed home and taught me everything I needed to know” (ln607-608)</p> <p>“I stayed home from school because I was bored, the teacher was boring” (ln 605-606)</p>				<p>“I think she was smarter...(ln634)</p>
PD0011						<p>“When my son went to kindergarten, he was very prepared” (ln695-696)</p>

(continued)

Table 13 (cont.)

Participants	1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?	3. Based upon your experiences, do ...preschool teachers have the expertise... to work with students? Why do you feel this way?	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements ...contributed to the outcome of the experiences?	7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance in a preschool program?
PD0012			“Her and my dad taught me from home...learned about the business at early age...math was my strongest subject” (PD0012, ln768-769)			“No problems at all. She was always above average in her grades” (ln743-744)

In the participants' responses to the interview questions associated with Research Question 4, they talked about the way the parents' past experiences contributed to their belief about preschool, parents' influences from others' attitudes and beliefs about preschool, and parents' satisfaction and/or disappointment in preschool/kindergarten outcomes. The data gathered from the interview question related to this research question will be presented within those three broad areas.

Past experiences of attending or not attending preschool as a child. PS0002, PS0003, and PS0005 noted that they attended preschool and remembered having success in school and wanted the same for their children. PS0002 stated, “I can't think of a time preschool wasn't successful for me” (PS0002, ln110-111). PS0003 indicated, “I think, for myself, I wanted both

of my kids to go to preschool because I thought it was very important to me when I was younger” (PS0003, ln231-232). Although PS0001 and PS0004 did not attend preschool, they believed that sending their child to preschool would be a “good experience” (PS0001, ln11) and “a good thing for kids” (ln260-261). On the other hand, PD0009 and PD0012 noted that they decided not to send their child to preschool because they believe that home is a better place for children to learn. PD0009 stated that “children learn in an environment that is comfortable to them...home...where they can learn in their own space” (PD0009, ln577-578). PD0012 also stated, “Her and my dad taught me from home...learned about the business at early age...math was my strongest subject” (PD0012, ln768-769). PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010 and PD0012 reported that their parents read to them or taught them how to identify letters and letter sounds. PD0007, PD0009, and PD0010 also noted that their parents taught them everything they needed to know. For example, PD0007 stated, “My child learns the majority of things from me” (PD0007, ln416). PD0009 indicated,

I didn't attend preschool either and I turned out to be very successful and above average in most of my classes in early school and college. I think it was because of the teaching I had from my mother. She had never been to college to learn how to be a teacher but she always found time to read to me and teach me everything (PD0009, ln561-565).

PD0010 also agreed, “My mom stayed home and taught me everything I needed to know” (PD0010, ln607-608).”

All of the participants reported that their children had successful experiences in kindergarten. PS0002, PS0003, PD0007, PD0010, and PD0012 indicated that their children exceeded expectations in kindergarten, whereas, PS0001, PS0004, PS0006, PD0008, PD0009 noted that their children performed well. Table 14 summarizes the data which explains how parents lived experiences contribute to their attitudes and beliefs about preschool.

Table 14

Participants Comments about Parents Past Experiences of Attending or Not Attending Preschool

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Personal success attending childhood preschool motivated parents' decisions to send their child to preschool	4	33%
Personal success not attending childhood preschool, parents taught them at home	6*	50%
Did not attend childhood preschool but wanted child to attend	2	16%
Parents' past experiences influenced parents decisions about sending children to preschool	12	100%

*6 of the 6 responses were from those parents who sent their children to preschool

Influences from others' attitudes and beliefs about preschool. PS0002 indicated that she sought the advice of other parents who had children in preschool to determine if she should send her child to the same preschool (PS0002, ln94). After speaking to other parents, PD0009 indicated that she believes "children who attend preschool are sick more often than those who do not attend" (PD0009, ln560-561). PS0003 reported that the attitude of her classmates who did not go to preschool exposed a dislike of school while her personal experience encouraged her to love school (PS0003, ln233-234). For this reason, she indicated that she sent her kids to preschool, as well. Also, PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, and PD0012, who did not attend preschool, reported that the support of parental involvement during their childhood, influenced their decision to take full responsibility for teaching readiness skills to their children at home. Table 15 summarizes the data which explains how parents decide not to send their children to preschool because of influences from others' attitudes and beliefs about preschool. Eight participants commented about the influences from others contributing to their decisions.

Table 15

Participants Comments about Influences from Others Attitudes and Beliefs about Preschool

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Advice from other parents	3	25%
Parental involvement during their own childhood	5*	42%
Other people from the past or present influenced parents' attitudes	12	100%

*5 of the 12 responses were from parents who did not send children to preschool.

Parents' satisfaction and or disappointment with preschool/kindergarten outcomes.

PS0002, PS0003, and PS0005 indicated how successful they were when they attended preschool. PS0001, PS0002, PS0003, PS0004, and PS0006 expressed how satisfied they were with the preschool programs and teachers who taught their children. Although PS0005, did not send her child to a preschool center, she reported that the children who did attend Head Start had "time to catch up on the skills" (PS0005, ln334) they were weak in and became very prepared for kindergarten. PS0005 also shared that preschool teachers, who work for Head Start, "have a lot of training and more paperwork" (PS0005, ln315). She indicated that training was a good thing. PS0001 did not have the privilege of attending preschool but stated, "I think preschool teachers are just fantastic! They have all the experience in the world to teach my baby" (PS0001, ln15). On the other hand, PD0007 and PD0010 experienced disappointment while attending preschool for a short time. PD0007 stated, "I remember being bored. I already knew the letters, I already knew how to count" (PD0007, ln446). PD0007 also indicated that his mother felt like he "wasn't learning enough" (PD0007, ln447).

I can remember begging my mom to let me stay home from school because I was bored, the teacher was boring...I distinctly remember telling her that all they did was play and color but I wanted to learn (PD0010, ln605-608).

PD0007 and PD0010 reported that their parents took them out of preschool because of disappointment in preschool programs related to feelings of boredom in school. While all the participants in this study expressed different reasons why they were satisfied with preschool or

experienced disappointment, all reported that their children were very successful in kindergarten. Table 16 summarizes the data which explains how parents decide not to send their children to preschool because of satisfaction or disappointment in preschool/kindergarten outcomes.

Table 16

Satisfaction or Disappointment in Preschool/Kindergarten Outcomes

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Parents' success when they attended preschool	3	25%
Parents' satisfaction with teachers	6	50%
Children were successful in preschool	6	50%
Children were successful in kindergarten	12	100%
Preschool is boring	2	16%

Research Question 5 asked, based upon their lived experiences, what intrinsic values do parents reflect upon when enrolling their child in a preschool? In response to research question 5, participants were asked:

- Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?
- What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?
- To what extent do you feel preschool has been successful and why?
- How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?
- What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?
- How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?

Table 17

Participants' Comments about Reflections on Intrinsic Values when Enrolling Children

Participant	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?	6. To what extent do you feel preschool is successful and why?	7. What has been your... involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points ...when assisting a child with school readiness skills?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or nonattendance in a preschool program?
PS0001	“The children are learning all of the alphabets” (ln29)	“Children learn how to right their name....ABC's ... numbers.” (ln42-43)				“She performed very well with other kids” (ln60)
PS0002			“Reading to him daily” (ln130)	“support what I already believed preschool to be based on the great experience. I had going to pre-school” (ln126-127)		“preschool helped make the transition to kindergarten smooth in a setting with children from 15 to 18 and he was advanced” (PS0002, ln133-134)
PS0003	“which is your ABC's and numbers” (ln192)	“teacher gave me chart paper to help my son practice writing things on a chart at home because he struggled with writing in class” (ln171-172).”			“one key thing is reading to them” (ln243)	

(continued)

Table 17 (cont.)

Participant	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?	6. To what extent do you feel preschool is successful and why?	7. What has been your... involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points ...when assisting a child with school readiness skills?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or nonattendance in a preschool program?
PS0004	“Preschool is successful in allowing children to have a calming feeling about school” (ln276)				“Help them become a keen listener” (ln287)	
PS0005	“Preschool is a nurturing environment... fun... and not regimented” (ln321-323).					
PS0006	“They can tell me what they learned, read, colored” (ln374)		“Reading books together” (ln3860)		“teach letter sounds, sight words, number colors, shapes” (ln393)	
					“Being able to enjoy being around other children” ln394)	

(continued)

Table 17 (cont.)

Participant	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?	6. To what extent do you feel preschool is successful and why?	7. What has been your... involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points ...when assisting a child with school readiness skills?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or nonattendance in a preschool program?
PD0007			<p>“Like 100 percent involvement... in everything” (ln438)</p> <p>“Reading to my child at night” (ln439)</p>	<p>“Get along with other people and behave” (ln441)</p>	<p>“reading, writing, and arithmetic are... what children are going to need...” (ln450-451).</p>	
PD0008			<p>“to focus ...being able to interact with children in a good way” (ln504-505)</p>			<p>“Did fine. We did not depend on someone to prepare him for school.” (ln509-10)</p>
PD0009					<p>“modeling how to read” (ln572)</p> <p>“How to listen and follow directions” (ln572)</p>	<p>“My child did very good because we taught her to be ready for kindergarten” (ln575-576)</p>

(continued)

Table 17 (cont.)

Participant	5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?	6. To what extent do you feel preschool is successful and why?	7. What has been your... involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?	8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?	9. What do you believe are the key points ...when assisting a child with school readiness skills?	10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or nonattendance in a preschool program?
PD0010		“But the parents and the family is Responsible for teaching things that your particular child needs” (ln617-618)	“My husband and I read to her every night (ln622)		“...have time to learn good behaviors” (ln631-632)	
PD0011	“The social aspect is good...teach them how to wait their turn and how to act around other children” (ln663-664)	“Learn how to interact with other children when parents don't have time to teach at home” (ln673)				“Valuable life skills, and pre-reading skills should be taught at home first. My son did very well.” (ln698-699)
PD0012				“Mom and my Dad...I can remember both...sitting me on their knees... reading counting with me” (ln724) “I made sure my wife and I do the same thing” (ln725)		

In the participants' responses to the interview questions associated with Research Question 5, they talked about parents valued their children being successful in school, how parents valued

taking ownership of preparing children for kindergarten, and how parents valued being able to trust preschool teachers/school leaders. The data gathered from the interview question related to this research question will be presented within those three broad areas.

Participants valued their children being successful in school. Participants valued the importance of their child being successful in kindergarten. PS0002, PS0003, PS0006, PD0007, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011, and PD0012 reported that they value reading to their child every day. PS0001, PS0003, and PS0006 indicated that preschool helped their children be successful with letters, letter sounds, counting, and writing their name in kindergarten. PD0007 agreed that “reading, writing, and arithmetic are basically what children are going to need throughout their educational career” (PD0007, ln450-451). PS0002, noted that her child’s success in preschool helped make the transition to kindergarten smooth, both socially and academically (PS0002, ln133-134). On the other hand, PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011, and PD0012, who did not send their children to preschool valued the importance of their children knowing how to behave, socialize, and follow directions in school as most important. PD0008 mentioned that the key elements to focus on would be to develop social skills and “being able to interact with children in a good way” (PD0008, ln504-505). PS0001, PS0002, PS0003, PS0004, PS0005, and PS0006 also valued preschool because it prepared their children to be successful in kindergarten by exposing them to positive interactions with others and nurturing a child’s emotional development. PS0005 indicated that “preschool is a nurturing environment...fun... and not regimented” (PS0005, ln321-323). Table 18 summarizes the data which explains what intrinsic values parents view as related to their child’s success in school.

Table 18

Views of Being Successful in School

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Reading to their child	9	75%
Learning letters, counting, writing	3	25%
Social emotional development	12	100%

Parents take ownership in the responsibility for preparing children for kindergarten. PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011, and PD0012, did not send their child to preschool because they valued the responsibility of teaching their child readiness skills at home. PD0007, PD0008, PD0009 and PD0010 mentioned that parents are the ones who prepared the child for success in school. PD0007 stated, “I took the responsibility of teaching my child. Preschool, that’s like for people who don’t have the time to spend with their children because of work or they don’t know how to help them” (PD0007, ln458-459). Also, PD0008 stated, “My mom taught me to count and how to read... My parents prepared me. It was primarily my mother “(PD0008, ln513-514). PD0011 indicated that parents should support “one-hundred percent” (PD0011, ln657) of the learning to prepare their child for kindergarten. PS0006 stated, “Parents need to do all they can to help prepare their child for school...reading to them...making sure they are exposed to things...make them ready for leaving home and being around other children” (PS0006, ln368-371).

While PS0001, PS0002, PS0003, PS0005, and PS0006 agree that parents should be involved in their child’s learning, they contend that parents should support preschool teachers 100 percent by reviewing what the child has learned in school. PS0004 added that parents should value the “invitation to visit” (PS0004, ln291) with the teacher to learn how to help prepare their child for kindergarten. Table 19 summarizes the data which explains parents’ intrinsic values of ownership and responsibility for preparing their child for school.

Table 19

Parent’s intrinsic value of ownership and responsibility for preparing children

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Parents’ opinions regarding who was responsible for teaching their children during their preschool years reflected their decisions regarding accessing preschool	12	100%

Parents being able to trust teachers and school leaders. PS0001, PS0002, PS0003, PS0004, PS0005, and PS0006, sent their child to preschool, trusting preschool to prepare their children for kindergarten with the necessary readiness skills and practice provided by adequate

preschool teachers. PS0004 stated, “I think preschool is successful in allowing the children to have a calming and trusting interest in their teachers” (PS0004, ln275-276). Although the participants who did not send their child to preschool believed that attending preschool was redundant, they did value the opportunity preschool could provide to support social and emotional development of children. PD0007, PD0008, PD0009, PD0010, PD0011, PD0012, who did send their child to preschool, also valued the exposure provided to children in preschool and trusted the role preschool could play in training children how to socialize and get along with others. In addition, PS0003 indicated that preschool teachers identified her son’s delays in preschool and that she trusted their advice in assisting her with strategies she could use at home to help improve his academics (PS0003, ln170-173).

My oldest son struggled...I asked for help with him...the teacher advised me to get a chalkboard at home and write out things...don’t spend so much time on things when he is frustrated...read more to him and talk to him (PS0003, ln172-173).

PD0009 also trusted preschool teachers to identify speech concerns, behavior problems, and other developmental delays for those students who needed intervention before kindergarten (PD0009, ln537-538). Table 20 summarizes the data which explains parents’ intrinsic values of ownership and responsibility for preparing their child for school.

Table 20

Parents’ Being Able to Trust Teachers and School Leaders

Categorical Variable	# of Participants	% of Participants
Parents who sent children to preschool trust preschool to teach academic and social emotional, readiness skills	6	100%
Parents who did not send children to preschool agree preschool can support social and emotional development	6	100%

Note: The N for this table is six, as there were six parents who did not send children to preschool and six who did not.

Summary

This chapter included an explanation of how the data were collected and structured for analysis and a description of how the data were coded and categorized, using the transcriptions from the semi-structured interviews from twelve participants who were parents of preschool aged children. The purpose of this chapter was to describe the lived experiences of 12 parents, six parents who have elected and six who have not elected to send their children to preschool, and to investigate their perceptions of their lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Further, the purpose was to examine the relationship between parent attitudes and beliefs about preschool and determine whether or not their lived experiences have contributed to what they have determined are the values of preschool. A modified version of the van Kaam phenomenological method was used to analyze the data and provide descriptions. The data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed through a process reduction and elimination in order to cluster the variables into thematic categories for each research question. More specifically, the transcribed interviews were reviewed in order to create individual structural descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants in relation to preschool.

Textural and structural descriptions were created to describe how the individual participants perceived the impact of their experiences on the attitudes and beliefs that they held toward preschool. The final step of Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method involved the creation of composite descriptions. These composite descriptions provided a summary of the meaning and essence of the participants' perceptions about how their lived experiences shaped their attitudes and beliefs about preschool. Based on the individual textural and structural descriptions, the final step of data analysis is to present a composite description of the meanings and essence of the experience for the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, analysis of the data across the initial and follow-up interviews are presented in response to the five research questions developed for this study.

Chapter 5 will include the major findings, implications for practitioners, and recommendations for future research. In addition, the researcher's reflections about the phenomenological research process and the findings are shared.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

This section provides a brief overview of the study, the interpretations of findings in relation to the conceptual framework and literature review, implications, recommendations for further for study, and a reflection of the research process were presented. The U.S. Department of Education, along with President Barack Obama’s “Preschool for All” initiatives, clearly state that children must be provided equal access to early intervention and quality preschools across America. Grant programs, like *The Race to the Top Challenge*, encourage states to participate in early learning reform efforts by providing funding that will support the expansion of preschools. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). However, many children still do not attend.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of parents who have or have not elected to send their children to preschool and the lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Further, the purpose was to examine the relationship between parent attitudes and beliefs about preschool to determine whether or not their lived experiences have contributed to what they have determined are the value of preschool.

The participants were six parents who elected to send their child to preschool and six parents who did not elect to send their child to preschool, but whose children did attend kindergarten.

The age of the participants ranged from 25 to 40 years of age. A qualitative research design was used to conduct this study. Data were collected to answer the following research questions:

1. What do parents believe are the value of preschool?
2. Why do parents decide to send their children to preschool?
3. Why do parents decide not to send their children to preschool?
4. What lived experiences do parents indicate contributed to their attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool?
5. Based upon their lived experiences, what intrinsic values do parents reflect upon when enrolling their child in a preschool?

Finding One. Participants believe that “academic readiness skills” are benefits of preschool. Ten out of twelve participants identified the following elements of academic readiness skills: listening to reading, knowing how to write, and identifying letters and small words, like their name. From interview question one, all twelve participants mentioned that preschool has the potential to develop some form of academic readiness skills in children, although six of the twelve participants did not send their children to preschool. The other half of participants who did send their children to preschool, agreed that the foundation of early learning begins in preschool.

Five of the six parents who did not send their child to preschool indicated that preschool had academic benefits for those students whose parents can’t afford to stay home and teach their children, whereas all of the participants who did not send their child to preschool agreed that preschool supports children in learning appropriate school behavior.

From the follow up interview responses, nine participants suggested that parents should send their children to preschool to learn basic concepts. Of those nine, six of the participants who did not send their children to preschool noted that parents should send their children to preschool only if they cannot afford to stay home and teach them. Petersen (2012) found that school readiness creates a strong foundation for learning.

Five of the six participants who did not send their children to preschool believed that the skills taught in preschool were redundant to the skills taught in kindergarten. These parents referred to those skills as a child being able to identify their ABC’s and letter sounds, write their name, and count and identify numbers.

To the contrary, current research (Barnett et al., 2012; USDOE, 2013; Paulsell et al., 2015) revealed that there is far more skill development going on in today’s preschools and kindergarten classes than those mentioned in the participants’ interview responses. Also, the Head Start framework (2015) lists over 50 indicators in the literacy domain of language, print knowledge, and writing that children who are 60 months of age should know before entering public school (DHHS&OHS, 2015). Likewise, Gordan et al. (2015) identified quality preschool programs that utilize key elements for pre-reading, pre-writing, and pre-math development through the Early Childhood Environment Rating scales (ECERS-R).

Finding Two. Participants believed that preschool contributed to a child’s social and emotional development. All of the parents who sent their children to preschool and half of the

parents who did not send their child to preschool agreed that children develop positive emotions about school. Most of the participants also believed that because positive emotions about school were developed, preschool supports a child's communication skills and the self-management of their emotions. The participants in DeMulder and Stribling (2012) study identified the effects of social emotional development in the following themes: increased positive feelings, self-confidence and positive relationships. This data was reflected in the responses from the participants in this study. All parents who did not send their children to preschool noted that learning how to interact with others with positive emotions was the most important skill to learn in preschool. At the opposite position, all parents who sent their children to preschool noted appropriate social interaction among children as a second value in preschool. In fact, PS0006 indicated that preschool is a place where children learn to talk to each other in addition to learning how to act around other children (PS0006369-370). Deming (2015) researched the impact of social emotional development in preschool and its long term effect on academic success. He concluded that social skills development in preschool was key to early childhood intervention because of the impact it has on the adults' employment and earnings as they communicate with others in a respectful, effective manner. Additionally, Demulder and Stribling (2012) reported that social and emotional development in children from low socio-economic backgrounds, benefit the family by increasing their positive relationships and feelings in their home environment and transfer into the positive outcomes in preschool and kindergarten. Finally, all parents who sent their children to preschool believed that preschool helped their child transition to kindergarten.

Finding Three. Participants identify either positive or negative effects preschool can have on children aligned to their decisions to send or not to send their children to preschool.

Şahin et al. (2013) concluded that the majority of the parents believed preschool improved their child's social skills and understood the characteristics of preschool programs. Most participants agreed that preschool is a place where children can attend to help prepare them with foundational skills for learning. All of the participants who sent their children to preschool indicated that reading, writing, and math skills were benefits of attending preschool. All twelve participants agreed that preschool provides some form of exposure to reading/literacy skills which are essential to the development of academic readiness in children. Slaby, Loucks, and Stelwagon (2005); Dickerson et al. (2006); Hoff (2006); Cunningham (2010); and Williford, Downer, and

Hamre (2014) also agree that access to preschool positively impacts literacy development and prevents reading deficiencies.

Five of the six parents who did not send their child to preschool reported that children can pick up bad habits from preschool. All of the participants who did not send their children to preschool suggested that preschool teachers had difficulty meeting the behavioral and academic needs of all children.

Finding Four. Past experiences were predictors of parents' attitudes, beliefs, and decisions about preschool.

All twelve participants indicated that their personal satisfaction and/or disappointment with preschool/ kindergarten outcomes had an impact on their attitudes and beliefs about preschool. Although all twelve participants indicated that their children were successful in preschool and/or were prepared for kindergarten, six participants also identified disappointments with preschool as a result of negative past experiences with preschool teachers. Kocyigit's (2015) study supports these findings as it reveals parents' frustration with the bad habits and negative attitudes of preschool teachers and administrators, frustration that derived from the parents' own lived experience.

Using the conceptual framework, Glasser's Choice Theory discussed in Chapter Two the participants' responses reflect Glasser's idea that individuals create beliefs based on their perception of their quality world. Data gathered in this study support Glasser's assertion that people choose who they want to be with, desire to own or experience things, govern their behavior according to their lived experiences. Glasser also affirmed that individuals who feel pressure to adapt to new experiences and/or relationships may react to situations in a variety of ways, as these experiences may "go against [their] basic wants and needs" (Glasser, 1998, p.51).

Past experiences of attending or not attending preschool as a child do contribute to the decisions parents make about sending or not sending their own children to preschool. Findings from this study suggest that feelings participants developed about preschool were based on prior experiences, influences from others, or negative preschool experiences affect their decision-making. PD0007 and PD0010 indicated that they started preschool for a short time but were pulled from the school in less than three weeks because their parents' attitudes changed after seeing the inadequacies of their preschool teachers' instruction and classroom management skills. Eight of the twelve participants in this study indicated that they did not attend preschool. Four of the participants who attended preschool for at least a year, also sent their children to

preschool. Four participants who had positive preschool experiences were receptive to sending their children to preschool. To the contrary, PS0001, who chose to send her child to preschool, indicated that she did not go to preschool but recognized the benefits of preschool and decided to send her child.

Although Glasser noted that individuals transfer their past positive or negative experiences into their current relationships, all twelve participants indicated that their lived experiences, with or without preschool, impacted their desire to accept or reject their decision to send their children to preschool. Not surprisingly, Glasser (1998) concluded that past life experiences have a "great deal to do with who we are today" (p.34).

Finding Five. Participants believe that parental involvement is essential to their children's successful kindergarten outcomes. All twelve participants believe that parental involvement with their children's growth and development at home contributed to their children's successful kindergarten outcomes. All twelve participants indicated that they read with their child. Saçkes et al. (2015) suggested that parental beliefs about children's literacy motivation are associated with their literacy practices at home, like storybook reading. Six participants who did not send their children to preschool indicated they wanted to take full responsibility for preparing their children for kindergarten; however, six participants who did send their children to preschool indicated that responsibility for preparing children for school was shared with the preschool teacher. Also, six participants who did not send their children to preschool indicated that parental involvement with their child's development is what caused their children to have favorable outcomes in kindergarten, as well. Current research has demonstrated a lack of understanding between parents and preschool leaders in regards to the values of preschool and knowing what key elements to focus on when trying to meet the needs of all preschool aged students, socially, emotionally, and academically (Feilding, 2009, Fielding et al., 2004, Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006). Research also supports the idea that relationships between the parent and the educator have an impact on a child's successful progression in preschool (Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison, 2015).

Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (2004) which focused attention toward early childhood education and the achievement gap among kindergarten students, school districts across the country have been urged to increase the rate of preschool attendance (USDOE, 2013). These factors required state officials and school leaders to explore

ways to provide quality preschool programs for all students, expand their community outreach to parents of preschool aged children, gain parental support, and encourage parental involvement in their children's learning before they enroll in kindergarten.

Finding Six. Most participants believed that parents' trusting relationships with preschool teachers contributes to their beliefs about the value of preschool. Seven out of twelve participants believed that partnerships with school leaders and teachers also supported their children's achievement in school. Trustworthiness of teachers and school leaders also contributed to the decision of the participants to send their children to preschool. PS0002, who elected to send her child to preschool and PD0008, who did not send his child to preschool, both believe that in order for early intervention to work, preschool teachers and school leaders must maintain open communication with parents and be willing to learn diverse ways of working with White and minority children who have with a variety of learning styles and behavioral backgrounds (Murray, McFarland-Piazza, & Harrison, 2015).

Finding Seven. Participants who sent their children to preschool believe the following factors influenced their decision: (a) social skills, (b) money (c) time (d) parent knowledge of readiness skills. Evidence-based research confirms that parents play an important role in making decisions about preschool and early intervention (Zivotic, Tanasic, & Mikanovic, 2013). Most of the participants indicated that they sent their children to preschool because of low socio-economic challenges, which included the feeling of being poor, lack of time to work at home with their children, being a single parent with only one income, family health issues, and inadequate funding for daycare or preschool. A Duncan and Magnuson (2007) study found that parents can reduce poverty in the family by sending their children to preschool. Four of the six participants noted that they receive state assistance to help alleviate the financial strain within the family. Half of the participants reported that they sent their children to preschool to prepare them for school and to provide them with the opportunity to get better jobs than their parents. Stebbins and Knitzer (2007) study revealed that children in poverty are at least 18 months behind their more affluent peers and need early intervention in order to be successful in school. Therefore, research supports the decisions that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds, are making to provide their children get an early start in school (Webster-Stratton, Jamelia-Reid, & Stoolmiller, 2008).

Participants in this study indicated that their lack of knowledge, in regards to preparing their children for kindergarten, contributed to their decision to send their children to preschool. Four of twelve participants noted that they did not have adequate skills to teach and support their children's learning. Hence, the participants sent their children to preschool in hopes of getting them ready for school. PS0003 noted that she was embarrassed that her daughter was not exposed to nursery rhymes and had a difficult time hearing and matching the ending sounds in words (PS0003, ln198). This parent revealed that she wasn't told that reading rhymes and riddles at home could have assisted her child's development of language (Hart & Risley, 1995). Five of the twelve participants agreed that preschool teachers are trained to prepare children for kindergarten and are more knowledgeable about new instructional strategies. These data indicate that parents feel less prepared to meet the needs of their children than preschool teachers.

Finding Eight. Participants who chose not to send their children to preschool were able to stay home and teach their children because they indicated they were a) college educated b) could work from home and, c) both parents resided in the home. Baroody and Diamond (2011) revealed that parents' years of schooling was found to be an important socioeconomic factor to consider when looking at the education of young children.

Finding Nine. Participants, who did not send their children to preschool, disagreed with the idea that preschool teachers are skilled with adequate training to meet the needs of all students. Four of these six participants reported that preschool teachers lack the intervention strategies required to support students who struggle with academics and behavior. Also, one of these six participants indicated that the requirements to be a preschool teacher are minimal.

Three of the six participants noted that attending preschool was not necessary because what they believe is taught in preschool is repetitive to what is taught in kindergarten. However, five of the six participants who chose not to send their children to preschool indicated that they had to supplement their home instruction with opportunities outside of the home for their children to practice and learn how to socialize and communicate with other children their age.

Finding Ten. All of the parents who did not send their children to preschool believed that parents are the first teachers and can best prepare their children with foundational skills at home. Murray, McFarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015) concluded that home educational

activities were predictors of effective parental involvement and communication strategies for families and are consistent with the academic and social behaviors valued in preschool.

Implications

This research permitted twelve parents to share both their positive and negative lived experiences and how those experiences led to their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and decisions about preschool. This study also revealed the importance of listening to the voice of parents regarding how they came to value a preschool experience and understanding why the parents who elected not to send their children to preschool have perceived preschool to be unnecessary or not useful.

Implication One. Preschool leaders should provide support for parents of preschool-aged children. Parent support may also promote positive social change because parents may feel more comfortable with sharing the trials and successes of supporting their children at home with preschools that are welcoming and promoting parents to get involved in the schools (Virginia Department of Education, 2013). Feedback from parents may assist school districts, private and public preschools, and community centers with the effective implementation parent programs that focus on essential “school readiness” skills. Most importantly, Konerza (2012) found that parents’ perceptions of their child’s school readiness skills were not generally consistent with the expectations of preschool education programs and recommended support for parents to learn more about school readiness.

The anticipated expansion of parent support programs could create positions within the school division for educators to become liaisons in the community. These supports may help inform parents of the expectations of kindergarten in relation to a child’s social emotional development and their reading, writing, and math skills (Center for Parent Resources, 2015).

Implication Two. Educational leaders should increase partnerships between parents and preschool teachers/leaders. This study contributes to the field of educational leadership as the study sought to explore the lived experiences of parents who elected to send or not to send their children to preschool and how those experience led to their decisions. Most decisions parents make not to send children to preschool are due to negative personal association with school. Ways to negate this obstacle would be to send personal invitations, openly value parents’ input,

and build on the strengths that are unique to each family. The findings from this study revealed a need for educational leaders to provide resources for parents, so that parents are more equipped to help their children learn the key school readiness skills. Paulsell et al. (2015) affirmed that successful preschool outcomes are evident when all stake-holders value increased parent access to services, continuity of caregiving for children, and parental involvement in children's early learning.

Although all of the participants in this study indicated that parental involvement was important, half of them noted a need for educational leaders to foster a preschool environment that encourages positive relationships between parents and preschool teachers/leaders, such as providing training for parents of toddler aged children (two and four years of age) to acquaint them with strategies and expectations of the necessary "readiness skills for all subjects" (Peterson, 2012). This training may potentially support increased preschool attendance in all communities, regardless of their socio economic status.

Implication Three. Educational Leaders should provide professional development opportunities for preschool teachers and elementary school principals to enhance their skills in understanding and evaluating "best practices" for literacy and language and social skills development in young children. Professional development opportunities for preschool teachers regarding appropriate behavioral and academic intervention for all children are critical to the successful implementation and expansion of preschools. Leary (2007) suggested that the achievement gap exists when students start kindergarten. Therefore, at-risk students must be placed on a level playing field in preschool.

The Paulsell et al. (2015) study recommended "enhancing capacity to offer high quality service options, develop strong partnerships, and increase staff professionalism" (p. 15). The findings of this study can support local policy makers such as school boards, superintendents, and principals in the creation of preschool committees comprised of parents, community leaders, preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, and elementary school administrators that focus on effective early intervention practices and trainings. Elementary principals also play an important role in the success of kindergarten students during their first year of school. Likewise, additional training may be provided to administrators to assist them in the guidance and evaluation of preschool and kindergarten teachers. Professional development courses that provide differentiated practices for social, emotional, and academic intervention for preschool aged

children can promote social change, and these trainings may allow educators to feel more confident and prepared to assess and teach all children the necessary readiness skills and meet their diverse needs. Current research (Ramey et al., 2011; DHHS & OHS, 2014; Paulsell et al., 2015) supports these findings as educators agree that further training is needed for preschool teachers in order to develop and sustain quality preschool programs (Barnett et al., 2012; Duncan & Magnuson, 2013; USDOE, 2014; National Institute for Early Education Research, 2015).

Implication Four. Elementary school leaders should increase data collection from parents and community members regarding the expectations of preschool and kindergarten through ongoing surveys and other feedback options. Participants in the study noted that increased communication with and outreach toward parents and community groups are also essential to successful student outcomes in kindergarten. Administering surveys to parents every year to find out what their needs and expectations are for their children may inform elementary school leaders of parents' diverse needs in regards to their children's education. The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), also recommend collecting data from a range of respondents through surveys and qualitative interviews and focus groups (Paulsell et al., 2015). With this information, preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers can participate in relevant training that will meet the diverse needs of parents and give parents strategies that can be used at home to support student learning (Gallagher, Clifford, & Maxwell, 2004). These levels of support and communication may also minimize potential disappointments and conflicts among parents, teachers, and community members regarding their knowledge of preschool and kindergarten readiness, as well as their attitudes and beliefs towards preschool (Kocyigit, 2015). These findings should be disseminated to community centers, family recreation centers, medical facilities, gyms, churches, and government resource facilities.

Implication Five. School leaders should distribute most current information about school readiness skills and school expectations to parents. Although parents who chose to educate their own children, rather than send them to preschool, reported successful kindergarten outcomes, all of them mentioned teaching basic skills that included learning the alphabet, sounds, and number sense. OHS clearly outlines the social emotional, and academic expectations for children who are 60 months of age revealing the need for parents to be aware of

the increased complexity of literacy, language, and emotionality of young children. Therefore, additional information about what every preschool aged child must acquire before entering school should be easily accessible to all parents. Sharing an overview of kindergarten curriculum/expectations and current research in regards to the impact of parental involvement may also be helpful to maintain smooth academic and social transitions into public school.

Recommendations for Further Study

Locally, findings from this study may encourage school leaders and early childhood policymakers to search for answers that may resolve the concern for children who do not attend preschool and come to kindergarten without the necessary readiness skills. School divisions are experiencing significantly low attendance rates in preschool. The following items require additional action:

1. Research that expands to a larger population of parents may assist school leaders and policy makers in focusing efforts to define specific early childhood resources in each community.
2. Additional research may include a more diverse population, as findings from this study were derived from a small number of parents who were predominately African American.
3. Expanding research that seeks the parent's perspective could be beneficial. Although Barnett et al. (2012) disclosed the benefits of preschool and its impact on a child's early exposure to readiness skills, social, and emotional development, ideas for sharing information with parents were not emphasized.
4. Research related to the effectiveness of programs to meet the needs of preschool children could provide understanding or clarification of the concerns expressed by parents in this study.
5. School leaders may want to study and enhance the variety and effectiveness of professional development opportunities provided to preschool teachers.

Researcher's Reflection

Conducting this study provided me, as an administrator, the opportunity to seek answers to questions that would support closing the “achievement gap” before students come to school with deficits in reading. Improving literacy rates have become top priority in our district. This pivotal time in early childhood education, when federal government officials are insisting that states focus on improving instruction for early learners, fueled my curiosity to find out why so many children are still not attending preschool despite spite of the reported benefits. Parents’ perceptions of the educational system are crucial to the development and sustainability of high quality preschool programs. Therefore, the interview process was a perfect opportunity for me to hear the participants’ thoughts and feelings about preschool.

Participants discussed their values, expectations, successes, failures, satisfaction, frustrations, and disappointments regarding how preschool has impacted their lives and the growth and development of their children. Parents in this study were forthcoming and appreciative of having someone listen to their concerns and affirmations about preschool and kindergarten outcomes. The motivational impact parents have on their child’s social, emotional, and academic development was evident in the experiences shared by all of the participants. These parents inspired me to continue my quest to find answers for school leaders regarding creating welcoming, informative, and incredible opportunities for parents and community leaders to work together and assist in closing the achievement gap among the youngest students in our school divisions.

Conclusions

Conclusively, all twelve participants agreed that their lived experiences shaped their attitudes and beliefs about preschool. According to Glasser (1998) an individual's belief system determines whom and what an individual will allow into his or her quality world. Glasser's concept in relation to the ideals or systems that govern behavior emerged in this study. All of the participants who did not send their children to preschool opposed sending their children because they believed that preschool was redundant or not suitable due to their own disappointments and personal experiences. On the other hand, participants who sent their children to preschool embraced the belief that preschool was essential to their children’s academic and social development due to affirmations and personal experiences. Glasser's Choice Theory and his

concept of an individual's quality world are confirmed within the findings in this study as the participants acknowledged both positive and negative beliefs towards preschool based upon their experiences relating to the people they want to be with, their desire to own and experience things, and the ideas and beliefs that govern their behavior. Moustakas (1994) explained that phenomenology is the “science of describing what one perceives, senses and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experiences” (p.26). Through two sets of interviews, the researcher found the perceptions of parents who had or had not elected to send their children to preschool and the lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Parents perceptions were based upon their lived experiences, their knowledge of school readiness skills, and their involvement with their child’s academic, social and emotional development.

Based upon the data collected, 15 themes emerged to answer the five research questions presented in this study:

- (a) social and emotional development,
- (b) preparation for kindergarten,
- (c) reasons that parents send their children to preschool,
- (d) socioeconomic challenges,
- (e) parental ill-preparedness.
- (f) parents’ desire to teach and prepare their own children for school,
- (g) parents’ desire to prevent negative behaviors that may be learned from preschool,
- (h) preschool teachers’ lack of expertise,
- (i) parents’ belief that preschool is repetitive and redundant,
- (j) past experiences of attending or not attending preschool as a child,
- (k) influences from others’ attitudes and beliefs about preschool,
- (l) satisfaction and or disappointment with preschool/kindergarten outcomes,
- (m) being successful in school,
- (n) responsibility for preparing children for kindergarten, and
- (o) trust in teachers and school leaders.

This study revealed that a combination of these factors aided in the participants’ attitudes and beliefs about preschool. Data were analyzed and coded for the use of school leaders to aid in the development of professional development opportunities for preschool teachers and preschool

leaders, to expand community outreach for parents of preschool aged children, and to inform kindergarten teachers of parents' perceptions and understanding of readiness skills.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of parents who have or have not elected to send their children to preschool and the lived experiences that contributed to those decisions. Further, the purpose was to examine the relationship between parent attitudes and beliefs about preschool and determine whether or not their lived experiences have attributed to what they have determined are the values of preschool. Findings from the study reveal that the participants have encountered both positive and negative experiences with preschool.

Although some of their attitudes and beliefs differ about the benefits of preschool, all participants want their children to be successful in school and have made attempts to support their children's growth and development, both at home and at school.

Preschool is a phenomenon of study that continues to stimulate debates among educators, administrators, and policy makers since the 1800's. As current research reveals the implications of preschool, the findings from this study add to the existing body of research, which documents the successful outcomes that children obtain in kindergarten. Additionally, these outcomes are attributed to learning the essential school readiness skills provided in preschool and in the homes where parents are actively involved in their child's social, emotional, and academic development. By developing supports for educators who teach preschool students and for parents of preschool aged children, leaders may increase preschool participation in as school districts strive to provide clear expectations of kindergarten benchmarks. Additionally, by providing appropriate resources, educational leaders will supply parents and preschool teachers with the necessary skills to effectively prepare children for success in school.

The findings in this study and current research support the idea that early intervention in preschool matters. While no one place has been found in this study to prepare children for kindergarten, preschool does serve as an inclusive and consistent idea of schooling that links educational leaders, community members, educators, and parents. In a joint effort to close the achievement gap, these stakeholders play significant roles in increasing parental involvement, improving school readiness skills, and nourishing social emotional development in young children. By working together, children will not only be promised a great future, but also they will build an educational system where failure to read, write, and compute numbers in kindergarten will not be an option. As data from this study and current research reveals, this idea

can become a reality with the support from a high quality preschool for all children and effective early intervention programs for parents to attend and learn more about school readiness.

REFERENCES

- Allison, R. (2011). *The lived experiences of general and special education teachers in inclusion classrooms: A phenomenological study* (Doctoral dissertation). Walden University Minneapolis.
- Arnold, D. H., Zeljo, A., & Doctoroff, G. L. (2008). Parent involvement in preschool: Predictors and the relation of involvement to preliteracy development. *School Psychology Review*, 37(1), 74-90.
- Barnett, W. S., Hustedt, J. T., Robin, K. B., & Schulman, K. L. (2004). The state of preschool: 2004 state preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.
- Barnett, W. S. (2008). *Preschool education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications*. Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit. Retrieved from <http://epicpolicy.org/publication/preschool-education>
- Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J. H. (2012). *The state of preschool 2012: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.
- Beatty, B. (1996). *Preschool education in America: The culture of young children from the colonial era to the present*. Retrieved from <http://yale.edu/yupbooks.asp?isbn=97803000>
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). Data analysis. In *Qualitative research for education: An Introduction to theory and methods* (pp. 159-197).
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Breckler, S. J., & Wiggins, E. C. (1992). On defining attitude and attitude theory: Once more with feeling. In A. R. Pratkanis, S. J. Breckler, & A. C. Greenwald (Eds.), *Attitude structure and function*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. pp. 407–420
- Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N., Pianta, R., & Mashburn, A. (2010). Threshold analysis of association between child care quality and child outcomes for low-income children in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 25(2), 166-176. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.2009.10.0004
- Burgess, S. (2002). Shared reading correlates of early reading skills. *Reading Online*, 5(7).

- California Department of Preschool Education. (2008). Preschool Learning Foundation.
Retrieved from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn>
- Cascio, E. (2009). *Do investments in universal early education pay off? Long-term effects of introducing kindergartens into public schools*. NBER Working Paper 14951, May 2009.
- Cascio, E., & Schanzenbach, D. 2013. The impacts of expanding access to high-quality preschool education. Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, Economic Studies Program. *The Brookings Institution*, 47(2), 127-192. doi: 10.3386/w19735
- Center for Parent Information and Resources (2015). *The head start early learning outcomes framework 2015*. Newsletter. June 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/head-start-framework-2015/>
- Christenson, S. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2001). *Schools and families: Creating essential connections for learning*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013) *Qualitative inquiry in research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Qualitative inquiry & research design choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. p. 191.
- Cunningham, D. D. (2010). Relating preschool quality to children's literacy development. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37(6), 501-507. doi:10.1007/s10643-009-0370-8
- Dearing, E., McCartney, K., & Taylor, B. A. (2009). Does higher quality early child care promote low-income children's math and reading achievement in middle childhood? *Child Development*, 80(5), 1329-1349.
- DeMulder, E. K., & Stribling, S. M. (2012). A big door opened for us: Parents perception of comprehensive preschool. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, (13), 4. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2012.13.4.328>
- Duncan, A. (2010). The state of states preschool—and round two of the RTT-early learning challenge. Remarks of Arne Duncan. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/secretary-arne-duncans-remarks-release-national-institute-early-education-research-report-state-preschool-2010>
- Duncan, G. J., Magnuson, K. (2013). Investing in preschool programs. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(2), 109-132. doi: 10.1257/jep.27.2.109

- Duncan, G., Ludwig, J., & Magnuson, K. (2007). Reducing poverty through preschool interventions. *The Future of Children*, 17, 143-160.
- Essa, E. (2010). *Introduction to the early childhood education*. CA: Wadsworth, Belmont.
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015. Pub. L. No. 114-95. Stat. 1177 (2015).
- Fan, W. & Williams, C. (2010). The effects of parental involvement on students' academic self-efficacy, engagement and intrinsic motivation. *Educational Psychology*, 30(1), 53-74. Jan 2010. doi:10.1080/01443410903353302
- Fielding, L. (2009). *Extraordinary parents*. Kennewick, WA: New Foundation Press.
- Fielding, L., Kerr, N., & Rosier, P. (2004). *Delivering on the promise*. Kennewick, WA: New Foundation Press.
- Gallagher, J., Clifford, R., & Maxwell, K. (2004) Getting from here to there: To an ideal early preschool system. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 6(1).
- Glasser, W. (1998). *Choice theory: A new psychological freedom*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Gordan, R., Hofer, K., Fujimoto, K., Risk, N., Kaestner, R., & Korenman, S. (2015) Identifying high-quality preschool programs: New evidence on the validity of the early childhood environment rating scale–revised (ECERS-R) in relation to school readiness goals, early education and development, 26:8, 1086-1110, DOI:10.1080/10409289.2015.1036348
- Guest, G., Bunce, A. & Johnson, L. (2006). "How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability". *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Hart, B. D., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul Brooks.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 6-8., 86.
- Huang, F., Ivernizzi, M., & Drake, A. (2011). The differential effects of preschool: Evaluating the Virginia preschool initiative using hierarchical logistic. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, UVA. Retrieved on August 2, 2013 from http://www.smartbeginnings.org/Portals/5/PDFs/Differential_Effects_of_Preschool.pdf
- Ivernizzi, M., Landrum, T. J., Teichman, A., & Townsend, M. (2010). Increased Implementation of emergent literacy screening in pre-kindergarten. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37(6), 437-446.

- Kagan, J. (2002). Empowerment and education: Civil rights, expert-advocates, and parent politics in Head Start, 1964-1980. *Teachers College Record*, 104(3).
- Klein, L., & Knitzer, J. (2007). Promoting effective early learning: What every policymaker and educator should know. Policy brief. National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, New York: NY.
- Klein, L., & Knitzer, J. (2006). Effective preschool curricula and teaching strategies. *Pathways to Early School Success*, (2) (September, 2006).
- Kocyigit, S. (2015). Family involvement in preschool education: Rationale, problems and solutions for the participants. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 15(1), 141-157.
- Konerza, J. A. (2012). *The effectiveness of parental involvement in preschool education programs on parent perceptions of their child's school readiness* (Order No. 3518778). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1034273475). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lib.vt.edu:8080/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview1034273475?accountid=14826>
- Kuhl, P. K. (2011). Early language learning and literacy: Neuroscience implications for education. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 5(3), 128-142.
- Leary, P. W. (2007). *An analysis of the impact of selected structures of the Virginia preschool initiative on PALS-Pre-K program summary scores for at risk preschool students in Virginia*. A dissertation. Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-06142007-213413/unrestricted/LearyDissertation.pdf>
- Magnuson, K. A., Meyers, M. K., Ruhm, C. J., & Waldfogel, J. (2004). Inequality in preschool education and school readiness. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(1), 115-157.
- Magnuson, K., Ruhn, C., & Waldfogel, J. (2007). Does preschool improve school preparation and performance? *Economics of Education Review*, 26(1), 33-51.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research a guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- Morrison, G. S. (2011). *Early childhood education today*. Upper Saddle River, N.J: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Murray, E. McFarland-Piazza, L., & Harrison, L. J. (2015). Changing patterns of parent–teacher communication and parent involvement from preschool to school, *Early Child Development and Care*, 185(7), 1031-1052. DOI:10.1080/03004430.2014.975223
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (2004). *Where we stand on school readiness*. Retrieved from <http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/psready98.pdf>
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). (2005). The Nation’s Report Card, 2005. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2015). Education Commission of the States, *Free and Compulsory School Age Requirements in the United States*, retrieved June 15, 2015, from <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/18/68/11868.pdf>. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/statereform/tab5_1.asp
- National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). Developing early literacy. Report of the National Early Literacy Panel. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy.
- National Institute for Early Education Research. (2015). *The 2014 State Preschool Yearbook: Executive summary*. New Brunswick, NJ: Author. Retrieved from http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/Inyearbook2014_executivesummary_1.pdf
- National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). (2013). 2013 State Preschool Yearbook. Retrieved from <http://nier.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2013.pdf>
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Obama, B. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2011). Remarks by the president in state of union address Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-unionaddress>
- Paulsell, D., Del Grosso, P. Bernstein S., & Bandel E. (2015). *Approaches to measuring early head start-child care partnerships: Recommendations and considerations*. OPRE Report #2015-62. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, September 2015.
- Petersen, S. (2012). School readiness for infants and toddlers? Really? Yes, really! *Young Children*, 67(4), 10-13.

- Preschool Curriculum Evaluation Research Consortium (2008). *Effects of preschool curriculum programs on school readiness* (NCER 2008-09). Washington, D.C: National Center for Education Research, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: US. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncer/pubs/20082009/pdf/20082009_rev.pdf
- Risley, T. R & Hart, B. (2006). Promoting early language development. In N. F. Watt, C. Ayoub, R. H. Bradley, J. E. Puma & W. A. LeBoeuf (Eds.), *The crisis in youth mental health: Critical issues and effective programs, Volume 4, Early intervention Programs and Policies* (pp. 83-88). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Ramey, S. L., Ramey, C. T., & Lanzi, R. G. (2004). The transition to school: Building on the preschool foundations and preparing for lifelong learning. In E. Zigler & S. I. Slyle (Eds.), *The Head Start debates* (pp. 397-413). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Ramey, C. T., Ramey, S. L., and Stokes, B. R. (2009). Effective pre-k programs: Research evidence about program dosage and student achievement. In R. Pianta (Ed.), *Pre-Kindergarten in the United States*. (pp. 79–105) Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Ramey, S. L., Crowell, N. A., Ramey, C. T., Grace, C., Timraz, N., & Davis, L. E. (2011). The dosage of professional development for early childhood professionals: How the amount and density of professional development may influence its effectiveness. *Advances in Early Education and Day Care, 15*, 11-32.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, London, New York.
- Şahin, B. K., Sak, R., & Şahin, I. T. (2013). Parents' views about preschool education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 89*, 288-292. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813029790>
- Seidman, I. E. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Slaby, R., Loucks, S., & Stelwagon, P. (2005). Why is preschool essential in closing the achievement gap? *Educational Leadership and Administration, 17*, 47-57.
- Smart Beginnings (2013). Virginia's biennial: School readiness report card. <http://www.vareportcard.com/Virginia-School-Readiness-Report-2013.pdf>

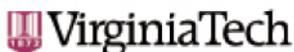
- Stebbins, H., & Knitzer, J. (2007). State of early childhood policies: Executive summary. National Center of Children in Poverty. Retrieved from http://www.nccp.org/about/publications_1075.html
- Tanner, B. (2008). The effect of preschool attendance on children's readiness for kindergarten. A Dissertation. Tennessee State University.
- Topor, D. R., Keane, S. P., Shelton, T. L., & Calkins, S. D. (2010). Parent involvement and student academic performance: A multiple meditational analysis. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, 38(3), 183-197.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *A matter of equity: Preschool in America*. Washington, DC: Author Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/early-learning/matter-equity-preschool-america.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2009) *President Obama, U.S. Secretary of Education Duncan announce national competition to advance school reform*. Retrieved from U.S Department of Education. (2004) *Serving Preschool Children Under Title I*. N.p.: Print.
- Virginia Department of Education (2013) Virginia's foundation blocks for early learning: Comprehensive standards for four-year-olds. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/foundation_blocks.pdf
- Virginia Department of Education (2007a). *Report on Virginia's foundation blocks for early learning: Standards for physical and motor and personal and social development (preschool standards)*. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/VA_Board/Meetings/2007/feb-itemN.pdf
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start (OHS). (2015). *Head start early learning outcomes framework: Ages birth to five*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Webster-Stratton, C., Jamilya-Reid, M. & Stoolmiller, M. (2008), Preventing conduct problems and improving school readiness: Evaluation of the incredible years teacher and child training programs in high risk schools. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 49: 471-488. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01861.x
- Weiss, H., Caspe, M., & Lopez, E. (2006). *Family involvement makes a difference: Family involvement in early childhood education*. Retrieved from Harvard Family Research

Project web site: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/research/nearly-childhood.html>

- Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.
- White House. (2014b). State of the Union. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sotu>
- White House. (2013). State of the Union. Retrieved from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/early-childhood>
- Williford, A. P., Downer, J. T., & Hamre, B. K. (2014). *Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Project--Phase 2, Legislative Report*. Research report prepared for Elevate Early Education (E3)
- Zivotic, P., Tanasic, J., & Mikanovic, V. B. (2013). Parents satisfaction with preschool education service, as determinant of service improvement. *Lex Localis - Journal of Local Self-Government*, 11(3), 799-810. doi:10.4335/l11.3.799-810(2013)

APPENDIX A

APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
 300 Turner Street NW
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
 email irb@vt.edu
 website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 23, 2015
TO: Carol S Cash, Catrina Cherry Manigo
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires July 29, 2020)
PROTOCOL TITLE: The Lived Experiences of Parents and Their Perceptions of Preschool in one neighborhood in Eastern Virginia
IRB NUMBER: 15-1202

Effective December 23, 2015, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6,7**
 Protocol Approval Date: **December 23, 2015**
 Protocol Expiration Date: **December 22, 2016**
 Continuing Review Due Date*: **December 8, 2016**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

APPENDIX B
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Pastor Wall Street
Amen Church
7777 Highway to Heaven
Eastern, Virginia

Dear Members of Amen Church:

I, Catrina Manigo, am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, an administrator in Virginia Beach City Public Schools, and a member of our church. You have been selected to participate in a doctoral study in educational leadership because our church is one of the largest growing congregations in the city, centrally located, and very diverse in age and gender. The study is specifically designed to collect information from parents to discover their beliefs and attitudes about preschool education, by conducting interviews.

I understand that scheduling time for an interview can be difficult. I am willing to work with your schedules and hold interviews here at the church or your home. Data collected from this study will provide school leaders and government officials with key information that may add to the improvement of preschool programs. It may also support the development of parent programs that will help increase academic achievement and child development before their children enter kindergarten.

Your participation in this study will be greatly appreciated by educators, parents, and children. **Please consider participating in this study if you (a) are at least 18 years of age and (b) have children who attended preschool or (c) have children who did not attend preschool.** If you are interested, email me your contact information to set up the interview. All information will remain confidential, names will not be reported in the data, and a copy of transcribed dialogue will be given to you before it is entered into the study. I would be pleased to send you a summary of the results upon request. If you have questions about this doctoral study, please email me at catrinam@vt.edu or call me at 757-641-4449. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Catrina Manigo
Doctoral Student

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to join a research study titled *The Lived Experiences of Parents and their perceptions about Preschool*. Preschool is a place where three and four year old children go to school before going to kindergarten. You were asked to be a part of this study because you have met the following: (a) you are a parent of a child who did not attend preschool or (b) you are a parent of a child who did attend preschool.

Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be part of the study. Catrina Manigo, the researcher and a doctoral student at Virginia Tech University, will lead the study. She is a member of this church and an administrator in Virginia Beach City Public Schools.

Background Information:

One goal of this study is to explore the experiences of parents who choose to send or not send their children to preschool. Another goal is to learn how those experiences form parent's attitudes and beliefs about preschool.

Seeking parent attitudes and beliefs about preschool may help the growth of preschool programs, increase programs for preschool parents, help educational leaders make decisions about preschool, and help teachers share ideas with parents about getting their child ready for kindergarten.

The results from this study will be used for a dissertation and publishing.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete a 30-45 minute initial interview about your experiences as a parent of a preschool aged child.
- Complete a 15 minute follow-up interview.
- Review the transcript of your interview.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

You can choose to participate or not. Your decision will not affect your membership within the church. All information will be kept confidential, which means that information will not be shared with anyone. You may stop at any time or skip questions that you feel are too personal. You may ask that your interview not be audio recorded.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There is little to no risk for joining in this study. All information will be locked up at all times. Pseudonyms, which are fake names, will be used instead of actual names. These steps will be followed to decrease the chance of information being shared, lost or stolen. What is found from this study will help school leaders and teachers understand why parents make decisions to send or not send their children to preschool.

Confidentiality:

All data that you give will not be shared and will not be used for any other purpose. The researcher will not include your name or anything that could identify you in any part of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is Catrina Manigo. You may contact her by telephone at 757-641-4449 or at catrinam@vt.edu. You may contact her advisor, Dr. Carol Cash at ccash48@vt.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

You will get a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

- I have read and understand my role as a participant in the study.
- I am 18 years of age or older, and I agree to participate in the study.
- I agree to have my interview audio recorded during the study.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Signature of the Participant _____

Signature of the Researcher _____

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Initial Interview Questions

Parent's Study ID Code _____ Gender of Parent _____

Date: _____

Did you attend Preschool? Y/N

Child 1-Age of Parent at time child was 4 years old: _____ Boy? ____ Girl? ____

School Division Child is zoned for _____

1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool?
2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?
3. Based upon your experiences, do you feel that preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?
4. What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten?
5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?
6. To what extent do you feel preschool has been successful and why?
7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?
8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?
9. What do you believe are the key elements to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?
10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?

APPENDIX E
FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

Follow Up Interview Questions

Parent's Name _____ Gender of Parent _____

Date: _____

Did you attend Preschool?

Child 1-Age of Parent at time child was 4 years old: _____ Boy? ____ Girl? ____

Child 2-Age of Parent at time child was 4 years old: _____ Boy? ____ Girl? ____

Child 3-Age of Parent at time child was 4 years old: _____ Boy? ____ Girl? ____

School Division Child is zoned for _____

4. Since our last interview, have any of your perceptions about preschool changed?
5. Based upon your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to a preschool program?
6. Is there anything else you would like to ask me?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I. Introduction/Purpose

- a. Welcome and thank participant for volunteering.
- b. Provide participant with bottled water.
- c. Review the four primary purposes for the study with participant.

II. Consent Procedures

- a. Provide the participant with the informed consent form and review the information contained in this form.
- b. Provide time for the participants to ask questions as needed.
- c. Obtain the signature of the participant on the informed consent form.
- d. Establish a pseudonym for the school and for the participant.

III. Semi-structured Interview

- a. Begin interview discussion using the pseudonym selected throughout the interview.

At the conclusion of the interview, thank the participant for their assistance with the study.

APPENDIX G
MEMBER CHECKING FORM

Dear Participant,

Thank you so much for participating in the study entitled: titled *The Lived Experiences or Parents and Their perceptions about preschool*. The purpose of member checking is to ensure that your responses were accurate and consistent. If there are no objections, complete the member checking questions, sign this form and return it via e-mail. If you would like to add to your responses. Please sign this electronically or print and sign to validate your responses. Please send all electronic responses or questions to: catrinam@vt.edu. Thank you.

Please indicate a response by checking yes or no.

1. Is this transcription about your lived experiences complete?

_____ yes _____ no

2. Does the transcription accurately describe your attitudes and beliefs regarding preschool?

_____ yes _____ no

3. Is there anything in the transcription that has been misrepresented?

_____ yes _____ no

If so, please type corrections
here: _____

Printed Name of
Participant

Participant's Written or
Electronic* Signature

Researcher's Written or Catrina Manigo or catrinam@vt.edu
Electronic* Signature

APPENDIX H
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW MATRIX

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Follow Up Questions	Themes
<p>1. What do parents believe are the values of preschool?</p>	<p>1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool? 4. What amount of support do you feel is necessary for successfully preparing students to enter kindergarten? 6. To what extend do you feel preschool has been successful? 7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child’s academic and social development during their preschool years? 8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool? 9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?</p>		<p>Theme 1 Socialization-share, get along with others, communication Theme 2 Preparation for Kindergarten environment</p>
<p>2. Why do parents decide to send their children to preschool?</p>	<p>1. Based upon your experience, how do you define preschool? 2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child? 5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences? 8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool? 9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?</p>	<p>F2. Based upon your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to a preschool program?</p>	<p>Theme 1 Why parents send their children Theme 2 Socio Economic Challenges Theme 3 Parents Lack of knowledge/ expectations about school readiness</p>

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Follow Up Questions	Themes
<p>3. Why do parents decide not to send their children to preschool?</p>	<p>2. What is or has been your role as a parent of a preschool aged child?</p> <p>3. Based upon your experiences do you feel preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?</p> <p>5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?</p> <p>8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?</p> <p>9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?</p> <p>10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program</p>	<p>F2. Based upon your experiences with preschool aged children, what suggestions would you give someone who has just discovered that he or she may have to make a decision to send their child to a preschool program?</p>	<p>Theme 1 Parents want to teach and prepare own child for school</p> <p>Theme 2 Parents want to prevent negative learned behaviors that may come from preschool</p> <p>Theme 3 Preschool teachers lack expertise</p> <p>Theme 4 Parents believe that preschool is repetitive</p>
<p>4. What lived experiences do parents indicate have impacted their attitudes and beliefs towards preschool?</p>	<p>1. Based upon your experiences, do you feel that preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?</p> <p>3. Based upon your experiences do you feel preschool teachers have the expertise necessary to work with students? Why do you feel this way?</p> <p>5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?</p> <p>7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child's academic and social development during their preschool years?</p> <p>8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?</p> <p>10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?</p>		<p>Theme 1 Past experience of attending or not attending Preschool as a child</p> <p>Theme 2 Influences from others attitudes and beliefs about preschool</p> <p>Theme 3 Disappointment and or Satisfaction with Preschool/ Kindergarten Outcomes</p>

Research Questions	Interview Questions	Follow Up Questions	Themes
<p>5. Based upon their lived experiences, what intrinsic morals do parents reflect upon when enrolling their child in a preschool?</p>	<p>5. Describe a time when preschool was successful or unsuccessful. What key elements do you feel contributed to the outcome of the experiences?</p> <p>6. To what extend do you feel preschool has been successful?</p> <p>7. What has been your overall experience of involvement with your child’s academic and social development during their preschool years?</p> <p>8. How have these experiences played a role in relation to your feelings about preschool?</p> <p>9. What do you believe are the key points to focus on when assisting a child with school readiness skills?</p> <p>10. How do you feel your child performed in public kindergarten in relation to their attendance or non-attendance in a preschool program?</p>		<p>Theme 1 Being successful in school</p> <p>Theme 2 Responsibility for preparing children for Kindergarten</p> <p>Theme 3 Trust Teachers/ School Leaders</p>