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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AND COLLABORATION PRACTICES WITH
NON-TRADITIONAL FAMILIES

A DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

BONNIE KILFOYLE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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ABSTRACT

The “typical” American family is becoming more diverse with more families encompassing different configurations of individuals, such as blended families, multi-generational families, foster families, and single parent families (Lambie, 2011). This research study used qualitative research methods (teacher interviews) to investigate the extent to which teachers in a Catholic school received training on collaborating with non-traditional families and family diversity. Additionally, this study investigated the perceptions teachers had about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, grandparents raising grandchildren, and divorced parents and whether these perceptions changed after receiving a brief professional development on working with these types of families. Although the sample size was small, the results of this study suggested that the participants slightly increased their out-reach practices to non-traditional families after receiving a short-training related to working with non-traditional families. Teachers in the study also reported increased cultural sensitivity and a better understanding of working with different types of families following the in-person training.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

A consistent research finding has been that there are many positive benefits to family-school collaboration (Minke & Anderson, 2005, Crea, Reynolds & Degnan, 2015). Strong partnerships between families and schools can lead to improved attendance and better social-emotional outcomes for students (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). However, despite the many benefits of family-school collaboration, teachers report feeling unprepared and poorly trained to work with families (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). The changing structure of the American family in recent years also presents new challenges to home-school collaboration efforts. Single parent, divorced, multi-generational, foster families, gay/lesbian families, and other family configurations are becoming more prevalent (Lambie, 2011). Teachers report having limited knowledge of how family diversity might impact their teaching, and, in some cases, teachers hold strong biases against non-traditional families (grandparents raising grandchildren, gay, and lesbian, foster families, step-parents, etc.) (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013). School systems that want to develop inclusive collaboration practices, sensitive to the needs of all families, should consider how to engage families from varying family structures. This is an area where many districts have struggled and the highest levels of parental

involvement in schools continue to be among households with students' biological, married parents (Myers & Myers, 2014).

The need to develop more inclusive family-school collaboration practices is not restricted to the public sector. Although private schools are sometimes perceived as being exclusionary, many non-public schools are considering how to attract a more diverse student body (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). Catholic schools across the nation have been making an effort to improve their capacity to serve students with disabilities or other barriers to student success. As Catholic schools enroll the largest percentage of students attending private schools, they are more likely than other types of private schools to serve students from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). Furthermore, improving outcomes for marginalized students and families is often central the mission of Catholic schools (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). As Catholic schools become more inclusionary, they struggle with developing clear policies for how to best serve the needs of all their students and with providing appropriate professional development to their teachers (Bello, 2006). How to serve students from non-traditional family structures may also be a consideration as student diversity increases within the Catholic schools.

Statement of the Problem

While little research has been done on collaboration practices with non-traditional families, what research exists suggests typical home-school collaboration practices in school districts may not adequately address the needs of these families. Grandparents raising grandchildren reported negative interactions with school personnel including a lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of teachers and a poor understanding of how a

child's home situation could impact behavior (Gibson & McGlynn, 2013). These sentiments were echoed by other kinship care-givers, who struggled to get needed services and information from the schools (Strozier, McGrew, Krisman, & Smith, 2005). Even foster families, who typically had greater access to resources and information, reported schools were unwelcoming environments and had negative stereotypes of children in foster care (Altshuler, 2003). A lack of training for teachers on working with non-traditional families may contribute to the negative stereotyping of children in out-of-home care and the absence of collaboration with these families. Understandably, teachers bring their own experiences to the classroom. However, teachers may benefit from professional development to increase their effectiveness when working in settings that are different from their own background (Ford & Quinn, 2010). Providing instruction in culturally responsive teaching practices may help teachers to develop the necessary dispositions to work with diverse students and families (Ford & Quinn, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the extent to which, if at all, teachers in a Catholic school received training on collaborating with non-traditional families and family diversity. Were teachers in the study aware of various types of family structures and the impact family structure can have on that family's level of school involvement? Additionally, this study investigated the perceptions teachers had about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, grandparents raising grandchildren, and divorced parents and whether or not these perceptions changed after receiving a brief professional development on working with these types of families. The professional

development session also included a component where teachers were taught how to apply professional development on working with these types of families. The professional development session also included a component where teachers were taught how to apply communication skills, such as active listening and conflict resolution practices to scenarios involving non-traditional families. This study could potentially provide information to address staff training needs and increase collaboration practices with all types of families. It could also provide teachers with tools to assist in communicating with families. While this study is being conducted in a Catholic school, being able to better serve diverse families is applicable to all settings that serve children.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of Home-School Collaboration

Home school collaboration has been broadly defined as families and educators working together to increase students' academic achievement and promote social-emotional growth (Cox, 2005). The benefits of schools partnering with families are numerous and include better student attendance, higher graduation rates, and increased academic test scores (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2010). Social-emotional gains have also been documented for students when families are involved in the educational process. Families who had higher levels of involvement in their children's educational activities reported increased confidence in their ability to help their children with their school assignments as well as a greater sensitivity to their children's social-emotional and intellectual needs (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2010). Clearly students benefit when families and schools can work together to support their needs.

Collaboration with families has been a topic of interest both in research studies and educational policies. The two most recent federal laws pertaining to education, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed in 2002, and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), passed in 2015 both include mandates related to family engagement in the schools (Shoffner, 2016). While researchers have looked at different aspects of home-school collaboration, generally the most effective home-school interventions are ones in

which families and educators believe they are working together towards a common goal (Cox, 2005). Partnering with families and allowing them to have a voice in decision making appears to have the greatest impact on student success. When there is two-way communication between school staff and families and families are treated as equals, home-school collaboration efforts are more effective (Cox, 2005).

Although children spend a great deal of time in school, there is learning that goes on in the home environment as well. Families are the foremost experts on their children and often have information that is helpful to school staff in working with students. Since the beginning of formal education, families and educators have developed relationships with each other (Reilly, 2008). However, the nature of these relationships and the role of schools has changed throughout history. Depending on reform efforts, the degree of family involvement in schools has varied. While parents were once seen as the primary educators of their children, this view has shifted to one where the schools are primarily responsible for children's education (Reilly, 2008). Only recently has there been research documenting how the home can function as a learning environment that can either support or detract from what is learned in school (Christenson, 2004). When school and family/home environments are viewed as complimentary learning environments, students experience enhanced learning outcomes (Christenson, 2004).

View of Home-School Collaboration within the Catholic Schools

Parental involvement is considered a central tenant of Catholic education (Crea et al., 2015). As parents are believed to have a primary role in their children's education, home school collaboration efforts take on particular significance within the Catholic

schools (Crea et al., 2015). The Catholic Church views parents as children's first instructors and models of the faith and the schools as an extension and reinforcement of what is being taught at home. The importance of the home-school relationship is recorded in over 300 years of official church documents (Frabutt, Holter, Nuzzi, Rocha, & Cassel, 2010). Active parent participation in school functions and close collaboration with teachers is crucial to the mission of Catholic schools (Frabutt et al., 2010).

Challenges of Effective Home-School Collaboration

Although schools have mandates to engage families, and these practices are supported by research, school districts often struggle with how to reach out to their most at-risk families. While home school collaboration benefits all students, it appears to be particularly important for students from high poverty areas (Hill & Taylor, 2004). However, these students' families are the least likely to be involved in home-school collaboration efforts. Parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds encounter numerous barriers, which may limit their availability to engage in school activities. Lack of flexibility in work schedules, transportation difficulties, child-care availability and language barriers are all factors which may impact the participation of low-income and minority parents in the school setting (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Schools districts for the most part have not figured out how to adequately tackle these barriers.

While there are several barriers external to the school that can limit families' engagement, barriers can exist within the school itself. Regrettably, families sometimes have negative experiences with the schools, which can lead to them feeling like the schools do not respect their needs. Previous negative experiences with schools can affect

families' comfort level with the schools and willingness to be involved in their children's education within the school setting (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Furthermore, schools do not always promote culturally responsive engagement efforts and can be inflexible to parent needs. Teachers and schools that are less supportive of family school engagement may be more likely to stereotype minority and low-income parents. However, when teachers and schools actively promote family engagement, the levels of family engagement tend to be higher (Wang & Sheik-Khalil, 2014).

The lack of participation of families from low-income backgrounds in school activities does not appear to reflect how they feel about education. Low-income parents report having similar educational goals for their children as parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds, but they may lack the time, resources, and access to information they need to fully participate in their children's education (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Work schedules and other responsibilities may also limit a family's ability to get support and information from other families. Several studies have investigated how social capital, such as the opportunity to network with other families and communicate about school policies and practices, can impact parents' level of involvement. Low-income families tend to have lower levels of social-capital than families from higher socio-economic classes (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, families from low-income backgrounds may not view themselves as being competent in changing their children's academic achievement or behavior (Wang, & Sheikh-Kahlil, 2014). This can lead to families avoiding communicating with the school and spending time there. Families who have limited education or negative educational incidents may also be less likely to initiate

interactions with school staff because of their previous experiences with the schools (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Unfortunately, there is often a disconnect between educators, who see families as not being involved and families who might not define their involvement in the same way as the schools do (Minke & Anderson, 2005). Schools frequently measure family involvement through attendance at school activities, but families are more likely to be involved in children's education through activities at home. This is particularly true for ethnic minority families and families whose primary language is not English (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Additionally, culture and background appears to influence how families communicate with schools. These cultural differences in how families and educators perceive school involvement can lead schools to conclude parents are disinterested and families to feel like they are not welcome in the schools (Minke & Anderson, 2005). There is a cycle in at-risk schools of families not initiating contact and schools failing to follow-up with how they can better engage these families. Schools located in high-poverty areas are less likely to promote family engagement, regardless of research which indicates families in these communities need more information on how to support their children's academic achievement (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Cultural and racial differences between teaching staff in urban areas and the students they work with, may also contribute to teachers' challenges in forming meaningful relationships with the families they work with. Both teachers and families can be hesitant to communicate with each other due to differences in their backgrounds (Ford & Quinn, 2010). For example, in many urban areas most teachers are white,

female, and middle class, while the students they work with are primarily African American and low-income. Teachers with limited exposure to African American youth are more likely to ascribe negative stereotypes to their students such as perceiving them as being violent, lazy, and unmotivated (Ford & Quinn, 2010). Furthermore, teachers may also project their own experiences with education onto their expectations of students. Given the cultural differences between most teachers' backgrounds and the students they teach, teacher education programs should play a role in helping teachers to develop the necessary dispositions to effectively interact with diverse students and families. While it would be nearly impossible for teachers to avoid bringing their own experiences to the classroom, they can be instructed in culturally responsive teaching practices (Ford & Quinn, 2010).

As previously mentioned, teachers are more likely to view the behaviors of students and their families negatively when they do not come from the same cultural or ethnic background as the students they work with (Ford & Quinn, 2010). However, even when teachers come from a similar background to their students, they tend to compare levels of parent involvement in their school settings to what is typical in White, middle class environments (Christianakis, 2011). It is not clear why this is so, but researchers have speculated that teachers own experiences and values relating to education may influence their expectations of families. Despite research to the contrary, there continues to be a wide-spread belief in schools that low-income African American and Latino families are not interested in their children's education (Christianakis, 2011).

Teachers can make incorrect conclusions about families' behaviors when they fail to consider cultural factors. While parents may defer to educators out of respect for their expertise, this is often seen as avoidance and disinterest by the schools (Christianakis, 2011). One study found that middle class African American parents who had a concern were more likely to approach the teacher, while African American parents from lower socio-economic classes were more likely to adopt a "watch and wait" approach. Not initiating contact was viewed by school staff as not caring, but both groups of parents saw themselves as being very involved in their children's education (Minke & Anderson, 2005). Cultural reasons are often related to parents' lack of contact with the schools. Parents from Latino backgrounds, for example, often expect the teachers to initiate contact, while the teachers are expecting the parents to contact them (Christianakis, 2011). This can lead to an unproductive loop where neither group is getting information from the other. Furthermore, many cultures conceptualize family to include extended family such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins, but teachers typically only reach out to a student's parents to discuss concerns (Ford & Quinn, 2010). Families can feel offended when the schools do not include them in discussions. These kinds of cultural disconnects can result in less communication between schools and families and can also contribute to the development of an adversarial relationship between families and schools (Christianakis, 2011). Educators who understand the dynamics of family relationships and cultural influences may form more positive relationships with families. Training for teachers that includes an examination of their own biases, discussions of social justice and information on how to become reflective practitioners can assist teachers with

becoming more effective at working with students from cultural and ethnic backgrounds that are different from their own (Ford & Quinn, 2010).

Preparation of Educators in Working with Families

Despite the many documented benefits of home-school collaboration, schools vary in their ability to effectively implement these practices (Minke & Anderson, 2005). Educators report they are poorly prepared to work with families and do not feel competent when interacting with families (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). This lack of sufficient training is particularly pronounced for educators working in urban environments with students from cultural and ethnic backgrounds that are dissimilar to their own (Ford & Quinn, 2010). Only in the last 25 years have teacher training programs started to routinely include education in diversity and multicultural issues (Ford & Quinn, 2010). Additionally, few pre-service teacher preparation programs require specific course-work in home-school collaboration and even fewer states mandate this type of course-work in their certification requirements (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). Although teamwork and collaborating with diverse families are widely acknowledged to be important aspects of teachers' and administrators' roles, few universities offer formal course-work in these topics (Epstein & Sanders, 2006). Teachers' lack of preparation in working with families can lead to these teachers not initiating relationships with families and sometimes can even result in detrimental interactions (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). One study, which looked at the difference in home-school collaboration practices between teachers who had received course-work in home-school collaboration and those who had not, found that teachers who had not received the coursework were significantly

more likely to make negative phone calls home about students and view home-visits as dangerous (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). The more competent teachers perceived themselves to be in working with families, the more likely they were to engage in activities which promote family engagement (Manz, Mautone & Martin, 2009). Teachers who believed they were effective in partnering with families were more likely to plan learning activities with a home component, encourage families to volunteer in classrooms, and invite families to participate in decision making processes (Manz et al., 2009). Teachers who actively encourage parent involvement, send a message to parents that they are welcome in the schools and increase both the extent and effectiveness of parent involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Both practical and pedagogical training for school staff is essential to help them build needed skills in working with families (Minke & Anderson, 2005).

Preparation of Educators in Working with Non-Traditional Families

Compounding the problem of educators not having enough training in how to work with families is the fact the structure of the American family is changing. While two parents raising biological children used to be the norm, families may now consist of single parent, divorced, multi-generational, foster families, gay/lesbian families, and other family configurations (Lambie, 2011). Grandparents raising grandchildren are also becoming a more prominent family structure in recent years (Hayslip & Kaminski, 2005). Family structure can act as a barrier to family involvement in the school setting (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). While not always the case, divorce, separation, single-parenting and other changes in family structure can impact how available families are to participate in

school activities (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Additionally, in some types of non-traditional families, such as foster families and grandparents raising grandchildren, both the family and the teachers may be confused about their roles causing the teachers not to reach out and the families not to initiate contact (Carlisle, Stanley & Kemple, 2005).

While many teacher education programs include course-work on diversity and multi-cultural issues, it is not common for family diversity to be addressed in the curriculum (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013). One study that looked at the attitudes and preparation of pre-service teachers in working with diverse families, found that most teachers surveyed had not thought of family diversity as an issue they might encounter in their classrooms. Furthermore, when asked to share biases they might have against non-traditional families (adoptive, gay, and lesbian, foster families, step-parents etc.), many teachers reported strong prejudicial beliefs against these non-traditional family forms (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013). Although little research has been conducted regarding the perceptions and competence level of teachers in working with non-traditional families, initial research seems to suggest there is a need for teachers to receive further training and to examine their biases in working with these types of families (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013). A review of the literature on family diversity indicated many Americans continue to perceive a heterosexual husband and wife and their biological off-spring as the ideal family form with other family forms being perceived as deviant or broken (Harris, 2008).

The lack of attention to family diversity in teacher education programs is significant as these non-traditional families are hardly in the minority. Less than 50% of children in American schools now come from biological, two-parent, heterosexual

households (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013). Teachers are likely to encounter children from a variety of family backgrounds in their classrooms and need to consider how they will promote collaboration practices with these families (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013).

Characteristics of Children in Foster Care and Kinship Care Arrangements

Types of non-traditional family structures that are becoming more common are children living with relatives (kinship care) or in foster care, rather than with a custodial parent. Over half a million children nation-wide are living in foster-care placements (Zetlin et al., 2010). The number of children living in kinship care, such as with a grandparent or another relative is more difficult to estimate because many of these arrangements are informal ones. However, 2010 census data reported there were around 1.8 million children under 18 living in a house-hold headed by an aunt, uncle, sibling or other relative (Washington et al., 2013). Additionally, more than 5.6 million children nationwide were living in a household headed by a grand-parent. The increasing numbers of children living in both formal and informal out of home placements suggests teachers are likely to work with these children in their classrooms.

Teachers may be more effective at working with children in kinship and foster care when they are aware of how these living situations may impact student's academic and social-emotional functioning. This can help teachers to recognize students' needs early on and provide support (Zetlin et al., 2010). Children living in foster care can be at greater risk of school failure due to their removal from the home. A lack of stability and continuity when moving between different homes and schools as well as trauma experienced prior to their foster placement, may all contribute to decreased educational

outcomes for these students (Zetlin et al., 2010). Foster children are likely to experience social-emotional, behavioral, and academic difficulties in the school setting (Altshuler, 2003). Additionally, children in foster care placements are also more likely to be retained in a grade level and perform significantly lower on standardized tests of academic achievement than non-foster youth (Zetlin et al., 2010). Similar educational difficulties are present in children living in kinship care arrangements. Children in kinship care exhibit a comparable rate of behavioral problems in the school setting to children in foster care (Strozier et al., 2005). They also are more likely than children in the general population to demonstrate learning and social-emotional difficulties. Behavioral, academic, and emotional problems in children in kinship care can also be exacerbated due to the informal nature of many of these arrangements. Children in kinship care have less access to mental health and other services than they would if they were in a foster-care arrangement (Strozier et al., 2005). Teachers and school staff can help link both foster and kinship-care families to interventions and supports. However, they often are unaware of the issues these families face and how to assist them.

How Non-Traditional Families View their Experiences with the Schools

While the research on how schools work with non-traditional families is limited, what research there is indicates schools are falling short in attempts to engage these families. The highest levels of school-based parental involvement, in terms of frequency and variety of activities, continues to be among biological, married parents (Myers & Myers, 2014). One reason non-traditional families may be more difficult to engage is that they frequently exhibit other risk factors, which can result in lower levels of school

involvement. For example, children living in kinship care, such as with a grandparent or another relative are more likely to be living in poverty. Their caregivers, as a group, also have lower levels of educational attainment, less access to resources and lower levels of social-capital than biological, married parents do (Gibson & McGlynn, 2013). It is difficult for families to engage with schools when they are focused on getting their basic needs met. Furthermore, transitioning to a new role and not knowing how they should be involved may contribute to why non-traditional families have less contact with the schools. Educators may also be unclear about who the important adults are in a child's life when families come from a non-traditional family structure (Duncan, 1992). In some cases, there may be legal restrictions on who can communicate with the school. Not having policies available or being aware of what school policy is can result in educators not connecting with non-traditional families. Unfortunately, bias can also be a factor in why school staff do not reach out to non-traditional families. Although non-traditional family structures are becoming more common, they are still frequently viewed by school staff in a negative manner (Duncan, 1992).

Grandparents raising grandchildren are one group that may avoid interactions with schools due to perceived bias. A qualitative study that looked at the experiences of grandmothers raising grandchildren whose grand-children had received out of school suspensions, reported largely negative interactions with the schools (Gibson & McGlynn, 2013). While it is possible these grandmothers were receiving negative reports due to their grandchildren's behavior problems, teachers may also have difficulty understanding the reasons behind the children's behavior. Grandmothers in the study reported educators

had a poor understanding of the behaviors of children living in out-of-home care. A lack of cultural sensitivity on the part of teachers and a negative view of their custody arrangement were other concerns reported by the grandmothers in this study (Gibson & McGlynn, 2013). Furthermore, when grandmothers approached the school with suggestions for how to work with their grandchildren, they stated they felt dismissed (Gibson & McGlynn, 2013). Other studies which have looked at the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren described how grandparents were unaware of resources available from schools and reported a tense relationship with school staff (Montoro-Rodríguez, Smith, & Palmieri, 2012). This strained relationship may be the result of the views school staff had of working with these families. One study, which looked at the attitudes of school personnel (teachers, administrators, counselors, and school psychologists), found that these individuals rated grand-children raised by grandparents as taking up a significant amount of their time. The same study also found that teachers consistently rated the classroom behaviors of grand-children raised by their grandparents as more problematic than their grandparents did (Montoro-Rodríguez et al., 2012). These findings suggest that school staff may have negative stereotypes about grandparents raising grand-children and communication is lacking between school personnel and these families.

Grandparents raising grand-children are the largest group acting as kinship caregivers and therefore constitute much of research on the subject. However, children raised by other relatives exhibit similar difficulties in the school setting, such as behavioral problems, learning challenges and poor academic performance (Strozier et al., 2005). As

with grandparents raising grand-children, other relatives acting as kinship care-givers have difficulty accessing resources and supports to assist the children they are caring for. Because many kinship care arrangements are informal, schools can help to provide services and information families may not otherwise be able to access (Strozier et al., 2005).

Although foster families typically had more access to resources than kinship care families, there was not always a link between school-based services and social-service agencies (Altshuler, 2003). Schools and outside agencies often had an adversarial relationship which resulted in a lack of sharing of information. Like students in kinship care, teachers also demonstrated negative stereotypes about students in foster care and attributed student's academic and behavioral difficulties to their home situation. Foster parents also reported feeling unwelcome in the school setting (Altshuler, 2003). More training is needed for teachers and other school professionals on working with families and students in foster and kinship care arrangements. While not much research has been done on how schools collaborate with these families, initial research seems to suggest schools have a negative view of students in out of home placements and do not reach out to these families.

Diversity within the Catholic Schools

Little research has been done on the prevalence of non-traditional families within the Catholic schools. However, it is becoming more common for private schools in general to consider how to attract a more diverse student body (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). Additionally, there is research to indicate Catholic schools are becoming more diverse.

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Catholic schools serve families from varying racial, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds (Shriberg et al., 2012). The changing student demographics in Catholic schools, may be the result of efforts by the schools to recruit from a wider base of families. Nationwide, Catholic schools are struggling to keep their doors open due to declining enrollments (Henk, Maney, Baxter, & Montejano, 2013). Many Catholic schools have begun to accept non-Catholic students as a way to increase the total number of students they have enrolled (Hallinan & Kubitschek, 2010). As a result, the composition of urban Catholic schools is more closely mirroring the student population of urban public schools with more students coming from minority and low-income backgrounds (Hallinan & Kubitschek, 2010).

Serving students and families from traditionally marginalized backgrounds is important to the Catholic philosophy of education (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). Numerous Catholic schools have missions that are social-justice focused. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has made a commitment to make Catholic education available to every Catholic family that wishes to send their children there (Bello, 2006). However, unlike public schools, Catholic schools are not legally required to meet the needs of every child. Therefore, these schools often lack the appropriate structure, policies and professional development for teachers that is needed to effectively serve a more inclusive student population (Bello, 2006). Despite a philosophy of being welcoming to all students and families, Catholic schools often struggle with implementing programming that would allow them to serve a more diverse student body including students with special-needs and students at-risk (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). While there is some evidence that Catholic

schools can have positive educational outcomes with students in poverty and special-education students, there is considerable variability in the types of programs and services that are offered at different schools (Bello, 2006; Scanlan & Tichy, 2015). Similar to the public-school setting, financial constraints, organizational limitations, and a lack of training for teachers can present barriers for Catholic schools in offering services to a broader range of students and families (Bello, 2006; Scanlan & Tichy, 2015).

Implications for Professional Development

While the importance of collaborating with families is widely acknowledged in the literature, teachers often struggle with how to develop partnerships with families (Sewell, 2012). This may be due to a lack of preparation for both pre-service and in-service teachers in working with families. A 2006 survey of public school teachers found teachers consistently reported feeling underprepared to work with families and finding communicating with families to be one of their greatest challenges (Sewell, 2012). A lack of confidence in these skills sometimes resulted in teachers developing misconceptions about working with families. Teachers frequently reported they expected their relationships with families to be characterized by conflict and were concerned families would judge their teaching practices (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004). Not surprisingly, many teachers described actively avoiding interacting with families (Sewell, 2012).

These misconceptions and avoidance may be due in part to a lack of prior exposure and experience in working with families. When teacher education programs do provide course-work on how to collaborate with families, it is mainly limited to early

childhood and special-education teacher candidates (Patte, 2011). Many educators go into the field feeling unprepared to initiate meaningful relationships with families (Patte, 2011). Although field placements are common in teacher education programs, students may have limited exposure and hands-on experience with families during these placements (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004). Furthermore, research indicates teachers receive little training in working with culturally diverse students and their families (Tucker et al., 2005).

Several studies have investigated how training in communication skills can impact teacher effectiveness. These skills are relevant to collaboration with families as they can help teachers to form positive partnerships with families (Mahon, 2010). Fear of conflict and defensiveness were found to contribute both to avoidance of interactions with families and an increase in negative interactions between teachers and families. However, teachers who maintained open, transparent communication with families reported more positive relationships (Mahon, 2010). Training teachers in how to communicate with families may increase their confidence and proficiency in this area. Another study, which trained teachers to use active listening skills when working with parents, such as the use of open ended questions, reflection, and paraphrasing, found teachers reported they were more likely to utilize these skills when working with families. They also reported an increased confidence in their ability to work with families (Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012). Although the research on training teachers in communication and conflict management is relatively limited, initial studies suggest this type of training has positive results (Mahon, 2010).

Additionally, research has indicated that good communication skills are important in interacting with families from diverse backgrounds. Cultural sensitivity involves an awareness of the role verbal and non-verbal communication and the differences in cultural norms (Tucker et al., 2005). Training teachers to examine their own biases has been demonstrated to increase teacher effectiveness in working with diverse students. Several studies have demonstrated that activities and course-work in teacher preparation programs can increase teachers' cultural-sensitivity by encouraging them to discuss and reflect upon multicultural issues (Lin, Lake, & Rice, 2008). Learning about student's family backgrounds and home life, can also help teachers to develop greater understanding in working with diverse families. Opportunities to apply these skills using role-play have also been shown to increase teacher competence in this area (Lin et al., 2008).

While there has been little research done on training teachers to work with non-traditional families, one study indicated examining potential biases and becoming a reflective practitioner were important in working with these kinds of families as well (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013). Many pre-service teachers in the study were unaware of the negative stereotypes they held about working with non-traditional families and how this might impact their work with students from these backgrounds. Although the study did not directly train teachers on communication skills, it did address how miscommunications can result from teachers' lack of awareness about a student's family situation (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013).

A recurring theme throughout studies on teacher training was that these trainings did not need to be extensive to be effective. While ongoing consultation and support are important, even brief trainings can help to reduce teacher bias and increase teacher effectiveness in working with diverse students (Tucker et al., 2005). Both the trainings on conflict resolution (Mahon, 2010) and the training on active listening skills (Symeou et al., 2012) were designed to be implemented in brief modules to accommodate the scheduling needs of in-service teachers and districts. The training on working with diverse families (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013) was designed to be conducted within a two-hour class period. In service trainings, while not as in-depth as a full course on the topic, can still have a meaningful impact on teacher perceptions and practices.

Conclusion

When schools develop strong partnerships with families, students experience better social-emotional and academic outcomes (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). However, teachers often struggle with how to best reach out to families and report feeling poorly trained to initiate relationships with families (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). Compounding the challenges of effective family school collaboration, is the fact that schools are becoming increasingly diverse. A “typical” family in today’s schools might include many different configurations of individuals including blended families, multi-generational families, foster families, and single parent families (Lambie, 2011). Grandparent headed households where there is no biological parent present are also becoming more common nationwide (Kresak et al., 2014).

Both public and private schools are considering how to better serve the needs of a more varied student body (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). Cultural sensitivity and good communication skills are important in interacting with families from diverse backgrounds (Mahon, 2010). Unfortunately, research indicates teachers receive little training in working with culturally diverse students and their families (Tucker et al., 2005). While the research on training teachers in communication and conflict management is relatively limited, initial studies suggest this type of training has positive results (Mahon, 2010).

Research Questions

- To what extent, if any, do teachers in the study have training in collaborating with families and family diversity?
- To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?
- To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?
- To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Setting

This study recruited teachers from a Catholic, PK-8th elementary school in an urban, Midwestern, US city. The school is a co-educational school. The Archdiocese of this city approved the study, as did the principal of the school in which it was conducted. The school is located in a low-income neighborhood and serves a student body of 326 students (AdvancEd, 2015). The majority of the students are Hispanic or Latino (94%) and supports are offered at the school for English Learners. An estimated 50% of the school's students are considered English Learners. The school also has an estimated 20 students with special needs and IEPs enrolled. Academically, students achieve at or above the national average in reading and math on high-stakes testing (AdvancEd, 2015). Ninety-nine percent of the faculty at the school hold advanced degrees (Private School Review, 2018).

Family school collaboration and valuing students' individual differences are both central to the mission of the school. An excerpt from the school's mission statement reads that the schools goals are to, "Inspire a community that develops and values each individual's gifts and talents and empower students to make a positive impact on their family, school and community" (Private School Review, 2018). The mission statement also states the school values and believes in, "Parents as the prime educators of their

children and the collaboration of parents and teachers in the development of each child” (Private School Review, 2018).

Participants

The participants in this study were a convenience sample of elementary school teachers from the school described above. The faculty at the school includes 18 full-time teachers and two full-time administrators. Demographic information important to the study includes grade level taught, number of years of teaching experience, the number of years the teacher has taught at the school and level of university training a teacher has received (i.e., Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctorate). Nine consents were obtained from teachers at the school to participate in the study and four teachers completed the training and both the pre and post interviews for the study. The participants in the study were all female and identified as being Caucasian.

Instruments

This study used qualitative research methods to assess whether teachers’ attitudes and practices towards working with non-traditional families (foster families, grandparents raising grand-children, divorced parents, and kinship care families, such as relatives caring for children) changed after receiving a short training. Teachers participated in a 30-minute interview before receiving the training and a 30-minute, follow-up interview two weeks after receiving the training to assess whether their perceptions changed. Interview questions were designed to link up with the four main research questions (see Appendix A and Appendix B for interview questions).

Procedures

Teachers were informed of the study by e-mail (see Appendix C for recruitment e-mail) and the researcher attended a regularly scheduled staff meeting to provide further information on the study and recruit participants. The date and time of the recruitment session and staff training was determined in collaboration with the school's principal. Dates and times for individual teachers' pre- and post-training interviews were scheduled with the individual teachers to occur after-school hours or on weekends. All pre-training interviews were scheduled to be completed before the training date. Following the recruitment session, the principal sent an e-mail to all the teachers with a link to information about informed consent (see Appendix D for informed consent document). Teachers who did not wish to participate could opt out at that time, while teachers who wished to participate would sign an informed consent document electronically. Several of the teachers also signed hard-copies of the consent form during the in-person recruitment session. Teachers who were participating in the study were sent a link to a doodle-poll to schedule their pre-interview. A second link was sent following the training for teachers to schedule their follow-up interview.

Interviews occurred using video conferencing software (GoToMeeting) and were both audio and video recorded. Information from the interviews was transcribed for the purposes of data analysis. If a teacher did not wish to be recorded, interviews could occur as a phone interview or an in-person interview with the researcher taking notes during the interview. The researcher printed a copy of the interview questions and took a running record of participants' responses to each question when interviews were completed over

the phone. Teachers could also complete the interview questions in written response form, if they did not wish to be recorded. Additionally, teachers could opt out of the study, if they were not comfortable with being recorded or any of the alternative interview formats. Teachers who were unable to use the video-conferencing software or would prefer an in-person, phone interview or written response format were also offered these options. Two of the teachers did not wish to be recorded and completed a phone interview instead. Each participant was assigned a number at the time of the first interview to protect their anonymity. Although there was no monetary reward for their participation, teachers had the option to be entered in a raffle to receive a \$50 gift card for classroom supplies upon completing the study. They were asked if they want to supply their e-mail address to be entered into the raffle when they signed the electronic or hard-copy of the consent form. The results of the study will be shared with the school and the Archdioceses to assist with future training and professional development needs. The training was conducted during a regularly scheduled staff meeting.

The training was conducted during a regularly scheduled staff meeting and was approximately 90-minutes long. The entire staff was invited to participate in the training, but only the four teachers who completed the entire study attended. The training included information on the prevalence of non-traditional families in the schools and issues specific to these types of families. Furthermore, teachers were trained in communication and conflict resolution skills and had the opportunity to use role play/ discussion to apply these skills to scenarios involving non-traditional families. About 30-minutes of the training was an overview of the research on family school collaboration and non-

traditional families, while the bulk of the training (60-minutes) was devoted to learning active listening/communication skills, discussion, and role-plays (see Appendix E and F for training materials).

This study used grounded theory research, as described by Nastai (2009), which uses systematic methods to analyze qualitative data. Codes were created to analyze the data, rather than using pre-existing codes. The data was analyzed using a constant comparison analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) to identify any underlying themes. Each piece of data was compared to other relevant data. The researcher read through the transcripts of each interview 3-4 times looking for reoccurring themes and grouped like data together. Data was chunked based on the four research questions. Individual participants pre and post interview responses were also compared to see if there was a change in how they responded following the training (see Appendix G, H, and I for tables of data coded by research participant, research question and pre and post intervention responses).

Researcher Perspective

While qualitative researchers strive to remain objective, their experiences and perspectives influence their research (Patnaik, 2013). The idea for this research study was heavily influenced by the researcher's own professional experiences. The researcher began her career in education as a special-education teacher in New York City Public Schools and later went on to pursue Educational Specialist and Doctoral degrees in school psychology. She is currently a certified school psychologist working in Illinois. All her work experiences with children and families has been in urban, low-income schools with

limited resources. She has always worked in public school settings and prior to conducting this research study had little exposure to the Catholic school setting. In the settings the researcher has worked in as a teacher and school psychologist, it was rare for parents to attend school activities and meetings. This resulted in many negative comments from staff about how these families must, “just not care” about their children’s education. In the districts the researcher has worked in, there were also many families who came from non-traditional family structures, such as grandparents raising grand-children, multi-generational families, and foster families. She began to wonder, if there was a connection between how schools structured their outreach to families, the perceptions of the staff and the lack of the involvement of the families in her schools.

It was important for the researcher to consider the differences between the schools she had worked in and the school where this research study was conducted when interpreting the data. One of the potential areas of bias she brought to this study was her prior work experience in challenging schools. Although the researcher attempted to be objective, it was difficult to get out of the mindset of having worked for many years in schools where staff morale was low, and their perceptions were negative. As this was a study where the researcher interacted with my participants during the teacher training and interviews, her own background came into play. The researcher was similar to the participants in her study in that they were all young, middle-class, Caucasian women with college degrees. However, her background was different from the background of the students at her research site. It was also different from the population of students and families she was discussing in her training. It is possible that the researcher’s background influenced who ultimately chose to participate in the study as well as the participants’ responses to her during the training and interviews.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Pre-Intervention Interviews

Research Question 1: To what extent, if any, do teachers in the study have training in collaborating with families and family diversity?

Prior to the training all of the participants described themselves as having a lot of knowledge of working with families and family diversity. Three of the participants had graduate training in special-education and spoke to how their course-work in inclusion had been helpful in expanding their training in diversity issues and their knowledge of how to work with families. The fourth participant was a first-year teacher with a bachelor's degree in education. However, she also described herself as feeling comfortable working with a variety of families. The following comments from participants were related to the education and training they had received in family collaboration:

Participant 1: We received a lot of training in working with families in my teacher training program. I think partially that had to do my training in early childhood and special-education. We had an entire class focused on inclusion and diversity.

Participant 2: My master's program (in special-education) did a great job in helping us to understand how to work with diverse families. There was an entire course about getting to know the neighborhood surrounding the school you

worked in, such as culture, surrounding businesses and community resources. We did a case-study about how to incorporate working with the community and the school. Both my undergrad and master's program touched upon cultural sensitivity in lesson planning.

Participant 3: I received most of my diversity training when getting my LBS1 (special-education licensure). In my undergraduate training there were not multiple classes related to families and diversity. We had one section that was about families.

Participant 4: The training I've had was primarily focused on collaborating with teachers, rather than collaborating with families. I've had limited exposure in classes. However, she commented in response to a later question, "I feel like I can work with any type of family and support them."

In addition to their classroom training experiences, participants described learning through experience as being important to increasing their knowledge of working with families. The following comments were related to on-the-job training participants had received:

Participant 1: There was a lot of communicating back and forth with the parents especially those of students with special-needs during my student teaching.

Participant 2: I've had a lot of exposure to family diversity through my work experiences. A lot of kids I've worked with have been raised by grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives. I had read articles in my teacher training

program that exposed me to different types of families, but I mostly learned through experience.

Participant 3: My mentor teacher (in student teaching) described how diverse families can be. On the job I've had some informal training on diversity and working with families. We talk about it within our school meetings and one on one in meetings with our principal.

Participant 4: The exposure I've had to working with families was directly based on working with my collaborating teacher in the school during student teaching, rather than in courses. I worked with families during my training that were similar demographically to the families I currently work with. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to work with families from different backgrounds because I've worked with these kinds of families before. I feel like I can work with any kind of family and support them with resources.

Participants were asked to define what family diversity meant to them and if their teacher training program included information on family diversity. While participants' definitions included a broad range of families, only two of the participants described receiving formal instruction in diversity in their training programs. Furthermore, it appeared from their comments that this instruction was more of an overall discussion of diversity in schools as opposed to family diversity specifically. Only two of the participants described types of non-traditional family structures that might be seen when defining family diversity:

Participant 1: Yes. We actually had an inclusion and diversity class. So, I consider

diversity to be anything with their race, their academic levels those kids are very diverse even within their families. Some of them will come from parents that are married, some of them are divorced, some of them have lost a parent, if they're living with other family members, such as grandparents, or aunts and uncles. I've dealt with some that do not have family that live with them. They live out of state.

Participant 2: I've had a lot of exposure to family diversity through my work experiences. A lot of kids I've worked with have been raised by grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives.

Participant 3: Family diversity means an individual should and could have knowledge of many different backgrounds. A teacher should take into account race and nationality and have some knowledge of student demographics. I have my LBSI (special-education licensure) and when I was going through this training program we talked about every child being different. I received most of my diversity training while getting my LBSI. Diversity is not just race but can be a lot of different factors. Each child has his or her own needs and should be treated as an equal

Participant 4: Family diversity means having a wide range of cultural, financial, and educational backgrounds in families. It means having some exposure to diverse families. I worked with families during my training that were from the same background to the families I've currently worked with. They had similar demographics to where I'm working now, so I have a good understanding of how to work with families from these backgrounds.

Research Question 2: To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?

Participants were asked to describe the types of families they would expect to see represented by the families they taught. Two of the participants referred to different family make-ups represented by the students they taught, but it did not appear many non-traditional family structures were present in the classrooms of the participants. Participant 4 described how families had chosen to send their children to that school because of the Catholic, faith-based aspect of an education there. She also referred to education at that school as being tuition-based. The types of families that could afford a Catholic school education, may have impacted the types of families that the participants in the study would expect to see:

Participant 1: Just based off the demographics of the area I'm in, they are mostly Hispanic families. There are some that do have parents that are married and some that are separated.

Participant 2: I would expect to see different family make-ups. Some students live with one parent, some live with both, some live with extended family and cousins, some live with both parents. In my current setting we have a lot of Hispanic families.

Participant 3: Very diverse. About 90 percent of our families are Hispanic. About three to four of my students have special needs such as Autism, behavioral and ADHD. These special-needs are not necessarily diagnosed.

Participant 4: I'm in a Catholic school setting, so since the parents opted for this setting, I would expect them to be from the Catholic faith and come from a place where they received a Catholic education themselves and to be able to afford to send the child to Catholic school.

Although participants did not appear to currently work with many non-traditional families, their comments related to working with non-traditional families were mostly positive. Teachers in the study reported that their expectations of students and families did not change based on student background. Furthermore, teachers in the study referred to positive experiences they had had working with non-traditional families. The following comments describe participants' perceptions of and experiences with working with non-traditional families:

Participant 1: I do have a student this year where their grandparent is their primary care-giver. I've never met mom before or dad actually, but grandma is very involved in his learning. She's always coming up and talking to me, making sure that he's brought his homework and if there's anything else we can do, so she is very supportive of him.

Participant 2: I have worked with grandparents and other relatives. I see no change in the commitment level between biological and non-biological parents. I haven't seen a disconnect between grandparent headed households and other kinds of families. All kinds of relatives are equally engaged.

Participant 3: I only worked with grandparents (raising grandchildren). They were a very loving family, so there was no difference in that respect.

Participant 4: Each family no matter together or divorced, every type of family is different from the next. Adoptive families are going to hold the same expectation for students. I hold the same expectation no matter what type of family background the student has. Families should have an active role and work hard to support children educationally and financially. I would expect all families from each background to be a typically functioning family with these expectations.

Participant 4 also referred to her experience working with foster families, “The foster families I’ve worked with have been really involved. They understood the struggles students were going through.”

Despite their positive experiences working with non-traditional families, there were a few comments from teachers that described some of the challenges they experienced when working with non-traditional families. All of the teachers interviewed for the study referred to the period of transition that can occur when a student has a grandparent as a primary caregiver. Participant 4 described grandparent caregivers as being less available for meetings and less knowledgeable about technology than children’s biological parents were. Two of the teachers also described the potential role confusion that can happen when a grandparent becomes a student’s primary care-giver:

Participant 1: I had experience working with a student, who was raised by his grandma and the only difference was sometimes it could be confusing because he would flip back and forth, and I never knew if he was talking about mom or grandma.

Participant 2: For grandparents, the situation was new for them, so they were just trying to get a handle on things.

Participant 3: I only worked with grandparents (raising grandchildren). They were a very loving family, so there was no difference in that respect. I don't feel the child was neglected or unloved. The child seemed lost with peers and kept to himself. He still talked about Dad and Mom and had a desire to be with his parents. That might have off-set his grade, since he was upset about his situation and couldn't accept the facts.

Participant 4: I have worked with grandparents that are the sole guardian, students with divorced parents and foster families. With grandparents, generally they had a hard time differentiating when to be the grandparent and when to be the parent. As a grandparent they wanted to be able to give the child everything, but had trouble enforcing boundaries. I've noticed that children who come from grandparent headed households have a tendency to not hear the word no often. Grandparents also might not be as knowledgeable about how to use technology and in my experience, do not attend school functions as often as biological parents.

When referring to working with divorced families, two of the teachers referred to difficulties communicating with these types of families. Participant 3 also commented on the financial aspect of divorce, which led to one of her students having less exposure to enrichment activities and less background knowledge in class. Participant 2 did not speak to her experience working with divorced families in her interview. The rest of the

participants' comments related to working with divorced families are represented below:

Participant 1: For divorced parents, I feel sometimes there's a lack of communication between the parents. So, if I speak to one parent about something, the other parent may not know what's going on.

Participant 3: With divorced families, the communication with the parents was positive, but the child was lacking in their academic performance. There were issues with things not being turned in and being turned in late. The student was not being pushed as well as in a two-parent household. There also was an economic aspect. Because of the financial aspect, the student did not have as much exposure to culture like going to museums, on trips etc. He lacked some background knowledge.

Participant 4: With divorced families there is a lack of communication between parents. When information is shared with one parent, it is not shared with the other. Having to have double communication can add to the list of things to do for teachers.

Post-Intervention Interviews

Research Question 3: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?

Participants were asked to describe how their concept of the types of families they would work with had changed following the training. While the participants did not

describe a significant change in this area, three of the participants described increased awareness of working with families:

Participant 1: I don't think it (the concept of the types of families I will work with) has changed right now, mainly because I'm at the same school, but I think if I were to change schools and see different types of families it definitely would.

Participant 2: I feel like I have more awareness of the statistics and the scenarios. I have more awareness of how I can relate and how I can't. When I sit with parents I am more aware of how I come across and how they are perceiving me. I'm more aware of doing what I can to make them comfortable.

Participant 3: It might have made me more aware of the percentages of these types of families. I know those families were there, but there were more than I anticipated.

Participant 4: Yes it (the concept of the types of families I will work with) changed a little bit. I have a better sense of being more patient and understanding of different kinds of families and more aware of students and the problems they may bring into the classroom.

Participants were also asked to describe how their definition of family diversity had changed following the training. Similar to the question about how their concept of the types of families they would work with had changed, participants reported limited changes in their concept of family diversity. However, two of the participants reported an increased awareness of their students and families and one participant referred to more awareness about the updated statistics related to family diversity:

Participant 1: I would say (it's changed) a little bit. I just didn't really realize how many, now that I've spoken to my kids about it a little more, how diverse their families are. Like how a lot of them I didn't realize had older siblings from their dad's first marriages. Some of them I knew had older siblings, but I didn't realize they weren't all from the same mother and father.

Participant 2: No. It hasn't changed.

Participant 3: I felt like I had a lot of knowledge of diversity before. I wouldn't say it changed much. There were a few things that helped because it has been a while since I learned the information. A few things helped because information (like the statistics) has been updated.

Participant 4: It changed a little bit. I'm more aware of different types of families and the struggles they face.

Participants were asked to describe their experiences working with non-traditional families following the training. As was seen in their other post intervention responses, participants described minimal changes in this area. However, as in the pre-intervention interviews, comments related to working with non-traditional families were mostly positive. Two of the participants described the non-traditional families they worked with as being supportive. Participant 2 also described an increased awareness of and sensitivity to non-traditional families:

Participant 1: For me I think the hardest would be the divorced parents. I just don't want to get into the middle of anything. Like one will say, "Oh well when they're at dad's house," and then the dad will come back with like, "Oh they don't

act like that here. I don't know what's going on at mom's house." But I'm very lucky that all of my families are very supportive, and they do want the best for their children and they're willing to work with me and continue what we're doing at school and try to help put it in place at home too, so there is a follow through, and just really show the kids that we're all trying to work together.

Participant 2: I've never worked with foster. I have worked with grandparents and mixed families. I'm more sensitive to the language I'm using in class like having to get something signed by a parent. I've increased my awareness of how to talk with these families.

Participant 3: No change. I just have the one grandparent headed family I work with.

Participant 4: I've worked with foster parents and they were very supportive and present. They were willing to cooperate with the teacher and schools. With my student being raised by the grandparent, mom is still in the picture, but mom doesn't really want him, and grandma doesn't have time for him. Grandma is who I need to contact, but mom shows up to meetings. The communication isn't very clear with who is responsible. I try to be patient with the student because he significantly below grade-level and neither mom nor grandma are able to and willing to help.

For some of the participants an increased awareness of working with students and families translated into implementing new practices in their classrooms. Participant 3 also described how she was planning to implement new practices in the future due to there not

being much time between the training and post-intervention interviews. Although the language the teachers used to describe non-traditional families had not changed, teachers in the study did appear to be more willing to reach out to different kinds of families:

Participant 1: When using classroom dojo (on-line messaging system), instead of just messaging one parent, if both parents are on classroom dojo, I will message both of them, just to make sure that everyone is understanding. For parent meetings, when I'm scheduling, making sure that both parents can be present.

Participant 2: I feel like I have more awareness of the statistics and the scenarios. I have more awareness of how I can relate and how I can't. When I sit with parents I am more aware of how I come across and how they are perceiving me. I'm more aware of doing what I can to make them comfortable.

Participant 3: It really hasn't been too long since the training. I would say there's not too much change. For the future, I would take into consideration as far as relating messages to grandparents and parents, I might be a little bit more apt to ask if it is okay to work with grand-parents as well, if the parent is involved. I have one student where the grandparent is involved, but not the guardian. With that student who is being raised by grandma, it brought to my attention that I might need to make more contact with that grandparent.

Participant 4: I increased my bi-lingual resources (both Spanish and English resources). I've reached out to parents more and have shared resources and links with grandparents raising students. I also set a different tone in the classroom. I have more awareness of students' backgrounds and emotions.

All of the participants referred to the active listening, role-playing and scenarios as being useful in helping them to work with families. A common theme was that working through the scenarios helped with empathy for what different families might be going through. Participants were asked to describe what had the greatest impact on them from the training:

Participant 1: Learning about the different ways to speak to the families, like restating the question, asking them when you are responding back saying, “Oh, I hear that you’re saying,” just really clarifying everything that is going on in the conversation.

Participant 2: The most beneficial was the scenarios. It was thought provoking to help with problem solving and how to react. Some of the situations I could relate to and some were things I had not thought about.

Participant 3: Working together and doing the skits (scenarios). I remember doing paraphrasing in psychology classes. It has been a long time though, so it was a good refresher. It helped talking about it and role playing a variety of scenarios.

Participant 4: How sometimes families might not see how we see their issues. I learned to better show how we understand and are patient by using active listening skills.

Research Question 4: To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?

Participants were asked to describe their confidence level in working with non-traditional families prior to receiving a short professional development on this topic.

Their responses are found below:

Participant 1: I would say that I am pretty confident. But sometimes I do worry with how I'm wording things. I know I've had students in the past, whose father has passed away. So, when we're talking about mom and dad, I worry about how they're going to take it, knowing that they have lost one of their parents. Like I'm confident when I'm teaching them, but I sometimes worry about how they emotionally can handle talking about certain things.

Participant 2: I try and approach all families in the same manner. Education is a team effort. Students are splitting time between school and home. I try really hard to keep communication open with families.

Participant 3: Very confident. I have a degree in psychology and feel comfortable working with pretty much anybody. Nothing would shock me.

Participant 4: I would say my confidence is growing. I wouldn't say it's low, medium, or high. All my experience has dealt with these types of families. I'm a first-year teacher, so I'm gaining confidence. I'm used to working with different kinds of families because I've done it before. I started off my career working with alternative families. I feel like I can work with any type of family and support them. Part of my job is also giving resources to families, so I can support them through giving resources.

Following the professional development session, the participants described similar levels of confidence to what they had described prior to the training. Only Participant 1 described herself as feeling more confident following the training. It was common for participants to describe their confidence as growing, but to refer to working with families as an on-going learning experience that needed to be adjusted depending on the family's needs:

Participant 1: I feel a lot more confident. Like I said earlier, just the way to speak to them, during our presentation really helped me. Just in the sense that it gives me a better understanding of what they were going through. Like when we did those scenarios and we were put into those situations.

Participant 2: I would say it's medium. I can always improve. Each family is different and requires different involvement and awareness. Sometimes there's a language barrier. I need to consider the needs of all families and what you can learn about them.

Participant 3: Not 100 percent confident. Practice makes perfect. It takes time to get used to new types of living situations. Somewhat comfortable. I'm not afraid to interact with different types of families. I'm pretty confident.

Participant 4: Fairly confident. I would never say I'm an expert. It's a constant learning experience. I appreciated time to reflect on things. I feel a little bit more confident than I had in the past. This year has been a learning experience.

Families are showing me how to work with them. It's been a great experience because I've been exposed to many things and types of families.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: To what extent, if any, do teachers in the study have training in collaborating with families and family diversity?

While previous research has documented that teachers feel poorly prepared to work with families (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011), this was not the case for the teachers in the study. All the teachers in the study reported having at least some training in family collaboration and diversity issues and feeling comfortable working with a variety of families. The majority of the teachers in the study reported having course-work or training in special education. This course-work may have contributed to these teachers feeling more prepared to work with a variety of families. Previous research has documented that when family collaboration is addressed in educational course-work, it is more likely to be woven into existing teacher education requirements, such as classes in special-education or instructional methods (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011). This is consistent with what was reported by the teachers in the study. Furthermore, three of the teachers in the study reported they had received informal training in working with families through consultation with their collaborating teachers during student teaching. The fourth participant also referred to learning about working with families through her work experiences. This suggests that both didactic and hands-on training can be valuable in developing teachers' knowledge level and confidence in working with families.

The extent of the training the teachers in the study had in collaborating with families appeared to be higher than what was typically reported by teachers in previous research. As these were teachers in a Catholic school with a mission that emphasized family collaboration, the teachers in this study may not represent a typical group of teachers. Although nine teachers from the research site originally signed consent to participate, only four teachers completed both interviews and participated in the training. It is possible that for the teachers who completed the entire study, the topic of working with non-traditional families was particularly relevant. Many of the teachers in the study mentioned previous or current work experiences working with students from non-traditional family backgrounds. As such, this study appeared to draw a group of teachers who were particularly comfortable with and trained in working with a variety of families.

The Catholic school setting may have contributed to the teachers in the study feeling more confident in working with different kinds of families. Active parent participation in school functions and close collaboration with teachers is emphasized in Catholic schools (Frabutt et al., 2010). The teachers in the study may have chosen to work in a Catholic school setting due to a desire to work closely with families. Catholic schools are often smaller settings where teachers work with the same students and families from year to year. Many students attend the same Catholic school from the time they are very young through young adulthood and may come to think of their school as an extension of their home environment (Frabutt et al., 2010). The teachers in the study may have chosen their work environment specifically to develop more meaningful and in-depth relationships with the students and families they worked with. As such, the

participants in this study may have been more likely to view working with families as an important part of their jobs and to pursue training and experiences that would develop their skills in this area.

Research Question 2: To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?

Prior work experiences with non-traditional families and previous coursework in diversity and family collaboration may have contributed to the lack of bias that was seen when participants discussed their perceptions of non-traditional families. Despite the majority of comments related to non-traditional families being positive, there were some comments related to working with divorced families and grand-parent headed households that were negative. Participant 4, who had the least amount of teaching experience of the participants and no graduate or special-education training, had the most negative comments. While few negative biases were reported by teachers in the study, these biases were still present. This was particularly seen in participants' comments related to working with divorced families. The lack of communication that can occur in divorced families was brought up by multiple participants. The high comfort level reported by the teachers in the study in working with all kinds of families suggests that they may not have been aware of their potential biases prior to receiving the training. This is similar to what was found in a comparable study with pre-service teachers, which found most of the pre-service teachers surveyed had not thought of family diversity as an issue they might encounter in their classrooms (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013). As was seen in previous research

(Ford & Quinn, 2010), teachers may benefit from examining their biases and perceptions.

Although there were few negative comments related to working with grandparent headed families, participants did discuss some of the challenges related to working with these types of families. In particular, the transition period that can occur when a student's grandparent takes over as a care-giver was discussed in several interviews. Previous research has documented that teachers may benefit from receiving further training to assist them in working with non-traditional families (Turner-Vorbeck, 2013). This was supported by the comments from participants in the study, who described several differences that students and families from non-traditional family structures might present.

As was seen with the first research question, the Catholic school setting may have been a factor in the teachers in the study feeling more prepared to work with diverse families. Creating a strong sense of school community based upon shared faith is important in Catholic schools (Hallinan & Kubitschek, 2010). This sense of shared purpose and community may have contributed to teachers in the study having more inclusive views of working with students and families from different backgrounds. Social justice and serving students and families from traditionally marginalized backgrounds are part of the Catholic philosophy of education (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). These values also appeared to be important to the mission of the school where this research study was conducted. Participant 3 mentioned in her interview that diversity was discussed in their staff meetings and one on one in meetings with their principal. Although the teachers in this study represented a small sample of the teachers at that

school and Catholic school teachers in general, they appeared to be supported at their work setting in addressing the needs of diverse students and families.

Research Question 3: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?

Following the training teachers reported they were more aware of their interactions and more culturally sensitive. Several of the teachers had also increased their interactions with non-traditional families and had increased the types of contacts or resources they provided. These results are similar to what was found in a different study that looked at training teachers in communication skills, which found teachers were more likely to utilize active listening skills, such as open-ended questions, reflection, and paraphrasing when working with families after receiving a training in these skills (Symeou et al., 2012).

While the language the teachers used to describe non-traditional families was similar in both the pre and post intervention interviews, this may have been related to teachers continuing to work with the same families. Additionally, the wording of the questions to assess teachers' perceptions may have influenced teachers' responses. Many of the pre and post intervention questions were the same. For example, teachers were asked to describe their experiences with working with non-traditional families. All of the participants appeared to interpret this as being asked to describe their actual work experience as opposed to how they personally experienced the families. Furthermore, all

of the teachers in the study reported currently working with few non-traditional families and therefore not having many opportunities to apply what they had learned.

The short nature of the training and the short time period in-between the pre and post intervention interviews were also alluded to in the post-intervention interviews. This may have contributed to the lack of group of change in their perceptions. In future research, it may be beneficial to have a longer time period in between pre and post intervention interviews to allow teachers more time to absorb and apply what was discussed in the training. The increased awareness reported by teachers may have laid ground-work for a future change in their perceptions. Following up long-term with the same teachers including when they may be working in different settings is beyond the scope of this study. However, it could provide more information on whether their perceptions changed at a later date.

Research Question 4: To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?

The results of this study are similar to what was found in a different study that looked at training teachers in communication skills, which found teachers were more likely to utilize active listening skills, such as open-ended questions, reflection, and paraphrasing when working with families after receiving a training in these skills (Symeou et al., 2012). As was seen in this study, the results of this current study indicate that professional development for teachers can be limited in length and still have an impact (Symeou et al., 2012). However, unlike in this study, three of the teachers in the

current study reported similar levels of confidence following the training to what they reported prior to the training. Only Participant 1 described her confidence as having improved a lot following the training. Both the short nature of the training and the high comfort level that teachers reported prior to the training in working with a variety of families could have accounted for this minimal change.

While prior to the training the teachers in the study described themselves as confident in working with families, following the training participants were more likely to describe each family's circumstances as being different. Furthermore, all of the teachers in the study referred to working with families as being a learning process and continually growing in these skills. This suggests that receiving more information about specific statistics on working with non-traditional families might have made the teachers in the study more aware of information they did not previously know.

There are several models of cultural competency that describe the stages individuals go through as they gain cultural competency. Howell's model (Crandall, George, Marian, & Davis, 2003) describes five stages of communication competence beginning with unconscious incompetency where the individual is unaware of what they do not know and ending with unconscious competence where the individual has developed a deep level of knowledge and experience and is culturally competent without having to think about it. The teachers in this study appeared to have developed to a level of conscious incompetence, as described by Howell (Crandall et al., 2003) where they were more aware of what they did not know and therefore were more likely to describe

working with families as a learning process post-intervention than pre-intervention when they did not realize their learning gaps.

By and large the teachers in the study referred to the role-playing aspect of the training as having the greatest impact for them. This suggests in-service teachers may benefit from hands-on and applied activities to improve their collaboration practices with non-traditional families. This was also seen in a similar study, which found teachers' cultural sensitivity was increased by encouraging them to discuss and reflect upon multicultural issues (Lin et al., 2008). Role playing and using examples of real situations may improve teachers' problem-solving skills related to working with families. Most of the teachers in the study referred to having gained their knowledge of working with families and non-traditional families through experience. Furthermore, several teachers in the study also discussed how their relationship with their collaborating teacher during student teaching was helpful in gaining information about working with different kinds of families and cultural sensitivity. In future research, having student teachers go through a similar training with their collaborating teacher could be helpful in opening up discussions about working with different kinds of families.

Study Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

In future research, it would also be beneficial to recruit a larger sample of participants. As the school that participated in the study was a small school, there were few teachers to recruit from. Reaching out to more types of settings and larger schools, might have increased the number of participants and the generalizations that could be made from the data. It might have also broadened the types of participants that were

involved in the study. The sample of participants in this study was 100% female and all the participants had similar work experiences and training. It would also be interesting to compare a sample of public school teachers to a sample of Catholic school teachers. As mentioned, the school that participated in the study had a mission that was specifically related to family school collaboration. In a school that was less mission focused, negative perceptions about working with families and biases about non-traditional families might be more apparent.

These negative perceptions might also be more apparent in a public school than in a Catholic school. As previously mentioned, teachers in Catholic schools form close relationships with the families they work with (Hallinan & Kubitschek, 2010). Social justice and working with underserved families are integral to the Catholic school philosophy (Scanlan & Tichy, 2014). Additionally, teachers in Catholic schools have a strong sense of shared purpose and school community (Hallinan & Kubitschek, 2010). While these factors can be true in public schools as well, teachers in public school settings generally have larger class sizes than Catholic school teachers. As a result, public school teachers may not connect with the families they work with as much. There are also different challenges in a general enrollment, public school than in a tuition-based, selective enrollment school. Families are making a choice to send their children to Catholic school and so may be more likely to initiate interactions with teachers and take an active role in their children's education. They may also choose a Catholic school due to the school's values being in line with their own.

Furthermore, while all the teachers in the study had some experience working with students from a non-traditional family background, non-traditional families did not make up a large percentage of the families at that school. This limited the opportunities for teachers to directly apply concepts they had learned from the training. In a school where more students were either being raised by a grandparent or came from foster families or divorced families, teachers might have more opportunities to apply concepts from the training and find the training to be more relevant to their practice.

However, for the teachers who participated in the study, the training did appear to have some effect on their perceptions about working with non-traditional families and their teaching practices.

As it was difficult to get participants for the study, even in a setting where family collaboration was part of the school's mission, changing the format of the training in future studies may encourage higher teacher participation. For example, the overview of family collaboration and non-traditional families could be done in an on-line format that teachers could complete on their own time. This would allow for a shorter in-person training that was entirely focused on the hands-on/role-playing aspect of the training. Implementing the in-person training in a shorter format, might also allow for the training to be administered during the school day and allow for more participants as teachers could potentially attend the training during their prep periods or professional learning committees that met during the school day. An increased incentive for teachers, such as offering CPDU's or a small gift certificate for everyone that participated in the training might also increase the number of participants.

As the intent of the training was to increase the capacity of teachers for working with different types of families, it might have also made sense to use a train the trainer model. Department heads could have received an in-person or on-line professional development session and then been supported by the researcher with how to discuss the information and implement strategies with teachers in their departments. The school where the research was conducted utilized professional learning communities, so it is possible that teachers would have preferred to learn from each other. There may have been low follow-up from some of the teachers that signed consents, due to not believing there was enough long-term benefit to them or the school. Conducting a needs assessment with the school prior to designing the training, might have resulted in greater teacher participation. It is possible teachers were interested in the family collaboration aspect of the training, but the focus on non-traditional families was not particularly relevant to that setting. In future research, it would also be beneficial to use rating scales for teachers to rate their confidence level in working with different types of families before and after receiving the training. This would make it easier to determine the extent of the change and less subjective.

As an outsider to the school where the research was conducted, it was difficult for the researcher to be seen as more than a student completing a project. While the researcher described her experiences working with diverse students and families in the recruitment session, she may have not been seen as being knowledgeable in that subject area by the staff. As a young, White female, she was noticeably different from the students and families she was discussing. Although demographic data was only collected

for teachers who participated in the entire study, the demographics of the staff that attended the recruitment session were noticeably more diverse than the participants in the study. Had a training model been used where the researcher was supporting department heads and teachers with implementing strategies over a semester or yearlong period, it might have changed how the staff perceived her. There might have also been a more discernable change in teachers' perceptions and teaching practices over a longer time period.

Conclusion

Although the sample size was small, the results of this study suggest that the participants slightly increased their out-reach practices to non-traditional families after receiving a short-training related to working with non-traditional families. Teachers in the study also reported increased cultural sensitivity and a better understanding of working with different types of families. Furthermore, the teachers in the study appeared to benefit from hands-on activities that allowed them to practice communication skills related to working with non-traditional families. In a school with a large population of non-traditional families, in-service teachers may obtain additional benefit from receiving a similar training, as they would have more opportunity to apply the skills they had learned.

The "typical" American family is becoming more diverse with more families encompassing different configurations of individuals, such as blended families, multigenerational families, foster families, and single parent families (Lambie, 2011). School districts and administrators need to consider how to build the capacity of their

staff for working with a variety of families. A short-training that includes statistical information and a hand-on, communication skills component, may benefit teachers by encouraging them to examine their perceptions and consider the perspectives of the families they work with.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: FIRST INTERVIEW

- 1.) What kind of training and preparation, if any, did you receive in your education program on collaborating with families?
- 2.) Describe what family diversity means to you. Did your training program include any information on family diversity?
- 3.) What types of families do you expect to see represented by the students you teach?
- 4.) What would you say is the biggest challenge/barrier you face in communicating with the families of the students you work with?
- 5.) What has your experience been, if any, related to working with grandparent-headed households, divorced parents, kinship caregivers, and foster families?
- 6.) In what ways, if any, are working with students in out-of-home placements (foster families, grandparent-headed households, and kinship care-givers) similar to or different from working with households heading by a child's biological or adoptive parents?
- 7.) How would you describe your confidence level in working with non-traditional families? (foster families, grandparent headed households, divorced families, and kinship care givers)
- 8.) What are your professional development needs, if any, related to collaborating with families? What information would you want to learn to help you collaborate better with grandparent-headed households, divorced families, kinship caregivers and foster families?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: SECOND INTERVIEW

- 1.) During our training many issues were discussed related to family diversity and working with non-traditional families (grandparent headed household, kinship care families, divorced parents and foster families), what made the biggest impression on you and why?
- 2.) Has your definition of family diversity changed, if so, how has it changed?
- 3.) Has your concept of the type of families you will work with changed, and if so, how?
- 4.) Has what you have learned about non-traditional families impacted your teaching? What changes, if any, have you made in your teaching or family collaboration practices since our training?
- 5.) What has your experience been related to working with grandparent-headed households, kinship caregivers, divorced families and foster families?
- 6.) In what ways, if any, are working with students in out of home placements (foster families, grandparent-headed households, and kinship care-givers) similar to or different than working with a working with households heading by a child's biological or adoptive parents?
- 7.) How would you describe your confidence level in working with non-traditional families? (grandparent headed household, kinship care families, divorced families and foster families)

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Dear Teachers,

My name is Bonnie Kilfoyle and I am a doctoral candidate in School Psychology at Loyola University Chicago. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a research study in your school about the extent to which teachers receive training in collaborating with non-traditional families and family diversity. Your principal has agreed to let your school participate in the study and has provided teachers e-mails to recruit participants. Your principal has also agreed to let me attend a regularly scheduled staff meeting on (date to be determined) to recruit participants and provide more information on the study. The study involves participating in 2, 30-45-minute video-conferencing interviews and a 90-minute training. Interviews will be scheduled to be conducted after school hours or on weekends and the training will be conducted during a regularly scheduled staff meeting or professional development time.

I am interested in investigating the perceptions teachers have about working with foster families, kinship care-givers (relatives other than a biological parent), divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren, and whether these perceptions change after receiving a brief professional development on working with these types of families. The professional development session will also include a component where teachers are taught how to apply communication skills, such as active listening and conflict resolution practices, to scenarios involving non-traditional families.

Participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be confidential. Participants will be eligible for a raffle to receive a \$50 gift-card for classroom supplies.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (bkilfoyle@luc.edu) or my dissertation chair, Dr. David Shriberg (dshribe@luc.edu). I will also be available to answer any questions when I visit your school on (date to be determined) to recruit participants.

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Teachers' Perceptions of and Collaboration Practices with Non-traditional Families.

Researcher: Bonnie Kilfoyle (EDD School Psychology Candidate, Loyola University)

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. David Shriberg

Introduction

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Bonnie Kilfoyle as part of the degree requirements for completing an Educational Doctorate in School Psychology at Loyola University. This student will be completing the research study under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg, faculty member of the School of Education at Loyola University of Chicago. You are being asked to participate because as a teaching professional, you possess knowledge and expertise in the area that is being studied. The study is expected to have around 10 participants and there are no restrictions for participation other than currently working as a teacher in a Catholic school system. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to gather information on the extent to which teachers receive training on collaborating with non-traditional families and family diversity. This study will investigate the perceptions teachers have about working with foster families, kinship care-givers (relatives other than a biological parent), divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren, and whether these perceptions change after receiving a brief professional development on working with these types of families. The professional development session will also include a component where teachers are taught how to apply communication skills, such as active listening and conflict resolution practices to scenarios involving non-traditional families. The Human Subject Research Committee at Loyola University Chicago have approved this study.

Description of Procedures

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in 2 video-conferencing interviews and a 90-minute in-person training to be provided by the researcher. The interview will be scheduled to occur at a mutually convenient time and will discuss your perceptions of working with non-traditional families (foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren) and how these perceptions impact your teaching and family collaboration practices. The researcher will help guide this discussion. Following the 1st interview, you will participate in a 90-minute training to provide more information specific to working with non-traditional families and communication skills that can be applied in various situations with these families. You will participate in the 2nd interview several weeks after the training to discuss how you have applied what you learned from the training in your teaching and if your perceptions about working with non-traditional families have

changed. To protect the privacy of interview members, all participants will be assigned a number at the time of the first interview. The discussions in the interviews will be video and audio recorded using a video-conferencing software and transcribed following the sessions. If you do not wish to be recorded, you can participate in a phone-interview or in person interview or complete the questions in written response format. Should you choose not to be recorded, notes will be taken during the interview. The interview will last approximately 30-45minutes and the training will last approximately 90 minutes. All research activities will be scheduled to occur during regularly scheduled staff meeting times or outside of school hours.

Risks/Benefits

The risks of this study are minimal and it is not expected participants will experience any risks beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions asked may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are always free to decline to answer any question or to stop your participation at any time. Benefits include receiving free training that may help participants improve their collaboration practices with the families they serve. The study will also provide information that may be useful to districts and schools in improving their family school collaboration practices and policies.

Compensation

Participants will not be paid for their participation in this study. However, participants will be eligible to be entered into a raffle to receive a \$50 gift card at the conclusion of the study. If a participant withdraws from the study before it is completed, they will still be eligible to participate in the raffle.

Confidentiality

The researcher will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data. Participants will be assigned a number at the time of the first interview to protect their anonymity. The researcher will keep your name or any information that may identify you confidential in any reports or transcripts by using a pseudonym. The researcher will store or archive data in a secure and locked file cabinet.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Bonnie Kilfoyle at bkilfoyle@luc.edu or faculty chair, David Shriberg at dshribe@luc.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX E
TEACHER TRAINING SLIDES

IMPROVING COLLABORATION PRACTICES WITH ALL KINDS OF FAMILIES

BONNIE KILFOYLE

EDD CANDIDATE IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY, LOYOLA UNIVERSITY
CHICAGO

AGENDA

- WARM-UP ACTIVITY (10 minutes)
- OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON FAMILY COLLABORATION. (10 minutes)
- OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON NON-TRADITIONAL FAMILIES. (10 minutes)
- COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING. (20 minutes)
- APPLYING THESE SKILLS TO OUR WORK WITH FAMILIES. (30 minutes)
- WRAP-UP/CONCLUSIONS (10 MINUTES)

WARM UP ACTIVITY

- With a partner discuss the following questions:
- What part does communication with families play in your teaching? Do you generally enjoy working with parents? Why or Why not? What is difficult or challenging about working with families? (5 minutes)
- Share Out/Whole group Discussion (5 minutes)

COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES IS A CHALLENGE FOR MANY TEACHERS.

- Many teachers actively avoid interacting with parents (Sewell, 2012)
- They expect their relationships with parents to be characterized by conflict and may worry that parents will judge their teaching practices (Baum & McMurray-Schwarz, 2004).
- Teachers report feeling unprepared and poorly trained to work with families (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011).

WHY IS COLLABORATION WITH FAMILIES SO IMPORTANT?

- The relationship between increased student achievement and parental involvement in education has been well documented (Minke & Anderson, 2005).
- Strong partnerships between families and schools can lead to improved attendance and better social-emotional outcomes for students (Zygmunt-Fillwalk, 2011).

FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE WORK WITH FAMILIES

- **External Barriers:** Lack of flexibility in parents' work schedules, child-care availability, transportation difficulties, language barriers.
- **Internal Barriers:** Previous negative experiences dealing with schools, families feeling like schools do not respect their needs, schools being inflexible parent needs and not promoting culturally responsive practices.
- Ex: Not initiating contact is sometimes viewed by staff as not caring. However, some cultures defer to educators out of respect for their expertise (Christianakis, 2011).

MORE ON CULTURAL FACTORS

- Cultural reasons are often related to parents' lack of contact with the schools.
- Both teachers and families can be hesitant to communicate with each other due to differences in their backgrounds (Ford & Quinn, 2010).
- Teachers are more likely to view the behaviors of students and their families negatively when they do not come from the same cultural or ethnic background as the students they work with (Ford & Quinn, 2010).
- Many cultures conceptualize family to include extended family such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins, but teachers typically only reach out to a student's parents to discuss concerns (Ford & Quinn, 2010).

NON-TRADITIONAL FAMILY STATISTICS

- Nationwide as many as 1.6 million children throughout the US are living in grandparent headed households where there is no biological parent present (Kresak, Gallagher & Kelly, 2014).
- In Illinois there are an estimated 220,088 children under the age of 18 living in grandparent-headed households (Illinois Department on Aging, 2016).
- Per 2010 census data, there were around 1.8 million children under 18 living in a house-hold headed by an aunt, uncle, sibling or other relative (Washington, Gleeson & Rulison, 2013).
- More than half a million children nationwide are living in foster-care placements (Zetlin, Weinberg & Shea, 2010).
- Approximately 50% American children will witness the breakup of a parent's marriage. Of these, close to half will also see the breakup of a parent's second marriage (Furstenberg et al, 1983).

WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF THESE FAMILIES INTERACTING WITH SCHOOLS?

- Non-traditional families frequently exhibit other risk factors, which can result in lower levels of school involvement. For example, children living in kinship care, such as with a grandparent or another relative are more likely to be living in poverty and their caregivers, as a group, also have lower levels of educational attainment, less access to resources and lower levels of social-capital (Gibson & McGlynn, 2013).
- Bias can also be a factor in why school staff do not reach out to non-traditional families. Although non-traditional family structures are becoming more common, they are still frequently viewed by school staff in a negative manner (Duncan, 1992).

OTHER EXAMPLES

- Grandmothers raising grandchildren whose grand-children had received out of school suspensions, reported largely negative interactions with the schools. They reported educators had a poor understanding of working with children in out of home care (Gibson & McGlynn, 2013).
- Foster parents also reported feeling unwelcome in the school setting (Altshuler, 2003).
- Other relatives acting as kinship care-givers have difficulty accessing resources and supports to assist the children they are caring for (Strozier, McGrew, Krisman, & Smith, 2005)

HOW TRAUMA AND GRIEF IMPACTS LEARNING

- Difficulties with concentration.
- Increased Distractibility.
- A lack of motivation.
- Feelings of Anxiety/Depression.
- Becoming more withdrawn and isolated.
- Trouble sleeping.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR INTERACTIONS WITH FAMILIES?

- Several studies have investigated how training in communication skills can impact teacher effectiveness.
- These skills are relevant to collaboration with families as they can help teachers to form positive partnerships with families (Mahon, 2010).
- One study, which trained teachers to use active listening skills when working with parents, such as the use of open ended questions, reflection, and paraphrasing, found teachers reported they were more likely to utilize these skills when working with families. They also reported an increased confidence in their ability to work with families (Symeou, Roussounidou, & Michaelides, 2012)

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Using active listening skills when working with families

ACTIVE LISTENING

- Verbal and non-verbal signals, which indicate to the speaker that you are attending to them and encourage them to go on.
- Examples of active listening skills might include nodding, asking carefully considered questions, and mirroring the speaker's body language, pace and choice of language.

USING OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

- An open-ended question is one that invites an extended response. They often start with “What”, “How,” “In what way,” “Tell me ...” or “Describe...”

Examples:

- “What happens when you say/do that?”
- “How did you do that?”
- “What was that like?”
- “Tell me more about that.”

PARAPHRASING

- Repeating back to the speaker what you interpreted them to be saying.

Examples:

- “So, I hear you saying that...”
- “If I understand you correctly...”
- “Is that right?”

REFLECTING

- Reflecting back the speaker's feelings as you have heard or inferred them. Examples:
- "You seem to feel anxious because you couldn't finish the assignment on time."
- "So, you feel angry about the way you've been treated."
- "You're disappointed Joey isn't getting better grades."

EXAMPLE

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gIJRcHqCEk>

COMMUNICATION SKILLS ACTIVITY

- In your group read through your assigned scenario.
- Choose 1 person to play the parent, 1 to play the teacher and 1 to be an observer. (You will rotate through these roles, so everyone will get a chance to be in each role).
- **Parent:** You are coming in to meet with the teacher and are frustrated/apprehensive. You feel like the school has not been responsive to your and your child's needs.
- **Teacher:** Have a conversation with the parent and attempt to use active listening skills: open ended questions, paraphrasing and reflecting.
- **Observer:** Observe the conversation and take notes on anything you notice about the interaction (Ex: body language of teacher/parent, how they respond to each other).

WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION

- What was your experience like applying active listening skills in each scenario?
- Did you observe anything noticeable about the body language or responses of the teacher and parent when active listening skills were used?
- Is this something you would try in a future interaction with a parent? Why or Why not?

WRAP-UP/CONCLUSIONS

What have we learned? How can you apply these skills in your teaching?

APPENDIX F
TEACHER TRAINING SCENARIOS

Scenario 1: Ms. Greene is coming in for a meeting about her grandson, Martel (3rd grade). The teacher has contacted her with concerns because Martel is not completing home-work and often does not complete classwork. Ms. Greene wants to support her grandson with being successful in school, but it has been so long since she learned the material. Frequently when Martel asks for help with his work at home, she does not know how to help him. Ms. Greene is embarrassed that she can't be more helpful to Martel with his assignments.

Scenario 2: David (9th grade) has been living with his foster parent, Mrs. Lopez for 6 months. Mrs. Lopez has been contacted by David's math teacher due to escalating behavioral difficulties in his classroom. Last week David crumpled up his math test and threw it at his teacher stating, "I'm not doing this XXXX!" Ms. Lopez is frustrated that this is the 1st time she has been contacted by the school. She also feels the teachers do not understand how David's home-life impacts his behavior. His biological father is incarcerated and was recently moved to a facility further away where David will rarely be able to visit. She wishes teachers would be more understanding of what he is going through and not just write him up for disciplinary problems.

Scenario 3: Michelle (2nd grade) is temporarily living with her uncle, Mr. Risser, due to her mother's military deployment. Mr. Risser has requested a meeting with Michelle's teacher because he is concerned about Michelle. He has noticed lately that Michelle seems increasingly withdrawn and keeps to herself. She doesn't seem to have many friends at school and doesn't interact much with her cousins or younger siblings at home. Mr. Risser thinks she might benefit from seeing a therapist, but he doesn't know how he

would afford it. He isn't Michelle's legal guardian and is getting very limited financial support from Michelle's mother.

Scenario 4: (This scenario requires 2 parent participants. The observer in your group can play 1 of these roles, or I can join your group to play a parent). Edwin (4th grade) receives special-education services for a Specific Learning Disability in reading and math. His parents, Ms. Garcia and Mr. Hannigan are divorced and do not get along. However, they are both very interested in being involved in Edwin's education. Both Mr. Garcia and Mr. Hannigan will be attending Edwin's upcoming annual IEP meeting. His resource teacher is feeling extremely anxious about this meeting because Edwin's parents often vehemently disagree and argue during IEP meetings. Edwin's father experienced similar difficulties in school and relates to Edwin's struggles, while Edwin's mother feels Edwin simply needs to try harder and is lazy. Edwin's resource teacher is unsure of how to help both parents feel validated and heard and reduce potential disagreements during this meeting.

APPENDIX G
INTERVIEW DATA CODED BY PARTICIPANT

Pre-Intervention Interviews

Participant 1:

| Research Question | Chunks | Code |
|---|--|--|
| <p><i>To what extent, if any, do teachers in the study have training in collaborating with families and family diversity?</i></p> | <p>-We received a lot. -I think that partly has to do with my background in early childhood and early childhood special-education -We actually had an inclusion and diversity class. -I've never had a professional development that was related to working with non-traditional families. It's just always been what I've learned through classes. -I think it would be helpful to have some training, particularly on working with divorced families.</p> | <p>-A lot -Background in Special-Education. -Course-Work on Diversity -Never had Professional Development on this Topic -Helpful to have more training.</p> |
| <p><i>To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?</i></p> | <p>-For divorced parents, I feel sometimes there's a lack of communication between parents. So if I speak to one parent, the other parent might not know what is going on. -I don't ever want to be in the middle of something. There's been a lot of comments like oh well he behaves like this at my house, but he doesn't behave like this at his Dad's house. I want to make sure both parents are aware of what's going on(Divorced Parents) -I do have one student this year where his grandmother is his primary care-giver. I've never met mom or dad before actually, but grandma is very involved in his learning. She's always coming up to me and asking if he brought his home-work. -The only experience I had was with working with the student being raised by his grandmother and the only difference was sometimes it could be confusing because he'll flip back and forth and I never know if he's talking about mom or grandma.</p> | <p>-Lack of communication between divorced parents. -Trouble navigating communicating with divorced parents. -Confusion with parent roles when being raised by grandparent. -Non-traditional family member (grandparent) is involved in learning.</p> |

Participant 2:

| Research Question | Chunks | Code |
|--|---|---|
| <p>To what extent, if any, do teachers in the study have training in collaborating with families and family diversity?</p> | <p>-My master's program did a great job with helping us to work with diverse families. -During the 1st summer in my graduate program there was an entire course about getting to know the neighborhood surrounding the school you worked in, such as culture, surrounding businesses and community resources. -We did a case-study about how to incorporate working with the community and the school. -Both my undergraduate and graduate program touched upon cultural sensitivity in lesson planning. -I've had a lot of exposure to family diversity through my work experiences. -I had read different articles in my teacher training program that exposed me to different kinds of families, but I mostly learned through experiences. -I think it would be helpful to have case-studies on how to work with non-traditional families. I also would like to know things non-traditional families wish we knew from their perspective.</p> | <p>-A lot -Course-Work on Diversity -Course-Work on Diversity -Case-studies. -Course-Work on Diversity -Exposure to Family Diversity through Work Experiences. -Course-Work on Diversity. -Case studies -Helpful to have more training.</p> |
| <p>To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?</p> | <p>-I would expect to see different family make-ups with the students I work with. Some students live with one parent, some live with extended family and cousins. -I have worked with grandparents and other relatives. I no change in the commitment level between biological and non-biological parents. -I haven't seen a disconnect between grandparent headed households and other kinds of families. All kinds of relatives are equally engaged.</p> | <p>-Expect to see no differences -Equal Engagement -Equal Engagement -Expect to see no differences -Adjustment period.</p> |

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| | <p>-I honestly don't see much of a difference in working with non-traditional families.</p> <p>-For grandparents the situation was new for them, so they were just trying to get a handle on things.</p> | |
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Participant 3:

| Research Question | Chunks | Code |
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| <p><i>To what extent, if any, do teachers in the study have training in collaborating with families and family diversity?</i></p> | <p>-A little bit during student teaching. My mentor teacher described how diverse families can be.</p> <p>-I got my degree a while ago, but from what I can recall there were not multiple classes related to families and diversity. We had one section that was about families.</p> <p>-On the job, I've had some informal training on diversity and working with families. We talk about it within our school meetings.</p> <p>-I have my LBSI and when I was going through this training program, we talked about every child being different.</p> <p>-I received most of my diversity training while getting my LBSI.</p> <p>-I would like more information on foster families. I'd also like to more training on how to work with grandparents where parents are not in the picture, but were at some point.</p> | <p>-Learning through work experience</p> <p>-Course-Work on Diversity</p> <p>-Learning through work experience</p> <p>-Background in Special-Education</p> <p>-Background in Special-Education</p> <p>-Helpful to have more training.</p> |
| <p><i>To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?</i></p> | <p>-For half a year, I dealt with a grandparent headed house-hold. They were a very loving family, but there were some issues (drug-use) that lead to the biological parent not having custody.</p> <p>-The child (grandparent headed household) had trouble focusing and was diagnosed with ADHD. I don't know if he really had that diagnosis or was just going through so</p> | <p>-Grandparent is involved.</p> <p>-Adjustment period.</p> <p>- Trouble with learning/curriculum.</p> <p>-Trouble with learning/curriculum.</p> |

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| | <p>much. He seemed to do okay once the situation stabilized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -With divorced parents, there were issues with things not being turned in and turned in late. -The student (divorced parents) was not being pushed as well as in a 2 parent household. -There was also an economic aspect (divorced family) because of the financial aspect the student did not have as much exposure of culture (museums, trips etc.) and lacked some background knowledge. | |
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Participant 4:

| Research Question | Chunks | Code |
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| <p><i>To what extent, if any, do teachers in the study have training in collaborating with families and family diversity?</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The training I've had was primarily focused on collaborating with teachers, rather than collaborating with families. The exposure I've had has been being directly based on working with my collaborating teacher in the school, rather than in courses. -I worked with families during my training that were similar demographically to the families I currently work with. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to work with families from different backgrounds because I've worked with these kinds of families before. -I'm used to working with different kinds of families because I've done it before. I feel like I can work with any kind of family and support them with resources. -I'd like to be more knowledgeable about the demographics of the community as a whole and what kinds of activities the community involves families in. I'd like to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Learning through work experience. -Learning through work experience. -Learning through work experience. -Helpful to have more training. |

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| | <p>help support parents with being more active in school whether they are divorced, single parent, etc.</p> | |
| <p><i>To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?</i></p> | <p>-I have no stereotype or expectation of the demographics of families I'm working with. I look for a parent that cares and is involved regardless of the background they are coming from.</p> <p>-I have worked with grandparents and generally they have a hard time differentiating when to be a grandparent and when to be a parent. As a grandparent they wanted to be able to give the child everything, but had trouble enforcing boundaries. I've noticed that children raised by grandparents have a hard time hearing the word no.</p> <p>-Grandparents might not be as knowledgeable about how to use technology and do not attend as many school functions as biological parents.</p> <p>-With divorced parents, when information is shared with one parent it might not be shared with the other. Having double communication can add to the list of things to do for teachers.</p> <p>-The foster families I've worked with have been really involved. They understood the struggles students were going through.</p> <p>-Each family no matter the background is different from the next. I hold the same expectation no matter what type of family background the student has. Families should work hard to support their children.</p> | <p>-Expect to see no difference.</p> <p>-Confusion with parent roles when being raised by grandparent</p> <p>-Trouble with learning/curriculum.</p> <p>-Do not attend as many school functions.</p> <p>-Lack of communication between divorced parents.</p> <p>-Trouble navigating communicating with divorced parents.</p> <p>Non-traditional family member (foster parent) is involved in learning.</p> <p>-Expect to see no difference.</p> |

Post Intervention Interviews

Participant 1:

| Research Question | Chunks | Code |
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| <i>To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -I didn't realize how many non-traditional families there are. -Now that I've spoken to my kids more, I realized how diverse their families can be. -I don't think my concept of the type of family I will work with has changed because I'm still in the same school. -I message both parents and try to make sure both parents are involved in meetings. -For me I think the hardest is divorced families. I don't want to get in the middle of something. -It's different because I feel like I have to be more careful when I am talking about family topics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More aware of statistics about non-traditional families. -How I work with students changed/More aware. -Concept of non-traditional families has not changed much because I'm working in the same school. -Collaboration with both parents. -How I worked with students changed/more aware. |
| <i>To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -I feel a lot more confident. -Just the way to speak to them during our presentation really helped me. -It gave me a better sense of what families were going through, like when we did the scenarios and were put in those situations. -Learning about the different ways to speak to families like restating the question, asking them when you are responding and clarifying everything that is going on in the conversation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -I feel more confident. -I have a better sense of what families go through. -Working through scenarios helped me. -Learning active listening skills made me more aware of how I talked to families. |

Participant 2:

| Research Question | Chunks | Code |
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| <i>To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It hasn't necessarily changed. It's maybe more distinct. I might react differently if that situation came up. -The statistics were not necessarily surprising but were interesting to read. I feel like I have more awareness of the statistics and scenarios. -I have more awareness of how I can relate and how I can't when I sit with parents and how I come across and am perceived. -I'm more aware of how I come across and what I can do to make families comfortable. -I'm sensitive to the language I'm using in class like having to get something signed by a parent. -I've increased my awareness of how to talk with these families. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Concept of non-traditional families has not changed much because I'm working in the same school. -More aware of statistics about non-traditional families. -How I work with parents has changed/More aware. -How I work with parents has changed/More aware. -How I work with students changed/More aware. |
| <i>To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The most beneficial was the scenarios, -It was thought provoking to help with problem solving and how to react. -It hasn't necessarily changed. I'm still in the same setting. -I would say my confidence is medium. I can always improve. Each family is different and I need to consider the needs of all families when I work with them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Working through scenarios helped me. - Learning active listening skills made me more aware of how I talked to families. Concept of non-traditional families has not changed much because I'm working in the same school. -Confidence is improving. Still learning. |

Participant 3:

| Research Question | Chunks | Code |
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| <p><i>To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?</i></p> | <p>-It might have made me more aware of the percentages of these types of families. I knew those families were there, but there were more than I anticipated.</p> <p>-For the future I would take into consideration as far as relating messages to grandparents and parents. I might be a little bit more apt to ask if it is okay to work with grandparents as well, if the parent is not as involved.</p> <p>-I have one student where the grandparent is not his guardian but is involved and it brought to my attention to make more contact with that grandparent.</p> <p>-I do feel that it's different. Grandparent views are different. The child is used to an environment with a biological parent and that can impact the child. It can impact the whole family. They have to get adjusted to new and individual needs.</p> <p>-Why the parent lost custody (drugs, neglect etc. Could create a bit of stress.</p> | <p>-More aware of statistics about non-traditional families.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed. More aware.</p> |
| <p><i>To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?</i></p> | <p>-Working together and doing the skits (scenarios) made the biggest impression. I remember doing paraphrasing in psychology classes, but has been a while. It helped talking about it and role-playing through the scenarios.</p> <p>-I felt like I had a lot of knowledge of diversity before. I wouldn't say it has changed much. A few things helped because it's been a while.</p> <p>-No change. I've just worked with the 1(non-traditional) family.</p> <p>-Not 100 percent confident. Practice makes perfect. It takes time to get used to new types of</p> | <p>-Working through the scenarios helped me.</p> <p>-Not much change. Had prior knowledge.</p> <p>-Not much change.</p> <p>- Confidence is improving. Still learning.</p> |

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| | living situations. I'm somewhat comfortable. I'm not afraid to interact with these types of families. I would say I'm pretty confident. | |
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Participant 4:

| Research Question | Chunks | Code |
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| <i>To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?</i> | <p>-Sometimes families might not see how we see their issues.</p> <p>-I've worked with foster parents and they were very supportive and present.</p> <p>-With the students I have who is being raised by a grandparent, the communication isn't clear who is responsible. I try to be patient with the student because he is significantly below grade level, but mom/grandma are unable or unwilling to help.</p> <p>-There are some similarities. They socialize normally and get along with peers. Students from non-traditional families have a harder time deciphering and communicating emotions. They have gone through things in life that they have had to adjust in some way and can be more emotional and not like change.</p> | <p>-How I work with parents has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-Families supportive</p> <p>-Families not interested in using resources.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed. More aware.</p> |
| <i>To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?</i> | <p>-I learned how to better show how we understand and are patient by using active listening skills.</p> <p>-It changed a little bit. I'm more aware of the different types of families and the struggles they face.</p> <p>-I increased my resources and have reached out to parents more. I have shared resources and links with grandparents raising students.</p> <p>-I try to keep routines/transitions in the classroom and provide stability. I also set a different tone in the classroom. I have more awareness of students' backgrounds and emotions.</p> | <p>- How I work with parents has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-Confidence is improving. Still Learning.</p> |

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| | <p>-Fairly confident. I would never say I'm an expert. It's a constant learning experiences. I feel a bit more confident than I did in the past.</p> | |
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APPENDIX H
INTERVIEW DATA CODED BY RESEARCH QUESTION

Pre-Intervention Interviews:

Research Question 1: To what extent, if any, do teachers in the study have training in collaborating with families and family diversity?

| Chunks | Code |
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| <p>-We received a lot. -I think that partly has to do with my background in early childhood and early childhood special-education -We actually had an inclusion and diversity class. -I've never had a professional development that was related to working with non-traditional families. It's just always been what I've learned through classes. -I think it would be helpful to have some training, particularly on working with divorced families.</p> | <p>-A lot -Background in Special-Education. -Course-Work on Diversity -Never had Professional Development on this Topic -Helpful to have more training</p> |
| <p>-My master's program did a great job with helping us to work with diverse families. -During the 1st summer in my graduate program there was an entire course about getting to know the neighborhood surrounding the school you worked in, such as culture, surrounding businesses and community resources. -We did a case-study about how to incorporate working with the community and the school. -Both my undergraduate and graduate program touched upon cultural sensitivity in lesson planning. -I've had a lot of exposure to family diversity through my work experiences. -I had read different articles in my teacher training program that exposed me to different kinds of families, but I mostly learned through experiences. -I think it would be helpful to have case-studies on how to work with non-traditional families. I also would like to know things non-traditional families wish we knew from their perspective.</p> | <p>-A lot -Course-Work on Diversity -Course-Work on Diversity -Case-studies. -Course-Work on Diversity -Exposure to Family Diversity through Work Experiences. -Course-Work on Diversity. -Case studies -Helpful to have more training.</p> |
| <p>A little bit during student teaching. My mentor teacher described how diverse families can be. -I got my degree a while ago, but from what I can recall there were not multiple classes related to families and diversity. We had one section that was about families. -On the job, I've had some informal training on diversity and working with families. We talk about it within our school meetings. -I have my LBSI and when I was going through this training program, we talked about every child being different. -I received most of my diversity training while getting my LBSI. -I would like more information on foster families. I'd also like to more training on how to work with</p> | <p>Learning through work experience -Course-Work on Diversity -Learning through work experience -Background in Special-Education -Background in Special-Education -Helpful to have more training.</p> |

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| <p>grandparents where parents are not in the picture, but were at some point.</p> | |
| <p>-The training I've had was primarily focused on collaborating with teachers, rather than collaborating with families. The exposure I've had has been being directly based on working with my collaborating teacher in the school, rather than in courses.</p> <p>-I worked with families during my training that were similar demographically to the families I currently work with. I feel like I have a good understanding of how to work with families from different backgrounds because I've worked with these kinds of families before.</p> <p>-I'm used to working with different kinds of families because I've done it before. I feel like I can work with any kind of family and support them with resources.</p> <p>-I'd like to be more knowledgeable about the demographics of the community as a whole and what kinds of activities the community involves families in. I'd like to help support parents with being more active in school whether they are divorced, single parent, etc.</p> | <p>-Learning through work experience.</p> <p>-Learning through work experience.</p> <p>-Learning through work experience.</p> <p>-Helpful to have more training.</p> |

Research Question 2: To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?

| Chunks | Code |
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| <p>-For divorced parents, I feel sometimes there's a lack of communication between parents. So if I speak to one parent, the other parent might not know what is going on.</p> <p>-I don't ever want to be in the middle of something. There's been a lot of comments like oh well he behaves like this at my house, but he doesn't behave like this at his Dad's house. I want to make sure both parents are aware of what's going on(Divorced Parents)</p> <p>-I do have one student this year where his grandmother is his primary care-giver. I've never met mom or dad before actually, but grandma is very involved in his learning. She's always coming up to me and asking if he brought his home-work.</p> <p>-The only experience I had was with working with the student being raised by his grandmother and the only difference was sometimes it could be confusing because he'll flip back and forth and I never know if he's talking about mom or grandma.</p> | <p>Lack of communication between divorced parents.</p> <p>-Trouble navigating communicating with divorced parents.</p> <p>-Confusion with parent roles when being raised by grandparent.</p> <p>-Non-traditional family member (grandparent) is involved in learning</p> |

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| <p>-I would expect to see different family make-ups with the students I work with. Some students live with one parent, some live with extended family and cousins.</p> <p>-I have worked with grandparents and other relatives. I no change in the commitment level between biological and non-biological parents.</p> <p>-I haven't seen a disconnect between grandparent headed households and other kinds of families. All kinds of relatives are equally engaged.</p> <p>-I honestly don't see much of a difference in working with non-traditional families.</p> <p>-For grandparents the situation was new for them, so they were just trying to get a handle on things.</p> | <p>-Expect to see no differences</p> <p>-Equal Engagement</p> <p>-Equal Engagement</p> <p>-Expect to see no differences</p> <p>-Adjustment period.</p> |
| <p>-For half a year, I dealt with a grandparent headed house-hold. They were a very loving family, but there were some issues (drug-use) that lead to the biological parent not having custody.</p> <p>-The child (grandparent headed household) had trouble focusing and was diagnosed with ADHD. I don't know if he really had that diagnosis or was just going through so much. He seemed to do okay once the situation stabilized.</p> <p>-With divorced parents, there were issues with things not being turned in and turned in late.</p> <p>-The student (divorced parents) was not being pushed as well as in a 2 parent household.</p> <p>-There was also an economic aspect (divorced family) because of the financial aspect the student did not have as much exposure of culture (museums, trips etc.) and lacked some background knowledge.</p> | <p>-Grandparent is involved.</p> <p>-Adjustment period.</p> <p>- Trouble with learning/curriculum.</p> <p>-Trouble with learning/curriculum.</p> |
| <p>-I have no stereotype or expectation of the demographics of families I'm working with. I look for a parent that cares and is involved regardless of the background they are coming from.</p> <p>-I have worked with grandparents and generally they have a hard time differentiating when to be a grandparent and when to be a parent. As a grandparent they wanted to be able to give the child everything, but had trouble enforcing boundaries. I've noticed that children raised by grandparents have a hard time hearing the word no.</p> <p>-Grandparents might not be as knowledgeable about how to use technology and do not attend as many school functions as biological parents.</p> <p>-With divorced parents, when information is shared with one parent it might not be shared with the other. Having double communication can add to the list of things to do for teachers.</p> <p>-The foster families I've worked with have been really involved. They understood the struggles students were going through.</p> <p>-Each family no matter the background is different from the next. I hold the same expectation no matter</p> | <p>-Expect to see no difference.</p> <p>-Confusion with parent roles when being raised by grandparent</p> <p>-Trouble with learning/curriculum.</p> <p>-Do not attend as many school functions.</p> <p>-Lack of communication between divorced parents.</p> <p>-Trouble navigating communicating with divorced parents.</p> <p>Non-traditional family member (foster parent) is involved in learning.</p> <p>-Expect to see no difference.</p> |

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| what type of family background the student has. Families should work hard to support their children. | |
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Research Question 3: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?

| Chunks | Code |
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| <p>-I didn't realize how many non-traditional families there are.</p> <p>-Now that I've spoken to my kids more, I realized how diverse their families can be.</p> <p>-I don't think my concept of the type of family I will work with has changed because I'm still in the same school.</p> <p>-I message both parents and try to make sure both parents are involved in meetings.</p> <p>-For me I think the hardest is divorced families. I don't want to get in the middle of something.</p> <p>-It's different because I feel like I have to be more careful when I am talking about family topics.</p> | <p>-More aware of statistics about non-traditional families.</p> <p>-How I work with students changed/More aware.</p> <p>-Concept of non-traditional families has not changed much because I'm working in the same school.</p> <p>-Collaboration with both parents.</p> <p>-How I worked with students changed/more aware</p> |
| <p>-It hasn't necessarily changed. It's maybe more distinct. I might react differently if that situation came up.</p> <p>-The statistics were not necessarily surprising but were interesting to read. I feel like I have more awareness of the statistics and scenarios.</p> <p>-I have more awareness of how I can relate and how I can't when I sit with parents and how I come across and am perceived.</p> <p>-I'm more aware of how I come across and what I can do to make families comfortable.</p> <p>-I'm sensitive to the language I'm using in class like having to get something signed by a parent.</p> <p>-I've increased my awareness of how to talk with these families.</p> | <p>-Concept of non-traditional families has not changed much because I'm working in the same school.</p> <p>-More aware of statistics about non-traditional families.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students changed/More aware.</p> |
| <p>-It might have made me more aware of the percentages of these types of families. I knew those families were there, but there were more than I anticipated.</p> <p>-For the future I would take into consideration as far as relating messages to grandparents and parents. I might be a little bit more apt to ask if it is okay to work with grandparents as well, if the parent is not as involved.</p> <p>-I have one student where the grandparent is not his guardian but is involved and it brought to my attention to make more contact with that grandparent.</p> <p>-I do feel that it's different. Grandparent views are different. The child is used to an environment with a</p> | <p>-More aware of statistics about non-traditional families.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/More aware.</p> |

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| <p>biological parent and that can impact the child. It can impact the whole family. They have to get adjusted to new and individual needs.</p> <p>-Why the parent lost custody (drugs, neglect etc. Could create a bit of stress.</p> | <p>-How I work with parents has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed. More aware.</p> |
| <p>-Sometimes families might not see how we see their issues.</p> <p>-I've worked with foster parents and they were very supportive and present.</p> <p>-With the students I have who is being raised by a grandparent, the communication isn't clear who is responsible. I try to be patient with the student because he is significantly below grade level, but mom/grandma are unable or unwilling to help.</p> <p>-There are some similarities. They socialize normally and get along with peers. Students from non-traditional families have a harder time deciphering and communicating emotions. They have gone through things in life that they have had to adjust in some way and can be more emotional and not like change.</p> | <p>-How I work with parents has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-Families supportive</p> <p>-Families not interested in using resources.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed. More aware.</p> |

Research Question 4: To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?

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| <p>-I feel a lot more confident.</p> <p>-Just the way to speak to them during our presentation really helped me.</p> <p>-It gave me a better sense of what families were going through, like when we did the scenarios and were put in those situations.</p> <p>-Learning about the different ways to speak to families like restating the question, asking them when you are responding and clarifying everything that is going on in the conversation.</p> | <p>-I feel more confident.</p> <p>-I have a better sense of what families go through.</p> <p>-Working through scenarios helped me.</p> <p>-Learning active listening skills made me more aware of how I talked to families.</p> |
| <p>-The most beneficial was the scenarios,</p> <p>-It was thought provoking to help with problem solving and how to react.</p> <p>-It hasn't necessarily changed. I'm still in the same setting.</p> <p>-I would say my confidence is medium. I can always improve. Each family is different and I need to consider the needs of all families when I work with them.</p> | <p>-Working through scenarios helped me.</p> <p>- Learning active listening skills made me more aware of how I talked to families.</p> <p>Concept of non-traditional families has not changed much because I'm working in the same school.</p> <p>-Confidence is improving. Still learning.</p> |

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| <p>-Working together and doing the skits (scenarios) made the biggest impression. I remember doing paraphrasing in psychology classes, but has been a while. It helped talking about it and role-playing through the scenarios.</p> <p>-I felt like I had a lot of knowledge of diversity before. I wouldn't say it has changed much. A few things helped because it's been a while.</p> <p>-No change. I've just worked with the 1(non-traditional) family.</p> <p>-Not 100 percent confident. Practice makes perfect. It takes time to get used to new types of living situations. I'm somewhat comfortable. I'm not afraid to interact with these types of families. I would say I'm pretty confident.</p> | <p>-Working through the scenarios helped me.</p> <p>-Not much change. Had prior knowledge.</p> <p>-Not much change.</p> <p>- Confidence is improving. Still learning.</p> |
| <p>-I learned how to better show how we understand and are patient by using active listening skills.</p> <p>-It changed a little bit. I'm more aware of the different types of families and the struggles they face.</p> <p>-I increased my resources and have reached out to parents more. I have shared resources and links with grandparents raising students.</p> <p>-I try to keep routines/transitions in the classroom and provide stability. I also set a different tone in the classroom. I have more awareness of students' backgrounds and emotions.</p> <p>-Fairly confident. I would never say I'm an expert. It's a constant learning experiences. I feel a bit more confident than I did in the past.</p> | <p>- How I work with parents has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-How I work with parents has changed/more aware.</p> <p>-How I work with students has changed/More aware.</p> <p>-Confidence is improving. Still Learning.</p> |

APPENDIX I
INTERVIEW DATA CODED BY PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES
PRE AND POST INTERVENTION

Participant 1:

Research Question 1: To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?

Research Question 3: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?

| Pre-Intervention Interview | Post Intervention Interview | Code |
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| <p>-I consider diversity to be anything with their race, their academic levels those kids are very diverse even within their families. Some of them will come from parents that are married, some of them are divorced, some of them have lost a parent, if they're living with other family members, such as grandparents, or aunts and uncles. I've dealt with some that do not have family that live with them. They live out of state.</p> <p>- Just based off the demographics of the area I'm in, they are mostly Hispanic families. There are some that do have parents that are married and some that are separated.</p> <p>- For divorced parents, I feel sometimes there's a lack of communication between the parents. So, if I speak to one parent about something, the other parent may not know what's going on. I've been trying to message both parents, so both are aware. I do have a student this year where their grandparent is their primary care-giver. I've never met mom before or dad, but grandma is very</p> | <p>-I would say a little bit. I just didn't really realize how many, now that I've spoken to my kids about it a little more, how diverse their families are. Like how a lot of them I didn't realize had older siblings from their dad's first marriages. Some of them I knew had older siblings, but I didn't realize they weren't all from the same mother and father.</p> <p>-I don't think it has right now, mainly because I'm at the same school, but I think if I were to change schools and see different types of families it would.</p> <p>- For me I think the hardest would be the divorced parents. I just don't want to get into the middle of anything. Like one will say, "Oh well when they're at dad's house," and then the dad will come back with like, "Oh they don't act like that here. I don't know what's going on at mom's house." But I'm very lucky that all of my families are very supportive, and they do want the best for their children and they're willing to work with me and continue what</p> | <p>-Definition of family diversity has not changed much. More aware of types of families in my class.</p> <p>-Concept of families I will work with has not changed. Might in future.</p> <p>-Families in general are supportive. Working with divorced families is the biggest challenge.</p> |

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| <p>involved in his learning. So, she's always coming up and talking to me, making sure that he's brought his homework and if there's anything else we can do, so she is very supportive of him.</p> <p>-I haven't had any experience with children that have been placed in foster homes. Like I said, the only difference would be the one that was raised by his grandmother. And there aren't any big differences. The only difference is it's sometimes confusing because he will refer to grandma as his mom. So, during different conversations he'll be flipping back and forth, and I never know if he's actually talking about his mom or he's talking about his grandma. Most of the times he is talking about grandma, who he refers to as mom.</p> | <p>we're doing at school and try to help put it in place at home too, so there is a follow through, and just really show the kids that we're all trying to work together.</p> <p>- It's different because I feel like I have to be a little bit more careful when I am talking about family related topics, especially if a parent has passed away or is very sick right now. I know even with just, not just their immediate family, like their cousins as well. I had a student who has recently lost her cousin and any sort of talk about cousins really upsets her.</p> | <p>-More awareness about differences in types of families. More awareness about language used in classroom related to families.</p> |
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Participant 1:

Research Question 4: To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?

| Pre-Intervention Interview | Post Intervention Interview | Code |
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| <p>-I would say that I am confident. But sometimes I do worry with how I'm wording things. I know I've had students in the past, whose father has passed away. So, when we're talking about mom and dad, I worry about how they're going to take it, knowing that they have lost one of their</p> | <p>- I feel a lot more confident. Like I said earlier, just the way to speak to them, during our presentation really helped me. Just in the sense that it gives me a better understanding of what they were going through. Like when we did those scenarios and we were put into those situations.</p> | <p>-A lot more confident. I have a better understanding of what families are going through and how to speak to them.</p> |

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| <p>parents. Like I'm confident when I'm teaching them, but I sometimes worry about how they emotionally can handle talking about certain things.</p> <p>- I've never had a professional development that was related to this. It's just always been what I've learned through classes. I think it would be helpful to have some sort of training especially on what to do with divorced families. Cause I don't ever want to be in the middle of something. There's been a lot of comments like oh well he behaves like this at my house, but he doesn't do this with his dad. Like I don't ever want to get in the middle of any sort of family drama. I want to make sure that both parents are well aware of what's going on.</p> | <p>- When using classroom dojo, instead of just messaging one parent, if both parents are on classroom dojo, I will message both of them, just to make sure that everyone is understanding. For parent meetings, when I'm scheduling, making sure that both parents can be present.</p> | <p>-Make more effort to message both parents in divorced families and make sure they can both be present for meetings.</p> |
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Participant 2:

Research Question 1: To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?

Research Question 3: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?

| Pre-Intervention Interview | Post Intervention Interview | Code |
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| <p>- I've had a lot of exposure to family diversity through my work experiences. A lot of kids I've worked with have been raised by grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives. I had read articles in my teacher training program that exposed me to different types</p> | <p>-It hasn't necessarily changed. It's maybe been made more distinct. I might react differently if that situation came up. The statistics were not necessarily surprising but were interesting to read.</p> | <p>-Hasn't changed, but definition of family diversity is more distinct.</p> |

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| <p>of families, but I mostly learned through experience.</p> <p>-I would expect to see different family make-ups. Some students live with one parent, some live with both, some live with extended family and cousins, some live with both parents. In my current setting we have a lot of Hispanic families. I think it's important to get to know the kids and what is normal for them.</p> <p>- I haven't worked with foster families. I have worked with grandparents and other relatives. I saw no change in the commitment level between biological and non-biological parents. The non-biological families I've worked with have been really involved. I haven't seen a disconnect between grandparent headed households and biological. All kinds of relatives are equally engaged. I hold all the families I work with to the same expectations.</p> <p>- I honestly didn't see very much difference besides sometimes a language barrier. All the families were very involved and hands-on. For grandparents, the situation was new for them, so they were just trying to get a handle on things.</p> | <p>- No. It hasn't changed.</p> <p>- I've never worked with foster. I have worked with grandparents and mixed families. I'm sensitive to the language I'm using in class like having to get something signed by a parent. I've increased my awareness of how to talk with these families.</p> <p>- They are different in that the kids typically come with more challenges. Understanding their background and the supports that they need. I have more awareness of that now.</p> | <p>-Concept of the type of families I will work with has not changed.</p> <p>-More awareness of language I use in class related to families. More awareness of how to speak with families.</p> <p>-Better understanding of differences in families. Better understanding of what students and families are going through</p> |
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Participant 2:

Research Question 4: To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?

| Pre-Intervention Interview | Post Intervention Interview | Code |
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| <p>-I try and approach all families in the same manner. Education is a team effort. Students are splitting time between school and home. I try really hard to keep communication open with families.</p> <p>-I think it would be helpful to have case-studies of how to work with non-traditional families. I also would like to know things non-traditional families wish we knew as educators (like what it is like from their perspective.</p> | <p>- I would say it's medium. I can always improve. Each family is different and requires different involvement and awareness. Sometimes there's a language barrier. I need to consider the needs of all families and what you can learn about them.</p> <p>- I feel like I have more awareness of the statistics and the scenarios. I have more awareness of how I can relate and how I can't. When I sit with parents I am more aware of how I come across and how they are perceiving me. I'm more aware of doing what I can to make them comfortable.</p> | <p>-I can always improve. Each family is different.</p> <p>-More awareness of statistics. More awareness of how to relate to families.</p> |

Participant 3:

Research Question 1: To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?

Research Question 3: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?

| Pre-Intervention Interview | Post Intervention Interview | Code |
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| <p>-Family diversity means an individual should and could have knowledge of many different backgrounds. A teacher should take into account race and nationality and have some knowledge of student demographics. I have my LBSI and when I was going through this training program we talked</p> | <p>-I felt like I had a lot of knowledge of diversity before. I wouldn't say it changed much. There were a few things that helped because it has been a while since I learned the information. A few things helped because information (like the statistics) has been updated.</p> | <p>-Definition has not changed much. More awareness of statistics related to non-traditional families.</p> |

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| <p>about every child being different. I received most of my diversity training while getting my LBSI. Diversity is not just race but can be a lot of different factors. Each child has his or her own needs and should be treated as an equal.</p> <p>- Very diverse. About 90 percent of our families are Hispanic. About 3-4 of my students have special needs such as Autism, behavioral and ADHD. These special-needs are not necessarily diagnosed.</p> <p>- For half a year I dealt with a grandparent headed household. They were a very loving family, but there were some issues (drug use) in the family that led to the biological parent not having custody. The grandparent ended up adopting the child. The child had trouble focusing and was diagnosed with ADHD. I don't know if he really had that diagnosis or it was just he was going through so much. He seemed to do okay once his family situation stabilized. With divorced families, the communication with the parents was positive, but the child was lacking in their academic performance. There were issues with things not being turned in and being turned in late. The student was not being pushed as well as in a 2-parent household. There also was an economic aspect. Because of the financial aspect, the student did not have as much exposure to culture like going to museums, on trips etc. He lacked some background knowledge.</p> <p>- I never did foster. I only worked with grandparents. The</p> | <p>- It might have made me more aware of the percentages of these types of families. I know those families were there, but there were more than I anticipated.</p> <p>-No change. I just have the one grandparent headed family I work with.</p> <p>-- I do feel it's different. Grandparent views are different. The child is used to the environment with the biological parent and that can impact the child. It can impact the whole family. They have to get adjusted</p> | <p>-More awareness of statistics and types of families.</p> <p>-No change. Still working with the same families.</p> <p>-Better understanding of differences in families. Better understanding of what students and families are going through</p> |
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| <p>only difference in that situation, they were a very loving family, so there was no difference in that respect. I don't feel the child was neglected or unloved. The child seemed lost with peers and kept to himself. He still talked about Dad and Mom and had a desire to be with his parents. That might have off-set his grade, since he was upset about his situation and couldn't accept the facts.</p> | <p>to new individual and other needs. Why the person got custody (drugs, neglect etc..) could create a bit of stress for that child.</p> | |
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Participant 3:

Research Question 4: To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?

| Pre-Intervention Interview | Post Intervention Interview | Code |
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| <p>-Very confident. I have a degree in psychology and feel comfortable working with pretty much anybody. Nothing would shock me.</p> <p>-I would like more information on foster families. I have no experience in this area, but it could come up at some point. I would like to know how the foster family works and how to work with children from that background and help them. I'd also like to know about grandparents where the parents are not in the picture but were at some point. I'd like more education on that.</p> | <p>- Not 100 percent confident. Practice makes perfect. It takes time to get used to new types of living situations. Somewhat comfortable. I'm not afraid to interact with different types of families. I'm pretty confident.</p> <p>-It really hasn't been too long since the training. I would say there's not too much change. For the future, I would take into consideration as far as relating messages to grandparents and parents, I might be a little bit more apt to ask if it is okay to work with grand-parents as well, if the parent is involved. I have one student where the grandparent is involved, but not the guardian. With that student who is being raised by grandma, it brought to my attention that I might need to make</p> | <p>-Pretty confident. Working with families is a learning experience that takes time.</p> <p>-Hasn't been long since the training. Not much change. Would take in to consideration for the future to make more contact with grandparent headed family I work with.</p> |

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| | more contact with that grandparent. | |
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Participant 4:

Research Question 1: To what extent, if any do teachers in the study hold negative perceptions and biases about non-traditional families, such as foster families, kinship care-givers and grandparents raising grandchildren?

Research Question 3: To what extent, if any, do the perceptions of teachers in the study about working with foster families, kinship care-givers, divorced parents and grandparents raising grandchildren change after receiving a brief training on issues impacting this population?

| Pre-Intervention Interview | Post Intervention Interview | Code |
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| <p>-Family diversity means having a wide range of cultural, financial, and educational backgrounds in families. It means having some exposure to diverse families. I worked with families during my training that were from the same background to the families I've currently worked with. They had similar demographics to where I'm working now, so I have a good understanding of how to work with families from these backgrounds.</p> <p>- I have no expectation or stereotype of demographics of families I'm working with. I look for a parent that cares for the student and education and is a primary support for that student regardless of the background they are coming from. All parents should play a role in education. I'm in a Catholic school setting, so since the parents opted for this setting, I would expect them to be from the Catholic faith and come from a Catholic family. I would expect the parents to come from educated backgrounds where they</p> | <p>-It changed a little bit. I'm more aware of different types of families and the struggles they face.</p> <p>- Yes, it changed a little bit. I have a better sense of being more patient and understanding of different kinds of families and more aware of students and the problems they may bring into the classroom.</p> | <p>-Definition has not changed much. More awareness of different types of families and what they are going through.</p> <p>-Not much change. More awareness and sensitivity of what children and families are going through.</p> |

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| <p>received a Catholic education themselves and to be able to afford to send the child to Catholic school.</p> <p>- I have worked with grandparents that are the sole guardian, students with divorced parents and foster families. With grandparents, generally they had a hard time differentiating when to be the grandparent and when to be the parent. As a grandparent they wanted to be able to give the child everything, but had trouble enforcing boundaries. I've noticed that children who come from grandparent headed households have a tendency to not hear the word no often. Grandparents also might not be as knowledgeable about how to use technology and in my experience, do not attend school functions as often as biological parents. With divorced families there is a lack of communication between parents. When information is shared with one parent, it is not shared with the other. Having to have double communication can add to the list of things to do for teachers. With foster families, I've had positive experiences. They tend to take a more active role and to care about students. They understand the struggles the students are going through and sometimes have decided to become a foster parent because they have had experience in the foster system themselves. The foster families I've worked with really take on the parent role and are involved in the student's activities.</p> <p>- No. Each family no matter together or divorced, every type</p> | <p>- I've worked with foster parents and they were very supportive and present. They were willing to cooperate with the teacher and schools. With my student being raised by the grandparent, mom is still in the picture, but mom doesn't really want him, and grandma doesn't have time for him. Grandma is who I need to contact, but mom shows up to meetings. The communication isn't very clear with who is responsible. I try to be patient with the student because he significantly below grade level and neither mom not grandma are able to and willing to help.</p> | <p>- Better understanding of differences in families. Better understanding of what students and families are going through.</p> |
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| <p>of family is different from the next. Adoptive families are going to hold the same expectation for students. I hold the same expectation no matter what type of family background the student has. Families should have an active role and work hard to support children educationally and financially. I would expect all families from each background to be a typically functioning family with these expectations.</p> | <p>- There are some similarities. They socialize normally with each other and get along with peers. Students from non-traditional families have a harder time deciphering and communicating their emotions. I work with 8-9-year olds and they are vulnerable. They have gone through things in life that they have had to adjust in some way and can be more emotional and not like change. I try to keep routines/transitions in classroom and provide support and stability.</p> | <p>-Better understanding of differences in families. Better understanding of what students and families are going through.</p> |
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Participant 4:

Research Question 4: To what extent, if any, does instructing teachers in how to apply communication/conflict resolution skills to working with non-traditional families increase their confidence level in communicating with these families?

| Pre-Intervention Interview | Post Intervention Interview | Code |
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| <p>-I would say my confidence is growing. I wouldn't say it's low, medium, or high. All my experience has dealt with these types of families. I'm a 1st year teacher, so I'm gaining confidence. I'm used to working</p> | <p>-Fairly confident. I would never say I'm an expert. It's a constant learning experience. I appreciated time to reflect on things. I feel a little bit more confident than I had in the past. This year has been a learning experience. Families are</p> | <p>-Fairly confident. Working with families is a learning experience that takes time.</p> |

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| <p>with different kinds of families because I've done it before. I started off my career working with alternative families. I feel like I can work with any type of family and support them. Part of my job is also giving resources to families, so I can support them through giving resources.</p> <p>-I could use a list of resources (such as things offered by the community for non-traditional families) before the beginning of the school year. I'd like to be knowledgeable about the demographics of the community and what kinds of activities the community involves families in. I'd like to help parents be more active in the school whether they are divorced, single-parent, etc. I know that can sometimes be difficult because they have so much going on. I'd like to know how to help make education a higher priority and encourage and motivate parents to be present.</p> | <p>showing me how to work with them. It's been a great experience because I've been exposed to many things and types of families.</p> <p>-I increased my bi-lingual resources (both Spanish and English resources). I've reached out to parents more and have shared resources and links with grandparents raising students. I also set a different tone in the classroom following the training. I have more awareness of students' backgrounds and emotions.</p> | <p>-Increased resources and outreach. Better understanding of differences in families. Better understanding of what students and families are going through.</p> |
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VITA

Bonnie Kilfoyle was born and raised in New York City. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, she attended Beloit College in Wisconsin where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology in 2005. She began her career in education through the New York City Teaching Fellows Program, an alternative teacher certification program, in 2005. Bonnie earned a Masters of Arts in Special Education from Mercy College in 2007 and has worked as a special-education teacher at the high-school level for New York City Public Schools and Chicago Public Schools. Her teaching experience increased her interest in academic and social-emotional interventions and in 2013, she obtained her Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. Bonnie has five years of experience working as a school psychologist in public and charter schools in the Chicago area. She currently works as a school psychologist for a public school district in Lake County, IL. Her interests within school psychology include supporting students' mental health and behavioral needs, collaborating with teachers and collaborating with families. She lives in Chicago, IL with her husband and dog.

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