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CONCEPTUALIZING ONE'S SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATE: PARENTS'
PERCEPTIONS AS EMBODIED IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITALS

by

Karmen Binion

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Education

In

Special Education

In the

Bagwell College of Education

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw, GA

2020

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DEDICATION

To my sons Antoine, Dean, Roman, and my two bonus sons... you are and forever will be my inspiration. I dedicate this work to you. It was through giving birth to my sweet son Antoine, born too soon and who opened his eyes for the first time in heaven, that I was able to find my voice to feverishly advocate for my children. My hope is that you, Dean and Roman, remember mommy's strength, perseverance and refusal to take no for an answer as you grow up and forge your own way in this world. Always remember that there is no limit to what you can do. Do not ever let anyone define you, silence you, or convince you that you are not good enough. You are my "why".

"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name" (Psalm 91:14, The New King James Version).

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To my parents, Floyd Battle, Margaret Battle and my big sister Mieke Battle. I hope that I have made you all proud. You shaped me into the woman that I am today. To the shy brown skinned girl who grew up doubting herself, doubting her intelligence, witnessing and experiencing trauma, being told and shown more than once that you are not good enough, this is dedicated to you. You are not only good enough, you are great, amazing, intelligent, articulate and I am so proud that you have finally emerged. To my ancestors, Daisy Gordon, Sol and Bedie Collins, Sarah Elizabeth Pittman Collins, John Wesley Collins and others. Thank you for all of your sacrifices. It is because of you that I am free. Your fire burns within me and I am

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passing that same fire on to my children ensuring that it never dies. Finally, to my husband, Birt Binion, thank you for supporting me through this journey. What a journey!

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to understand, and generate theory, relevant to educator-parents' and non-educator parents' perceptions of their efficacy as advocates for their own child(ren) with exceptionalities, as embodied in social and cultural capitals, as espoused by Bourdieu (1986). The present study was guided by the following research questions: How do educator-parents and non-educator parents perceive their efficaciousness as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities? How do educator-parents and non-educator parents construct the narrative of their efficaciousness as advocates as embodied in cultural and/or social capital?

Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) was chosen for the six-month qualitative investigation to elicit parents' perceptions that both informed, and was informed by, rich data using a constructivist approach. The participants in the present study included four educators who were also parents of children with exceptionalities and four non-educator parents of children with exceptionalities for a total of eight parents. Data sources included in-depth biographical and open-ended interviews, diaries, documents for review, participant-generated visual representations, and researcher-generated memos. These multiple data sources were analyzed using constant comparative analysis throughout the study. To identify analytic distinctions, Bourdieu's Theory of Social and Cultural Capital (1986) was used as a beginning foothold for the grounded study upon which results were analyzed, findings were expounded, and researcher-generated theory was formulated. It is the confluence of parents' experiences, expectations, and social and cultural affordances that help them conceptualize their efficaciousness as advocates for their child(ren) with exceptionalities. Theory as embodied by the participants of the study, educator-parents, and non-educator parents, reveal how social and

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cultural capitals differentially affect parents' self-efficacy in advocating for their child(ren) with an exceptionality.

Keywords: Parental Perceptions; Advocacy; Self-Efficacy; Cultural and Social Capital; Students with Exceptionalities

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Chapter One: Vignette

It's a Wednesday, late morning around 9am. My three year old son and I are sitting in the main lobby of a one-story, mature, brick building surrounded by the pitter patter of toddler steps, crying babies and immersed in a room full of mothers, babies and fathers of varied ethnicities. The staff appear oblivious behind sliding glass windows as the lobby continues to fill with young mothers and their children. They all present with a look of concern, even suspicion. I feel out of place, awkward and find myself undertaking the same demeanor of concern and suspicion as the time slowly creeps by. After a thirty-minute wait, a younger woman enters the lobby from a back room with a clipboard and reads aloud the name "Binion" without looking up. We quickly gather our things and follow her through the heavy door to the right of the lobby.

The room is darker than expected when we enter. The lights are turned off but the blinds are opened letting in natural light. The smell is old and moldy. There is a table in the middle of the room with mounds of papers. There are two women seated at the table facing us. The third woman who walked us in gestured for us to sit in the corner by pointing towards two chairs. She sat down behind the table next to her counterparts. There is a smaller round children's table and chair a few feet away from the staff table. I am afraid. I can only imagine that he's also afraid, so I hold him tight. The atmosphere is so formal and cold. There are dirty old toys scattered around and beneath the tables on the dirty old carpeted floor. It is not kid friendly. It looks more like an area for pets to play instead of children. The women talk quietly amongst each other as if we're not there. One of the women eventually stands up with her clipboard of paper and a pen and walks towards us and says, "let's get started". She takes him from my arms, places him on the floor and leads him by his hand to the children's table. She tells him to have a seat. She sits

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down next to him and begins presenting him with the dirty toys from the floor. He looks back at me for assurance and I nod and give him a brave smile.

He begins to fiddle with the toys on the table. She asks questions at him, not of him. He does not respond. She marks her paper. He does not look up. He continues to fiddle with the toys. She calls his name and repeats the question. Again, he does not look up. She continues to mark her paper and read through her script pausing after each verbal and gestural prompt. This goes on for roughly 30 minutes with a rotation of dirty toys being handed to him and taken away with directions of place them here or questions such as “*what color is that?*” or “*what is that toy?*”? My breathing is shallow and I’m holding my purse tightly.

He has an eligibility of significant developmental delay I’m told. It hurts to swallow. I believe that my breathing stops. The world stops. What does that mean? Will he ever speak? What does that mean for his future? “Ma’am, we don’t know, we can’t say and let’s just focus on getting him the services that he needs. Don’t worry.” But I don’t know what this means. Will my child be ok? “Ma’am, sign here, and here and on the next several pages. Take this home and review it. You will be contacted shortly with the date and time that his services will begin.”

The rationale for the current study derived from my own experience as a parent of a child with an exceptionality. I chose to end my twelve year career in commercial and higher education insurance and risk management, to become an educator by trade after the experience described above in my vignette. I perceived that by becoming a special educator, I would gain an in-depth knowledge into the world of special education and be better equipped to advocate for supports and services for my son. The following presents the introduction to the current study on parents’ perceptions of their advocacy efforts for their child with an exceptionality.

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Introduction

It is generally recognized that parent involvement in their child(ren)'s education results in positive academic effects, so much so, that legislation exists mandating schools to take steps to ensure that parent involvement occurs (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, et al., 2004; Francis, Blue-Banning, Turnbull, et al., 2016; Henderson, Carson, Avallone, et al., 2011; Hornby & Lafaele, 2012; Sumarsono, Imron, Wiyono, et al., 2016). Factors that influence parental involvement, student advocacy in particular, are often presented through the lens of a lack of contentment by parents with the resources and services provided by the school. When parental advocacy is especially warranted, as in the case of advocating for children with exceptionalities, the stakes are inevitably that much higher (Connor & Cavendish, 2018; Czapanskiy, 2014; Hess, Molina & Kozleski, 2006). Given the critical importance of parental advocacy for children with exceptionalities and the parent's role both inside and outside the home, the current study will investigate educator-parents' and non-educator parents' conceptualization (i.e., perception) of their efficacy as advocates for their own child(ren) with exceptionalities, as embodied in social and cultural capitals, as espoused by Bourdieu (1986). A Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) was chosen to gain insight into how the participants in this study conceptualize representations of their own efficaciousness as advocates for their child(ren) with exceptionalities.

Background to the Study

Parents of children with exceptionalities are faced with many challenges, from the identification and diagnosis of an exceptionality to learning how to access needed resources, services, and academic supports for their child(ren), positioning them to become advocates for themselves and their young (Hess, Molina, & Kozleski, 2006; Trainor, 2010a). Individual needs

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of parents and their child(ren) are ultimately determined by the nature of the exceptionality “as every child manifests them in different ways” (Gross C. , 2011, p. 88) and family dynamics; in either case, learning how to access and coordinate what is needed can often be a daunting task. Most parents find that advocacy is the most effective way to garner what is needed for themselves and their child(ren) (Fenton, Ocasio-Stoutenburg, and Harry, 2017; Hess, Molina & Kozleski, 2006). The literature provides ample evidence that the challenges that parents face while advocating for services in the school setting can be linked to the lack of effective parent-school communication, collaboration and partnerships (Curry and Holter, 2019; Epstein, 1995; Watson, Sanders-Lawson, & McNeal , 2012; Turnbull, Summers, Turnbull, et al 2007). Yet, even when effective parent-school partnerships exist, the need for advocacy does not go away.

Further, how a parent advocates can be altered by the effectiveness of the partnership and supports provided through these partnerships. This is a timely topic to explore as establishing and maintaining parent and school partnerships is best practice for schools, as well as it is written into law (Rodriguez, Blatz, & Elbaum, 2014). The literature suggests that parent engagement efforts, such as school provided parent support programs, are linked to student achievement (Turnbull, et al., 2007). It seems important to investigate the motivations for parent involvement and engagement in schools, what shapes and has shaped their perspective, and how they conceptualize their personal knowledge about their own idiosyncratic advocacy experiences, particularly when some are additionally defined as “teacher.” Teachers’ voices are rarely elicited, and those of parents even less so. As part of the process for engaging data and generating findings (i.e, in this investigation), questions of reflexivity and voice will come to the fore, which is why parents who are educators, as well as parents who are non-educators, engaged in

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conceptualizing their own in-depth accounts of their experiences as advocates for their own children is important.

Rationale/Problem Statement

The evolution of this study derived from my own experience as a teacher and parent of a child identified as experiencing a developmental delay. My toddler son began presenting with cognitive delays (communication and social) during his time in preschool. Nonverbal, he would point to communicate his wants and needs and exhibited limited interaction with his peers, preferring to play alone and not make eye contact with those around him. With the encouragement of two separate preschool directors we sought early intervention services through our state's public agency. I initially sought to gain knowledge regarding developmental delays through months of google researches, inundating myself with social media support groups, quitting my job as an insurance and risk manager and pursuing a position as a special educator while completing a teacher preparation program and ultimately advancing my knowledge through the pursuit of a terminal degree in special education.

Drawing from my own experience, I recognize that my own personal, cultural, and historical experiences have shaped, and may likely continue to shape, my interpretations. As Patton (2002) avers, researchers' interpretations "cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understandings" (p. 39). Resonating with a social constructivist worldview (Charmaz, 2006), my focus in this study has been to develop theory based on my participants' local contexts, diverse realities, and the multiplicities of their views, actions, and intentions. Classifying and conceptualizing participants' events, acts, and constructions of reality is based upon Charmaz's (2006) interpretive approach for developing

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theory, one that allows the researcher the freedom to make decisions about the categories and concepts that are conceptualized and constructed throughout.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand and generate theory relevant to educator-parents' and non-educator parents' conceptualizations (i.e., perceptions) of their efficacy as advocates for their own child(ren) with exceptionalities, as embodied in social and cultural capitals as espoused by Bourdieu (1986). It engages parents in an examination of their own conceptualizations of their role in the advocacy process, how their experiences came to be, and what major sources influenced their experiences. Using social and cultural capital as a lens for understanding their experiences, I begin with a basic description of their experiences as advocates, organize these data into discrete categories, and then theorize ideas and concepts, forming them into a logical, explanatory scheme (Patton, 2002). Making sense of (i.e., interpreting) the meanings, views, ideologies, beliefs, and assumptions the parents in this study have about their world, will be emphasized and valued as highly, if not more so, than the methods used to gather such data.

Social and Cultural Capital

Social capital is defined in terms of networking, relationships, mutual acquaintances, and membership in a group and exist to inform and exchange (Bourdieu, 1983; Portes, 1998; Lin 2001), while cultural capital is defined as “pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments (and) machines” (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 243). Through my current role as special educator I have gained particular “insider knowledge,” a term identified by Trainor (2010c) as someone who has “firsthand knowledge of (the) special education processes, contexts and experiences common to participants” (p. 250). My insider knowledge brings awareness of limited resources within the

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district, allocation of funds, the massive caseloads that special educators possess along with the lack of time to provide the individual attention needed for each case, the lengthy process and multiple steps required to obtain an evaluation, the inability of a school psychologist to perform an individualized and truly detailed evaluation due to high caseloads, and the need to process them expeditiously.

Employing this definition, my own social capitals would be described as relationships with my educator peers, peer professional development opportunities, and participation in social media platforms such as special educator networks. My cultural capitals would include independent professional development opportunities, my educational pursuits such as my specialist degree in special education and pursuit of a doctorate in special education.

Theory resulting from this study may assist educational leaders and policy makers in helping to provide the *conditions by which parents and other care-givers can leverage opportunities* for specific types of social and cultural resources. These opportunities may also assist in helping to further equitable and quality education for children with exceptionalities. As Trainor (2010b) indicates, education professionals acquire and maintain capital as a part of their profession, and more significantly, suggests that this capital be transferred to parents to meet the “legislation that positions parents as equal partners” (p. 259). Yet, how can we assume that this is the case for every parent who is an educator with a child(ren) with exceptionalities? Is it not possible that there may be drawbacks to preferential access? This is why stirring participants’ reflexivity and voice are crucial to this grounded theory study. It is from these data that the findings, which in essence *are* the theory, can suggest avenues for future research and practice. The various forms and permutations of social and cultural capital will be more specifically delineated in future chapters as distinctions are made and concepts are derived.

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Research Questions

The research questions guiding this investigation are: (1) How do educator-parents and non-educator parents perceive their efficaciousness as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities? and (2), How do educator-parents and non-educator parents construct the narrative of their efficaciousness as advocates as embodied in social and or cultural capital?

“Capital” in this study is operationalized in the language of parents who have, or endeavor to have, a relationship with their child’s school or teacher for the purpose of efficaciously advocating for their child(ren) with an exceptionality. Further, examining and comparing the voices of parents of students with exceptionalities who are teachers by trade versus those who are not, provides a unique perspective which positions parents working from the realm of education and those without, adding to our understanding of the potential variation amongst the two sectors. As Cosford and Draper (2002) posit, “parents need to be understood as a differentiated group; all parents are not the same and do not have the same experience, nor the same grasp, of educational issues” (p. 359). As this study will reveal, it is the confluence of parents’ experiences, expectations, and social and cultural affordances that help them conceptualize their efficaciousness as advocates for their child(ren) with exceptionalities.

Significance of the Study

The research surrounding *how* parents engage in schools is plentiful (Epstein, 1995; Hess et. al, 2006; Moll, Amanti, Neff, et al, 1992; Rodriguez et al, 2014; Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, et. al, 2011). Studies surrounding the advocacy experience, including how parents of children with exceptionalities conceptualize, construct, and characterize their knowledge surrounding their self-efficacy (particularly among those who are educators versus those who are non-educators by profession), however, is not. Why does this gap exist? What bias exists in the literature? What

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will the voices within each group lead us to ponder? What culture capitals, social capitals, and power differentials exist that might lead a parent to construct his or her advocacy role in a particular way?

Federal statute mandates that schools engage parents to participate and become involved in their child's education. For this study I felt that it was important to define the link between federally mandated responsibilities of the school and how these mandates link engagement efforts with parent involvement, parent participation, parent-school partnerships and ultimately, advocacy. Researchers agree that making the distinction between parent advocacy and parent participation is a challenging task; however one main distinction in regards to federal statute, is that "participation rather than advocacy is used exclusively to describe the role of parents" (Trainor, 2010c, p. 35). Advocacy is implied and "clearly illustrated in sections of the statute that describe parent's rights and responsibilities when seeking due process, which is by definition an act of advocacy" (Trainor, 2010c, p. 35). Advocacy transcends participation, calling for a greater level of parent knowledge, understanding, critical evaluation, and articulation of wants, needs and expectations from the school, and local level school and district resources.

Wright and Taylor (2014) indicate that "preparing parents to be skillful and effective advocates for their children has been interpreted as a key part" (p. 598) of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) parts B, C and D. As Phillips (2008) points out, IDEIA merely provides guidelines that schools often loosely interpret as providing parents with a brochure and contact information prior to evaluation or Individualized Education Program (IEP) changes. Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, (2000) indicate that assumptions are embedded throughout IDEIA noting that parents have a greater capacity to understand the language, policies, and procedures related to their children's rights than mere brochures would indicate.

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Most parents need additional ability and knowledge with accessible language to appropriately advocate for children with exceptionalities (Phillips, 2008). Trainor (2010c) goes to great lengths in weaving through this maze explaining that while the “the term ‘participation’ is widely used (throughout IDEIA), it can invoke a range of involvement comporment, from passivity to adversarial, which may or may not include advocacy” (Trainor, 2010c, p. 35). Trainor also identifies barriers (although limited due to a gap in the research), such as conflict of interest, in that it tends to abdicate the school’s responsibility for providing maximum feasible benefit to children with exceptionalities and instead, puts the onus on parents to articulate appropriate supports for their children. It appears then that there is no clear and direct path from federal mandated school engagement efforts to parental advocacy. What we do know is that there are factors that support parental advocacy efforts such as positive relationships between home and school, parental confidence (self-efficacy), parent and teacher access to special education information as well as understanding of the exceptionality and impact on family dynamics (Trainor, 2010c).

An added benefit of effective parental involvement, engagement and parent-school partnerships is improved student achievement. Title I parent engagement provisions are in place across the nation to ensure that there is “shared accountability between schools and parents for high student achievement... (as well as) building parents’ capacity for using effective practices to improve their own children’s academic achievement” (United States Department of Education, 2004). One major requirement of each districts’ Title I Parent Engagement Policy is to implement parent-focused programs and activities as a means of engaging parents in their child’s education as well as creating a partnership between home and school which may lead to increased academic success of the child. While the creation of partnerships, even strong

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partnerships, does not guarantee academic success for children with exceptionalities, research suggests that “all students benefit from (parent) involvement in education” (Henderson, Carson, Avallone, et al., 2011, p. 49).

Turnbull, et al., (2007) agree that the field of special education has not provided enough supports and services to families of children with special needs, nor has it addressed what services should be offered. The literature suggests that these services increase the likelihood that there will be positive outcomes for families and for children with exceptionalities (Turnbull, et al., 2007). Some of the positive outcomes that Turnbull, et al. mention include: parental acquisition of skills to support and advocate for the implementation of their child’s Individual Education Program, to better understanding of their child’s special needs, to active participation in their child’s learning and growth, and arming them with knowledge about their rights as a parent, (i.e., the degree) to which parents feel able-bodied or efficacious, in terms of their roles and responsibilities.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and phrases are found throughout the study and are defined below for clarification purposes:

Achievement Gap. “As it’s commonly used, “achievement gap” refers to the differences in scores on state or national achievement tests between various student demographic groups” (Anderson, Medrich, & Fowler, 2007, p. 547).

Advocacy. “The act of speaking and acting on behalf of another person or group of people to help address their preferences, strengths, and needs” (Wolfensberger, 1977, as cited in Trainor, 2010a, p. 35).

Concepts. Per Charmaz (2014) “concepts are abstract ideas that account for the data and

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have specifiable properties and boundaries” (p. 342). In this study, concepts will form the foundations on which findings will be articulated.

Community Based Parent Support Programs. These programs are often voluntary groups available for “parents of children with exceptionalities (to) join... to assist them in coping with their child’s (exceptionality) and to share experiences with other families about living with a child with these (exceptionalities)” (Law, King, Stewart, & King, 2001, p. 30).

Conceptual Framework. “A conceptual framework is an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous” (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017, p. 5). Ravitch & Riggan go further by defining another view of “the conceptual framework as a way of linking all of the elements of the research process: researcher interests and goals, identity and positionality, context and setting (macro and micro), formal and informal theory, and methods” (p. 5).

Constructivism. Per Charmaz (2014), constructivism is “a social scientific perspective addressing how realities are made. This perspective brings subjectivity into view and assumes that people, including researchers, construct the realities in which they participate” (p. 342). In the current study, constructivist theory forms the conceptual and methodological orientation.

Cultural Capital. “Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital covers a wide variety of resources, such as verbal facility, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, scientific knowledge, and education credentials” (Swartz, 1997, p. 43). In this study, I will apply the concept of cultural capital to the experiences of participants.

Efficaciousness. Webster’s dictionary defines efficaciousness as “having the power to produce a desired effect” (Efficaciousness, n.d.). In this study, it will underscore participants’ feelings of ability and capability pursuant to their role as advocate.

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Emic Approach. An emic approach is taken when “the observer attempts to learn the rules and categories of a culture from the native’s perspective. As such, emic analyses depend on informants’ explanations, and if informants agree on a description or interpretation of data, the data are considered accurate” (Margolis, 2013, p. 149).

SSA Title I parent engagement mandate. This mandate is defined from Title I, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 1116:

A local educational agency may receive funds under this part only if such agency conducts outreach to all parents and family members and implements programs, activities, and procedures for the involvement of parents and family members in programs assisted under this part consistent with this section.

Each school served under this part shall jointly develop with parents for all children served under this part a school-parent compact.... Such compact shall... address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum ... ensuring regular two-way, meaningful communication between family members and school staff, and, to the extent practicable, in a language that family members can understand. (Schwartz, 2017)

FAPE. Free and appropriate public education. “A free appropriate public education must be available to all children residing in the State between the ages of 3 and 21, inclusive, including children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school, as provided for in §300.530(d)” (United States Department of Education, 2017).

Grounded Theory. Grounded theory derived from Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) development of several systematic methodological strategies used to study a variety of topics (Charmaz, 2014). These are theories that are developed “from research grounded in qualitative data rather than

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deducting testable hypotheses from existing theories” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 6). Grounded theory also “serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 17).

IDEA. IDEA refers to The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, formally known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, (Public Law 94-142) and reauthorized on several occasions including as IDEIA in 2001 under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) which established, among other things, a right to public education for all children regardless of an exceptionality.

IDEIA. In 2004, IDEIA was reauthorized again as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004. IDEIA as amended, aligns itself with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001). This change preserves the fundamental structure and guarantee of rights of IDEIA however it makes significant changes to include, (but not limited to): defining “highly qualified” for special education teacher qualifications, statewide increase in funding and requirements, private school provisions, assessment requirements, use of IDEIA grant for early intervention, changes to procedural safeguards, compliance monitoring and extending services for infants and toddlers beyond the age of 2 (Apling & Jones, 2005).

IEP. Individualized Education Program is “a written document that is developed for each eligible child with a disability” (United States Department of Education, 2020).

Insider. An insider in this study will denote a parent of a child with an exceptionality, who has “firsthand knowledge of (the) special education processes, contexts and experiences” (Trainor, 2010c, p. 250). It is a parent of a child with an exceptionality who by “working within the organization, they (know) their rights and (have) access to information about resources... (and are) able to influence the outcomes of the formal meetings with educators and ensure that

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IEPs (are) read and followed” (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, & Robertson-Grewal, 2011, p. 131).

It is also a parent who “navigate(s) the procedures and protocols to advocate for services... for their own children inside the districts where they work” (Haley, 2014, p. 43).

Interpretive. As presented by Charmaz (2014), interpretive is defined as a grounded theorists’ journey through,

interaction emanating from (their) world-view, standpoints, and situations, arising in the research sites, developing between (the theorist) and (their) data, emerging with (their) IDEIAs, then returning back to the field or another field, and moving on to conversations with (their) discipline and substantive fields. To interact at all, we make sense of our situations, appraise what occurs in them, and draw on language and culture to create meanings and frame actions. In short, interaction is interpretive. (p. 321)

LEA. Local education agency is:

a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties as are recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools (United States Department of Education, 2017).

Outsider. An outsider in this study will denote a parent of a child with an exceptionality who lacks the lived experience as an educator within the district where their child attends (Haley, 2014). An outsider is a parent who advocates “without a clear understanding of the resources that could be made available” (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, & Robertson-Grewal, 2011, p. 131) to them to support the needs of their child(ren) with an exceptionality.

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Parent. For the purpose of this study the term parent is considered a guardian, a mother, a father or anyone through biological or adoptive means, who is responsible for the care or rearing of a child.

Parent(al) Advocacy. Parental advocacy refers to "enhancing the parent's perceived ability to work with professionals and advocate for services" (Bailey, et al., 1998, p. 320). It also refers to identifying, requesting and gaining needed services for their child.

Parent(al) Engagement. This type of engagement refers to parent participation in decision-making regarding their child's education, communication that is consistent and not one sided, collaboration through an exchange of knowledge and creating a home environment that values learning and supports programs (Halgunseth, 2009). In the school context parent engagement "means the onus is on school personnel to engage families" (Garbacza, Herman, Thompson, & Reinke, 2017, p. 2) or to gain parent involvement through extending invitations to families to actively participate in their child's school.

Parent(al) Involvement. This type of involvement refers to the parent's support of their child's education through participation in school meetings, school committees, verbal and written communication from parent to the school, review and involvement in child's homework and volunteering at the school (Garbacza, Herman, Thompson, & Reinke, 2017).

Parent Mentor. A parent mentor for this study refers to anyone who "provide(s) social support and information" (Law, King, Stewart, & King, 2001, p. 29) to other parents of children with exceptionalities in order to foster a sense of self-efficacy and advocacy for their child's academic and social well-being.

Parent-School Partnerships. These partnerships refer to "families and school staff (as) co-equal partners... engag(ing) in shared work and joint planning, and focus on promoting

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positive child outcomes” (Garbacza, Herman, Thompson, & Reinke, 2017, p. 2).

Educator-parents. For the purposes of this study, educator-parents are defined as parents who are also teachers by profession of children in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Parent-Teacher Collaboration. This refers to the teacher’s ability to “understand parent assets, respect parent background/culture, collaborate with the parent, value parent input, engage the parent, sustain ongoing communication with the parent, and build relationships with students and families” (Buchanan & Buchanan, 2017, p. 238). It also refers to the parent’s ability to work with teachers in meaningful ways to promote a productive and successful educational experience for their child while sustaining ongoing communication (Halgunseth, 2009).

Propositions. Propositions are “connected sets of statements, reflecting the findings and conclusions of the study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 75). In the current study, they form the frame for concepts and theories.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis. Comparative analysis is when the researcher “make(s) comparisons (analytic distinctions) at each level of analytic work” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 132). This analysis is done in order to identify similarities and differences, test ideas, make sense of the data, and to make sense of the findings (Charmaz, 2014). It is the overarching methodological form of analysis for the current study.

Re-authorization of IDEIA, 1997. This refers to “The Individuals with Exceptionalities Education Act of 1997 requiring every state to have in effect policies and procedures to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students with exceptionalities” (United States Department of Education, 2005).

Re-authorization of IDEIA, 2004 and recently amended in 2015 under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This re-authorization indicates that...

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Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with exceptionalities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with exceptionalities. (United States Department of Education, 2018)

School Initiated Parent Support Programs. These types of supports are defined by Sanders (2001) as models in which “good schools are a part of a total system of interactive forces, individuals, institutions, goals and expectations that are linked together inextricably” (p. 20). Partnerships are then derived from this model between “schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to promote students’ social, emotional, physical and intellectual development” (Sanders, 2001). These partnerships are then filtered through the school to the parent as the resources provided from these partnerships are beyond the scope of the school alone.

Parental Self-Advocacy. Parental Self-advocacy is defined by Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy’s (2005) conceptual framework of self-advocacy (CFSA) as four components including “knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership” (as cited in Hutchinson, et al., 2014, p. 350). The components of knowledge of self, rights, communication and leadership reference parents’ knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of their child with an exceptionality. The parent must be knowledgeable of their child’s rights as Test’s definition is specific to the rights of the child with an exceptionality. The final two components of communication and leadership are specific to the parent’s ability to acquire the supports and services needed for their child through effective communication and leadership

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developed through combining the first three components of CFSA. (Hutchinson, et al., 2014).

Parental Self-Efficacy. Bandura (1977) defines “self-efficacy as an individual’s belief in their ability to achieve a goal or outcome” (as cited in Román-Oyola, et al., 2018, p. 2).

Parental Self-Efficacy is defined in Román-Oyola, et al.’s. (2018) study in which they state, parental self-efficacy “refers to the confidence and expectations of a parent regarding their ability to perform the parental role competently and effectively” (Teti & Gelfand, 1991 as cited in Román-Oyola, et al., 2018, p. 2).

Social Capital. Social capital is defined as derived power and knowledge through acquaintances and networks (Swartz, 1997). “Social capital is (also) the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 119 as cited in Gauntlett, 2011). As Gauntlett indicates, social capital as presented by Bourdieu (1986), can be best described as ‘it’s not what you know, it’s who you know’. In the present study social capital is identified by participants networks (i.e. peer relationships, family and friend relationships, recognition as an educator) that increase their self-efficacy for advocating for their child with an exceptionality.

Social Constructivism (Social Constructivist perspective). Charmaz (2014) defines this theoretical perspective as one that “assumes that people create social reality or realities through individual and collective actions. Rather than seeing the world as given, constructionist ask how it is accomplished” (p. 344). Creswell (2013) indicates that social constructivism and interpretivism are the same in that both perspectives seek understanding of the lived world and that subjective meaning are then derived from these lived experiences. “These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than

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narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal... then, is to rely... on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2013, pp. 24 - 15).

Student with Exceptionalities/ Child(ren) with Exceptionalities. For the purpose of this study, these terms refer to students with impairments including hearing, vision, speech, orthopedic, health, emotional disturbances, autism, a specific learning exceptionality, any type of traumatic brain injury or a student who needs special education and related services as indicated by (IDEIA) (P. L. 101-476).

Theoretical Framework. Ravitch and Riggan (2017) define theoretical framework: "in the terminology of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), it is topical research, identified through literature review, that helps us to fill the intellectual bins that make up our conceptual framework. (It also leads us to create new bins.)" (p. 11) Charmaz (2014) indicates that the theoretical framework is where "you claim, locate, evaluate, and defend your position... (it) show(s) why you favor certain arguments and evidence" (p. 305). Charmaz also indicates that for grounded theory both

the literature review and theoretical framework can serve as valuable sources of comparison and analysis. Through comparing other scholars' evidence and IDEIAs with your grounded theory, you may show where and how their ideas illuminate your theoretical categories and how your theory extends, transcends, or challenges dominant ideas in your field. (2014, p. 305)

Theory. Ravitch and Riggan (2017) indicate that theory is an explanation of "why things work the way that they do, and... by way of identifying and examining relationships among things" (Maxwell, 2013; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2008, Strauss, 1995 as cited in Ravitch &

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Riggan, 2017, p. 22). In the current study, my (generated) theory is offered as the organically driven conclusion as based upon parents' words, thoughts, actions, and constructions.

Visual Representation. A visual representation is a type of a document that “can serve as objects for analytic scrutiny rather than as corroborating evidence... (and) may give you insights into perspectives, practices, and events not easily obtained through other qualitative methods” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 53).

Worldview. Worldview as defined by Guba (1990) is “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (p. 17). Creswell (2014) defines “worldviews as a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to the study” (p. 6). There are four types of worldviews: 1) postpositivist, “the need to identify and assess the causes that influence outcomes, such as found in experiments,” (Creswell, 2014, p. 7) 2) constructivist, believe that individuals develop varied and multiple meanings of their experiences “leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas,” (p. 8) 3) transformative, “focuses on the needs of groups and individuals in our society that may be marginalized or disenfranchised... (and) becomes a united voice for reform and change,” (p. 10) and 4) pragmatic, “arises out of actions, institutions, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” (p. 10).

Overview of Chapters

Chapter one begins with the researcher-generated vignette and introduction. It then provides background information, statement of the problem, purpose of the study and an overview of special education as it pertains to parent advocacy for their children with an exceptionality. It also presents social and cultural capital as conceptualized within the realms of this study, as well as the overarching research questions. The chapter concludes with the significance of the study, and definitions of relevant terms used throughout.

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Chapter two provides an initial review of literature as a foothold “to sensitize the researcher to look for certain processes and topics” (Charmaz, 1996, p. 49). In addition, chapter two presents the methodological, conceptual, and theoretical frameworks which undergird this study. Chapter two concludes with a summary. Chapter three presents the methodology of this study. It describes the research design, participant selection, participants and context and access. Also included are the data collection, data sources and data analysis. This chapter concludes with my positionality as a researcher, dependability and credibility, trustworthiness, confidentiality of data, ethical considerations, and summary.

Chapter four reveals the findings of the study, where data are presented through participant voice through in-depth interviews, documents for review, participant-generated diary entries, participant-generated visual representations, and researcher-generated memos based on the Constructive Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2000, 2004). This chapter concludes with a summary. Lastly, chapter five provides a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, researcher-generated theory, implications, limitations and delimitations of the study, suggestions for future research and the conclusion.

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Chapter Two: Literature Review

Traditional reviews of literature typically begin with exploration of the research question while establishing theories and preconceptions (pre-findings) of phenomena under investigation. Charmaz (2006) called this “strangling” the creativity and freedom of the researcher in his quest to generate theory - the main focus of grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advised the writing of the literature review in grounded theory should take place only *after* completing analysis so as not to “contaminate research findings” (Hussein, Kennedy & Oliver, 2017, p. 2006). In an effort to maintain a semblance of balance between traditional and “less traditional” purpose and structure of the literature review for a grounded theory study (El Hussein, Kennedy, & Oliver, 2017), the current study will endeavor to provide comprehensive awareness of the gaps in the literature on the topic under investigation before moving into more substantive literature. The goal is to support, not squelch, the reader’s ability to imagine emerging schemes and theories in the process.

El Hussein, Kennedy, and Oliver (2017) espouse that the literature review in Grounded Theory:

is a multistage nonlinear approach to the literature. During the first stage, researchers identify the gap in the literature, and justify the reason for conducting the study. We believe that knowing the literature is a substantial guide for interviewing in GT research. Comprehensive awareness of the literature will help researchers to direct and construct the interview guide in a way to guard against familiar observations. We believe that Glaser’s claim that GT is about the participants’ main concern (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) often limits the discovery of new knowledge and we question Glaser’s intention of using this mantra over and over. We also acknowledge that it is not unusual

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for the main concern to have been noted in some way in the published literature. As such GT that only captures the participants' main concern falls short of capturing the meso and macro perspectives that potentially shaped the thinking of participants and the organization of their work. Emerging GT researchers should acknowledge the importance of some level of literature review to guide scholarly exploration and generation of new knowledge. In grand scheme, the participants' lives are a bigger picture than immediately perceivable in everyday life. We believe that the GT researchers' job is also to see the participant's bigger picture and show how it relates to their everyday life as revealed through interviews and participant observations. While we recognize that Glaser's (1978) approach Mohamed T. El Hussein, Andrea Kennedy, and Brent Oliver 1201 tends to miss the macro/societal big picture analysis, we see GT research as a qualitative method where findings are highly shaped by the context that is unique, often examining a complex social process. (El Hussein, Kennedy, & Oliver, 2017, p. 1199)

They go on to assert:

GT (Grounded Theory) is best supported by a preliminary and iterative literature review, characterized by a dynamic, reflexive and integrative (DRI) framework. The DRI zipper framework provides a systematic approach establishing clarity regarding the rationale, while iteratively reconnecting to the researcher's inherent purpose of applying GT. This check-in guides the researcher to determine if the literature review informs concept generation that is grounded in data from the studied concern, behavior or process while minimizing preconceptions. This process requires critical appraisal identifying why, what, when, how and the extent of the literature review. (El Hussein, Kennedy, & Oliver, 2017, p. 1200)

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The research questions framing this investigation, (1) How do educator-parents and non-educator parents perceive their efficaciousness as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities? and, (2) How do educator-parents and non-educator parents construct the narrative of their efficaciousness as advocates as embodied in social and or cultural capital?, provide only a starting point for this investigation.

Organization of Review

Hussein, Kennedy and Oliver (2017) aver that organizing a literature review for a grounded theory study is best supported by DRI, or Dynamic, Reflexive, and Integrative Framework, also known as the DRI Zipper Framework (see figure 1).

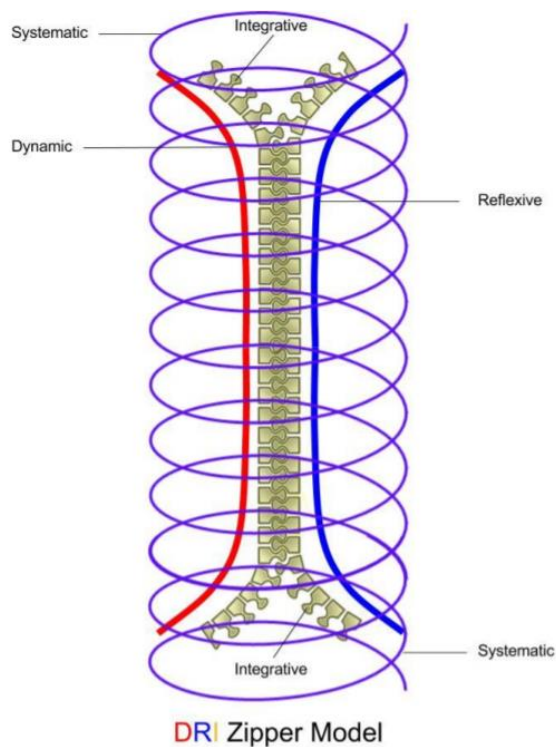


Figure 1. Reprinted from “Grounded Theory and the Conundrum of Literature Review: Framework for Novice Researchers” by El Hussein, M., Kennedy, A. and Oliver, B., 2017, *The Qualitative Report*, 22(4), p. 1206.

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This framework, which seeks to minimize preconceptions, offers an iterative flow to the review and helps reconnect myself and the reader to the very purpose of the grounded theory study.

Without preconceived ideas, new and divergent theories can emerge, which is the intent of this study. New concepts, based on parents' thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and conceptualizations were gradually woven into the review. This review does not stand as the sole criterion for gauging the relevance of the findings, as a theoretical review of the literature is offered in chapter five.

The review includes an initial empirical review of social and cultural capital, historical context for parent involvement in general and special education, overview of legislative action, and parental influence on special education laws through advocacy. Parental advocacy and its origins in special education are explored through the following six subheadings (1) parent-school partnerships, (2) legislation mandating parent engagement, (3) parent support programs, (4) parental self-efficacy, (5) impact on student achievement, and (6) barriers to advocacy. As is common in a grounded theory study, wherever possible, empirical evidence is presented before conceptual evidence and gaps and biases in the literature on the topic of parental self-efficacy (i.e., efficaciousness) and advocacy for child(ren) with exceptionalities is exposed as well.

Next, the methodological, conceptual, and theoretical groundings for the study are discussed. *Social and Cultural Capital Theory*, and *Parental Development Theory* are examined for their usefulness in generating new(er) understandings about educator-parents and non-educator parents as they construct the narratives of their experiences as advocates for their child(ren) with exceptionalities. Objectivity, the goal of grounded theory research and the investigation of the literature that surrounds it (Charmaz, 2014), cannot be overstated. What is

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sought is new knowledge that both informs, and is informed, by the data that becomes exposed once the study has begun.

Social and Cultural Capital.

Embodied in parents' constructions of their efficacy as advocates for their children are ideologies – in the way one speaks, the way one acts, and the way one thinks. Trainor (2010a) best defines this as “cultural capital,” which, according to Bourdieu (1986), consists of material items as well as dispositions and knowledge that inform the way a person thinks and acts” (p. 36). An example of cultural capital used in the context of parental advocacy was provided in this focus group study.

After gaining information from a parents' rights handbook and other documents, a parent who accepts and understands her role in an IEP meeting attends the meeting with several IDEIAs or requests regarding the educational program of her child. During the IEP meeting, the parent uses communication demonstrating her ability and willingness to collaborate and advocate. (Trainor, 2010a, p. 36)

Social capital, on the other hand, is defined by Bourdieu (1986) as that which is “comprised of relationships and social networks among people that afford the interchange of information and cultural goods (i.e., cultural capital), economic capital, and additional social capital” (Trainor, 2010a, p. 37). The example that Trainor provides for social capital is when the same parent who prepped for the IEP through researching and reading, also attends a support group, meets with other parents who are knowledgeable about special education and advocacy and gains emotional and social support prior to the IEP meeting. Supporting studies found that parent acquisition and professional understanding of educational terminology and school policies assisted parents of children in becoming successful advocates (Besnoy, et al., 2015). Social and

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cultural capital, as related to this study, indicates that parents who have access to “numerous and varied capital resources are able to gain access to additional resources, whereas those who do not have (to) struggle to gain access to important stock” (Trainor, 2010a, p. 37). Plagen (2011), supports this theory, indicating that although social capital was not clearly defined in early literature by Dewey who introduced it in 1900, it “is suggestive of a valuable resource that does not reside with the individual but emerges from interaction among individuals” (p. 42).

Besnoy, et al’s (2015) study points out the formal and continued training that educators receive over the course of their profession towards special education policies, procedures and pedagogy that is not often afforded to parents leading to a lack of knowledge and an uneven ability to contribute to the partnership. The researchers indicate that “the gap between wanting to be an effective advocate and knowing how to be one is often frustrating for parents. Closing this gap requires parents to educate themselves” (Besnoy, et al., 2015, p. 109). Trainor (2010a) asserts that “parents with access to all three types of capital resources (cultural, social, and economic) have been able to secure quality education for their children to varying degrees, which indicates a positive correlation” (p. 37). Trainor’s (2010) study aimed to present teachers understanding of parental acquisition and use of cultural, social and economic capital in the interaction and advocacy process of their child with an exceptionality. While it is beyond the purview of the current study to examine economic capital, this would be a consideration for future research.

Although Wright and Taylor’s (2014) study does not identify Bourdieu’s theory (1986) explicitly, their research identifies key traits related to the theory such as findings that social relationships through groups, organizations, social media and specialized training can provide confidence and increased advocacy skills for parents and parents describing their need to become

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experts in the field to be an effective advocate for their child. Increased advocacy skills may include but are not limited to: parents contacting their child's teacher to inquire about additional services or making suggestions to add, change or delete goals and objectives during the IEP process. Wright and Taylor (2014) found that "much of the burden for ensuring that children receive appropriate services falls upon parents. As one parent pointed out, this creates inherent inequality because 'so many parents don't have the time to do this, and it is not fair that some children get the services they are entitled and others don't'" (p. 606). Stitt and Brooks (2014) indicate that although, as Bourdieu (1986) claims, "all individuals possess forms of capital-cultural, economic and social-... merely possessing the capital is insufficient. Individuals must also possess the knowledge of transferring and activating the capital in a variety of settings" (pp. 88-89). Most empirical studies have concentrated on the relationship between Bourdieu's (1986) Capital theories and their effects, whether gained and then transferred from parent to student or gained directly by the student themselves, on the educational attainment of students (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997; Sullivan, 2002) versus this study's focus on capital effect gained by parents towards parental advocacy.

Cultural capital "is generally (and variously) defined as proficiency in and familiarity with dominant cultural codes and practices – for example, linguistic styles, aesthetic preferences, styles of interaction" (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997, p. 573). This study focused on the effects of cultural capitals on student academic achievement. The same premise applies to the present study in examining the effects of capital resources, if any, on the efficaciousness of parents who advocate for their children with an exceptionality. The authors indicate that according to Bourdieu's Theory of Social and Cultural Capital (1986), those with the fitting cultural capital "are better able to decode the implicit "rules of the game" (and) are able to adapt and further

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develop the cultural skills and preferences rewarded in the schools” (1997, p. 573). The present study presents parental perspectives as embodied by social and cultural capital.

Historical Context

There have been a number of impactful education laws and statutes enacted by Congress over the past several decades (Fischer & Schimmel, 1978) that have transformed the course for students with exceptionalities and their families. One of the most important of these enacted laws are those “concerning handicapped children, student records and privacy, parent involvement and the rights of non-English speaking people” (p. 321). The intent of these laws address not only parent rights but also parent-school interactions and the impact of these rights and interactions towards parental advocacy experience in the educational setting for their child with a exceptionality.

There is no doubt that society “has a legitimate interest in the schooling of children, its future citizens” (Fischer & Schimmel, 1978, p. 321). Legislative interest in education can be dated back to the Massachusetts School Law of 1642 when lawmakers required parents to educate their children (Massachusetts School Law of 1642, 2017). Although this legislation was in place, it was deemed permissive and primarily left up to families to ensure that education occurred (Hartman, 2005). During this time in history child labor was acceptable as a means of employing “cottage industries and family agricultural labor (that) dominated the economy” (Lingwall, 2014, p. 190). Families relied on their children’s labor along with their own to sustain the family’s livelihood therefore education was not a priority.

Historical literature indicates that there were two motives for the passage of the Massachusetts School Law of 1642 and the education laws that followed. One was to ensure literacy while the other was for the economic well-being of the state (Hartman, 2005). The

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issues that arose during this era that prompted these laws were the growing illiteracy rates deeming individuals unable to read or understand the laws of the country. Another issue was that children of families who could not afford to pay for a private education suffered from inequality and lack of opportunity increasing the class gap and resulting in a direct expense to the state due to growing poverty and unemployment.

In response to these issues was the “development of a public-school system in almost every state by 1860” (Hiatt-Michael, 1994, p. 249). The intent of this response was to provide an increased educational opportunity for all children to remedy the issues of illiteracy and poverty. While the intent was honorable, prior to the enactment of the Education of Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) of 1975, individuals with exceptionalities were mostly secluded in restrictive, state run institutions where the focus was on accommodation versus education (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; United States Department of Education, 2007; Winzer, 1998). In effect, formal education of individuals with exceptionalities is rarely mentioned in historical literature prior to the enlightenment period of the 1800’s.

The development of the public-school system ultimately paved the way for access to public education for children with exceptionalities; however, the underlying economic motivation that served the interest of the state took precedence over ethical societal reform (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). Additional results of the public-school era included a price of reduced, and what some consider, elimination, of parent-school partnerships for parents of children with and without exceptionalities. Stitt and Brooks (2014) support this notion explaining that “one of the original aims of public education was to minimize parent’s influence on their child’s education” (p. 76) as transition from the agrarian ideology to industrialization was priority.

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This transition resulted in an awakening of parents' opinions of public education which some felt was substandard, segregated and unequal, ultimately resulting in suits being filed against the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Increased parental awareness and gradual change in societal perception of education in general as well as the ability of individuals with exceptionalities, engendered legislative change. The laws that have evolved are the direct result of parental advocacy resulting in systematic change that strongly encourages school districts to involve and engage parents and strengthen parent-school partnerships (Trainor, 2010c; Epstein & Sanders, 2006).

Despite this snowball of legislative focus, barriers still exist with developing and maintaining effective parent-school partnerships (Trainor, 2010c). These barriers can be further problematic for parents of children with exceptionalities. A partnership between parents and schools is not a requirement for parental advocacy, however a collaborative relationship is not only expected under IDEIA but beneficial for the educational decision making process for the child with an exceptionality (Haley & Allsopp, 2019). Educational laws such as IDEIA have procedural safeguards in place specifically designed to protect the rights of parents and their children with an exceptionality, which includes the rights of parents to be involved in the decision-making process of their child's education. Parents of children with exceptionalities are often the most knowledgeable about their child's individual exceptionality by default; therefore, they are likened the expert who is most equipped to advocate for their child's educational needs (Fenton, Ocasio-Stoutenburg & Harry, 2017; Hartas, 2008).

Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) (2004), "authorizes grants to states to develop and maintain early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities" (Apling & Jones, 2005, p. 43) including family supports. This

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reauthorization of IDEA to IDEIA identifies early interventions as important tools available to support children in meeting their developmental milestones through an individualized family service plan (IFSP) prior to the identification of an exceptionality under an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This provision provides an invitation for parent involvement from the onset of their child's educational career. These supports often partner with parents and provide services within the home as Part C is from the age of zero to two.

Families have more of a role in the IFSP process which is considered a "solution-based approach" to reduce the possibility and need for special education services prior to the child reaching school age than they do in the IEP process (Turnbull, Huerta, & Stowe, 2005). Per Turnbull, Huerta, and Stowe (2005), Part B of IDEIA, which focuses on what occurs after the transition from an IFSP to IEP:

now place(s) increased responsibility on parents and hold(s) them accountable for their action with respect to their child's education. Parents must now make decisions that define whether their child is admitted to special education and, if so, what the student will receive there. Accordingly, the amendments now require parents to inform themselves about IDEIA and its provisions, and to be knowledgeable as co-educators and as advocates. A parent who does not have a firm grasp of the law and the options that IDEIA grants will risk losing the parent and student rights that IDEIA confers. (pp. 64-65)

Not all parents are aware of the shift in responsibility from the family focused Part C that is geared towards a more collective preventative measure of closing the gap on the developmental delay, versus Part B that focuses on the actual implementation of servicing the child with an exceptionality in special education. The transition from Part C to Part B is an

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integral step that must be made with fidelity to ensure that parents are aware of the shift in responsibility and knowledge base required.

The most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics indicates that 14% of all public education students from the ages of 3 - 21 receive special education services as mandated by IDEIA (United States Department of Education, 2019). That percentage shows a steady increase from the prior five years data from the same source. Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2017) investigate the criticality of disability studies through the many paradigms that exist to “understand the lived experience of disabled people” (p. 177) and how these experiences ultimately effect social, political and economic change. The increasing number of P – 12th students with exceptionalities as well as the critical effects of their lived experiences and those of their parental advocates on social, political and economic change indicates the need for such a study.

There is limited research available identifying parents’ perceptions of their own advocacy for their children with exceptionalities furthermore, even less research is available comparing the perceptions of parents’ social and cultural and capital resources when they are teachers by profession versus those parents who are not teacher by profession. The lack in research indicates that a need exists for the current study to focus on in-depth accounts of the experiences of parents who are educators, as well as parents who are non-educators, as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities. The studies presented define the development of parent and school partnerships through means of parent involvement and engagement, with implications that parent supports (through capital resources such as books, online learning and other materials) impact these partnerships. Additional literature defines the effect that capital and social resources have on parent self-efficacy and achievement of students with exceptionalities. The

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review ends with a summary of literature defining the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. I would emphasize that although the review is offered both as a beginning point, as well as at the beginning of the current investigation (Charmaz, 2014), it is followed by a secondary theoretical review in chapter five, as is consistent with a constructivist grounded theory approach.

Paucity of Empirical Evidence

Little empirical evidence was found in the literature regarding comparisons between the perspectives of parents who are educators and those who were not. Leads that were worded, “*educator-parent*”+*advocacy*, and which rendered 1,192 results, seemed initially promising. Upon further review, however, only two studies were directly related to parents who are also educators of children with exceptionalities and one media link led to a dissertation on the topic. Several of the results were e-books and articles related to the relationships between parents and educators within the advocacy process (Campos, Delgado, & Soto Huerta, 2011; Fenech, Salamon, & Stratigos, 2019; Kubik, 2018). Several of the studies found refer to the abundance of literature available regarding the impact of parent involvement on student achievement however the majority indicated that there is a dearth of research specifically towards educator-parents. After a quick review of the first 180 of the 1,192 rendered results from the search string, “*educator-parent*”+*advocacy*, 126 were e-books, none specifically related to educator-parent advocacy, 5 were nonrelated periodicals, 1 nonrelated media link news report, 2 unrelated academic reports, 43 were nonrelated academic journal articles while only 2 related empirical articles were found and one related media link news report that ultimately led to a dissertation study on educator-parents advocacy. All three relevant studies were of qualitative nature (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, & Robertson-Grewall, 2011; Haley & Allsopp, 2019; Trainor, 2010a).

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With the limited results found based on the specific search strings listed above, a deeper search was conducted in the reference section of each relevant article and dissertation found which rendered additional relevant articles. The topic of educator-parents advocating for their own children with exceptionalities is mentioned abundantly in the relevant articles however none of them provided a comparison to parents who are not educators by profession who have children with exceptionalities. There appears to be empirical evidence in the literature for investigating educator-parents advocating for their own children with an exceptionality, as well as, parents who are not educators by profession advocating for their own children with an exceptionality. The number of published dissertation and thesis results indicate the interest of novice researchers on this topic.

Empirical and Topical Research

Parent-School Partnerships. The strength, or lack thereof, of parent-school partnerships plays a major role in parental advocacy in special education. Parent-school collaboration and partnerships are imperative when a child has been identified as having an exceptionality as this can be life-changing for many parents who may find accepting and dealing with the diagnosis challenging and overwhelming (Koch, 2016; Besnoy et al. 2015). Blue-Blanning et al.'s (2004) qualitative focus group and interview study suggest ways in which schools can work with parents of children with exceptionalities to develop effective and collaborative parent-school partnerships. Effective partnerships can alleviate parental anxiety and stressors related to having a child with an exceptionality. These type of partnerships may enhance advocacy efforts by allowing the parent to feel more confident in communicating wants and needs for their child and may create a better sense of trust in the school while struggling or nonexistent partnerships may leave parents frustrated, hesitant and confused with what services

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their child has or needs within the educational environment. Hess et al. (2006) present findings indicating that parents often look to school officials for guidance and support in advocacy efforts. It is reasonable, then, to expect that parents can up their position as advocates by bridging as much knowledge into their negotiations with teachers and schools as possible.

The existing literature defines parent and school partnerships in many ways. Francis, et al. (2016) interprets this partnership as one in which “(parents) and school professionals (e.g., principals, teachers, support staff) regard each other as reliable allies and (when parents) have multiple opportunities for meaningful participation in their children’s education and in the life of the school” (p. 281). Several themes were derived from this focus group study presented by Francis, et al. (2016) in which parent perspectives on what promotes trusting parent and school partnerships were examined. Parents identified these partnerships as trusting when globally accepted values were present across the board with staff in the school setting and when they felt that “inclusion and equality pervaded the school(s)” (p. 284). Frequent and informal reciprocity in communication between home and school was another vital attribute identified by participants in this study (pp. 286-287). Ratliffe and Ponte’s (2018) phenomenological study provides a simpler definition, stating that parent and school partnerships are “people who talk to each other, who learn from and about each other, and who work together to plan and implement educational activities for children” (pp. 219-220).

Turnbull et al., (2007) define “parent and school partnership” as four practices between parents and educators in their qualitative study, which includes sharing responsibilities, working collaboratively, using individualized and flexible practices, and focusing on strengths and assets. The first function, sharing responsibility states that families should work collaboratively with special educators in the decision-making process for the best interest of the child. This includes

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special educators and staff sharing pertinent information about the education process so that families can make informed decisions. This is a key finding in that it solidifies that it is not solely the relationship between the parent and teacher that is pertinent, but it entails special education teachers and school staff collectively sharing information about the education process with the parent. The second practice focusing on individualization discusses cultural responsiveness when tailoring supports and services to the parent's identity, needs and dynamics. The third and fourth practices focus on promoting self-efficacy and parent supports which are described later in the review.

“Parent involvement” and “parent engagement” were recurring themes in the literature, and often used interchangeably with “parent and school partnership.” Its applicability to this study lies in its role as the context for “advocacy.” The distinction for this study is that parent involvement is defined as parental participation in the child(ren)'s school, initiated by the parent, whereas parent engagement is defined as an invitation from the school to the parent to participate. Aceves' (2014) quantitative study indicates that “historically, parents have been important change agents” (p. 46) towards increasing parental involvement in schools, especially of their children with an exceptionality, which has in turn led to increased legislation towards engaging parents to become more involved in partnerships with the school. Because of the historical progression identified in the literature from “parent involvement” followed by “parent engagement” to then “parent and school partnerships,” the subtopics of “parent involvement” and “parent engagement” were naturally derived subtopics.

Legislation Mandating Parent Engagement. This informational subtopic has limited empirical support; however, its position is paramount in this review as it addresses pertinent steps and policies leading to parent engagement in schools. Court rulings such as *Brown v.*

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Board of Education of Topeka, Serrano v. Priest, Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and others stemmed from parent concerns and ultimate advocacy for the improved and equal education for their children. Parental pleas for a voice in their child's education, along with the increased interest in educational research on the topic of parent involvement, helped to push for legislation mandating that schools begin to engage parents to get involved in their child's education (Hiatt-Michael, 1994). Some of the legislation that emerged from this push include the America 2000 Act, No Child Left Behind, and Every Student Succeeds Act, Title I, section 1118, Parent Engagement, all of which include directives for parent engagement.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was the first piece of American legislation that identified, through reauthorization in 1997, several parent engagement mandates such as “the development of a school–parent compact in every school receiving Title I Funding” (Evans & Radina, 2014). The United States Department of Education (2004) indicates that this piece of legislation derived from evidence-based research and “is based on four principles that provide a framework through which families, educators, and communities can work together to improve teaching and learning” (United States Department of Education, 2004, p. 1). The principles surrounding the ESEA 1965 Act include: accountability for results, local control and flexibility, expanded parental choice and effective and successful programs that reflect scientifically based research. The four principles to be examined in the next four sub-topics below provide an in-depth insight into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and why they are important pieces to the puzzle of parental advocacy for children with exceptionalities.

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Accountability for Results. The 2002 reauthorization of ESEA with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) provided parents additional insight on topics such as teacher qualifications and school performance. Adamson and Darling-Hammond (2012), identify the historic ramifications of the accountability for results provision stating, “students targeted by this federal legislation—those who are low-income, low-achieving, new English language learners (ELLs), or identified with special education needs—are least likely to have experienced, certified, and fully-prepared teachers who are teaching within their field of preparation” (Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012, p. 4). In fact, the study indicated that districts serving the highest proportions of higher needs students “have about twice as many uncredentialed and inexperienced teachers as do those serving the fewest” (p. 1). The authors also found that teacher qualifications correlate with student achievement. Similar research is used to inform this legislation and in turn is used to hold schools accountable for student achievement or lack thereof. This information is pertinent in this study concept as legislation now mandates that schools provide teacher qualification information to families.

Local Control and Flexibility. Beginning in the 1960’s with the civil rights movement and the passage of ESEA in 1965, the federal government played a significant role in education. This role snowballed with each passing piece of legislation in an attempt to keep up with industrialized nations and increase international competitiveness, ultimately culminating “with the passage of (No Child Left Behind) NCLB in 2002” (Egalite, Fusarelli, & Fusarelli, 2017, p. 761). The 2015, reauthorization of ESEA with Every Student Succeeds Act “dramatically reduce(d) the federal role in shaping education policy, returning significant power to the states to design educational systems as they best see fit” (Egalite, Fusarelli, & Fusarelli, 2017). The intent of granting additional local control was to reform the one-size-fits-all and allow states to

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implement plans that would work for local schools. As indicated further in the review, school-initiated parent support programs are differentiated per school and per district, allowing for flexibility in engagement efforts.

Expanded Parental Choice. Expanded parental choice is the third principle of the ESSA framework and it gives “parents a choice of another school when an accountability system indicates that the public school their child attends is inadequate” (West & Peterson, 2006, p. 46). The overall goal of this third principle is to stimulate school improvement and to provide parental options when school improvement is not achieved. This parent choice is limited to those schools receiving Title I funds and is not an immediate resolution as it gives schools up to a year to show improvement.

Programs that Reflect Scientifically-Based Research. The most recent reauthorization occurred in 2015 as described in Section 1116 of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This reauthorization redefines parent involvement as parent engagement and mandates school identification and implementation of parent engagement policies and procedures as a requirement for schools to continue to receive Title I funds. Extensive research emphasizing parent engagement indicates that strong ties between the school and parent units can produce improved student academic outcomes, improve attendance and boost graduation rates (Hornby & Lafaele, 2012).

Gross, Choi and Francis’ (2018) focus group study sought to determine the effect of including community partners within the parent and school partnership. The researchers state that “families often require varying degrees of support to meaningfully engage with educators and contribute to positive student outcomes” (p. 61). The findings of this study indicated that all participants including students, families, schools and community partners, equally benefited

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from the partnerships. This is a key finding as these supports provide cultural capital resources to parents similar to those articulated in the current study. The type of school-initiated parent supports described in the Gross, Choi and Francis (2018) study falls within the purview of parent engagement initiatives mandated by laws such as NCLB and the Title I mandate. The community partnerships presented provided needed supports to families that schools alone were unable to accomplish. As indicated by Gross, Choi and Francis (2018), parent support is not interchangeable with parent engagement. Parent supports are a component of parent engagement that includes active participation by families and communication between families and the school.

Parent Support Programs. As the literature above indicates, parental supports have been shown to increase parental empowerment in advocating for the achievement of their child with an exceptionality. Through an online review of local school district special education websites, it was found that there are a variety of formal and informal parent support programs directed towards parents of students with exceptionalities. However, like the subtopic of parent involvement, there were few empirical studies found. These Title I mandated programs all appear to have similar plans towards achieving parent engagement with schools. Such cultural capital resources range from very informal school directed Title I meetings and documented school to home communication. Formalized parent university courses are also offered by schools in the form of social and cultural capital in that they provide opportunities for networking amongst parents while providing material knowledge developed and presented by parent mentors employed by the school district.

Not all schools have publicized and formalized parent support programs for parents of students with exceptionalities. The schools that do offer formalized programs present them as

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parent supports through online and in-person courses with topics such as navigating the individualized education program (IEP) process, assistive technology and transition support between grade levels and post high school, to name a few. Rose and Stein's (2014) quantitative study identifies parent supports as engagement outreach from the school that includes; communicating through letters, emailing parents, initiating phone calls, inviting parents to volunteer and join school committees, extending meeting and conference request, and providing informal trainings.

Qualitative studies found that parent-initiated support programs were pertinent to increased parent empowerment as well. Hess, Molina, & Kozleski, (2006), found that their parent participants supported each other through social capital resources such as sharing experiences, access to services and instructing each other on how to ask for services and what services to ask for. Additionally, Francis, et al. (2016) found that "actively involved families recruiting others is likely successful because new families may find it easier or less intimidating talking to other parents" (p. 291).

One qualitative study by Murray et al. (2013) presented a unique parent support opportunity in which select parents were "embedded" in a local college preservice teacher course. This study found that parents of students with exceptionalities can also be empowered by teachers. The study was completed through a pre-service, teacher preparation course for special educators with the inclusion of parents of children with special needs. The goal of this study to was to provide parent empowerment and to encourage engagement between parents with similar needs. Upon completion of the course, parents were expected to use what they learned to empower other parents of students with exceptionalities. This preservice college course also provided opportunities for parent and teacher candidates to build collaborative relationships.

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The study found that not only did parents walk away from this experience feeling empowered but that they also had a change in perception of special educators.

The final practice noted in the Turnbull, et al. (2007) study recommends strengthening the parent function by offering information on supports such as respite care and community support groups for the parent. This recommendation as well as the others discussed throughout this literature review were chosen to illuminate how trust can be built between parents and educators. There are many resources made available to educators through the school system's Title I Parent Engagement Policy that can easily be shared with families of students with exceptionalities. Parents who are veterans to the school who have children in special education classes already are also a great resource. When educators collaborate with these veterans to gather resources for those parents new to special education then that becomes a means of beneficence and positive partnership. It shows a sense of value as well to those families of students with exceptionalities.

Parent supports can also be a means of giving parents a voice by helping them come to terms with their child's exceptionality diagnosis and to feel that they are able to successfully advocate for their child (Allred, 2015; Barnett, Clements, Kaplan-Estrin, et al., 2003; Barton & Fettig, 2013). The qualitative study by Barnett et al (2003) allude, sessions led by therapist and veteran parents of students with exceptionalities increase parent well-being, self-efficacy and adaptation to the child's exceptionality. These sessions focused on all domains of social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral wellbeing. Blue-Blanning et al.'s (2004) qualitative focus group and interview study theorized that parent supports through early intervention also engage parents as effective and collaborative partners in education with service providers as their child grows older.

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Moll et al's (1992) qualitative case study provides findings that support the notion that parents rely on family members and other parents who share similar funds of knowledge which are essential in developing and seeking out parental supports. Funds of knowledge is defined as an accumulation of historical and cultural "developed bodies of knowledge and skills" (p. 133) that individuals and households use to live their daily lives. In this study it was determined that "when funds of knowledge are not readily available within households, relationships with individuals outside the households are activated to meet either household or individual needs" (p. 134). This section provides several examples of parent supports that empower, engage and inform parents of their advocacy efforts while promoting collaboration. These supports also provide examples of social and cultural capitals offering networking opportunities for parents to share experiences as well as material funds of knowledge.

Parent Self-efficacy. "Parent self-efficacy" was addressed throughout the literature as a driving force behind a parent's ability to successfully advocate for his or her child. The need for increased parental self-efficacy is best defined in Hess, Molina, & Kozleski's (2006) study on parental voice and advocacy. The authors held focus groups with 27 participants of parents of students with exceptionalities with varying abilities. The authors articulated the parent's stories derived from the focus groups explaining the demanding parental role of a parent of a child with an exceptionality. The participants indicated that they are their child's voice, advocate, caregiver and the one who is left to deal with the grief, stress, recovery, adaptation of their child's exceptionality diagnosis and the daily implications that come along with the diagnosis (Hess, Molina, & Kozleski, 2006).

The gap of knowledge between school officials and parents who are not educators by profession, may lead to feelings of intimidation and reduced self-efficacy (Besnoy, et al., (2015).

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As indicated by Wright and Taylor (2014), “whether or not parents elect to become advocates for their children may be related to their level of empowerment” (p. 596). This research also found that “parental empowerment and its expression through advocacy may promote coping and resilience, especially in early childhood as parents adjust to the often overwhelming changes associated with becoming a parent, while also facing the challenges of caring for a child with a special need” (p. 597). Wright and Taylor’s study found that “parents may be more likely to engage in advocacy efforts if they have a greater sense of self-efficacy” (2014, p. 604).

Turnbull et al., (2007) discuss several practices towards strengthening the parent function in their qualitative study. One function discussed was to seek out services that promote the self-efficacy of parents. The other practice discussed was to build the parents knowledge base and confidence in their child’s exceptionality and how to help their child which corroborates with parental advocacy. Epstein (1995) indicates that the expected results for strengthening parent’s self-efficacy include not only leadership in decision making, but also confidence about parenting, productive curriculum-related interactions with children, and many interactions with other parents and the school.

There are thirteen exceptionalities covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) that include: specific learning exceptionalities, other health impairment, autism spectrum disorder, emotional disturbance, speech or language impairment, visual impairment including blindness, deafness, hearing impairment, deaf-blindness, orthopedic impairment, intellectual disability, traumatic brain injury, and finally, multiple exceptionalities. With this extensive list of IDEIA identified exceptionalities, the parent’s role can vary greatly depending upon their child’s exceptionality and needs. Some parents of students with exceptionalities may encounter scheduling difficulties, transporting their child to a multitude of

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doctors' appointments, and therapy sessions along with taking care of the daily living responsibilities of their child who may not be capable of completing those tasks themselves. By contrast other parents' roles may not entail such in-depth demands. In either regard, the parent of a child with an exceptionality is "considered to be (an) integral stakeholder with expert knowledge regarding their children's unique manifestations of disability" (Trainor, 2010b, p. 34) in order to ensure that services are maintained and needs are met for their child.

One major finding in the Francis, et al. (2016) focus group study was that unity through parent-school partnership, to meet the needs of students, made participants feel valued as members of their school and community. Although the exact phrase of self-efficacy was not directly mentioned in the Francis, et al. study, the findings encompassed the concept of the term indicating that parents felt confident in bringing suggestions to the table when school staff respected families and treated them as equal partners (Francis, et al., 2016). The literature treats the topic of self-efficacy as schools leveling the playing field by valuing the expert knowledge of parents in conjunction with the expert knowledge of the educators.

Impact on Student Achievement. The literature treats the topic of student achievement as the common goal of parent and school partnerships, parent engagement, and parent involvement. There were limited qualitative research studies found surrounding the effect of capital resources on student success. Epstein's (1995) qualitative study implies that the six types of parental involvements may have a longitudinal influence on student achievement. This study stressed that the quantity and quality of supports is what determines the influence on student achievement. There were, however, several quantitative studies found supporting the impact of parent involvement in schools and student academic success. Sumarsono et. al's (2016) qualitative multi-case comparative study concluded that parent participation either individually

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or through community-based organizations was found to improve the quality of education of the students with fewer students placed in remedial classes.

The literature largely provided evidence suggesting that parental engagement in schools not only improves the academic success of students but also presents positive effects towards “the child's emotional and social development” (Sumarsono, Imron, Wiyono, & Arifin, 2016, p. 257). Francis, et al.’s (2016) qualitative study found that school and parent partnerships created a sense of loyalty amongst all members of the partnership towards “the child and (parents) and school professionals sharing positive visions and goals for all children, including a common investment in student success” (p. 288). One focus group, as part of a qualitative study, found that a strong and positive relationship between parents and school is beneficial when collaborating to develop an effective educational program for students with exceptionalities (Blue-Banning, Summers, Frankland, et al., 2004).

Barriers to advocacy. The literature suggests that parental advocacy for appropriate curriculum, services and placement can sometimes come with barriers, such as emotional and financial tolls, which can lead to lack of opportunities to participate (Ryndak, Orlando, Storch, Denney, & Huffman, 2011). As stated before, each parent of a child with an exceptionality has unique needs for themselves as well as their child, depending on the exceptionality and family dynamic (Besnoy, et al., 2015). Educator-parent participants in the Cosford & Draper (2002) study indicated that they “probably (didn’t) initiate things with the school as readily as parents who (were) not teachers” (p. 358). Another barrier noted was parental hesitancy to criticize their child’s teacher although they were unhappy with the school as a whole because “they understood the context within which they (the child’s teachers) were working” (p. 353). Phillips (2008) law review presented three main barriers that prevented parents from successfully advocating for

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their children and those barriers all surround the “unstated presumption that parents have sufficient knowledge to advocate effectively for their child” (p. 1828). The barriers included the parents limited abilities to “recognize diagnostic criteria for exceptionalities” (p. 1828), lack of awareness of educational options and available services for their child and finally, parents inability to challenge a school official that they deem an expert in the field of education.

Methodological Framework

For the current study, I have chosen a Grounded Theory (constructivist approach), Charmaz (2000, 2006) to gain in-depth understanding of parents’ conceptualizations of their efficaciousness in advocating for the social, emotional and academic well-being of their child(ren) with exceptionalities. My motivation for engaging in this research is personal, based on a desire to determine if my advocacy experience as an educator-parent (i.e., person with knowledge of the school, the district, the stakeholders, and strong understanding of special education regulations) for my child with an exceptionality was unique as compared to other educator-parents; whether my experiences differed greatly – or at all - from those parents of children with exceptionalities who were not educators by profession. My experience of being thrust into the world of special education with its formalities, educational jargon and matter of fact dispositions, continues to shape who I am today as a doctoral student, how I advocate for not only my child’s needs, but my own, and how I carry myself and network as a district employee.

Glense (2016) defines the methodological framework as one in which there is a “goal of interpreting the social world from the perspectives of those who are actors in that world” (p. 9) addressing its correlation with an interpretivist philosophical framework. As an interpretivist, I seek to expose others’ views, attitudes, and voices, and, in turn, perhaps understand my own truths as well. Thus, the philosophical underpinnings that inform this study are of an interpretive

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nature based on social constructivism (Creswell, 2013), making a Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) the best possible fit for this investigation.

Grounded Theory as a Methodological Framework

Grounded theory methodology, as propagated by Charmaz (2006), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and others (Bryant, A., Charmaz, K., 2019; Corbin J., Strauss, A., 2015; Babchuk, W., 2011), is, at its core, the search for theory. As a novice researcher I believe, like Charmaz (2014), that “we are part of the world we study, the data we collect, and the analyses we produce. We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (p. 17). As a parent of a child with an exceptionality, my advocacy efforts have long been conceptualized and constructed through those same methods. In developing the theoretical framework, the concepts derived from Bourdieu’s (1986) Theory of Social and Cultural Capital and Mowder’s (2005) Parent Development Theory are explicated below as they are the lenses that, to a great extent, are used to guide what I see and how I see it.

As a parent who is also an educator, I was easily drawn to the concepts of role development and social and cultural capital based upon my prior (and current) personal and professional experiences. Mowder’s Parent Development Theory (2005) is identifiable in my beliefs and behaviors as a parent of a child with an exceptionality in that they have been molded by my experiences in raising my child. I am also able to identify with the concept of social capital as a part of a professional membership as an educator with a network of educator peers. Bourdieu’s Theory of Social and Cultural Capitals (1986) and Mowder’s Development Theory (2005) were identified and used simply as a guide and a tool for comparison (Charmaz, Constructing Grounded Theory: 2nd Edition, 2014). I ran into barriers and struggled with my

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role as my child's advocate as a non-educator therefore I became an educator in order to seek membership into the education field and to acquire what I perceived as "inside" resources and educational knowledge. The shared phenomenon between myself and participants is that we all advocate for our children with exceptionalities as either an educator by profession or non-educator. We all share the process of role development and utilize a variety of resources to advocate for our children.

The literature review and theoretical framework presented in this chapter will serve as "sources of comparison and analysis through comparing other scholar's evidence and IDEIAS" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 305) surrounding the topic of parent self-efficacy as embedded in social and cultural capital to the parent conceptualizations within the current study. Creswell (2013) indicates that "phenomenology emphasizes the common experiences for a number of individuals, the intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory" (p. 83). The process of role development and what resources are available towards advocacy for the needs and services of each child "has distinct steps or phases that occur over time. Thus, a grounded theory study has "movement" (i.e., an action) that the researcher is attempting to explain" (p. 85). I am using this belief as grounds to build my own theory rather than finding an existing theory to define and explain data derived in this study.

Conceptual Framework

Social Constructionism largely captures my worldview and forms the conceptual basis for the current study. Creswell (2014) asserts that "constructivism or social constructivism (often combined with interpretivism) is such a perspective, and it is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research. The ideas came from Mannheim... Berger and Luekmann (1967)... and Lincoln and Guba (1985)" (as cited in Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Crotty, (1998) indicates that open-

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ended questions allow for participants to share their interpretations and views of their experiences through their own social and historical perspectives. Crotty (1998) also indicates that the findings are then shaped by the researchers own experiences and world view.

Through completing this study, I am seeking a deeper “understanding of the world in which (I) live and work” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24), and am relying upon the voices of this investigation’s participants to drive the theor(ies) that will ultimately be developed. I also seek to better understand how our culture can eliminate barriers for parents who need and want to better advocate for their children with exceptionalities. A major personal assumption that I harbor is that parents from all walks of life are often marginalized in the processes, procedures, and legal mandates surrounding special education. This assumption is derived from historical context research identifying the introduction of public education supported by taxes, as well as the evolving legislative mandates towards parent engagement.

Theoretical Framework

This study is supported by a theoretical framework that allows for a complementary, albeit introductory, amalgam made up of Mowder’s (2005), Parent Development Theory, originally deemed the Parent Role Development Theory (PDT), (Mowder 1991, 1993, 1997) and Bourdieu’s (1986) Theory of Social and Cultural Capital, which creates a lens for expounding the diverse perceptions of efficaciousness between educator and non-educator parents of children with exceptionalities. This framework is presented as a beginning foothold for the grounded study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45).

The parent role development theory “defines who parents are, examines the parent role individuals play, clarifies how parents and parenting develop and change over time, and explains how the parent role relates to parenting activities” (Mowder, 2005, p. 46). Bourdieu’s theory

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provides the foundation for understanding whether social and capital resources affect the parental involvement process and whether these resources are perceived to provide educator-parents with an advantage over non-educator parents in their advocacy experience for the social, emotional and academic well-being of their child with an exceptionality.

The following conceptual literature, or formal theories, are what best define the perspective from which the topic of parental self-efficacy as an advocate is advanced in the current study. The parental development theory is utilized to interpret parental evolution throughout the process of rearing a child with an exceptionality while navigating the educational arena. The intent of this study as presented in **figure 1** below, was to present parental perception of advocacy encompassed by social and cultural capital resources, and the effects of these resources on the advocacy efforts of educator-parents as compared to non-educator parents for their children with an exceptionality. These theoretical constructs form the lens through which I discuss, examine, and analyze the perceptions of educator-parents and nonparents.

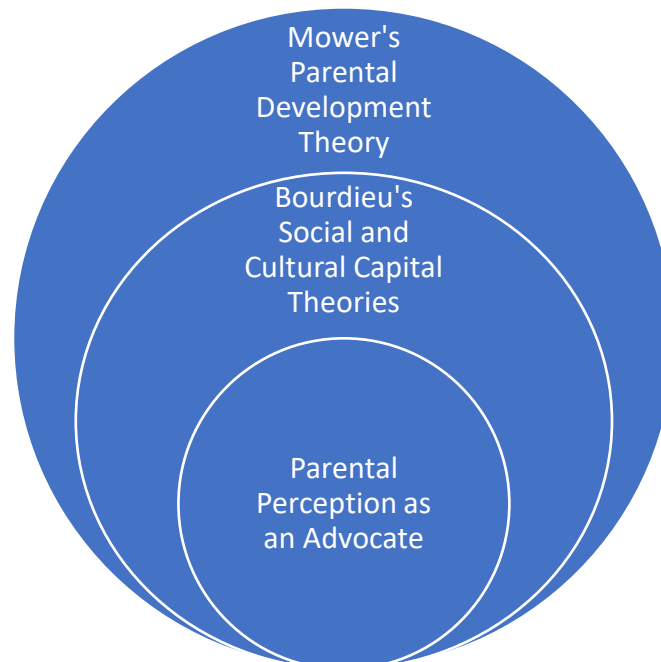


Figure 1 – Framework for Understanding the Advocacy Experience of Parents of Children with Exceptionalities

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Parent Development Theory. Mowder's (2005) Parent Development Theory provides a foundation for guiding our concept of how parents (educators and non-educators) perceive their self-efficacy in advocating for their child(ren) in the education system. This theory is built from the assumption that parenting is primarily learned, so therefore, role development is derived through cumulative effects. Sperling and Mowder (2006) indicate that a parent's perception of their parental role is affected not only by their own individual needs but also by the developmental milestones of their child, or their "parent-child relationship, family dynamics, and the broader social-cultural milieu" (p. 695). This concept, along with the added component of parenting a child with an exceptionality as an educator by profession, is a unique phenomenon that would undoubtedly alter parent self-efficacy towards advocating for the social, emotional and academic well-being of their child. The findings of this literature review indicate that there is limited research on this unique topic rendering it worthy of inquiry.

Mowder (2005) identified six perceived parent-initiated roles associated with the parental role theory: (1) bonding, (2) discipline, (3) education, (4) general welfare and protection, (5) responsivity, and (6) sensitivity. *Bonding* refers to parental feeling and how they show affection to their child. *Discipline* refers to the limitations that parents set for their children while assuring adherence to limitations. *Education* as defined by Mowder (2005), is the transmission of information from the parent to the child. *General welfare and protection* are considered the role that parents take to protect their child from harm while also providing their tangible as well as intangible needs. *Responsivity* is "the extent to which parents respond to their child(ren)" (p. 51). *Sensitivity*, finally, refers to the parents ability to "discern what the child is communicating (while) matching the parent response to the child's needs" (p. 52).

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The roles as defined by Mowder (2005) provide a framework that clearly defines the different components of parental role development. The roles, however, are not mutually exclusive and can be reconfigured based on the child and parent's individual needs. When parenting a child with special needs, for example, a parent must come to terms with their child's exceptionality and adjust their thinking to accommodate for those needs (Mowder, 2005). As the parent gains knowledge about their child's exceptionality they are better equipped to make decisions on how to access what their child needs. This distinction builds upon the framework to identify individualized parental perceptions of their advocacy for their children with an exceptionality.

The quantitative Parent Behavior Importance (PBI) study by Respler-Herman, Mowder, Yasik, and Shamah (2012) supports the notion that social supports and other indicators such as parental stress are related to parent beliefs and behaviors that affect the perception of their parental role. Respler-Herman et. al's (2012) research plays a pivotal role in supporting this study on parental perception towards advocacy. Their results indicate that knowledge gained about what affects parental perception "may assist practitioners in becoming more effective consultants by increasing their sensitivity to the myriad of parenting perspectives" (Respler-Herman, Mowder, Yasik, et al., 2012, p. 197). Sperling and Mowder's (2006) quantitative study on parental perception of their typically developing preschoolers, as compared to those with developmental delays, provides additional support indicating that "PDT offers a communication vehicle for professionals to understand different parenting perspectives and how they may have developed as well as to provide a way to conceptualize parenting interventions specifically to a parent-child dyad" (p. 696).

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The Parent Development Theory was developed by utilizing quantitative assessment tools such as the parenting role questionnaire and the parenting behavior questionnaire in which Likert scales were used to rate responses on parental perception of roles. The Parent Development Theory is positioned in this study as a loose guide to glean parent self-efficacy as parental perception. The roles that parents take on are the direct reflection of their own individual needs as well as the needs of their child with an exceptionality. Parents make adjustments in their parenting role based on individual trajectories that includes medical needs, growth, development and life changes of both the child and themselves which determine why they advocate, how they advocate and to what extent for appropriate services for their child's needs.

Empirical Studies. Trainor's (2010b) study identifies educator capital as "aches of professional knowledge (e.g., knowing how to participate in special education processes, how to collaborate with teachers and related service providers, (and) how to implement differentiated lesson plans)" (p. 36). When a educator-parent is armed with this large fund of capital knowledge they are better equipped to use these resources to maximize their advocacy efforts for their own child with an exceptionality. The effects of social and cultural capital on parents' perceptions of their efficaciousness as advocates can be seen in studies such as Koch's (2016) in which the author indicates that "teachers with personal experience of disability issues (with their own children) will have more intimate knowledge of resources, both medical and social, within the community" (p. 10). These studies support the notion that educator-parents can be more aware of the special education process, which may lead to a more efficacious advocacy experience over a non-educator parent who may not have access to the same knowledge.

Haley and Allsopp (2019) indicate that educator-parents with children of their own with exceptionalities "have a deeper understanding of the educational system, it's processes, and the

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challenges that schools confront when serving students with (exceptionalities)” (p. 24). This qualitative case study described three educator’s experiences with advocating for their own children with exceptionalities within the school district where they work. All three participants in this study were career changers initiated by the diagnosis of their child’s exceptionality and a desire to advocate for the social, emotional and academic wellbeing of their children. They all experienced challenges and expressed changing their approach as their understanding progressed. This study ultimately found that exposing the experiences of educator-parents in their advocacy efforts for their child with an exceptionality can be a learning experience for others in helping to identify areas or issues that work against parent-school partnerships.

As noted by a participant in the Cosford and Draper interview study of parenthood as professional development for educator-parents, “some parents are so demanding of their children, expecting everything to happen quickly but if you are a teacher you are aware of the longer process” (Cosford & Draper, 2002, p. 358). Special educators in particular are held to professional standards that require the acquisition of knowledge and skills specific to children with exceptionalities and building home school relationships (Trainor, 2010b). This supports Cosford and Draper’s study which found that educator-parents were able to interpret limitations of their child’s teachers and had an enhanced understanding of school to home comments on schoolwork.

In their study, educator-parents were found to be better equipped to advocate as needed for their child with an exceptionality versus those parents who were not educators by trade and who had limited understanding of their child’s academic needs. Sikes’ (1998) study regarding educator-parent roles found that educator-parents “vigorously challenge(d) inequities of various kinds because of their own children’s experiences” (p. 93). Another result of social and cultural

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capital may be that the advocacy experience stems from educator-parents feeling guilty for not doing more for their own child. As Sikes (1998) indicates, it is likely that educator-parents are trained to think that “as mothers, they are liable to ‘damage’ their children; yet at the same time, as teachers, they have responsibility, as substitute mothers, for a whole class” (p. 95).

Gross (2011) provides an in-depth investigation into her journey as an educator-parent presenting her own advocacy experience through her ethnographic study. Gross (2011) boldly conveys that coming to terms with her son’s exceptionality and understanding that it was going to be a lifelong journey was both lengthy and painful for her and her son. Gross (2011) also provides instances of positive affirmations for herself throughout her advocacy experience in which her own cultural capital helped her to advocate for her son while sharing her disappointments through self-blame when she felt that she failed her child.

The literature offered few empirical studies regarding social and cultural capital of parents of children with exceptionalities who were not educators by profession. The research was limited to teachers’ perception of parental social capital resources and cultural capitals of the student with an exceptionality. Of the relevant studies found, it was indicated that parents who felt more empowered through social capital derived from family, school and community supports felt comfortable asking for information and help when needed from the schools (Wong, Ching, Whitfield, & Duncan, 2018). This study also found that social capital derived by parents, such as networking with the educators within the school, being actively engaged in the community and religious organizations, and networking with other families, ultimately transferred to the child with an exceptionality of deaf or hard of hearing.

Ryndak, Orlando, Storch, Denney, and Huffman (2011) completed a one participant interview study over a twelve-year period. This study defined a mother’s advocacy efforts for

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her child with an exceptionality. The study participant explained how she obtained social capital resources by meeting with the “high-powered” mothers, (i.e., those mothers who were “involved, informed, and advocated strongly for their children (and) whose children were included in general education settings and received effective accommodations or modifications)” (Ryndak, Orlando, Storch, Denney, & Huffman, 2011, p. 84). The participant discussed cycling emotions of agreement and conflict with the educational service providers’ view of her child’s abilities versus her view of his abilities. The participants’ level of advocacy and need for social supports evolved as her experience evolved.

Summary

The paucity of available empirical research on the topic of educator-parent self-efficacy and parent-non-educator self-efficacy when it comes to advocating for their own children with exceptionalities, suggests that this investigation may produce data that until now, has been limited. The literature provides meager evidence related to how parents and educator-parents of children with exceptionalities advocate for their own children. Certainly, portraits of both vary based on cultural diversity, racial diversity, available supports, individual parental needs, professions, individualized needs of children, and possibly many other factors. The literature suggests that parents often seek supports through many means and depend on the school system to help them identify and advocate for the needs and services for children with exceptionalities – particularly their own.

The literature appeared to suggest that there are both benefits to leveraging social and cultural capital when advocating for children with exceptionalities and barriers “drawbacks” to leveraging social and cultural capital when advocating for children with exceptionalities, shared by both educator-parents and non-educator parents. The issue of self-efficacy was broached;

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however, this topic would benefit from further investigation. As current legislation mandates parent engagement within schools, it would benefit school leaders to seek out research on what types of capital resources promote opportunities for parents to identify and advocate for the social, emotional and academic well-being of children with exceptionalities. The limited research found highlights the gap in research that this study would help to fill.

This literature review is supported by a constructivist approach, especially useful for the current study as this is my first foray into using grounded theory (Fram, 2013). Charmaz (2006) argues for the literature to be dispersed throughout the study and for the review itself to be situated after data analysis to prevent stifling researcher creativity (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). This introductory review is presented as a foothold to additional literature that will become increasingly theoretical in chapter five.

Chapter three will present the methods used in conducting the current study, including a description of the research design, participant selection, context and access, data collection methods, data sources, and data analysis. Also included are my positionality as the researcher, triangulation and dependability, trustworthiness, confidentiality of data, ethical considerations, and summary.

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Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter will provide the methods used for this study relevant to the research questions, (1) how do educator-parents and non-educator parents perceive their efficaciousness as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities? and (2), how do educator-parents and non-educator parents construct the narrative of their efficaciousness as advocates, as embodied in social and or cultural capital?

First, the research design, participant selection process, and participants are described. Next, the context and access to the study are provided followed by the data methods, which includes data collection, data sources, and data analysis. Then, my positionality as the researcher is provided, followed by a description of triangulation, trustworthiness, validity, confidentiality of data, and ethical considerations. A summary is provided at the end of the chapter.

Research Design

Grounded theory is mainly used for qualitative research (Glaser B. , 2001), and is a general method of analysis that accepts qualitative, quantitative, and hybrid data collection from surveys, experiments, and case studies (Glaser B. , 1978). Studies generally follow one of three basic design and analysis principles: Classic, Straussian, or Constructivist. All three principles concur that “research sample cannot be predetermined; instead, it must be a theoretical sample, dynamically led by the emerging theory until the point of saturation” (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1271) through constant comparison of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The principles incorporate memo writing as an important map, a step by step depiction of the relationship between each concept, towards the development of the theory (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Finally, the argument for a substantive localized theory applicable only to one field, as a steppingstone to formalized (all-inclusive theory) is shared amongst the three principles (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

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The divergent characteristics of the principles for constructing a grounded theory investigation include coding, philosophical positions and use of literature (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). The Classic principle describes a coding method of line by line constant comparative analysis of the data ending with the introduction and comparison of literature. In this coding process, the researcher uses comparisons to identify patterns and similarities for the emergence of conceptual categories morphing into major categories ultimately *discovering* a theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) present a step by step coding method called the Straussian principle. This principle separates itself as a very complex “how to” manual for *creating* theory through a meticulous 4-stage coding process which is criticized as excessive and complicated by Glaser (1992) and Charmaz (2000).

The development of the Constructivist Grounded Theory principle is given credit to Charmaz (2000, 2006), who coincidentally was a prior student of both Glaser’s and Strauss’s. Charmaz, (2008) tells the researcher to look for cues rather than themes in answering the questions derived from Glaser and Holton, (2004), i.e., “what is the chief concern of participants?” and “how do they resolve this concern?” (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1279). This principle strongly emphasizes in-depth interviews for in vivo coding, allowing for the direct language of the participants, while focusing less on conceptual categories and more on participants’ experiences (Glaser 2002, as cited in Kenny & Fourie, 2015). The constructivist principle gives the researcher flexibility to *construct* theory through interpretation of a variety of participant data (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

Glaser and Holton (2004) resist bonding Classic Grounded Theory with any research paradigm. They also view supporting literature as a part of the data analysis process that should not be incorporated or examined within the study until after data collection to eliminate clouding

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the researchers' judgement (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify Straussian grounded theory as post-positive and “encourage the appropriate use of literature at every stage of the study” (as cited in Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1284). They do, however, discourage against a comprehensive review that may alter the researchers' view of the data. The Constructivist principle is based on positivism and encourages a literature review chapter and references throughout the study while discouraging the researcher from becoming fully immersed in the literature until after data analysis (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

Charmaz's more iterative, free-lance approach, designed so as not to inhibit or stifle new revelations or “contain” theories, is the basis for the present study. Konecki (2011) presents grounded theory as a process in which “a new and unique empirical observation cannot be explained on the basis of existing knowledge and categories or assumptions, (and) existing knowledge must be reformulated and re-sorted for an explanation of a new fact” (p. 132). Data sources used in this study include: in-depth biographical and open-ended interviews, participant-generated diary entries, participant-generated visual representations (drawings/collages), and researcher-generated memos, as would typify a grounded theory investigation. Documents (i.e. daily communication sheets and parent-school email correspondence) were also included as data sources to establish routines and instances that framed participants' experiences. Below you will find a table adapted from Kenny and Fourie's (2015) presentation of the three traditions of Grounded Theory:

Table 1: Three Traditions of GT

	Grounded Theory Approaches		
	Classic Glaser & Holton (2004)	Straussian Strauss & Corbin (1990)	Constructive Charmaz (2000, 2006)
Similarities			
Theoretical Sampling	✓	✓	✓
Saturation	✓	✓	✓

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Comparative Analysis	✓	✓	✓
Researcher-generated Memos	✓	✓	✓
Substantive Theory	✓	✓	✓
Differences			
Coding Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line by line word patterns • Similarities into conceptual categories • Morphing into major categories • Discover an Emergent Theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open coding through constant comparative method • Axial coding “forging links” & 5 sub-categories within each category • Selective coding • Conditional Matrix • Create theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial coding with participant voice (In vivo) and gerund’s to define what is happening (-ing). • Refocused coding with identification of recurrent codes merged into theoretical categories and memoing. • Construct theory
Philosophical Positions	Resists a research paradigm but argued to be traditional positivist by Charmaz	Postpositive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional • Theory verification 	Constructivism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaning • Language • Interpretation
Use of Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review as a constant comparison tool at the end of the study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature interspersed throughout the study. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature interspersed throughout the study • Delay formal review until after data analysis
<p>1. Theoretical Sampling: Research is guided by the data, not predetermined. Gaps are made evident through collecting, coding and categorizing data. Concepts emerge that may change the direction of data collection. Data collection continues, identifying more gaps. The researcher is guided by this evolving process until a theory is emerged.</p> <p>2. Saturation: Theoretical sampling until no new emergence of data occurs.</p> <p>3. Constant Comparative Analysis: Simultaneously collecting, coding, analyzing and categorizing data (Glaser & Holton, 2004; Holton, 2010)</p> <p>4. Researcher-generated Memoing: A map depicting relations between the concepts towards theme development.</p> <p>5. Substantive Theory: Local theory applicable only to this field.</p>			

Participant Selection

The participants in this study consisted of a total of eight parents of children with a variety of exceptionalities enrolled in a P-12 school within one of two targeted districts. Smaller sample sizes often provide rich information resulting in lasting significance (Charmaz 2014; Glense, 2016). Further, Creswell (2013) suggests that a smaller number of participants provide ample opportunity for concept development. Charmaz (2014) guides the grounded theorist to consider excellence rather than adequacy while determining the number of interviews to pursue and to “stop when the properties of your theoretical categories are ‘saturated’ with data” (p. 213) and the newly derived theoretical insights begin to dwindle.

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I chose participants who showed a variety of parenting perspectives, as those with a background in teaching and those without. Theoretical sampling was used in this study as primary principal of the grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser and Holton, 2004; Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The initial strategy, however, to identify participants who met the criteria for this study was selective in that a calculated decision was made to sample a specific group of individuals, educator-parents and non-educator parents, who advocate for their child(ren) with an exceptionality. This strategy was selected based on my preconceived notions about these participants being able to provide in-depth and rich data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is acknowledged by Coyne (1997) that “theoretical sampling does involve the purposeful selection of a sample in the initial stages... (as) the researcher must have some idea of where to sample, not necessarily what to sample for, and where it will lead” (p. 625). The next step in identifying participants is where theoretical sampling occurred when identifying emerging codes and categories.

I analyzed the data as the information emerged and selected participants based on the emerging themes developed. Charmaz (2014) indicates that “interviewing provides the major tool for generating focused data for developing abstract conceptual categories” (p. 87) for grounded theory. The participants were chosen because of their ability to inform the research problem through their lived experiences as well as their ability to inform emerging IDEIAs to assist me in identifying concepts of worth to the current study.

To identify information-rich participants, I took into consideration the available network of knowledgeable and experienced parents, who themselves, are also advocates for their own children through my access points, as well as participants’ availability and willingness to participate (Bernard, 2002; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Spradley, 1979). All participants

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have a child or children who attend either an elementary, middle, or high school within the two districts under investigation. One participant who chose to unenroll their child from one of the two districts and enroll them in a private setting, was also included. The participant pool was open to male and female parents over the age of eighteen. Four of the participants are parents who are also educators, by profession, and have children with exceptionalities enrolled in P-12 schools. Three participants are parents who are not educators by profession, and who have children with exceptionalities enrolled in P-12 schools. The final participant is not an educator by profession, who had a child with an exceptionality enrolled in a private educational setting. All participants were required to read and agree to participate by responding a participant cover letter prior to the beginning of the study.

A diverse group of parent participants were chosen for this study. They represent varying ethnicities, races, levels of education, and socioeconomic status. Their children all receive special education services and vary in terms of their exceptionalities (i.e. low incidence to high incidence).

Participants

Seven of the eight participants selected from the two targeted school districts are between the ages of 43 and 56. The eighth participant selected had a child who was previously enrolled within one of the two targeted school districts and is 50 years old. Based on the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau household income demographic information, five of the eight participants are in the middle-class socioeconomic income status, one is in the upper middle class, one participant is in the high-income status and one is in the highest tax bracket income status. Five of the eight participants have a master's degree or higher while four of eight have bachelor's degrees. The remaining participant has a vocational degree. Six of the eight participants are married while the

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remaining two participants are divorced. Five participants are Caucasian while the remaining three are African American. Seven of the eight participants have children currently enrolled in the P – 12th public school setting within one of the two targeted districts and are all receiving special education services with an IEP. The final, eighth participant is enrolled in a private school setting receiving individualized special education services. The demographic data for each participant are provided below. Descriptions of each participant are presented in depth in chapter four.

Table 2: Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Age	Race	Highest Education Completed	Marital Status	Career	Child age/grade	IEP	District Identification
Daisy	43	White	Masters	Married	Teacher	13/7 th grade	Yes	District A
Winona	43	White	Masters	Married	Teacher	13/7 th grade	Yes	District A
Tammie	44	Black	Vocational	Divorced	Collections	12/6 th grade	Yes	District A
Margaret	50	White	Bachelors	Married	Homemaker	19/12 th grade	Yes	Private School
Debbie	50	White	Specialist	Married	Teacher	11/5 th grade 13/8 th grade	Yes	District B
Julie	56	White	Masters	Divorced	Teacher	14/8 th grade 15/9 th grade	Yes	District B
Carla	55	Black	Bachelors	Married	Sales	13/6 th grade	Yes	District B
Lisa	44	Black	Masters	Married	Insurance	9/4 th grade	Yes	District B

Context and Access

This study focuses on eight participants who have P – 12th grade children with varying abilities who attend either District A or District B within the southeastern United States. The

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most recent 2017 United States Census information shows that of the eight participants in the current study, three parents have children attending District A, with a population of 254,149 with 50.8% female, 49.2% male, 78.4% white, 7.4% black or African American and 15.6% other races and ethnicities (U.S. Census, 2018). The socio-economic status of District A indicates that the median household income in 2017 was \$75,477 with 7.5% of the population of this district in poverty.

Of the remaining participants, the most recent 2017 United States Census information shows that 4 parents have children attending District B with a population of 694,720, with 52% female and 48% male. Race and ethnicity of the larger school district, District B, indicates that 52% of its population are white while 27% are black or African American with 21% listed as other races and ethnicities. The socio-economic status of District B indicates that the median household income is \$78,338. Both districts adhere to a continuum of various placement options from full inclusion to self-contained classroom settings which provide intense, individualized and direct instruction. The special education programs for both districts are comparable, both offering placements that include self-contained, small group resource, inclusion (co-taught) and consultation. At the time of this study, one participant had chosen to unenroll their child with an exceptionality from the public-school district setting and instead, enrolled him in a private school setting. This key revelation placed this participant outside of the original selection criteria however as theoretical sampling ensued, I determined that the data that this participant possessed would support the emerging theory.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the university as well as from the two target school districts were obtained in order to gain access for the study. Following all IRB approvals and in order to conduct the study, I obtained principal approval from the elementary

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and middle schools where the children attended. Special education administrators, facilitators, lead teachers and related service providers were chosen respectively as access point persons from the two target districts. The role of each access point person differed per district.

The special education administrator's role was either one of assistant principal or special education administrator. The assistant principal not only implements student discipline and leadership to the special education staff but is often on the front line of parental contact when there is a concern or a need. The facilitator's role is to act as the Local Education Agent (LEA) at the school, and knowledgeable resource person for parents of children with special needs as well as for the teachers in their district. The lead teacher's role is as liaison to filter information to and from the special education classroom teachers, facilitators and administrators. Finally, the related service providers comprise physical therapists, occupational therapists, vision therapists and speech therapists through direct or consult services to children with special needs. Related service providers were the most appropriate point of contact to elicit quality participants. These providers regularly encounter parents who advocate for supports and service for children with an exceptionality. The access points provided participant contact information including telephone numbers and email addresses.

Once participant contact was obtained, I emailed each participant to determine their interest in the study. The goal was to acquire four parents of children with exceptionalities who were also teachers within the school district where their child attends, as well as, four additional parents of children with exceptionalities who were not educators by profession. The participants needed to meet the final criteria of being 18 years or older to participate. Ultimately, five participants recommended by access point people were invited to participate in the study.

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Three participants were recommended by the four initial participants all within their respective target districts. Once the participants replied to the email expressing interest in participating in the study then I sent out a cover letter (Appendix A) with the IRB study number attached and scheduled interview dates, public meeting locations and times. Once received, the participants who checked “I agree and give my consent” on the cover letter, met with me, cut off the bottom of the cover letter (which also contained the IRB study number) for their own records, and physically handed the top part of the consent cover letter back to me.

Data Collection

Data collection began with me providing each participant with the following: Consent cover letter (Appendix A), prompt for visual representation (Appendix F) and prompt for diary entry (Appendix G). These documents were provided to participants prior to the interview to solicit, clarify and resolve participant questions or concerns preceding the interview. Once the participants reviewed the documents and informed me that they were ready to proceed, interviews were scheduled and the participant biographical and open-ended interviews began. At the beginning of the interview I provided each participant with a duplicate copy of Appendix A (the consent cover letter), as well as a pocket-sized notebook with Appendix F (prompt for visual representation) and Appendix G (prompt for diary entry) glued inside for quick reference.

Three of the eight participants chose to produce electronic participant-generated diary entries one month after they were initially given the prompts, as they indicated that they preferred to type or text instead of writing in the journal. The remaining participants produced hand-written participant-generated diary entries approximately one month after they received the pocket-sized notebook at the beginning of the interview. All participants submitted their participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collages) simultaneously with their

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participant-generated diary entries. Two participants provided discretionary documents for review. Researcher-generated memos began during the transcription process in which I recalled participant demeanor and tone. I continued to memo during data analysis of the completed transcripts, participant-generated diary review, participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collages) review, and document review.

In a period of three months, I collected 574 minutes of open-ended interviews which, when combined, produced 120 pages of transcripts; 8 participant-generated visual representations (drawings/collages); 62 pages of reflection and communication via participant-generated diary entries; and 6 pages of researcher-generated memos. Initially, consent cover letter (Appendix A), prompt for visual representation (Appendix F) and prompt for diary entry (Appendix G) were provided to each participant. Following participant consent, participant biographical and open-ended interview dates, location and times were set. Next, interviews were completed. Then, participant-generated diary entries and participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collage) were obtained one month after participants consented to participate. Finally, researcher-generated memos were complete. The data sources and their role in the data collection process are delineated below.

Data Sources

The following were data sources for the current study: (a) participant in-depth biographical and open-ended interviews (Appendix C), (b) electronic and hand written parent-participant generated diary entries (Appendix G), (d) participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collages) (Appendix F), (e) any additional discretionary documents for review provided by parent participants (i.e. daily take-home communication sheets, emails between

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parents and teacher, etc.) that shows a variation of parent supports, and researcher-generated memos.

Participant In-depth Biographical and Open-Ended Interviews. Creswell (2013) indicates that the most pertinent type of data source for grounded theory is the interview. The in-depth biographical portion of the interview consisted of six questions such as, “*What is your career or vocation?*,” “*How long have you been engaged in this line of work?*,” “*What is your marital status?*,” and “*What is your race or ethnicity?*” The open-ended interview questions derived from my role as “researcher as key instrument” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). Drawing from my own experience as both a parent of a child with an exceptionality, as well as a teacher of students with exceptionalities, allowed me to initiate a query and build upon it by eliciting additional responses from the participants. The purpose of the open-ended format was to evoke an explanation over a simple “yes” or “no” response (Stake, 1995).

I developed an interview protocol as suggested by Creswell (2013). The determined amount of time needed to complete each interview was taken into consideration and ultimately, three separate sessions of no more than thirty minutes each session was determined to be appropriate. This would provide the best opportunities for in-depth responses without overwhelming the participant while also being courteous and respectful of their time. When presented with this interview protocol, all participants requested to complete the interview in one session, agreeing to a follow-up if necessary due to their own limited availability. The interview sessions varied per participant lasting between a minimum of 45 minutes to a maximum of 3 hours each.

The individual interview sessions for the educator-parents were held in public places such as the local library, coffee shops, church conference center and public parks to protect the safety

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of the interviewer and interviewee based on institutional review board (IRB) requirements and my need to assess the potential risk of self and participants (Sieber & Tolich, 2013). The individual interview sessions for the parents who were not educators by profession were also held in similar public places again to ensure the physical safety of both the interviewer and interviewee as it is my responsibility as the researcher to assess all risk. All interview locations were centrally located for easy access to participants as well as to reduce level of interviewer and participant risk by choosing an arbitrary location.

The in-depth biographical questions, (Appendix C) were demographical in nature, while the open-ended questions were more qualitative in nature, designed to explore concepts, opinions and perceptions. The open-ended questions were intended to foster informed and in-depth responses without imposing my preconceived notions. The goal of the questions was to expose social and/or cultural capitals as identified by the participants themselves by posing questions pertaining to participant relationships between teacher and school, perceived barriers to, and successes for, improved advocacy, and contributions received while advocating for their child, and from whom or what.

As indicated by Trainor (2010c), the typical participant's vernacular would not typically include the term "capital," therefore, "questions were designed to elicit responses about participants' experiences and perceptions that illustrated cultural and social capital" (p. 250) while also identifying differences and similarities between the two participant groups of educator-parents and non-educator parents. The questions were differentiated per the two groups as "each interviewee is expected to have had unique experiences (and) special stories to tell" (Stake, 1995, p. 65). In lieu of parents using the terms "social" or "cultural capital," I set up an alternate terminology system, that of "insider" and "outsider," as a means of helping parents

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reveal their perceptions when constructing their experiences. These terms, “insider” and “outsider” are also presented as a metaphor for parents to use in self-conceptualization as an advocate for their child(ren) with an exceptionality. As a reminder, for the purposes of this study an “insider” is defined as someone who is positioned within a setting, such as a school, that provides in-depth knowledge about the special education process and available resources (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, & Robertson-Grewal, 2011; Trainor, 2010c). An “outsider” is defined as someone who is not an educator by profession and who does not have the lived-experience or understanding of special education as someone who would by virtue of working in the field (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, & Robertson-Grewal, 2011; Haley, 2014). All participants were asked to self-identify as either an “insider” or an “outsider,” and to define their relationships with their child’s teacher and school. The questions for eliciting parents’ frames of reference were chosen to evoke thoughtful reflection and experience.

A critical component of the current study was to determine whether parents, by virtue of their vocation as educators, perceived themselves to be advantaged in some way, with “insider” knowledge of the school system and its policies. I was aware that being an “insider” may or may not have been perceived as providing advantages to a parent. Therefore, a question asked of participants was if their status as a parent and educator, provided them an insider track for advocating for their child with an exceptionality followed by a question of why or why not.

The second critical component was to determine whether parents, who were not educators, perceived themselves to be disadvantaged in some way, lacking “insider” knowledge of the school system and its policies by self-identifying as “outsiders.” I was similarly aware that being an “outsider” may or may not have been perceived as posing disadvantages to a parent. Those participants who were not educators by profession were then asked if their status as a non-

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educator parent affected their ability to advocate for their child(ren) and asked to explain why (or why not).

The in-person, audio-recorded interviews were then transcribed by myself using the online NCH free dictation playback software, resulting in a combined 120 pages of transcriptions across all participants.

Participant-Generated Diaries. Diary collection is a familiar and much-used data source in studies that employ grounded theory in that first-person documentation is powerful and unfiltered, allowing participants to elicit their direct language and words (Creswell, 2013, 2016). The participants were provided a prompt (Appendix G) and asked to keep a diary of their choice either electronically or in written format, with a minimum of one entry per week, capturing specific moments of communications with their child's school and reflecting new learning gathered from the communications. Participant diaries allow for an in-depth description about participants' thoughts and feelings and can provide insight into the cultural values that influence their thoughts and actions (Charmaz, 2014). This form of elicited text assists with triangulation in assuring validity of the findings as the combination of interviews along with diary entries allowed me to check stories and compare responses for disparities (Charmaz, 2014).

Participant-Generated Visual Representations (Drawings/Collages). The data collection began with my providing each participant with several prompts. One of the initial prompts was for participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collages), (Appendix F). In this prompt, participants were asked to consider all factors that influence the academic, social and emotional well-being of their child with an exceptionality when creating their drawing or collage. This prompt was provided concurrently with the participant-generated diary prompt (Appendix G) in which they were to include a detailed written description and explanation of

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their drawing or collage as their final diary entry. Participants were asked to depict not only the factors that influence their child's academic, social and emotional well-being but also to consider their current role as an advocate for their child who had an exceptionality. They were also asked to portray what their current partnership with the school looked like. The participant-generated visual representation prompt, (Appendix F), requested that they generate a visual representation of their choice, depicting their perception of their role as advocate for their child with an exceptionality. Glesne (2016) indicates that participant-generated visual data is beneficial in that it allows participants to “give voice to their perspectives, apprehensions, and desires about aspects of their lives” (p. 89).

The participants were given up to a month to complete the participant-generated diary entries along with the participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collages) giving them time to for deep reflection prior to returning them to me. The diary entries and participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collages) request were presented with a prompt, and were therefore responses partially shaped by myself, however, they remain to be forms of data that are “seen as more ‘objective’ than interviews” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 45) as the participant is able to conceptualize and shape their own narrative with their replies.

Konecki (2011) describes the benefits of visual data in grounded theory indicating that it “open(s) new possibilities to develop grounded theories. Developing theories of substantive visual processes could facilitate constructing formal theories of the visualization of social problems, visualization of organizational politics, visualization of identity, etc.” (p. 152). Visual data has also been found to be a complementary data source that provides depth and opportunities for participant reflection (Bessette & Paris, 2019; Rees, 2018). As a complementary data source to in-depth biographical and open-ended interviews and participant-

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generated diary entries, visual data with written explanation is another tool that “endorses the researcher and participant’s co-construction of knowledge and mutual interpretation of meaning” (Charmaz, 2000 as cited in Kenny and Fourie, 2015, p. 1283). Charmaz (2006) further supports the use of varied participant-generated sources indicating that “including verbatim material from different sources permits you to make precise comparisons” (p. 82). Co-development of knowledge between myself and participant is supported by the constructivist paradigm of which this study is positioned (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

There were several challenges identified with the use of visual representation as a source of data. One of the drawbacks was that even with written explanation, participant-generated visual representations still require that “participants provide sufficient information for (the researcher) to make a plausible interpretation” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 52). Additional findings indicate that participant-generated visual representations yield multiple interpretations (Rees, 2018) placing, the responsibility on the researcher to determine which interpretation to position within the study. As the literature indicates, participant-generated visual representation is an enriching form of data; however, when researcher interpretation is required, in addition to participant written description, the “power of ‘knowing’ shifts from objective to subjective” (Bessette & Paris, 2019, p. 175).

Rees (2018) exposed the challenge of anonymity with participants who chose to present photo’s as their visual representation. One participant in the current study chose to produce a photo collage. In building a rationale for incorporating visual data, I felt that the benefits of added sources of participant-generated data not only support the constructivist paradigm of this study, but the importance of participant participation in the construct of a theory outweighed any

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challenges presented. The multiple data sources presented in this study will assist in validating the findings.

Document Review. The participants were asked, at their discretion, to maintain and submit a copy of parent and school communication (i.e. daily/weekly communication through email, take-home sheets, documented phone calls to and from school with a brief description of the nature of the call) as well as communications with any other supports related to gaining services for their child with an exceptionality, such as family, friends and social media groups within a month of consent to participate. These extant documents are defined by Charmaz (2014) as relative, unobtrusive and seemingly objective forms of useful data. They answer the questions of “where do the data come from and who participated in shaping them?” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 52). The documents were collected, maintained, and submitted by the participant to myself within the same month that the diary entries were due. This information was used to further examine communication as it related to social and cultural capitals that participants revealed were derived from the school or other sources, and whether resources elicited by educator-parents and non-educator parents were comparable.

Researcher-generated Memoing. Researcher-generated memo writing was used as a data source as notes to myself reflecting learnings from the participant-generated data. These “preliminary analytic notes” were written IDEIAs accumulated while collecting and analyzing the data to identify concepts and to highlight relationships between concepts (Charmaz, 2006). As Glaser and Strauss (1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss; 1987) and Charmaz (2006) point out, memoing can be used as a tool to “fill the gaps” when questions arise and when “our analytic grasp of the data begins to take form” (as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p. 3). Kenny and Fourie (2015) reminds us that this data source is a distinctly grounded theory tool used to assist in

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theory construction. They indicate that “memo writing is intrinsic to GT methodology and continues to pervade Classic, Straussian, and Constructivist variations of GT” (p. 1272).

Charmaz (2006) dedicates an entire chapter, in her guide to constructing grounded theory, to researcher-generated memos as an indication to its importance to data collection and analysis. A central theme in her chapter is that memoing assists the researcher in catching moments, directing thoughts and developing ideas. In this quote, “the pain and sorrow on their faces and in their voices cast deep shadows on their tales” (p. 72), Charmaz provides an example of how her participants situated stigma. She went on to describe how her researcher-generated memos derived from participant cues and statement recall allowed her to conceptualize instances of stigma as they related to Erving Goffman's (1963) concept of stigma.

I found it useful to take Charmaz's (2006) suggestion to memo in a manner that worked best for me. I utilized a diary to free write my thoughts throughout data collection and analysis. This allowed me to quickly identify patterns, relate them to the prior empirical evidence found throughout the initial literature review, and identify a need for additional supporting literature along the way. I was able to easily create categories within a Microsoft excel document using memos taken throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Data Analysis

During the course of this study, participants discussed their experiences and their perceptions of their effectiveness as advocates while speaking in terms of past, present, and future experiences. They chronicled their stories not only through verbalization, but also through documented communications, diary entries, and participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collage). Data analysis began as each individual interview, participant-generated diary entry, and participant-generated visual representation was collected. Data analysis was on-

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going throughout the collection process. The data was organized by individual participants using pseudonyms to provide anonymity and to maintain confidentiality of the participants. A file was created for each participant that included each participant's individual data source: audio recording and transcription of interviews (i.e. biographical, opened-ended and member checking), participant-generated diary entries and participant-generated visual representations with descriptions. Once the files were complete, coding began, followed by detailed descriptions of the findings from each participant. Interpreting the meaning of concepts, descriptions and patterns as seen within the data was carried out by myself.

Data analysis procedures began with transcribing participants' biographical and opened, audio-taped interviews. I used the NCH free dictation playback software at a low playback speed in order to accurately capture and recall rich details. The transcription process was tedious in nature however it allowed for preservation of "the participants' tone and tempo, silences and statements, and the form and flow of questions and responses" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 91). All data was devoid of any identifiers; pseudonyms were used. Second, the data sources were grouped separately by transcribed interviews, diary entries, and any additional participant-provided communications, including participant-generated visual representation, along with written explanations.

Participants who had limited experience and knowledge of either working within education or having a child with an IEP were categorized by me at the basic level. When I identified a knowledge level above basic, but still limited based on participant verbiage and cues of hesitation, or lack of knowledge about available resources, then they were categorized as intermediate. Finally, the veteran parents with many years of experience advocating for their child, were labelled "advanced," as demonstrated by their confidence, participant-generated

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visual representations and participant-generated diary entries. The results are presented linearly, per participant, using a descriptor to assist the reader in identifying each participant. Following each finding, a figure is provided which summarizes participants' experiences and knowledge of the process of advocating for their children.

Constant Comparative Analysis

The data sources were analyzed using Constant Comparative Analysis, as is common in a Grounded Theory study. Per Charmaz (2014), "whatever unit of data you begin coding in grounded theory, you use constant comparative methods to establish analytic distinctions – and thus make comparisons at each level of analytic work" (p. 132). All data sources were compared against each other as well as items within each data source. I utilized a Microsoft excel spreadsheet for visual grouping and identifying raw data. I used advanced memos to sharpen my comparisons between participants and within individual interviews and data sources (Charmaz, 2014). I constructed my own memos, as memo writing is beneficial in grounded theory as it allows the researcher to break apart and analyze the data while identifying emerging categories for theory development (Charmaz 2014; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The data sources exposed participant perspectives on school and teacher relationships, advocacy experiences, modes of communication, types of services and supports acquired and how acquired, definitions of supports and advocacy, and emotions and impactful moments.

The current study investigated parent advocacy and self-efficacy as embodied in social and cultural capitals; therefore another important category - *capital* - was coded based on types of supports and services that educator-parents and non-educator parents used when advocating for their child(ren), as well as how they acquired these supports and services. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital in terms of one's social space as acquaintances and networks, and cultural

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capital as “cultural goods and services including educational credentials” (Swartz, 1997, p. 74). Two participants, for example, provided documents for review (discretionary data), which included communication between the teacher and the parent. The aim was to elicit rich participant descriptions to encourage reader generalization as well as generalizations for myself obtained from codes and interpretation.

Data derived from this analysis occasionally found commonality with concepts presented in the existing literature review, although in a Grounded Theory study, this is not necessarily a goal. The similarities helped to identify codes related to social and cultural capital based on Bourdieu’s Theory of Social and Cultural Capital (1986). Transcripts, diary entries, documents for review and participant-generated visual representation were reviewed multiple times. I transferred key descriptors from the transcripts into categories in the excel spreadsheet in order to compare participant responses. For example, when a participant was asked to “define ‘parent support’” in relation to meeting the needs of his or her child in the school system,” the key words in the reply were coded as either “cultural,” or “social” based on Bourdieu’s (1986) definition of these types of capital. Documents for review and diary entries were reviewed and I similarly transferred key terms verbatim from their written words into the excel spreadsheet.

The data transferred into the excel spreadsheet was further used to develop charts summarizing participants’ experiences and knowledge of the advocacy process. The summarizing charts identify parents knowledge level as either “basic,” “intermediate,” or “advanced,” and can be found in chapter four following each participant finding. Participants who were determined to have limited experience and knowledge of either working within education, or having a child with an IEP, were categorized by myself as having a “basic” knowledge level. The knowledge level above basic, was defined by myself as “intermediate”

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and determined by participant voice and cues of hesitation, or lack of knowledge about available resources. The final category that I defined was “advanced” and given to the veteran parents with many years of experience advocating for their child, as demonstrated by their confidence, participant-generated visual representations and participant-generated diary entries.

Positionality as Researcher

In this investigation, I, like Chavez (2008), am an insider in that I “bear negative and positive consequences of insider positionality, such as familiarity with cultural norms (positive) and risk of taking for granted what I know about the topic”(as cited in Renn, 2019, p. 283).

As indicated by Locke (2019):

positionality is not just a list of the identities that define us but a reflection of those identities, the power dynamics that have helped to shape those identities, as well as a consideration of why is this the right study for me? Why do I want to study this? Why is now the right time to conduct this study? (p. 121)

My dissertation journey began years before I considered a doctorate in special education. In 2013, my child was referred to receive special education services at approximately the age of three and given the eligibility of significant developmental delay. Years later this experience continues to be the driving force behind my qualitative inquiry into the effects of effective parent advocacy for achieving student success. This is imperative because “education professionals have so much power regarding educational planning and placement of children, it is critical that they are knowledgeable about parental needs and perspectives” (Hess, Molina, & Kozleski, 2006). This is the type of knowledge gained through effective parent support programs, parent and school partnerships, and other means as this study will suggest.

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As both a parent of a child with special needs and a teacher of students with exceptionalities, I am aware of the research regarding the impact of positive parent engagement and school partnerships. As an African American female educator-parent, I situate myself in the current study as a segment of the culture being studied. The lack of positive engagement and partnerships amongst schools and parents can create communication barriers, including unresponsiveness, evasiveness and elusive responses, as well as ineffective advocacy efforts. Plagens (2011) argues that “social capital (is) one means of conceptualizing how relations among individuals (are) critical to success in many senses of the word” (p. 43). These issues drive my desire to produce credible theories on the relationship between capital benefits, parent and school partnerships, and effective parental advocacy for the social, emotional and academic well-being of children with exceptionalities.

Kenneth Pike’s (1954) “major contribution in anthropology was his development of the emic/etic concept” (as cited in Headland, 2013, p. 620). I pursued an emic approach to this study in which I “attempt(ed) to learn the rules and categories of a culture from the native’s perspective” (Margolis, 2013, p. 149). As Wright (2019) avers, “emic researchers are sometimes referred to as insiders. An insider starts from the perspectives of the research participants: The concepts and categories deemed meaningful and appropriate by members of the culture whose beliefs and actions are part of the analysis” (p. 181). From an emic perspective, my own predisposition - based on my experience as a parent and teacher and my conversations with other educators, parents and administrators - leads me to believe that effective partnerships between parents and schools will support all parties and create effective means towards achieving student success, particularly for those with exceptionalities

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My assumption is that when parents understand more about how the school works, then they are more confident in participating in all aspects of their child's learning. As an educator and novice researcher, I have become privy to evidence-based research such as that espoused by Allred (2015); Blue-Banning, et al. (2004) and Murray, Handyside, Straka, et al., (2013), which extol the benefits of strong parent and school relationships specific to parents of students with exceptionalities. In delving into the theoretical frameworks that provide the basis for this study, I determined that there was a connection between capital resources, parental satisfaction with educational services offered to children, and parent and school partnerships. Plagens' (2011) research on social capital indicates that "relationships are not a natural or social given, but are the result of time and energy invested, consciously or unconsciously" (p. 44). The researcher also argues that social relations "can constitute useful capital resources when they produce obligations, expectations, trust, information channels, and norms as effective sanctions, all of which he argues can facilitate action among individuals" (Plagens, 2011, p. 44). This finding supports my assumptions surrounding the current study.

Dependability and Credibility

The richly detailed methodology section enhanced the dependability of the present study (Sikolia, Biros, Mason, & Weiser, 2013). Member-checking was completed throughout various stages of data collection and analysis. This supports the accuracy of my interpretation of participant voice, participant written data, and participant-generated drawings/collages.

The literature review presented in this study is secondary to the data collected and theory developed, as is common within a Constructive Grounded Theory approach (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). The dependability and credibility of the data sources can be measured by how their findings overlap with those of comparable studies. Charmaz (2006) supports this notion, that to

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strengthen researcher argument and credibility, the supporting literature should set the stage for the present study's findings. This overlapping of participant findings across data sources and the steppingstone nature of the literature review helps in the development of a data driven theory.

Sikolia, Biros, Mason, and Weiser (2013) emphasize that “credibility refers to how much the data collected accurately reflects the multiple realities of the phenomenon” (p. 2). The varied data sources used in the present study provided multiple opportunities for reflection of the phenomenon of parental advocacy. Participant voice and vision through interviews, diary entries and visual representations guided this study. To ensure multiple realities, I selected a variety of participants from a variety of socioeconomic strata who are racially and ethnically diverse and who represent varying social and cultural capitals.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was completed through the member-checking process. Member-checking with informants was conducted continuously throughout the data collection and analysis process, through email, phone calls and text messages based on participant availability and accessibility throughout the study. Member-checking, which is an integral element of triangulation of data, included taking data from the transcribed interviews, participant-generated diary entries, and participant-generated visual representation back to the participants to determine if the interpreted findings were accurate based on the participants' perspectives. Member checking provided a sense of verification and trustworthiness, giving the participants an opportunity to comment on their meanings and/or clarify meanings that may have been misinterpreted (Creswell, 2016).

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Confidentiality of Data

A file was created for each participant labeled with that participant's pseudonym that included the participant's individual data sources: audio recordings, transcriptions, member checking, diary entries, documents for review, and participant-generated visual representation with descriptions. I personally conducted each individual interview session and recorded each interview using a digital recording device. I typed transcripts of each interview verbatim. All paper representation of the data along with the password protected USB was stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home. All paper transcriptions will remain under lock and key in my home for three years following the publication of this dissertation, then shredded, and all the electronic data files will remain password protected on a USB flash drive and locked in a filing cabinet in my home until they are deleted. Confidentiality was addressed during the transcription process and in these and any subsequent submission of the findings by using pseudonyms in place of the participants' real names. Coding notes were paired with each participant's assigned pseudonym to additionally address confidentiality.

Ethical Considerations

Individual state and district professional codes of conduct and educator code of ethics can presumably assist in defining the moral principles that guide this study. Per Buchanan and Buchanan (2017), there are two standards, the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) (2011) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) that provide influence and guidance to districts and states towards developing standards and professional development programs for educators. Elements of these standards instruct educators to understand and respect the background and culture of parents and to value their input through collaboration, input and engagement (Buchanan & Buchanan, 2017). These

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standards address the importance of schools building relationships with not only students, but parents as well.

The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, reauthorized from IDEA (1997) and formally known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, provides an overarching ethical consideration undergirding this study in that it protects not only the rights of children with exceptionalities but their parents as well by “strengthening the role of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home” (Title 20). IDEIA Parts B, C and D provide procedural safeguards for both children with exceptionalities as well as their parents regarding procedures not limited to notice, consent and confidentiality. Parent counseling and training as defined by IDEIA is described in Subsection (C) (8) as: “(i)... assisting parents in understanding the special needs of their child; (ii) Providing parents with information about child development; and (iii) Helping parents to acquire the necessary skills that will allow them to support the implementation of their child’s IEP or IFSP” (Wrightslaw, 2016).

The Federal Regulation under IDEIA (1999) states that the definition should be changed to “recognize the more active role acknowledged for parents under the IDEIA Amendments of 1997 as participants in the education of their children” (Wrightslaw, 2016). It goes on to state that parents of children with exceptionalities play an important role in the education process and that counseling and training of parents helps these children towards meeting their goals and objectives set forth in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The development of the IEP goals and objectives are intended to be accomplished as a team with school educators and parents. The counseling and training referenced in IDEIA is intended to initiate positive change for parents, further educate children

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with exceptionalities, and aid the schools by bridging the gap between in-school education and out-of-school learning (Wrightslaw, 2016).

The search rendered for this study indicates that local districts and schools within those districts are often left to their own devices to determine exactly what is needed to build strong relationships with parents. Parent support programs, training, and parental engagement are not clearly defined in the law. While engagement strategies and levels may differ per school, district, and parent, what remains constant are the families' hopes and dreams for their children and the shared bond between schools and parents that a quality education can and will be attained by all students (Buchanan & Buchanan, 2017).

The typical ethical code for researchers... "is to protect the privacy of the participants and to convey this protection to all individuals involved in a study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 99). To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the study, no identifying information was collected. During the data collection phase, parent participants were assigned a number (e.g., #1FS1 = first female participant, school 1; #2FS2 = second female participant, school 2 etc.). During the transcription process the assigned number was modified into a pseudonym to further protect the identity of the participants and for ease of reporting within the dissertation findings.

In an attempt to ensure fair and non-biased or judgmental questions, I sought questions that were exploratory in nature, i.e. open-ended, and ones that provided an emergent understanding and validation of participants' individual experiences (Charmaz, 2014). I acknowledge my positionality in this study and that the emergence of this topic was the direct result of my personal and professional experience as a mother of a child with an exceptionalities as well as my role as an educator in the field of special education. Locke (2019) indicates that

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novice researchers must realize that “multiple (even exponential) truths exist, and realizing that their positionality and identities are important to both the research process and the expression and representation of the findings are all relevant” (p. 118).

It was important, therefore, to ensure fair and non-biased or judgmental interpretations of the data provided by the participants. The study began with a preconceived list of questions, however, I allowed participants “stories (to) tumble out” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 91). I took the participants’ lead during the interview process by following up with clarifying questions such as, “what do you mean when you say... (repeating their response verbatim),” to encourage a continuation of their individual experience even when it took us off the beaten path of the original questions. Rather than sticking to the script, during each participant reflective moment, those clarifying questions allowed me to “impart my interest in knowing more... (and to) elicit the participant’s definitions of terms, situations, and events and try to tap his or her assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit rules” (p. 95).

Summary

This six-month qualitative investigation was guided by a Constructivist approach to Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) in which interpretive methods to code, collect data, and analyze data were utilized. This chapter outlines the means through which I investigated participant’s “multiple constructions of how (they) have experienced a particular phenomenon, how they have made meaning of their lives, or how they have come to understand certain processes” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The investigation began in response to the following research questions:

(1) How do educator-parents and non-educator parents perceive their efficaciousness as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities? and (2), How do educator-parents and

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non-educator parents construct the narrative of their efficaciousness as advocates as embodied in social and or cultural capital?

Data sources were comprised of: (a) participant in-depth biographical and open-ended interviews, (b) participant-generated diary entries, (c) participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collages), (d) documents for review (i.e. daily/weekly school and home communication through email or take-home sheets) that show parent and school communication, as well as communication with any other supports, such as family, friends and social media groups and (e) researcher-generated memos. Data was analyzed using the Constant Comparative Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014). While Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed this method, it is used across all forms of Grounded Theory. The interview analysis began by comparing statements, situations, and experiences within each individual interview, followed by comparing those findings with the other participant data within this study (Charmaz, 2014). I looked for similar statements, words, and situations including memos recalled from interviews such as times when there was a change in participant demeanor, signs such as participant sighing or pausing during statements, and/or when participants became emotional and cried or laughed.

The participant-generated diary entries and documents for review were then compared with their individual interview responses, again looking for substantiating statements and situations. Finally, participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collages) along with the written explanations provided by participants were cross-referenced with interview responses, participant-generated diary entries, and documents for review. This collective information was entered into an excel spreadsheet for identification of cues, patterns, and language of participants. Mey and Dietrich's (2016) study regarding visual grounded theory methodology describes the process of making connections between the data:

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the aim... is to transcend the level of pure description in order to gain access to the text's conceptual content. Over the course of this analysis the findings are differentiated, continuously compared, and summarized in more comprehensive categories, as well as related to each other in order to extract data-based information about connections (relations, pattern, and types). (p. 291)

Per Charmaz (2014), “methods are merely tools. However, some tools are more useful than others. When combined with insight and industry, grounded theory methods offer sharp tools for generating, mining, and making sense of data” (p. 26). This chapter identified ways in which I began to justify findings and work towards theory development.

Chapter four will provide the findings of the current study beginning with a reiteration of the research questions, followed by my role and subsequent bias, and then portraits of the participants. Next will be a presentation of the data: transcripts of interviews, diary entries, documents, and participant-generated drawings/collages, which together, give rise to the concepts and ultimately, categories (i.e. themes). As the categories emerge, all the data from those categories will be compared in consideration of how they are linked together. Chapter five will include: a) summary of the study, including what was learned and what was not learned; b) discussion of concepts (findings) as embodied within Bourdieu’s Concept of Social and Cultural Capital framework (1986) and secondary theories; c) Researcher-generated theory emerging from the data; d) limitations and delimitations of the study; e) suggestions for future research; and f) the conclusion.

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Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand and generate theory based on an examination of how parents of children with exceptionalities, both educators and non-educators, describe their experiences when advocating for the social, emotional, and academic well-being of their child(ren) with exceptionalities. I sought to understand how parents conceptualize their role as advocate, how efficacious they feel doing this, and how social and cultural capitals contribute to, or hinder, their efforts. This chapter begins with a reiteration of the research question, followed by my role and subsequent bias, and then portraits of the participants. Next will be a presentation of the data: transcripts of interviews, diary entries, documents, and participant-generated drawings, which together, give rise to the concepts and ultimately, categories (i.e, themes). As the categories emerge, all the data from those categories will be compared in consideration of how they are linked together.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this investigation are: (1) how do educator-parents and non-educator parents perceive their efficaciousness as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities and (2), How do educator-parents and non-educator parents construct the narrative of their efficaciousness as advocates as embodied in social and or cultural capital?

“Capital” in this study was operationalized in the language of parents who have, or endeavor to have, a relationship with their child’s school or teacher for the purpose of efficaciously advocating for their child(ren) with an exceptionality. Further, examining and comparing the voices of parents of students with exceptionalities who are teachers by trade versus those who are not provides a unique perspective from, i.e., parents working within the

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realms of education, and possibly a better understanding of the potential variation amongst the two sectors. As Cosford and Draper (2002) posit, “parents need to be understood as a differentiated group; all parents are not the same and do not have the same experience, nor the same grasp, of educational issues” (p. 359). This concept will be more fully explored at the end of this chapter as well as within chapter five’s Discussion.

Researcher’s Role and Bias

In my role as researcher, I am a “gatherer” of information relevant to the perceptions (i.e., constructions) of parents’ efficaciousness as advocates for their child(ren) with exceptionalities. An obvious bias that I have as an educator-parent who has a child with an exceptionality, is that I have developed self-theories over time based upon my own parenting experiences. For example, I have questioned my own efficacy in advocating for my child, despite being ensconced in the world of schools, teachers, and a school district. As a parent, I have called into question aspects of the parent-teacher, parent-school, and teacher-student relationships that have been part of my world and that of my family’s. My perspective might be described as emic in that I feel a part of my participants’ experiences and can clearly understand their beliefs, perceptions, and feelings. While I can empathize with their conceptualizations, however, I need to remind myself that this investigation, while prompted by my own experiences, is predicated solely on the voices of the participants.

In the portraits that follow, participants were introduced to the concepts of insider and outsider and were encouraged to use these descriptors when, and if, appropriate for them.

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Participant Portraits

Eight parents participated in the current study. They are: Daisy, Winona, Tammie, Margaret, Debbie, Julie, Carla, and Lisa. An in-depth portrait of each participant is provided below:

Daisy. Daisy, a 43-year-old Caucasian female, is married with four children. Daisy works in a relatively small school District A. She is in her eighth year as an educator in both the public and home-school setting and holds a master's degree in education. Daisy is married to an educator with both she and her husband working in the same smaller targeted school district. Daisy indicates that education is important in her home. Although the school district does not offer excessive homework, they encourage their children to study nightly and push them to succeed academically. Daisy's third child attends seventh grade within the same school district where both parents work.

Daisy's child is served under the eligibility of "specified learning disability" and receives co-taught services for English and Language Arts (ELA). Daisy first noticed that her child struggled with reading and writing at an early age during her years homeschooling. Daisy's experience as a public education teacher and experience as a mom with two older children led her to believe that her third child was not at grade level in English Language Arts. It was not until she enrolled her child into the current public-school setting, three years ago, that she and her husband requested special education (i.e., diagnostic) testing based on their child's continued difficulty with reading and writing. It was at that time that the IEP was implemented.

Daisy considers herself both an "insider" and "outsider" regarding her status as a parent advocate. Her referral to the term "insider" denotes someone working within the school who has an advantage through gaining supports and services for their child with an exceptionality. She

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felt that she had an insider track when she worked at the same school where her child attended. She stated, “maybe they did a faster track, or they would at least come and find me and tell me results because I was actually present at the school” (Participant, Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). However, now that she works at a different school within the same district and has a good relationship with her child’s school in general, she feels that she has a nonexistent relationship with her child’s teachers. Daisy typically communicates with her child’s teachers through email and IEP meetings. She noted that she “tend(s) to get a quicker response if I email from my school email account than I do from a (personal) email account” (Participant, Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a).

When asked about the acquisition of services for her child, Daisy indicated that "no one’s really helped" (Participant, Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). She stated that she was unaware of any specific parental supports available at her school and that any supports that she has utilized thus far had been “from just doing research myself online” (Participant, Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). She spoke of feeling guarded and fearful of advocating on the behalf of her child. An example was when Daisy described feeling pleased with her child’s progress last year and agreed with the case holder’s recommendation of reducing her child’s supports. She said that in hindsight she was now unsure if that was the right course of action because her child has begun to regress academically.

Even with this regression, Daisy struggles with advocating for her child. The tables have turned, and Daisy’s husband now works at the school where her child attended. She feels that her husband working there is more of a hindrance than a benefit. Daisy stated that her husband “doesn’t want to cause tension between (himself and his) peers... and doesn’t want to disturb his peer relationships” (Participant, Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). Daisy said that she

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wanted “him to just let me be mom!” (Participant, Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). Daisy used the words and phrases “kind,” “encourage” and “team approach” when defining supports that had helped her to advocate for her child. She said that when a teacher was kind to her child and sent her encouraging words such as the time that she received an email from her child’s teacher which said that she’s a 'rock star' and was working hard, she saw that as support. Daisy said that during the time of the email, her child was struggling academically so that teacher-initiated encouragement made her feel less defensive in asking for additional supports for her child. That action boosted Daisy’s confidence and made her feel as though supporting her child was a team effort between herself, her child and the school. Daisy indicated that her biggest accomplishment thus far had been taking the initiative to get her child evaluated for special education services and getting her child an Individualized Education Plan in place.

Winona. Winona, a 43-year-old Caucasian female, is married with one child. Winona works in the smaller targeted school District A, comparable to District B, in terms of student achievement ideology, however, boasts a higher national SAT score margin by 34 points. She is in her eighteenth year as an educator in the public-school setting and holds a master’s degree in education. Winona’s husband does not work in education, and per her admission, “doesn’t have a clue” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b) about the IEP process. She indicated that education was very important in her home so much so that her child has developed an obsession with checking grades nightly in the school’s web-based learning platform. Winona’s child is in the seventh grade and attends school in the same school district where Winona works.

Winona’s child has a medical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder with extreme weaknesses in executive functioning. Her child is served under the eligibility of autism with

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speech/language in resource for language arts and reading and general education with support in the co-teaching environment for other academic subjects. Winona initially gained knowledge about her child's exceptionality through intuitive measures. She noticed that her child exhibited hypersensitivity to wet diapers, food aversions, stimming behaviors that included hand flapping and spinning. Finally, at three and a half years old, after attending preschool for a period and maintaining a limited vocabulary of only seven to eight words, Winona and her husband reached out the local school district to obtain an assessment for special education service for their child. It was at that time that an IEP was implemented.

Winona considers herself an "insider". She stated that being an insider helped her to get her child assessed at the school level. Winona "knew from the educational side what needed to be in the email to make them test him" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She suggested that knowing the personnel, educational jargon and having the ability to "just show up on your doorstep, not literal doorstep, but school doorstep like in a heartbeat, that made a difference" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She credits her status as an insider with her sons academic, social and emotional successes thus far in the educational setting. Winona indicated that overall she has a good relationship with her child's teachers and school and felt that they have a genuine concern about her child.

She did, however, describe one bad experience that she had this year with one of her child's teachers. Winona stated that a male teacher repeatedly veered from her child's IEP accommodations by having him attempt note taking versus providing prewritten notes and did not provide extended time provisions for assignment completion. This teacher's actions initiated a chain of emails from Winona who stated that "after several exchanges and trying to work it out in email... I was like, we need to have a meeting" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview,

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February, 2020b). She referenced her attorney during several parts of the interview however was very guarded about disclosing specifics only indicating that she and her husband were high profile parents by their own definition. Winona spoke of several means of communication between herself and the school such as through email, meetings, text messages and phone calls although she was adamant that her expectation was not for teachers to give out their cellphone numbers.

Winona acquires services for her child through her child's private speech therapist, psychologist, and a couple of her child's teachers who she's befriended over the years. She could not identify school supports other than stating "we have that brochure with the little parents that have been through it (parent mentors). I'm not gonna lie... I get it. It looks good. It's just weird for me to call somebody that I don't know." (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b).

Winona's faith plays a major part in her life as she repeatedly indicated that "God has just placed like appropriate people in my life that I need" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She spoke of feeling nervous, guarded, and hesitant throughout various stages of advocating for her child over the years. In explaining why she felt guarded, Winona referenced the recent meeting initiated by the actions of the male teacher... she stated "when I brought emotion into it, my efforts as an advocate for my child are diminished. They don't see past the emotion. If you just lay out the facts nobody can argue with the facts" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). Winona spoke of being heard, encouraged, and a part of a team when defining supports that have helped her to advocate for her child. Finally, Winona's biggest accomplishment has been getting her child diagnosed and not caving in when the school wanted to reduce services.

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Tammie. Tammie, a 44-year-old African American divorced female, has two children: one is in middle school and her oldest child is an adult. Tammie works in mortgage servicing and holds a vocational degree in business. She stated that academics are very highly regarded in her home and, because of that she wants to encourage her children to reach their goals. Tammie's youngest child is in the sixth grade in the smaller targeted school District A. Her child is served under the eligibility of "specific learning disability" and is in resource for math and general education with support in the Co-teaching environment for other academic subjects. Tammie was first made aware of her child's struggles in the academic setting when the teachers brought it to her attention in the fourth grade. Tammie indicated that in hindsight she did recall her child exhibiting sensitivities to sound as a young child. She stated that "a lawn mower, a car screeching... a vacuum cleaner... things of that nature" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a) would make her child scream and hold her ears.

However, it was the school that initiated the assessment with parent consent. Tammie reported that her child received a medical diagnosis of delayed learning and dyslexia. She considers herself an "outsider" because she lacks firsthand knowledge and had "to go by an experience of a friend or what a teacher is telling me" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Tammie recalled her child's first IEP meeting where she felt like a "deer in headlights," unable to understand or convers with the team, and made a request by saying, "Ok stop, can we use regular words because I have no clue what ya'll are talking about" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Although Tammie feels like an "outsider" and that middle school is not as accommodating to students with exceptionalities, in comparison to elementary school, she stated that she loves her child's teachers. She gave examples where one teacher would reach out on a regular basis to let her know when they were introducing something

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new in the class or if her child was struggling or simply being too chatty during lessons.

Tammie appreciates that interaction and finds that it adds a personal touch that is familiar to what she experienced in the elementary school setting.

Although Tammie's preferred method of communicating with the school is through meetings and phone calls, she finds that emails work best. She compared attempts at scheduling parent-teacher conferences in middle school to "trying to get in to speak to somebody at the bank. It's impossible" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). After repeatedly providing her work, home, cellphone numbers and email address to her child's teachers, Tammie said that she continues to be the only one who initiates communication outside of one befriended teacher.

Tammie lists a friend, her pastor, elementary school teachers, and the current middle school counselor as individuals who assist her in acquiring services for her child. These services include assistance with glasses when her child was uninsured, free tutoring services, referral to websites with valuable resources, and an extra set of eyes to review IEP documents. When asked about specific parental resources provided by the school Tammie referred to a special needs link on the elementary school website where her child attended the prior school year. She noted that the webpage no longer exists because the school dissolved in 2018, but that was the only specific parental resource provided by the school that she was aware of. Tammie spoke of the struggles of having to educate herself in teaching her child to sound out words, correct spelling, correct reversed letters and numbers, choose appropriate books to peak interest based on ability versus age and improve study skills. She also spoke of "having to learn to teach those social skills" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a) because she sees her child struggling with that in school as well.

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Tammie described feeling a range of emotions such as pride in her child, feeling judged, regret, hesitation, fear, isolation, nervousness, and confusion to name a few. She was confused in terms of how services and accommodations work for her child and fears for her child's mental and emotional wellbeing due to the typical middle school drama. Tammie spoke of feeling judged by her family and friends due to her child's struggle with dyslexia and regret for missteps in not taking better notes to help advocate for her child.

In defining supports, Tammie spoke of the school counselor "having her back" and hinted at a team approach asking, "how can we do this thing together" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a) to support my child. She relies heavily on the support of a friend who also has a child with an exceptionality. She called her often to ask questions throughout the implementation of her child's IEP and continues to reach out when a new concern arises.

Tammie noted that her biggest accomplishment thus far has been obtaining supportive services in the co-taught environment for all academic classes for her child as there was one class where supports were not being provided. She was able to accomplish this by keeping notes of her child's academic progress in classes where she was co-taught and comparing them to the lack of progress in the one class where she was not receiving co-taught services. She stated that her persistence in calls and emails to the school, highlighting the difference in progress across classes, resulted in the school providing additional supports for her child.

Margaret. Margaret, a 50-year-old Caucasian female, is married with three children. Margaret is a homemaker with a bachelor's degree in business. Margaret's oldest child is in twelfth grade and although he is currently enrolled in a private school setting, her child did attend the smaller targeted school District A for a short period of time. Margaret's husband

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serves as a company principal in his family's multimillion-dollar business. Margaret's family also developed a foundation to support families of children with exceptionalities.

Margaret's oldest son has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder with extreme weaknesses in executive functioning. Margaret first noticed that her child needed additional assistance at the age of two. She realized quickly after enrolling her child in a private preschool without supports that "the teacher just couldn't handle a class and (her child)" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). In response, Margaret and her husband hired a therapist to shadow their child in the preschool setting. The therapist reported back to them their child's struggles noted during the day such as, an inability to remain in a designated spot on the carpet during group time. Based on their child's occupational therapist recommendations to research autism spectrum disorder, they proceeded with obtaining an assessment for their child for preschool special education services through the states early learning intervention program.

Margaret then took her child to their pediatrician and requested referrals for an official medical diagnosis. Margaret recalled the private assessment process in which she was forced to sit on the floor, legs crossed, in the hall of a hospital as her child kicked and screamed for no apparent reason while she waited to be seen. She said, as she waited, she was offered handouts on using "time out". She described feelings of confusion, despair, isolation, and judgement. It was only after a lot of push back that a diagnosis was obtained because at the time, per Margaret, "they weren't handing out diagnoses" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). Margaret described her desperation even after the diagnosis...

The doctors claiming nothing's wrong. I just was desperate. I just kept calling people and this is so random but, my sister in law, told me that her neighbor had a child that had something wrong with him in their neighborhood. Crazy story, she said you know they

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sent him somewhere and he came back and he was better. That's the only information. I said, give me the information. I'll call them (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b).

Margaret contacted the neighbor and they bonded over their common journeys. This mother referred Margaret to a center for autism in the Midwestern part of the United States. With the support of their entire extended family, Margaret and her husband “loaded up everybody and headed to (a Midwest state)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b) where they spent the next three months receiving intense, hands on training in behavior modification. They watched and took notes, through a two-way mirror, as a therapist worked with their child, in a padded room. They were required to reciprocate exactly what they saw verbatim. Margaret described the intensity of the program and how difficult it was to watch and participate as her child exhibited self-injurious behaviors, such as head banging on the floor. She described the outcome as miraculous stating that her child “was taught how to sit and attend at a table... and was walking and saying hi to people and counting to 10 within the first couple of weeks... I mean at that point I was thinking he's gonna be OK” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b).

After three months in (a Midwestern state), Margaret and her family headed back to their home in the Southeastern United States with their progressing two-and-a-half-year-old child and a plan. They hired contractors and converted a room in their home into the exact duplicate of the therapy room from the center for autism that they visited. They met with the smaller targeted school district and together developed an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), a family focused support. The school district provided a paraprofessional twice a week to work alongside the private therapist hired by Margaret in the private preschool setting. Margaret and her

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husband then hired another private company to come into the preschool setting to work one on one with their child on tact training, which stems from Skinner's (1957) operant conditioning "where behavior that is followed by a reinforcer will increase in frequency or probability" (Mayer & Alexander, 2011, p. 250). Margaret enrolled her child into the smaller targeted school District A, preschool class when the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) had ended and the IEP was developed and implemented. During that year Margaret described the feeling as being a part of a team with the school district. She loved her child's teacher and felt that he made significant progress.

At the age of five, Margaret's child was transferred from the preschool classroom to their home school kindergarten classroom which Margaret described as a disaster. She said that her child's time in public school only lasted for two additional months after that and he has been in a private setting since. Margaret stated that the school initially placed her child in the least restrictive general education environment with a one on one paraprofessional where she received no feedback on daily progress as the general education teacher had 20 other students to attend to and the paraprofessional was not allowed to communicate with them at all. Her child struggled to go to the bathroom independently. He had a female paraprofessional in the general education setting and they informed Margaret that the female paraprofessional could not assist with toileting. In response, Margaret and her husband offered to pay for their private, board certified, behavior modification therapist to shadow their child in the public-school setting.

That offer was a defining moment for Margaret and her husband. That moment in her mind defined her as an outsider. She indicated, "I'm an outsider. We had so much professional training. We flew in people from (a Southwest state) to help us with behavior. I think I've had more behavior training than most people" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January,

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2020b) but as far as education, an outsider. Margaret indicated that their offer to provide a private therapist in the school setting set off a firestorm response from the IEP team which included “an aggressive tactic to scare us” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). Margaret stated that they were scared, frustrated and desperate for communication. They had their own private therapist on payroll that they had recruited from the behavior modification group that they were initially using. They also paid a group of individuals to fly in from (the Southwestern state) to train the therapist and provide them with “the best curriculum that goes all the way through adulthood” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b) for individuals with autism yet they walked away from the IEP meeting feeling defeated.

Margaret clarified that she and her husband were desperate. She doesn't believe that most people are trying to sue the school system and indicates that was not their intent. She recalled that “we went to an IEP meeting and we just were ignorant of the process. We just didn't understand. My (child) was really struggling” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). Margaret and her husband have spent the last 14 years providing their child with the best private education possible ultimately through purchasing a home, gutting it and building a therapy center located next to their family business. The therapy center is fully equipped with an education room, a music room, an exercise room, outdoor garden designed by a horticultural expert, a kitchen and bathroom to work on daily living skills. They have been able to retain the same one-on-one therapist for the past 14 years who also acts as their child's private teacher providing a comprehensive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) curriculum. Their child continues to receive daily therapies outside of the therapy center six days a week as well as social skills training through daily community visits to local stores, parks and restaurants with his one-on-one support.

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Margaret indicated that their acquisition of services derived from their ability to financially secure services and supports. It was their ability to acquire a therapist to shadow their child during preschool, and through the advice of a family member who directed her to a parent in the neighborhood, to take the information received and secure the best doctors and the best training. She indicated that...

Yes, I did advocate on behalf of my child, but I feel bad to answer that question. I feel like most people would have to go through the school system. The vast majority of people like me on my own having a degree in business without education to teach my child... I could not have done it on my own and done a good job. I couldn't have done it. I advocated on my child's (behalf) but we had to pay people. I don't mean this to sound (rude) but it's just true most people couldn't afford to do what we did. We had to pay a company to come in and set up the programing. We had to pay therapists. We had to pay people that were highly trained in behavior modification to fly in and teach us. I don't know if I should be saying all of this. It's not really fair to say well yeah, I was just able to advocate on my child's behalf. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

Debbie. Debbie, a 50-year-old Caucasian female, is married with two children. Debbie works in the larger targeted school District B and is in her 23rd year of teaching. Debbie holds a specialist degree in education. When asked about their home culture regarding education Debbie's response focused more on behavioral therapies. She indicated that they were working diligently on behavioral skills, social skills, play therapy, and tutoring. Both of Debbie's children attend the school district where she works with the younger child attending fifth grade and the oldest attending eighth grade.

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Both of Debbie's children were adopted from countries outside of the United States and both children received their diagnoses prior to, or during, the adoption process. Debbie's oldest child received a medical diagnosis of fetal alcohol syndrome at nine months old and is served under the eligibility of "specified learning disability" in the general education setting with co-teaching support for all academic subjects. Debbie received a video of her oldest child during the adoption process and based on facial features, rocking behavior and developmental measurements, she and her husband decided to forward the video to a clinical pediatric physician at the autism center near her home for a professional opinion. The physician made a diagnosis of fetal alcohol syndrome based on the video and written documentation from the orphanage. Debbie indicated that she and her husband "paid a doctor... to fly to the orphanage to (examine her child) and he agreed with the diagnosis and cautioned us about our choices (to adopt)" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Debbie's younger child received a medical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder at two years of age and that child is served under the eligibility of autism and speech/language impairment in a self-contained setting with paraprofessional supports for all academic subjects. Debbie explained that they chose not to pursue the private doctor evaluation the second time around since her child was two years old and the orphanage had more definitive information about his behavior and speech delays. Her second child was already placed in a special needs orphanage prior to arriving to the United States. Debbie stated that she and her husband called their states early intervention program prior to leaving his birth country to get an evaluation scheduled.

Debbie is clear that her experience in special education did not gear her towards adopting children with special needs. She exclaimed... "my husband, the second he saw their picture was

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like that's what we're getting. That's my kid, special education or not, they were going to be ours" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Debbie's oldest child attended private school until the age of three with no special education services. However, they determined that his needs exceeded what was available without extra supports. They chose to have their child assessed by the public-school district and enrolled in the district's special needs preschool program once the IEP was implemented. Debbie's youngest child was assessed and enrolled in preschool with an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) at the age of two once arriving to the United States from a country overseas.

Debbie considers herself an insider although she felt "less than" based on her experiences advocating for her children within the district. Debbie stated that she knew how to appropriately word her parental concerns. She understood the educational jargon and how to read IEP's and progress reports. She also explained that knowing what's going on in the county allowed her to adjust her expectation of services available. She gave the example that due to restructuring in the county there was only one autism trainer for her zone. This information made her more aware of what level of services to expect, with such limited staff, and how to advocate for those services. She indicated that because she is a paid employee of the district, she feels as though her concerns are often dismissed and that "they might take me a little more seriously if I was not an employee" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Debbie described her relationship with her children's teachers and schools as great and stated that she has become good friends with most of them. Because Debbie has a good relationship with her colleagues and one of her children attends the school where she teaches, she feels that she can comfortably communicate in a variety of ways to include email, text, chance meetings in the hallways and phone calls. When she does email, she typically uses her work

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email address because her “county email address catches their attention a little more” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c) and provides a paper trail for legal purposes if needed.

Veteran parents of children with disabilities have been the main source of support and acquisition of services for Debbie and her husband. She indicated that “there's really nothing out there telling parents where to go or what to do other than parent's word of mouth" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). She also stated that “the school has helped us with absolutely nothing. We had pursued and learned about (several professional resources, i.e. a Medicaid waiver, a comprehensive supports waiver), gotten money for community services and done everything on our own" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Debbie spoke repeatedly about feeling ignored by the school district and not taken seriously although she did speak of having to retain legal services and keeping her advocate in the loop on more than one occasion to get her youngest child the services needed. Even with the ignored responses Debbie and her husband refuse to stop advocating for their children. She discussed showing up to every IEP meeting “with premade statements on a flash drive and (they) make them copy it word for word so that they know exactly what we want is in there” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). She has also started a social media support group as well as a blog to keep other families informed of supports and services available to them and their children because she wants to inform them the way that other parents informed her when she and her husband needed it the most. When asked about her greatest accomplishment as an advocate for her children, Debbie stated that there are a lot of ups and downs and that it still feels like a rollercoaster to her so she could not pinpoint one accomplishment thus far.

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Julie. Julie, a 56-year-old Caucasian female, is divorced with two children. Julie works in the larger targeted school district and has been in the education field in both paraprofessional and teacher roles for the past 15 years. Julie holds a master's degree in education. When asked about her home culture, Julie said that she tries to make sure that her children do their work nightly and she pays for them to attend tutoring outside of school weekly but it is "ultimately up to them" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). Both of Julie's children attend the same District B where she works. Her youngest child is in the eighth grade and her oldest child is in the tenth grade. Julie's oldest child has no medical diagnosis but is served under the eligibility of specific learning disorder, which she believes is dyslexia. She indicated that back then she was "baffled as to why (her child) couldn't read" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). Her youngest child's teacher has a son with a diagnosis of dyslexia, so she provided subtle hints to lead Julie into researching the diagnosis. Julie's youngest child has the same eligibility with a medical diagnosis of anxiety.

Julie first noticed that her oldest child struggled communicating at the age of two. She said that she was the only one who understood what her child was saying. By the age of three when there was no improvement with her child's delayed speech, the daycare provider suggested that she have her child assessed through the public-school district's special needs preschool assessment program. Her oldest child was served only under the eligibility of speech/language impairment until the end of 3rd grade when the teachers finally took note of Julie's persistence in repeating, "wait a minute, something's not right" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a) every year since kindergarten. Julie noted feeling ignored and not taken seriously year after year as the teachers continued to reassure her that her child would catch up or do better academically next year. She noted that some teachers came up with impromptu

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strategies in response to her concerns about her oldest child's recall with learning, but there was no offer of response to intervention (RTI) or any other form of intervention until the end of 3rd grade when her child was still reading at a 1st grade level. By the beginning quarter of 4th grade, her oldest child had an IEP in place and began being served in a small group setting for reading and in general education with co-teaching supports for all other academic subjects.

Julie was very aware of what to look for with her second child so by the 2nd grade when she noticed struggles with reading, memory and a lack of progress academically, she requested an assessment through the school district. Her second child was served in general education with co-teaching supports for all academic subjects. Julie considers herself an "insider" now as opposed to before when she "sat on the side of the table where you don't know what they're saying and you don't know what an IEP is, what goals are, how they measure the goals... and they don't explain it to you" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). She now feels more welcomed as a part of the IEP team and can talk the same language. She also referenced having a better understanding of the shifting and allocations of money for special education. She indicated that this was "exactly why they go to tutoring because technically by law they cannot fulfill (her children's) IEPs and support (them) to where they're passing" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a) due to the lack of funding and resources.

Julie defined her relationship with her high schooler's teachers and school in general as nonexistent. Per Julie, the school prefers to allow the students to handle concerns as a means of supporting independence. Julie appears fine with this approach as this coincides with her home culture. She explained her relationship with her child's middle school as aggravating and chafed as it didn't feel student-centered. Although it is natural for educators to promote independence

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as early as middle school, Julie feels that some children just aren't ready at that age. Julie stated that she had a good relationship with the middle school teachers but believes that they are overwhelmed. She often wondered "if they (middle school teachers) don't like kids" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a)!

Julie prefers emails and meetings as her means of communication and replied that "if I'm really upset then I send it through my county email" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a) because she will get a quicker and more welcoming response. When asked about the acquisition of services for her children, Julie credits the following for helping her: veteran parents of children with disabilities, coworkers and her first child's daycare provider who referred her to the state's early intervention program. She indicated that she had received no parental supports from the school. Although she described feeling welcomed and a part of the IEP team now that she's a teacher, Julie also described feelings of frustration, being ignored, lost and a sense of hesitation due to being a school employee with a child in the same school district. She said that "you have to walk a thin line. I don't want to get myself in trouble you know. It's a hard line" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Julie believes that the goal in advocating for her children is to teach them to self-advocate. Julie defines obtaining private tutoring as her biggest accomplishment thus far with her children's academic success. She stated that the tutoring had gotten her children to where they "need to be quicker than if I just let it up to the school" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Carla. Carla, a 55-year-old African American female, is married with one child. Carla works part-time in sales, is a parent resource coordinator for the states early intervention program, is a contributing author to a chapter in a handbook of children with exceptionalities

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studies and a chair to her state's interagency coordinating council (SICC) for early intervention programs. Carla holds a bachelor's degree in editing and psychology. When asked about home culture regarding education, Carla believed that "if they're doing the right thing in school then give (the child) a break... enjoy life" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Carla's child attends sixth grade in the larger targeted school District B. Carla's child has a medical diagnosis of failure to thrive, autism spectrum disorder, and cerebral palsy and is served under the eligibility of significant developmental delay, speech/language impairment and visual impairment in a self-contained classroom with one on one paraprofessional support for all academic subjects.

Before delivering her child, Carla's water broke at 23 weeks, her child was born two weeks later and remained in the neonatal intensive care unit for 12 months. She described knowing from the beginning that her child was never going to be the same as "little Johnny." Carla replied, "when my child was already in the hospital... I already had to deal with that abandonment of what a child should be... the abandonment of that" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). When her child was nine to ten months old, the children's hospital informed Carla that the state's early intervention program would be contacting her to set up an assessment within 45 days of her child's release from the hospital and at that time an IFSP was put into place. Once her child turned three years old, Carla and her husband attended their first transition meeting for the school district's special needs preschool and an IEP was put into place.

When asked about her position as either an outsider or an insider, Carla said the following:

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I'm definitely not a teacher. I definitely have no formal training in teaching. I'm self-taught at being my child's advocate. I would consider myself an outsider that has learned to play the game. That means I have simulated myself to be that person so that I can get into those classrooms... so that I can see and be involved. A lot of parents and teachers and administrators get mad because they don't think I should be up there that much. But I never hovered. I was never in my child's room. But I was learning the whole time. I felt like to learn you need to be in there. You need to hear the conversations. You need to assimilate yourself so they're comfortable with you I am an outsider that has learned to play the game. I mean it seems bad to say it that way, but I truly am an outsider. I would never wanna be insider. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

Carla went on to define her opinion of insiders as those who know who the "key players" are in the district. She sees those key players as individuals who have knowledge of, or access to, resources and services for parents of children with special needs. She also defined insiders as slaves to the school district through her reply below...

Ok, so this is going to sound really bad, but please take it with a grain of salt. I would have not made it as a slave. You could have just shot me, because to me, sometimes teachers are slaves to the plantation and the master and how it's supposed to be done. I probably could not be in the school system. Being told something that I know isn't correct and being told that I have to do it this way because of money because that's not how it operates so I would be advocating differently but I probably wouldn't be in the school system past 5 days. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

Carla defined her relationships with her child's teachers as positive and the relationship with the middle school as two and a half on a scale of five. She stated that the school is "behind

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the eight ball” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b) regarding inclusion and that it is a very political environment. From her perspective, parents of children with significant disabilities have to “find the doctors then we have to try to understand the system and then try to find out there’s a lot of political part going on in the school that’s impeding your child getting what they need. It’s tiresome” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Carla stated that she is adamant about communicating with the school in person and through phone as she feels that verbal interaction is more effective than emails and there is no way to “spam” her if she is “in your face”. She stated that she also found ways to con her child’s teachers into giving her their cellphone numbers so that she can text them if needed.

Carla’s husband is a certified occupational therapist assistant. She gave an example of how he taught her a valuable lesson in acquiring services for their child during the transition meeting. Carla recalled experiencing a heart dropping moment during that meeting when she was told that her three-year-old was functioning at the cognitive level of a twelve-month-old child. She assumed that the early interventions would have caught her son up to his same aged peers. She stated that she was not only heartbroken but upset and felt misled. However, her husband said, “you want them to rate (our child) as low as possible because he’s gonna get more services” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She also indicated that the children’s hospital was very impactful in teaching her how to acquire services for her child. They sent her home with a binder full of wealth. She studied the binder and completed research on any and every resource noted in the binder which she said saved her life and taught her to be organized and informed to gain the services needed.

Carla has established herself as a staple in the educational setting where her child attends school. She is undoubtedly more knowledgeable about school-based supports than the typical

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non-educator parent of a child with an exceptionality, based on the definition of an “insider” within this study. She does, however, have a strong opinion about parental supports available within the school district where her child attends. She stated:

Unfortunately, the schools feel like they do a good job telling me about the supports, the personnel or the support people that are through the school, but a telltale sign was when I attended a meeting for the county for the parent mentors. It was an auditorium full of parents at a middle school and I was shocked that they (the parents) were upset because they didn't know that their child had an SSA (Support Services Administrator). They didn't know that there was a parent mentor. They're all the way to middle school and they didn't know this. I'm like, how do they not know this? How was this valuable information missed somewhere down the line? (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

Carla has experienced a range of emotions over the years including contention with the school, despair, isolation, hesitation, treated as unknowledgeable, judged, worried, protective, and exhausted, just to name a few. She sums up her range of emotions by stating that this is all for her child. She said “I'm dealing with how my child is gonna live when I die. I am figuring out everything... who's gonna take care of (my child) because right now (my child) would go into a nursing home and be sedated” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She stated that she does get tired and upset and cries often but her ultimate goal is not to only ensure that her child benefits from her advocacy efforts, but that parents become educated so that they have access to the services and resources needed for their children as well.

Carla easily advocates for her child. She stated that her experience in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) prepared her for a life of advocacy and that once she realized that

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she had a voice, that she didn't have to sit on the sidelines and allow others to make decisions for her child. She indicated that this realization "carried over into the school system... and over into anybody that touches my child" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

Carla defined parent supports as a partnership between parents and the school system and spoke about advocating for special education teachers because as she put it, "if you fight for my child, then I've got your back" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Carla's biggest accomplishment thus far had been finding her voice to advocate for her child. She proudly proclaimed that "as much as I fear having conversations with people, I know I have to open my mouth for my child's sake. I'm gonna sit there and I'm gonna talk whether it's right or wrong. If I'm bloody afterwards, I'm there" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

Lisa. Lisa, a 44-year-old African American female, is married with one biological child and one adult stepchild. Lisa works in insurance and holds a bachelor's degree in business. When asked about home culture, Lisa stated that the school provided homework packets at the beginning of each week that had to be completed by the end of each week, so it required her child to maintain structure and time management. Lisa's child attends fourth grade in the larger targeted school District B and is served under the eligibility of "specified learning disability" in the general education setting with small group resource for math and co-taught support for all other academic subjects.

Lisa stated that it was her child's teachers who brought it to her attention during second grade that her child struggled with recalling grade level math concepts. Lisa stated that her child had been in tutoring since kindergarten only because she received tutoring of her own in high school and felt that the extra one on one services would be beneficial for her child. She did not

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however, notice any academic areas of concern until the school brought it to her attention. The school requested an RTI meeting to move Lisa's child from Tier I to Tier II in second grade. Lisa's child received intense interventions under Tier III during third grade however Lisa did not see any improvement, so she and her husband requested that the school assess her child for special education services. It was at the completion of her child's third grade year that the IEP was implemented.

Lisa considers herself an outsider stating "I'm not able to even suggest strategies. If I do suggest (them) how can I prove that those are being implemented without actually sitting there with (my child) each day" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2019). She indicated that she doesn't understand the lingo. She feels that all information that she has received about her child's education is second hand and that she is constantly second-guessing information that she receives from the school. Lisa described her relationship with her child's teacher and school as positive. Lisa liked that her child's teacher was focused on her child's emotional needs and that she shows up to her child's extracurricular activities to support all of the children.

Lisa typically likes to follow a protocol when communicating with her child's school. She prefers to start off with an email to initiate a paper trail then she will follow-up with an email and proceed to a phone call and finally request a meeting if needed. When asked about acquisition of services, Lisa stated that she relied heavily on her "close family members and friends who are educators" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2019) to point her in the right direction for seeking additional resources. Lisa stated that other than her friends, she felt that she had to locate and acquire services on her own. She referenced the request for the special education assessment as one that was initiated by herself and her husband. Lisa felt that

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the school “would have been ok with (my child) just staying in that RTI Tier III and just working these strategies. I just felt like no, (my child) wouldn’t benefit from that” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2019).

Lisa’s response was similar when asked about school parental supports. Lisa laughed and stated, “there are none that I am aware of” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2019). She reiterated that she was supported by her family and friends who were in education as this was the first year that her child had an IEP, so she was fairly new to the process. Lisa described her range of emotions that included confusion, suspicious, hesitation, fear, judgement, and frustration. Because Lisa lacks experience in the special education process, she is confused about the instructional strategies that are being used and remains suspicious when told that her child is progressing without proof through daily grades and progress. She is frustrated that she has to wait nine weeks to receive updates and indicated that she plans to request an IEP meeting soon.

Lisa is still in a learning curve when it comes to her role as advocate for her child. She replied, “I felt like I was advocating last year just by getting this done. So now that this is done, I have to figure out how I can make sure that it's being implemented without being overbearing” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2019). She defined supports as her family and friends listening and providing advice without judgement. She also mentioned self-initiated things like the private tutoring service that she utilizes for her child. When the school promptly responded to a concern Lisa considered that supportive and it made her feel that her voice mattered. When asked about her biggest accomplishment, Lisa indicated that initiating the assessment process has been her biggest accomplishment thus far as she feels that her daughter achieves higher grades with small group instruction and will benefit from the IEP in the long run.

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Findings

In this section, interviews, diary entries, documents, and participant-generated drawings/collages are presented, revealing the emergence of the following concepts: a) level of parental self-efficacy towards advocating as suggested by parental understanding of policies and practices; b) perceiving one's role as that of "insider" and implications (benefits or challenges); c) perceiving one's role as that of "outsider" and implications (benefits or challenges); and, d) team approach and implications. As the researcher, I found that it helped me to operationalize each participant's level of self-efficacy in comparison to each other by assigning a defined level of basic, intermediate or advanced. The parameters used to classify each participant in either of the three levels were based upon: 1.) number of years of experience in having a child with an exceptionality, 2.) the number of years of work experience in roles as either an educator or within education, and 3.) their statements during their interviews.

Participants who had limited experience and knowledge of either working within education or having a child with an IEP were categorized by myself at the basic level. When I identified a knowledge level above basic, but still limited based on participant verbiage and cues of hesitation, or lack of knowledge about available resources, then they were categorized as intermediate. Finally, the veteran parents with many years of experience advocating for their child, were labelled "advanced," as demonstrated by their confidence, participant-generated visual representations and participant-generated diary entries. The results are presented linearly, per participant, using a descriptor to assist the reader in identifying each participant. Following each finding, a figure is provided which summarizes participants' experiences and knowledge of the process of advocating for their children.

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Interview Transcripts

Daisy: Inside Out

Although Daisy is a teacher within the same district where her child attends, she struggled to identify as either an insider or an outsider. Daisy stated that her child may have received testing for special education quicker because of her status as an educator but that was only when she worked at the same school where her child attended. She said that now that her child was in middle school and she remains in the elementary setting, she doesn't feel that her status as a district employee benefits her advocacy efforts.

Concept of parental understanding of policies and practices. As a special educator with eight years of experience as both a homeschool teacher as well as a public educator, Daisy has gained valuable knowledge to support her in effectively advocating for the needs of her child. Daisy stated, "well it helps because I'm a Special Ed teacher so I kind of know the laws or I know the issues and what should be done and what's not acceptable so that kind of helps that I have that background" (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). As an elementary school teacher, Daisy receives biweekly email updates from the school's Local Education Agency (LEA) with district guidelines and expectations towards IDEIA and ensuring Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with exceptionalities. Therefore, Daisy has developed an understanding of policies and practices (written and unwritten) from an insider's perspective that assists her with making informed decisions about how to effectively advocate for her child with an exceptionality. She uses this information not only for her professional development as a special educator in the district but also for her own benefit when it comes to understanding her rights as a parent.

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Concept of perceiving one's role as that of a possible insider: Benefits. Daisy is married to an educator as well who offers suggestions on how to effectively advocate based on his experience and understanding from a teacher's perspective. Daisy stated, "my husband, who is a middle school teacher, will say sometimes they have so much IEP, EIP, ESOL or whatever that they don't really know from day to day who has accommodations" (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a).

She went on to say that based on her husband's perception, "unless you have a parent who has emailed you and says, listen, for testing they are supposed to have extra time, then it's difficult for (us) as educators with a high caseload to keep up" (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). Daisy uses this information to draft an email at the beginning of each school year to each of her child's teachers introducing herself, providing a brief synopsis of her child's strengths and weaknesses and specifically listing her child's IEP accommodations. Daisy stated that this "insider" information is valuable and would be beneficial to all parents. She stated, "I know that because I'm in the school system (I) know to stay on top of things, but some parents may not know that" (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a).

Concept of Team Approach. Daisy supports a team approach from both the parent's perspective as well as the teacher's perspective and believes that this has prompted her to be more efficacious in advocating for her child with an exceptionality.

I think if I feel like the teacher is kind and seems like she really is doing what she can to help then it's more of a team effort to be an advocate. I'm going in with a team not so much defensive. When I feel like a teacher is not doing what she is supposed to be doing as an advocate I feel a bit more defensive about it if that makes sense. (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a)

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Daisy, alternatively, felt that “teachers wouldn't come in so defensive if you're (a parent who's) nice and it's a team approach” (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). She suggests that if the parent's intent was to request a meeting to increase services or discuss a lack in progress then parents should try a team approach in order to obtain a receptive response from your child's teacher.

Concept of “insider” vs. “outsider” perspectives: Challenges. Daisy discussed feeling hindered in her advocacy efforts because of her husband's role as a peer to her child's teachers. She felt hesitant to really advocate for what her child needed because she felt that her husband didn't “want to disturb his peer relationships” (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). Daisy also described having a nonexistent relationship with her child's teachers and expressed that she's “not really even sure who's the case holder” (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a). Per Daisy, no communication is ever initiated from her child's teachers. She stated that the “school rarely communicates” (Participant Open-ended Interview, December, 2019a) and indicated that the responses were reactive versus proactive. She provided an example by stating, “I emailed about my child turning in things (and) the teacher created an agenda (for my child)” (Document Review, December, 2019a). Daisy indicated that the content of her child's IEP was “stagnant – rarely changes.” Daisy used the word, persistence, to define advocacy indicating that she felt that her “persistence wears them down and that the squeaky wheel gets the grease” (Document Review, December, 2019a). She did, however, note that it's a challenge to constantly persist for something that should be provided without a fight.

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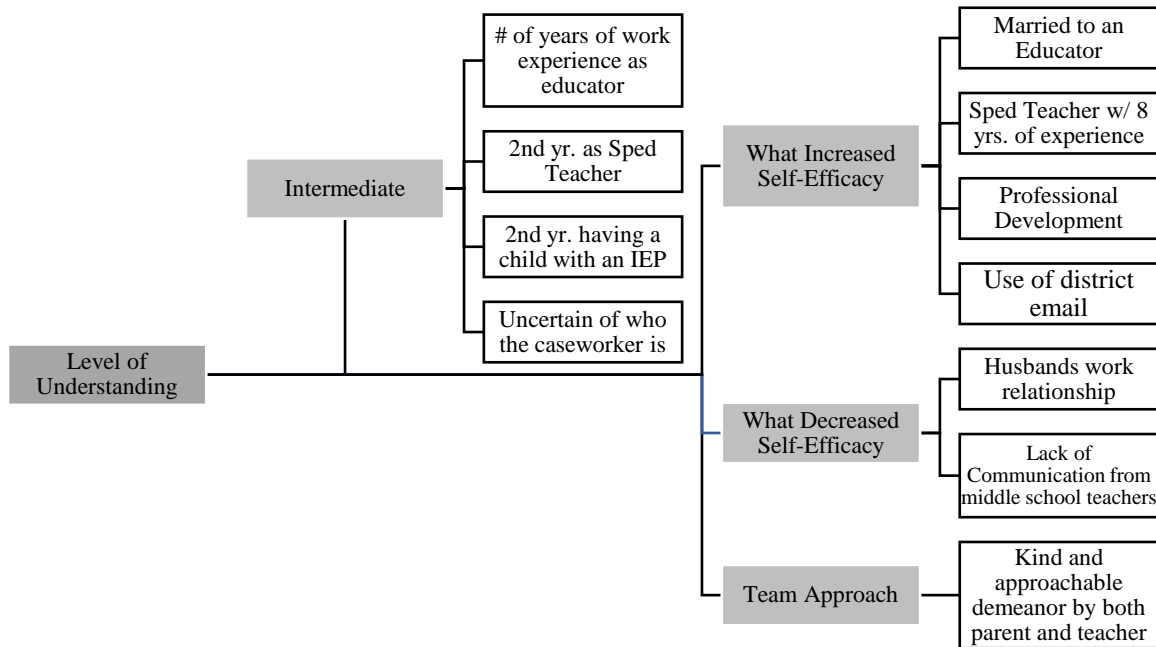


Figure 2: Daisy's perspective as an educator within the smaller school District A

Winona: High-Flyer

Winona was identified as the “high-flyer” per her own definition:

Unfortunately, I've had to be, not intentionally, not kind but very direct. My directness comes across sometimes as being not kind. But I have to remind myself (that) I'm there for my child. When you walk into a meeting and you have both administrators present, the facilitator, every single possible person there, conversations being taped on both ends, and you know what an IEP meeting can look like then suddenly we reach the status that I feel we are now, highfliers. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b)

Concept of parental understanding of policies and practices. Winona has become aware, over the years, that it is her right as a parent to call an IEP meeting and has gained comfort with doing so once gaining that knowledge. She doesn't “think people understand that is a right that they really have. If I wanted to call a meeting right now I could (and) it would have to be done! I don't think a lot of people realize that” (Parent, In-depth Biographical

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Interview, February, 2020b). She acknowledged that her time in the field of education has helped to elevate her understanding of her rights as a parent.

Concept of perceiving one's role as that of an insider: Benefits. Having taught for eighteen years within the same district where her child attends, Winona perceived her role as an educator-parent as providing her with a somewhat elevated level of self-efficacy. Winona cited knowledge of essential educational verbiage, utilizing her district email account to gain attention, knowing key people in the district and possessing first-hand knowledge about new programs within the district as supports. She feels that “they (her child’s IEP team) usually respect the fact that OK, she knows what she's talking about” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b).

Winona described a “sounding board” relationship with her child’s teachers when her child was not only in the same district but also attended the same school where she works. She stated, “a few colleagues who have taught (my child) they've been a great sounding board to me (saying) look this is kind of what's going on what do you think? Am I asking realistically (for your child to do this)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b)? This type of a relationship was not identified or described in this study by parents who were not educators. Winona believed that the benefit of not only working in the same district but also working in the same school where her child attended, at one point in her career, helped to build her confidence in advocating for her child.

She stated that she “knew from the educational side what needed to be in the email to make them test (my child). I think there's a benefit when you see your child on a daily basis and you know their teachers” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She also felt that working in the district gives her the ability to not be “brushed off”. Overall, Winona

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credits her child's progress to her position as an educator. She stated that she often pulls from the knowledge gained while working on her prior students' IEPs when brainstorming of ways to assist her own child. Finally she said, "I just think my child would not even be close to where (he is) now if I was not in education because I would not have the knowledge that I needed" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b) to help my child succeed.

Concept of team approach. Winona feels that her directness and go-getter persona derives from sharing a mutual language with her peers, who also were her child's teachers. She described feeling like she can contribute and that her voice is valuable in the conversation based on knowing the lingo. This made her feel a true part of her child's IEP team. Winona did however explain prior struggles and missteps along the way in attempting to find a spot in her child's school team. She and her husband schedule an meeting with her child's teachers at the beginning of each year "to give them the breakdown of who (her child) is and what kind of things have helped and just let the teachers know we're on board with them" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). Per her own admission, in the past, these annual meetings have given teachers the perception that they are high-profile parents. She stated that their intent is not to be high-profile but to gain the teachers trust so that "they realize that I'm really there as a team" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b) and to help nurture the home and school partnership. She stated that once the team realizes this, she typically sees a consensus between herself and the school and ultimately, everyone is on board with what was best for her child.

Concept of "insider" vs. "outsider" perspectives: Challenges. Winona has received pushback from certain teachers, in the past based on her perceived status as a high-profile parent. She said, "we're probably the parents that when someone gets our child's file... we're high

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profile parents. But not because I want it to be, (it's) because I had to be" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). However, her main challenge has been teachers who Winona feels ignores her child's accommodations. When asked why she feels that they do this she replied that those teachers are arrogant. She stated that they are arrogant in the sense that they think that they know her child and that they are convinced that her child does not have an exceptionality. She stated "it's frustrating that in this age that we have people (who) don't realize that an IEP is a legal document. It hurts as an educator to have to remind people of that" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). Although this was found to be a deterrent to Winona's self-efficacy, it is also a benefit in that she is now fully aware of the rights afforded to her child and her ability to advocate for those rights.

Winona spoke briefly about the transition from elementary school to middle school in which she stated that "middle school has proven to be frustrating" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She discussed her struggles in trying to develop a relationship with the middle school teachers however she stated that she doesn't "think that parent involvement in middle school is as great as it is in elementary school" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). When she tried to initiate a meet and greet or to get to know the teachers better, she felt push back and said that she "think(s) it's unusual especially for middle school... for teachers to really understand" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b) so she feels that parent involvement is not expected or necessarily welcome in middle school.

Finally, Winona perceived that the lack of appropriate allocation of funds plays a major role in halting her advocacy efforts. She stated, "that's the part about the county that I get frustrated with because they don't put funding where funding is needed. They put our children that count the most at the greatest risk" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February,

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2020b). She recalled a time when she felt that her child’s IEP was being altered based on funding decisions rather than services that her child needed to succeed. She stated, “when we begin changing IEP's to fit what our budget says... because that's been tried on me as a parent and I fought that, then that's a problem” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b).

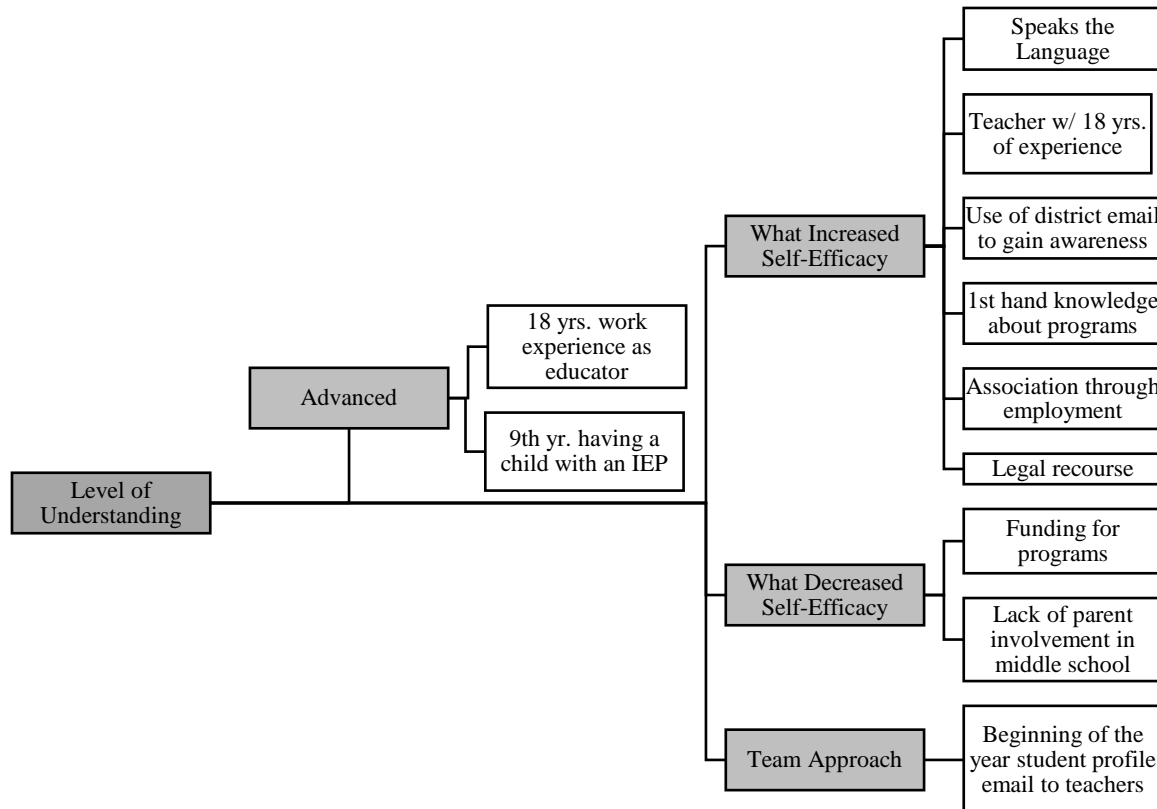


Figure 3: Winona's perspective as an educator within the smaller school District A

Tammie: Goal Getter

Tammie’s home culture is based on her desire to teach her children the value of goal setting. She told her children, “you set goals and you reach that goal now make yourself another goal” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). She is very adamant that her child’s teachers understand that:

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I don't want them to just... (your child's) a pleasure, (your child's) a delight I'm just gonna give (them) half a point because (they) tried. I don't want that for (my child) because (my child's) not gonna get half a point in life. Thank you for helping (my child) but don't just float (her) through school because after school the only thing left to teach you is life and that can really slap you in the face. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a)

Concept of parental understanding of policies and practices. Tammie works in mortgage collections and holds a vocational degree in business with no official training as a special educator. She struggles to understand special education policies. Earlier in the school year Tammie thought that her child had a one-on-one paraprofessional who transitioned from class to class with her child. When her child informed her that there was one class without a paraprofessional, Tammie stated, “that's when I went left (laughing)... because I didn't understand that. I still don't understand because to me that teacher would still need assistance because those kids would have a harder time” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

She also expressed difficulty with understanding class placements and stated, “I don't understand... there's a lot of kids in class that have behavioral (and) learning problems. I feel that kids with learning disabilities and kids with behavioral disabilities... separate the 2 because your child becomes a product of the environment” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Tammie spoke during her interview about her perception of the financial constraints involved with providing additional paraprofessionals and separating children by exceptionality type. She stated, “I understand (that there's a) money situation (with the schools).

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I know we need more teachers for that and probably more paraprofessionals. But I think that would help” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

Concept of “insider” vs. “outsider” perspectives and implications: “Outsider”. There were no benefits described by Tammie as an outsider. She did define herself as an “outsider for middle school. Because I don’t think that I see the full picture” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Tammie spoke a few times about not being able to see everything, not having the full picture and not knowing the “flip side” as a parent who does not work within the school district. She recalled her first IEP meeting with her child as she stated, “I’m not going to lie, (the) first IEP I was sitting there like a deer in headlights. I was like... What? WHAT? OK stop, can we use regular words because I have no clue what ya’ll are talking about” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). When asked if she felt as though being an educator within the district would support her advocacy efforts Tammie responded, “I would get the full picture, the full grasp of the money, the limitations, etc.” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

Concept of team approach. Tammie found her team in her friends as she indicated, “I just found that speaking with friends (helps)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). She also found that befriending teachers helps. Her oldest child’s teacher is now her sixth grader’s teacher, so she found comfort in that perceived friendship. She was able to attain a sense of familiarity with this teacher and stated that “literally once a month I will type and ask this teacher what’s (my child) struggling with? What do I need to (do) to help because (I know that) you have to do some stuff at home too” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Tammie described a time when her child posted a video on a social media account threatening to self-harm. When this happened, Tammie pleaded with the school counselor to

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keep a close eye on her child at school and to share this information with her child's teachers. She asked that they "pay close attention (and) if (her child) goes to the restroom and doesn't come back within a time span just go check" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Her intent was to form this team of people to support her child through this challenging time. Tammie began to cry as she recalled, "I flipped because I didn't... I just never thought my child would think like this. It just blew my mind to say OK we're gonna have to get a grip. I'm gonna have to be that much more involved" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

Outsider Challenges. During her interview, Tammie often referenced her experiences with her now adult child, who was diagnosed with oppositional defiance disorder while in school. She sought advice and support from her family and friends in the African American community, which she stated, resulted in "more backlash instead of positive" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). She was told that her child "just needed a spanking (and told) oh girl they gone label (your child) as retarded" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

She recalled an incident in a large department store when her first child was a toddler. Tammie said that she and her child were shopping with her mother when her child dropped to the floor and started screaming. Her mother's advice was for her to just walk away. She said that approach did not work. Tammie started experiencing moments of self-doubt saying, "I think that's the biggest thing, as a parent you blame yourself because the child is a make-up of you and your partner. I had people put in my head that (my child was) slow and didn't know anything" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). She cited these reasons for her

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hesitancy to seek supports earlier on with her second child because of the judgement that she received within her family and community from seeking supports for her first child.

Another challenge identified during Tammie's interview was the transition from elementary school to middle school. She stated that "in the elementary setting they reached out (but) in the middle school setting, I reach out" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Tammie's experience with elementary school left her feeling that the elementary school educators were more caring, and relatable than the middle school educators. She recalled that there were more emails and phone calls in elementary school between herself and her child's teachers. She felt that they were "talking to each other and you could hear if I'm upset (whereas) emails could be read either way. But middle school, I feel like, it's not as hands-on, maybe it's because you are dealing with more kids" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

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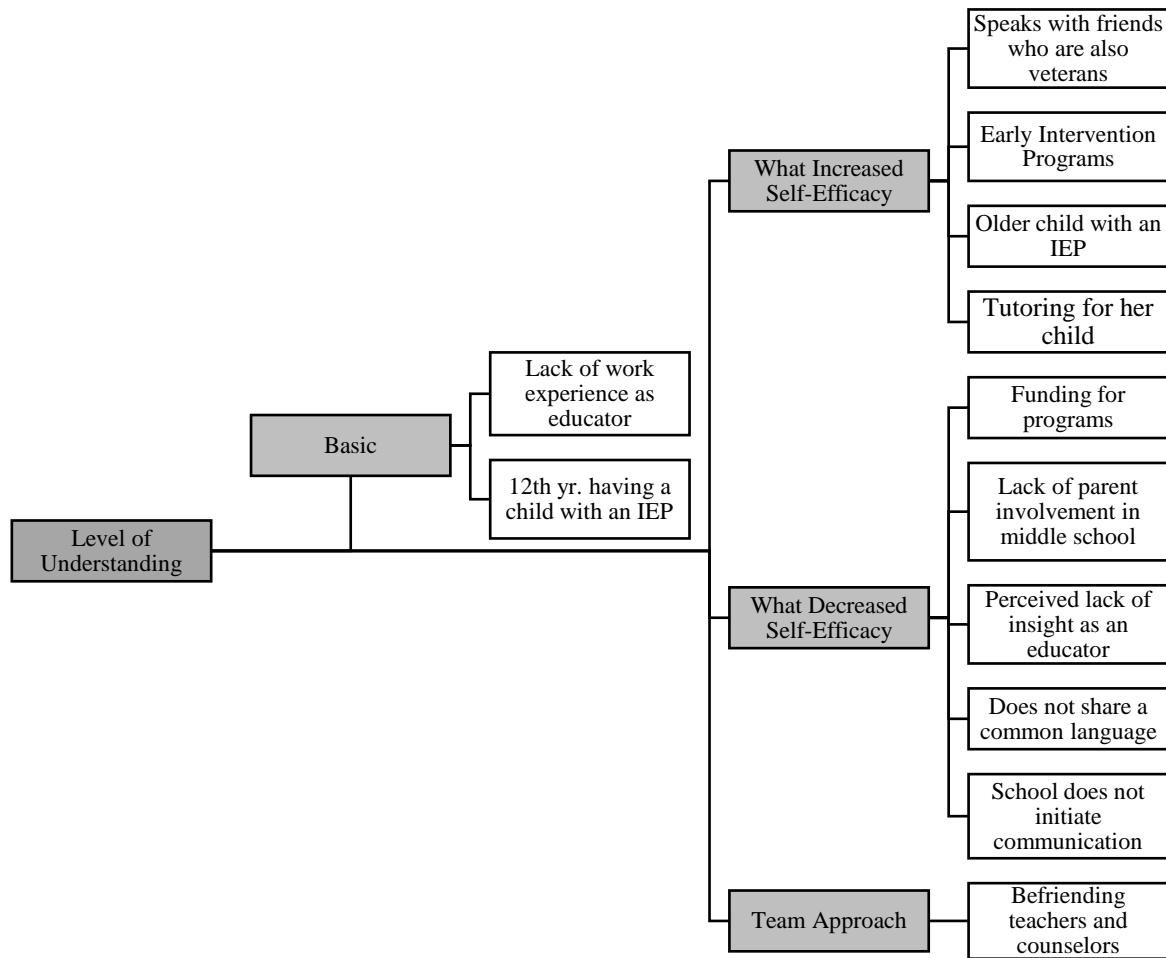


Figure 3: Tammie's perspective as a non-educator in the smaller school District A

Margaret: Unconventional Advocate

Margaret is identified as an unconventional advocate because she and her husband have taken a more unconventional route in advocating for their child. After trying both the private and public-school sectors, they decided to build their own school due to perceived lack of communication, services and supports needed towards the success of their child with an exceptionality. Margaret indicated, “we ended up fairly early in the game leaving the public-school system. Basically, because of lack of communication and lack of feeling like we were being heard. We didn’t expect the school system to have everything that (our child) needed” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b).

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Concept of parental understanding of policies and practices. Margaret appeared to have developed a reasonable understanding of the policies and practices of special education placement as it relates to her child's exceptionality. In the following excerpt she explains her impression of her child's placement:

They tried to do least restrictive environment. We were told (by private advocates) fight for your child to be in the least restrictive environment. That's what we were told but as a mom I disagree with that. It depends on your child. I think if you have a child that's high functioning and maybe has Asperger's then yes, they need to be in the least restrictive environment because they can learn that way. They can learn from their peers. They can learn in that setting. My child was never gonna learn in a classroom of 20 people. (My child) was gonna be a distraction to the others and wasn't gonna learn. That's not what I was being told. I was being told, oh no, they're gonna try to put your child in a self-contained classroom. (That) sounds terrible, self-contained sounds terrible. Everyone who's alive learns better one on one. If parents could understand that, you know, if you have an opportunity to have your child be taught one on one in so many subjects (then) take it! They're gonna learn better! Then (in) PE and things like that they can have (the least restrictive) so it's a frustrating system. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

When asked about her understanding of educational policy and procedures Margaret indicated that although she spoke with her child's therapist and was prepared to ask for service related to his specific needs, "I did not do a good job preparing for the language that was gonna be used or what we could and couldn't ask for. I didn't understand" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). Margaret was also perplexed with the communication

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process as she stated that she “wasn't allowed to talk to the person that was in charge of (her child) all day” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). She understood that her child had a teacher and a one-on-one paraprofessional, however did not understand the roles of the staff or the breakdown in communication.

Margaret indicated that her child was experiencing toileting issues at school. Her child was in a general education classroom at the time with a one-on-one female paraprofessional. Margaret stated that the school informed her that “we can't have female teachers in the men's restroom. Maybe you could have your husband come and help. I'm like he's at work! I did not understand. Why would it be more OK for somebody who hadn't been background checked” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)? That incident prompted Margaret and her husband to offer to pay for their own private behavior modification person to come into the school and provide services directly to their child. Margaret described the school's response to their request as “an aggressive like tactic to scare us. I actually was a little scared” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). She indicated that the response on their end to pay for services was completely due to a lack of understanding by herself and her husband. She stated that “we went to an IEP meeting and we just were ignorant of the process. We just didn't understand. My (child) was really struggling” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b).

Outsider Challenges. Margaret got visibly flustered when discussing how she and her husband advocate for their child. She perceived her economic advantage as isolated and unfair in comparison to the typical parent who may not have access to the same benefits.

I don't mean this to sound (rude) but it's just true, most people couldn't afford to do what we did. I don't think it's fair. Yes, I did advocate on behalf of my child, but I feel bad to

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answer that question. I feel like most people would have to go through the school system. The vast majority of people like me on my own having a degree in business without education to teach my child I could not have done it on my own and done a good job. I couldn't have done it. I advocated on my child's (behalf) but we had to pay people. We had to pay a company to come in and set up the programing. We had to pay therapists. We had to pay people that were highly trained in behavior modification to fly in and teach us. I don't know if I should be saying all of this. It's not really fair to say well yeah, I was just able to advocate on my child's behalf. I do honestly feel like (my child) got the best of what could be available to be provided but the vast majority of the population is relying on the public-school system and it's failing them. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

Financial ability aside, Margaret indicated that she was an outsider who felt hindered when attempting to advocate for her child in the school system because she didn't know the rules of the game or the special education acronyms that an educator would know. She stated that had she "been an educator and known the language and known what was available (then) I could have done a better job advocating for services through the school system" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). The alternative was to give up advocating through the school district which was what she and her husband chose to do. She explained:

At that point we had to decide how are we going to spend our time? Are we gonna spend our time fighting the school system? We elected not to because we felt like we could go down this path of saying you know you've got to provide this and then if we won, I don't know what we really would have won. So, we pulled back and focused our energy on getting our own team together. That's when we dreamed up the therapy house IDEIA

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(Appendix P). (Our child) does a half a day at the therapy house and half a day at in the natural environment. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

Margaret discussed feelings of being misunderstood, judged, and desperate in her attempts to obtain services for her child. She recalled a time when she felt judged by her child's own doctor:

I remember actually sitting on the floor of the pediatrician's office crying saying something is wrong. He gave me a hand-out on time out. I mean, time out for a child with autism who does not understand time out! I could sit (my child) on the stairs all day and put (my child) in time out but it's not gonna help at all. The doctors claiming nothing's wrong. I just was desperate. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

Margaret also cited a breakdown in communication and the schools fear of being sued as other major challenges. She stated that she doesn't feel that the majority of parents want to sue the school. She confessed, "we weren't (trying to sue), we were just ignorant. Had they (the school) known we were not going to sue them, we just wanted what was best for our child, (then) we could have had a better meeting" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). Margaret utilized the phrase "breakdown in communication" three times during her interview and "communication issue" and "lack of communication" twice during the interview. Each of these references were related to the final IEP meeting with the public-school District A where they decided to withdraw their child and provide their own services in a private setting.

Concept of team approach. Margaret referenced a team approach throughout her interview indicating that once they realized that the public-school approach was not working for them "we pulled back and focused our energy on getting our own team together" (Parent, In-

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depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). Per Margaret, the state's early intervention program did help them by providing a paraprofessional to attend the private preschool with her child. This paraprofessional would work with her child as well as the therapist that they hired to shadow and they would have team meetings. Margaret and her husband utilized their economic resources to hire and organize a team of professionals to work in conjunction to provide their child with any and all resources that they thought that their child needed including therapy, medical services, curriculum and restrictive classroom settings. Margaret stated that over the years they've had team members comprised of therapist and consultants from all over the United States to include a center for autism, an early autism project (within a southeastern state in the U.S.), a behavioral solutions firm, and a center for autism related disorders group, to name a few.

Margaret stated that in the public-school setting, "I felt overwhelmed. I felt like I was not going to be offered the help that I needed" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). She recalled speaking with an educator later on about her experience in trying to develop a team environment in the school setting and she said that the educator laughed at her. She stated, "when I said we offered to pay for it she thought it was funny. I didn't think it was funny and I still don't think it's funny. We were trying. We were desperate. We were trying to help our child" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b).

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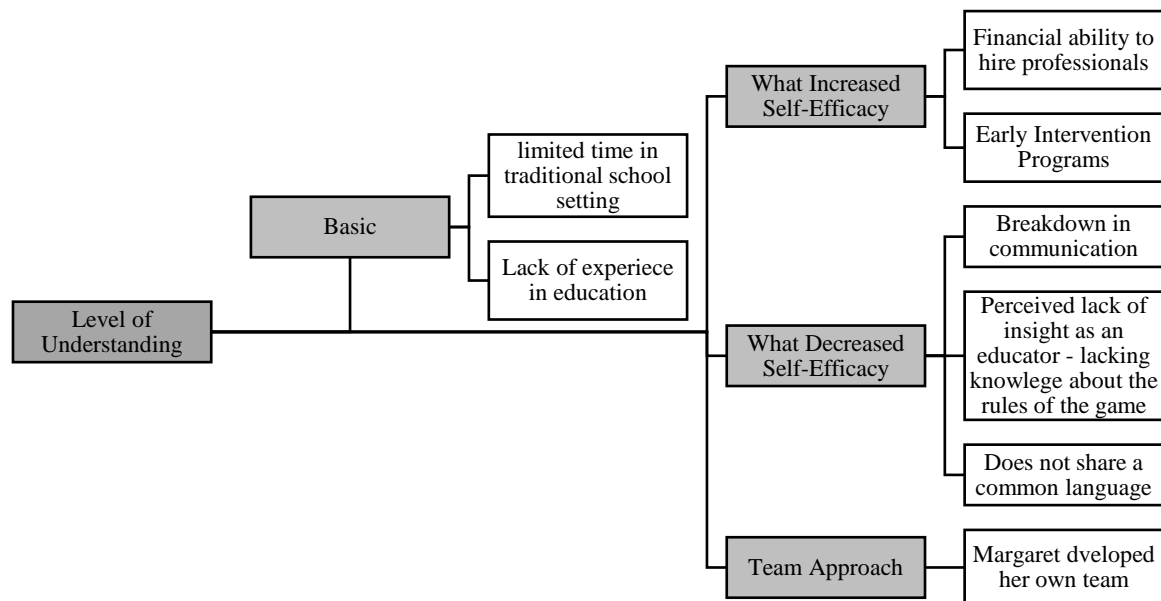


Figure 4: Margaret's perspective as a non-educator in a private school setting

Debbie: Change-Agent

Debbie is identified as a change agent because she has taken the knowledge she has gained to support and assist other parents of children with exceptionalities. She not only wants to gain services and resources for her children, but she wants to share what she knows with other parents. She indicated:

They (the school) don't know. So, what I've done is created a blog for all of the autism and intellectual disability kids in our school. (I) put all the information of everything happening in our community as far as sports, how to get (a professional resource, i.e. a Medicaid waiver, and) how to get these things with all the phone numbers and it's all there for all the parents. In addition to that, if we are talking to a parent and they say you

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know we need help with this (then) we push it. We help them get the information. (We) give them all the phone numbers and all the inside track to be able to help them get where they need to be. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c)

When asked why she's making these resources available to parents, Debbie simply replied, "because it wasn't there for me (and) because we really haven't gotten any (support). I really try to give it to other people" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). She indicated that it's important for her to let other parents know how "to help kids get involved in different things so that parents can meet other parents. If they don't meet other parents, they're going to be alone. So, we try to really push for parents to become involved" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Concept of parental understanding of policies and practices. With 23 years of experience in special education, Debbie feels that she has a pretty good understanding of the policies and practices. She spoke of being aware of how an IEP meeting was conducted and what wording was needed to ensure that services and supports are received. She also indicated that there were times where she's had to "have little meetings on the side; not official but like sit down with the team (her children's IEP teams) and you know say 'this is what's going on, you cannot do this'" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Debbie has taken it upon herself to learn as much as she can about special education, independent of her required professional development. She is a fan of popular special education blogs and has joined popular online parent advocacy groups. Debbie stated, "every year I try to keep up with the case summaries of the year. I take little classes online that are free like with (an online resource dedicated to improving educational outcomes) to try to keep up to date with what's going on" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Not only does

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she know the law, Debbie stated, “I know what's going on in the county. I'm not going in expecting that the trainer for my (child) has a clue about autism or lower IQ's. I know they've made it one person, (so) I go in understanding that” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Another example that Debbie provided that identified her understanding of policies and procedures was when she led the most recent IEP meeting for her youngest child. She stated, “I knew more than they knew. They said, we've never been to a meeting where the parents led it! I wasn't leading it. I just want(ed) to get the important things done. They were shocked that I already initiated things” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Concept of “insider” vs. “outsider” perspectives and implications: Insider benefits.

An early example of Debbie's advocacy for her children can be found in her discussion of receiving photos and videos of both of her children prior to adoption. She described noticing physical attributes of both children in those photos and videos such as, facial features and size. She stated, “they (the orphanage) gave height, weight and things like that (and) the facial features and rocking. That was all concerning” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Debbie's years of experience working as a special education teacher as well as in group homes, support living and respite, gave her a heightened sense and ability to notice these attributes in both children.

Debbie hired a medical doctor to fly to the orphanage in another country and examine her oldest child and to also translate medical records prior to adoption. With her second child she said, “(the orphanage) had a lot of information about behavior and speech and all that because (our child) was two. (So), I called from (this other country), set up the meeting (with the state's

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early intervention program) and was in immediately” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Debbie identified district email as one benefit to working within the school district where her child attends. She described how “sending an email through (school district) county email address catches their attention a little more. I feel like especially (in) the middle school they're like OK it's another teacher” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Debbie also benefits in her status as an employee by communicating regularly in person with her youngest child’s teacher and principal about issues, concerns or simply finding out about her child’s day. This is made possible through her child’s attendance at the school where she works. When asked how often she speaks with her youngest child’s educational staff she explained, “we talk like almost every day in the hallway because I work two classes down and I was (my child’s) teacher’s mentor” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Debbie discussed gaining the knowledge of an impending rezoning of self-contained autism classrooms. She gained this knowledge as an employee through internal communications prior to it being publicized to parents. She knew that the rezoning would affect her child’s school placement. She, therefore, utilized her interpersonal relationships with the supervisor for the autism unit and peers within the district to determine which school her child would attend the following year. Once gaining this information, she once again utilized her peer relationships with other self-contained teachers in the district to find out that the classroom where her child was being moved “was having a new teacher (and had) some parents that had advocates and lawyers and were extremely high maintenance” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Based on this information, Debbie decided that school would not be the best

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fit for her child. She was able to use her status as an employee to request a transfer to another school within the district outside of her child's attendance zone.

Concept of team approach. Debbie is a proponent for parents being an integral part of the IEP team. She stated that she and her husband "have a statement in the IEP parental concerns section that we are to be involved in everything. We are a part of the team. We come with premade statements on a USB drive making them copy it word for word" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). She feels as though there is more of a team approach with her oldest child's school. Debbie explained that during her child's last IEP, she "felt that we were really problem solving together and (my child) was there. (My child's) the person who's going to have to buy into it. I felt like we were really working on it together" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Debbie spoke about utilizing her peers and friends as a part of her children's team. A veteran teacher in the district, she not only knows a lot of teachers, she's also mentored a lot of them. She has won teacher of the year in the past at her current school and works with the self-contained teachers in a lead teacher capacity. Debbie stated that they problem solve across the three self-contained classrooms in her building including when issues arise with her youngest child. She said that one of the teachers there had "known (the children) since we adopted so she throws (in) her two cents and you know we all try to help each other out with different (things). You always try to problem solve together with different behaviors with different kids" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Her role as a veteran and lead teacher at her child's school places her in the unique position of being not only a peer but also a friend to her child's teacher.

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Concept of “insider” vs. “outsider” perspectives: Challenges. Debbie feels that working within the school districts comes with its drawbacks. She said yes, “as far as going through the (IEP) draft, I know what to do but it doesn't always get the results that I want” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). She stated, “I feel that because I'm an employee they don't take it as seriously. They pay me and they consider it as I'm less than because I'm the employee” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Debbie goes on to explain that sometimes she's hesitant to advocate due to her status as an employee.

Debbie talked about her child's behaviors manifesting from the exceptionality and her struggles with deciding whether to address the problem as an advocate for her child or as a peer mentor to her child's teacher and the rest of the IEP staff. She stated that “some of them are very new to this and don't understand (my child). I just try to keep giving them praise and trying to help” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). She explained that when they did have to hire an attorney to obtain services that they felt their child needed, they went about it by asking the schools therapeutic director “if we could do a parental referral and how to do it so she would help us get in” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). When Debbie and her husband resorted to legal recourse, they still felt the need to approach it hesitantly and presented it as a team effort to protect her status as an employee.

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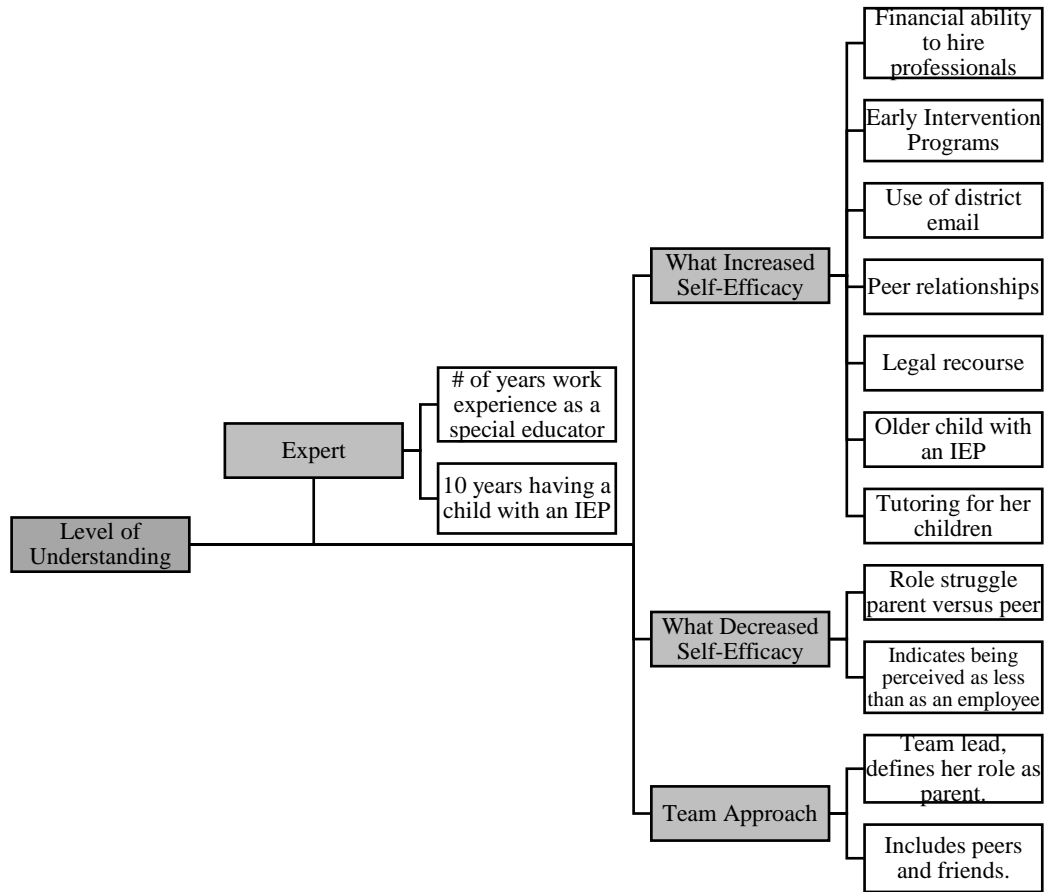


Figure 5: Debbie's perspective as an educator in the larger school District B

Julie: Independence

Julie denotes Independence because she encourages her children to advocate on their own behalf. She has taken a hands-off approach when it comes to her high schooler and is gradually moving towards being less involved with advocating for her younger child. She defined her role as advocate as one who identifies a need based on her child's struggles, then expresses that need to her child's teacher if they are unable to express it themselves. She emphasized that "the goal, at least in my life, is for them (her children) to be able to see the need and then say OK I'm struggling here so what is it that I need to do for myself to go and help me" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

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Concept of parental understanding of policies and practices. Julie has been in the field of education for approximately fifteen years. Those years have been filled with experiences as a preschool teacher for ten years, a special education paraprofessional for five years and this year, as a special education teacher in the district where her children attend. Her understanding of special education policies and practices as an educator are admittedly limited as she did not have a large working capacity with the IEP process in the role as teacher until this school year. At the time of the interview she had been in the role of teacher for approximately six months.

Julie discussed her earlier experiences as a parent advocating for her child prior to becoming an educator. She did not understand the response to intervention (RTI) process and what was needed to move to a different tier. She stated, “by third grade, I’m like something is not right. (My child) wasn’t reading at a third-grade level (instead) at a first-grade level. (The teacher) put (my child) on RTI which at the time I had no IDEA what that was” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Julie explained that now that she’s an educator she has a better understanding of the allocation of funds when it comes to special education. She said “special education is such a budget item, there’s money that has to go to that base and away from something else. So, they have to shift allocations on things. Now that I’m a teacher, I understand how that works” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Julie spoke of her struggles to gain needed services for her students as a classroom teacher. Her experience in this role as teacher of record in the classroom, versus paraprofessional, has given her a different perspective that she would not have otherwise had. She said transitioning from the role as parent outside of the school system to now, “once you get in, you really can see how broken special education (is). There's no support. I would say as a

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parent and a special educator, I'm a little more gentle with teachers now that I am one" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Concept of "insider" vs. "outsider" perspectives: Benefits. Julie spoke of recognizing the benefits of being an educator when it comes to advocating for her children. Julie talked about using her work email to communicate with her children's teachers and how that often results in a more welcoming response "and a lot of times it gets my foot in a little better" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). She said, now "I get what the RTI processes is. You know, I understand the IEP and what kind of document it is and what they should or shouldn't be doing for my kid (and) what they can and cannot say to me" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

She uses her perceived, newly-found, understanding of special education funding to make informed decisions about her children's supports and services. As mentioned earlier, she continues to pay for private tutoring for her children because she feels that the school is limited in its ability to provide sufficient supports and services for their academic success. She said that although taking on the role of teacher has provided her with basic knowledge, she still doesn't know everything. After such a limited time in her role as teacher she said that she still relies on her children's private tutor to "look at the (IEP) draft and help me make sure that it's OK" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Julie drew on the experience of going through the IEP process with her oldest child to help her identify areas of need with her second child. She recalled, "I noticed things a lot quicker and knew what to do because I had already been through it once so that was the big caveat. I knew exactly what to say to get them to start doing RTI" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). With her second child Julie stated "we already knew

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my first (child) had an IEP and struggled with reading so let's not let my second (child) go through the same stuff my first went through (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). Communicating that information to her youngest child's teachers was enough to get an evaluation started towards an IEP.

Concept of team approach and supports. Julie used verbiage identifying her friends and peers who are also parents of children with exceptionalities as her team. She stated, "I have a couple of parents in my life that have been through the same thing" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a) and those are the people who she leans on for support and sees as her tribe. When speaking of her peers she stated, "I can't say that I'm friends with everybody. It's just that we have a mutual bond. We have a good relationship and it's one where we just know that we can call each other if we need help or support" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). She stressed that these are people who understand exactly what she's gone through and who can give valid advice about how to help her children be successful. In discussing her peers, specifically as supports, Julie stated, "basically it's just any other teacher within the school system like me, it's other teacher parents that have kids. A lot of times we will talk and get together and, you know, find out what resources are available" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Julie talked of feeling validated as an IEP team member now that she's an educator. She asserts that, "they think of me differently than a parent. It's like OK you're a teacher too so we can talk the same language you know" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). Julie utilizes social media groups as supports having indicated that there were "a couple of special education groups that are private on (social media) and I use those. I will ask hey, my

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kid is doing blah blah and they'll be like well have they tried this? So, that's been a great resource" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Concept of “insider” vs. “outsider” perspectives: Challenges. Julie struggles with the middle school approach. She indicated that she's not sure if the middle school educators really like working with the students. She shared her perception of the middle school culture stating that the teachers feel that “they (the students) need to do it. They need to figure it out. I know he's got an IEP but hey he's gotta figure it out” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). She also felt as though the middle school teachers “have their IDEIA of what they see my youngest (child) is at school but I'm like yeah, no. I know why (my child's) doing that and I'm going to tell you. You know sometimes they just don't listen” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). Julie discussed how working as a school district employee has its drawbacks in the following excerpt:

The only caveat (is) if your kid is in the same district as you, (then) you have to walk a thin line. I don't want to get myself in trouble you know. That's a hard line. Not that I wouldn't go to bat for my kids but would I get an attorney involved right away? Maybe not. You know because I don't want repercussions unless it was so bad that there was no choice. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a)

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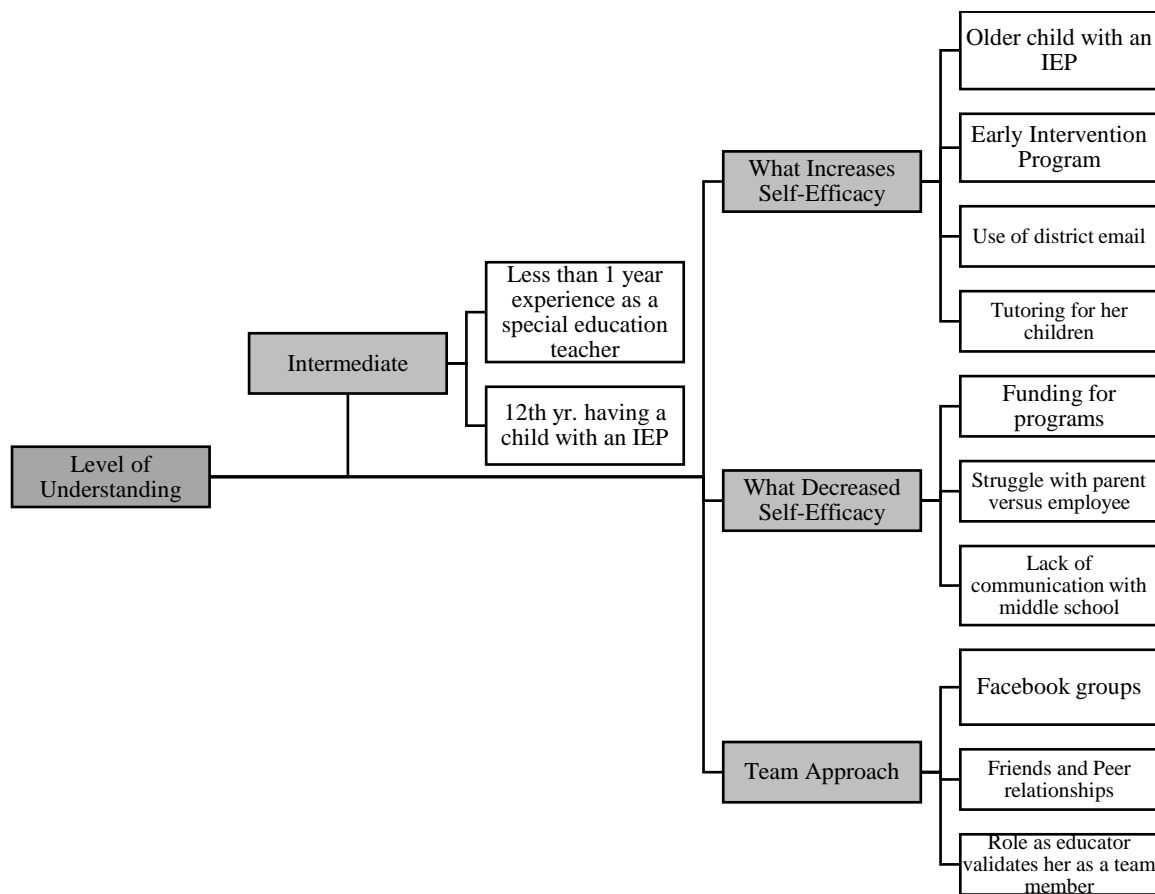


Figure 6: Julie's perspective as an educator in the larger school District B

Carla: Veteran

Carla is identified as the veteran as she began her role as advocate for her premature child, born at 25 weeks. Carla pinpointed her experiences in the NICU for a year with her child as a very definitive time where she found her voice and realized the responsibility and impact that she could have towards her child's success in life. Carla indicated that once she brought her child home from the NICU, a year later, she became inundated with therapist including, occupational, physical and speech therapist as well as an at home nurse to assist with taking care of her child who was medically fragile. This inhibited Carla's ability to work; however, she recalled being "grateful for that because it helped me start understanding our child, everyone's role... (and) our child's trajectory and how I was going to have to be involved" (Parent, In-depth

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Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She definitively stated, “I’m the type A parent. From the moment that (my child) stepped in the school I have been active in the school trying to learn everything I can” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

Concept of parental understanding of policies and practices. Carla has years of experience as a parent of a child with a significant cognitive exceptionality, as well as, significant medical challenges. She has taken on unique measures to educate herself in the school system’s policies and practices, as well as, special education in general. She provided an example of her first major lesson learned in this education process during her child’s transition meeting into special needs preschool. She told a story of showing up to the meeting prepared based on having heard the horror tales about the school system’s transition meeting. She stated, “I brought snacks, put them on the table and said, I know this is gonna take four to five hours so here's some candy for you people. Let's work on this” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She recalled using that opportunity as a way to make inroads with the IEP team.

Carla stated that she “conned” the IEP team into divulging what school her child would be attending and as soon as she left the meeting she went directly to the school and demanded to meet the preschool teacher. She came with a list of questions and her type A personality. She was shocked that the school let her in and walked her down to meet the teacher in the middle of class for an impromptu meet and greet. She stated, “I went right down there (to the classroom) and said my (child) is gonna be here and I just wanna know what your gonna do because (my child) has a trach (tracheostomy tube)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She went on to explain her child’s many ailments to the teacher and what she perceived

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that her child could not do. She stated that the teacher provided an immediate and calm response; however, they bumped heads moving forward.

She learned a lesson about her approach and how to appropriately gain access to the classroom. Carla found that she needed to build that relationship instead of presenting with an ambush of questions and demands. She stated, “I learned that I just have to be careful because I’ll come off the wrong way and I’ll come off as a parent who’s gonna be in the teachers way instead of a parent that’s gonna fight for the teachers” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Carla stated that learning the school system had been a little tricky and said, “I’ve tried to learn to make inroads positively. Positive change stays. If you just stomp your foot then they’re gonna make you happy and wait for you to leave and go back to what they did before” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Carla argued that the school system is too political to understand:

I don't understand the political part of it. I have come to terms with the only thing I need to know is that all the players are at the table and they're all working in the right direction. I can't fix everything. I can't fix the relationship. I can't do everything that needs to be done. It's a simple step to fix but in a system that is broken and it's not just this county it's every school in this state... when the system is broken where you have this and this and this (then it's) too much for the parent (to learn). We gotta fight our own battles. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

Concept of “insider” vs. “outsider” perspectives: Outsider benefits. Carla’s personality benefited her ability to advocate for her child. She identified herself as an outsider and indicated that she was a “self-taught” advocate for her child. Carla explained that although she would never want to take on the role as educator within the school district, she had to

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become meticulous in her attempts to gain access into the schools and classrooms so that she could learn the lingo and, in her words, “learn who the players are” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Her intent is to determine how to gain supports and services for her child in the most direct way possible and to locate the keyholder within the school or district for those supports and services. She used the words and phrases, “impatient...my patience runs thin, I don't have time for all that and I have little patience for people of that nature” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c) when explaining why she chose to seek out supports and services through the school district in a methodical manner.

Her experiences in the NICU as well as over the past thirteen years raising her child, who has limited cognitive abilities and significant medical constraints, has provided her with the benefits that she needs to successfully advocate for her child. Carla described why she feels that parents who have children with similar needs advocate the way that they do. She pointed out, “we took the road less traveled. Why? Unfortunately, that road less traveled is mandatory for us to take” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

Below Carla described a tip that she learned when fighting for every possible medical service for her child to survive during the time in the NICU. She stated:

I learned from the hospital days, the squeaky wheel gets the oil and that's for the typical or atypical child. If you are involved, if you are there, if you are present, if you are asking questions, (then) they know you (and) they know your child. They also know OK this parent will be back up in my face, so I don't know what the other kids are doing but with this child, everything's gonna be right. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

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Concept of team approach. Carla feels that the school, school therapist, outside medical staff, and therapist should all work together with her as a team for the social, emotional and academic well-being of her child. Carla takes on more of a global approach when it comes to parent's supporting parents as a team. She spent a great deal of time during her interview redirecting her narrative back to her passion which is helping parents to learn to advocate for their children.

I'm fighting to try to make sure that we have informed and educated parents because there's a lot to learn. You just don't know when you have your child (with an exceptionality) that you (have to) go back to school and all of a sudden is kind of like a University or better yet I like to tell people (you) inherited like a million dollar company with your child. You have to be the CEO of everybody. You have to be a quick study because there's no handbook for that. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

Carla feels, based on her experience in gaining knowledge over the years, that parents typically gravitate towards other parents who have similar experiences. She firmly believes that it is her role as a veteran parent to reach back and help those parents who are new to advocating for their child with an exceptionality. One way that she has taken on this role of change agent is through establishing an exceptional child's program at every school that her child has attended. She indicated that at each school, her goal is "to focus on the school being inclusive, having awareness and positivity" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Carla gathers parent support through the school's parent teacher association, (PTA) and simply by showing up every day to drop off her child at school. She parks her car in the handicap spot and takes on a campaign approach through the car rider lane and in front of the school to solicit

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parent support and membership into the program that serves children with similar disabilities as her child. She has been successful in building a team of parents at each school, fundraising to establish a full week of events each year to market exceptional child's week and spearheading a sensory room addition to her child's elementary school. Now that her child is in middle school, she stated that she's having to start over from scratch, but she is up to the task and has begun once again to garner support to start up a program that was nonexistent when she arrived.

Concept of “insider” vs. “outsider” perspectives: Challenges. Carla identifies her lack of experience as an educator as a hinderance to her role as advocate for her child. She stated, “because I'm not in (the school), I have to learn. I try to be in there as much as I can, but each school is individual. So yeah, it does hinder because it takes longer (to learn)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She noted, however, that nothing was ever going to stop her from advocating for her child and stated, “when it comes to my child, I am more educated (than the teachers)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Carla did realize that the service models, teachers and special education structure, and organization is not a constant throughout the schools within the same school district. She realized, “I'm (also) less educated because they change the process. So, I'm not educated it that way” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

Carla spoke in terms of frustration and challenge when she discussed having to start over from scratch with every school move. She stated that she worked hard to establish programs such as the exceptional child program and to build up the parent base in the elementary school setting, only to move to middle school and realize that it doesn't exist there. Not only do the programs not exist, but she describes her frustration with the lack of parent support or initiative to get something like that started. Carla stated, “I'm not being effective if I keep leaving these

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holes and other parents are used to me doing it. I have to bring somebody along with me.

Unfortunately, in the middle school I haven't made inroads into meeting other parents” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She takes this perceived challenge as a personal defeat.

As a chair for her state’s interagency coordinating council, Carla regularly speaks with representatives from the Department of Education in her state. She has insight to directives from the State Department of Education to individual school districts regarding special education. It is her belief that the school districts are misinterpreting those mandates. When asked where she felt this disconnect occurs, Carla stated, “the superintendents don't know anything about special education. The principals don't know anything about (it)... you have teachers that only deal with typical kids and then go on to become superintendent and they have no earthly IDEIA what they're doing” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She feels as though the lack of knowledge regarding special education of those who are responsible for making district level decisions creates a challenge in parents’ ability to advocate.

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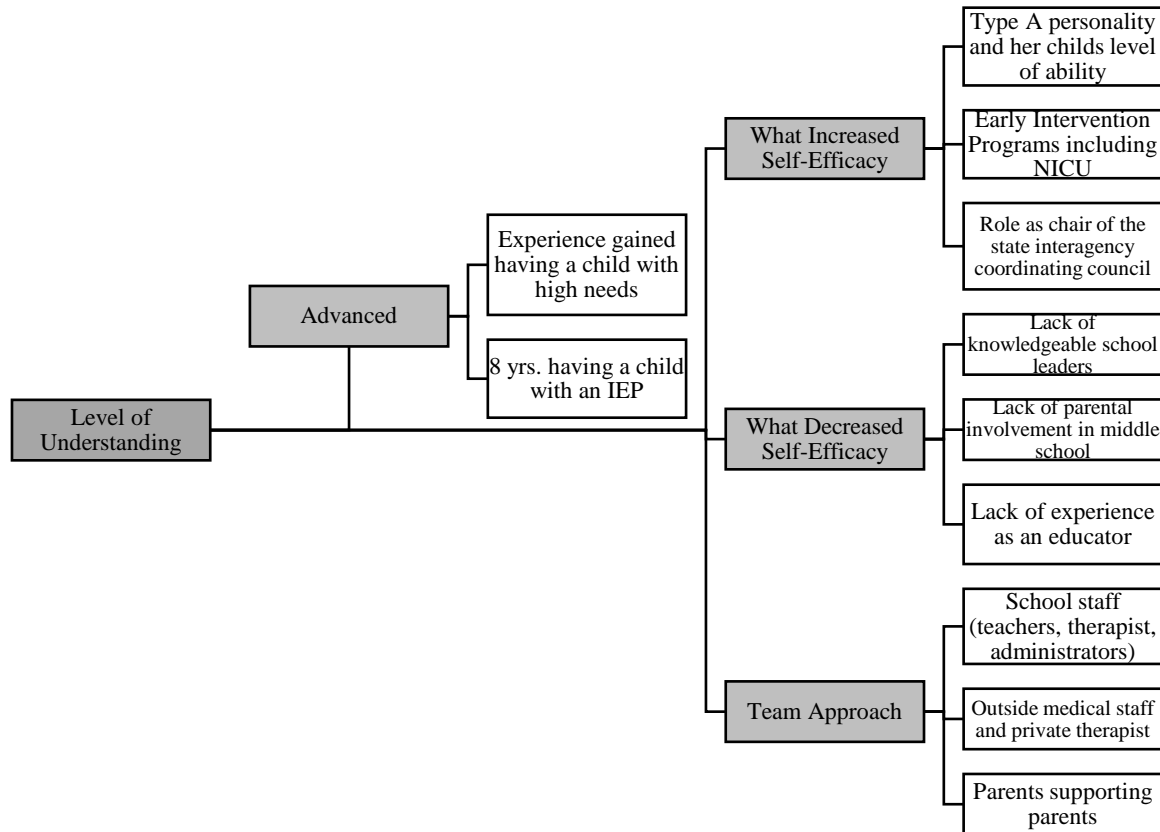


Figure 7: Carla's perspective as a non-educator in the larger school District B

Lisa: Newbie

Lisa is identified as a “newbie” because her child is in the fourth grade and this is her first full year of her child having an IEP. Lisa holds a master’s degree in business with eighteen years of experience in her career in insurance, however, she spoke of feeling limited and intimidated by the field of special education. She spoke throughout her interview with cautious distrust of the special education process and its validity. Lisa stated, “I don’t trust it. That’s my issue that I know I need to work on. My gut tells me that this work (the instruction) is being done. But I have no way of verifying it and that drives me crazy” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

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Concept of parental understanding of policies and practices. Lisa discussed feeling limited in her knowledge about special education in general. She stated “I always like to know about something before I try to speak on it and gauge as much information as possible. I do feel limited” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c) in effectively communicating about special education. She also struggles with understanding special education placement. When asked about her child’s placement she explained there are “some situations in (my child’s) classroom where (my child is) pulled out... I'm not exactly sure the exact name for that class” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

Lisa indicated feeling more informed about her rights as a parent going through the IEP meeting process. She advised that she and her husband “didn't know that if we decided to do this (agree to special education services) that we were a part of that (IEP team). (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c). Lisa noted that her views of special education, although still hesitant, have changed now that her child has an IEP and she is learning about the process. She stated that prior to her child’s IEP she “believed a lot of the stereotypes from when I was in school. Myself and my husband were hesitant on labeling (our child)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

Concept of “insider” vs. “outsider” perspectives: Outsider Benefits. Lisa defined herself as an outsider in terms of knowledge about special education. Lisa said that she relies on her “friends who are parents and educators or my family members who are parents and educators or just educators in general” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c) to gain knowledge about special education supports and services. Lisa stated that she feels her child “may not be benefiting from my process (because) I'm still learning. I feel like (my child) will

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benefit at the end of this semester and definitely next year in what my expectations are. That's what I think" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

Outsider Challenges. Lisa was unable to identify any specific challenges that she's had other than her lack of knowledge about special education. She did mention an incident where she felt that there was a child in the classroom who was acting inappropriately based on general daily conversations with her child. Lisa contacted the school and scheduled a meeting but when discussing her concerns with the school and pushing for additional information about the other child's behaviors in the classroom and how they were affecting her child she was told that this child had "protection(s) in place because of their IEP" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c). She felt limited in her ability to fully advocate for her child without having the right to any feedback about the other student. She stated that although it was frustrating, she did understand and left the meeting trusting that the school would address and resolve the issue.

Lisa mentioned her lack of understanding about the process and her internal battle with believing the data. She stated, "I see (my child's) grades but I don't see progress in (the) work because (there's) no homework. That's a little frustrating. I have to take it all from what they tell me and what the data shows" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c). She suggested that meeting with the IEP team on a more frequent basis, rather than once a year, would help to increase her comfort level. She stated, "I'd like to meet next month or so to see where they feel (my child's) at. They were able to tell me at the end of 1st semester but, I just feel like it wasn't a lot of time" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

It was obvious that Lisa wanted to be a valued member of her child's IEP team however due to her lack of special education knowledge, she stated, "I'm not able to even suggest strategies" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c). She also explained that

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her lack of knowledge challenged her when she had a question about supports or services for her child, but she was often too hesitant to pursue the issue. For example, she said that she will contact the school to ask “how does this work? Then, I don't press it because I'm not well versed in it yet” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

Concept of team approach. Lisa referenced her friends repeatedly when asked about how she gains supports and services for her child. She stated, “I have a big circle of family and friends who are educators. They're not certified in special education, but they know how everything works and they know how I can advocate and (gain) resources that I didn't know were available” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c). Lisa mentioned her child's general education teacher coming to basketball games to support the students and her taking the time out to chat with her about her child's progress. Once her child's IEP was implemented, Lisa reached out to the school's assistant principal who reassured her of the process and Lisa stated, “come to find out she (the assistant principal) has a special education degree. That's her focus. So, we were able to talk about it a little more. It made me feel really comfortable” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c). She notes that those are positive experiences that build trust and supports relationship building with the school.

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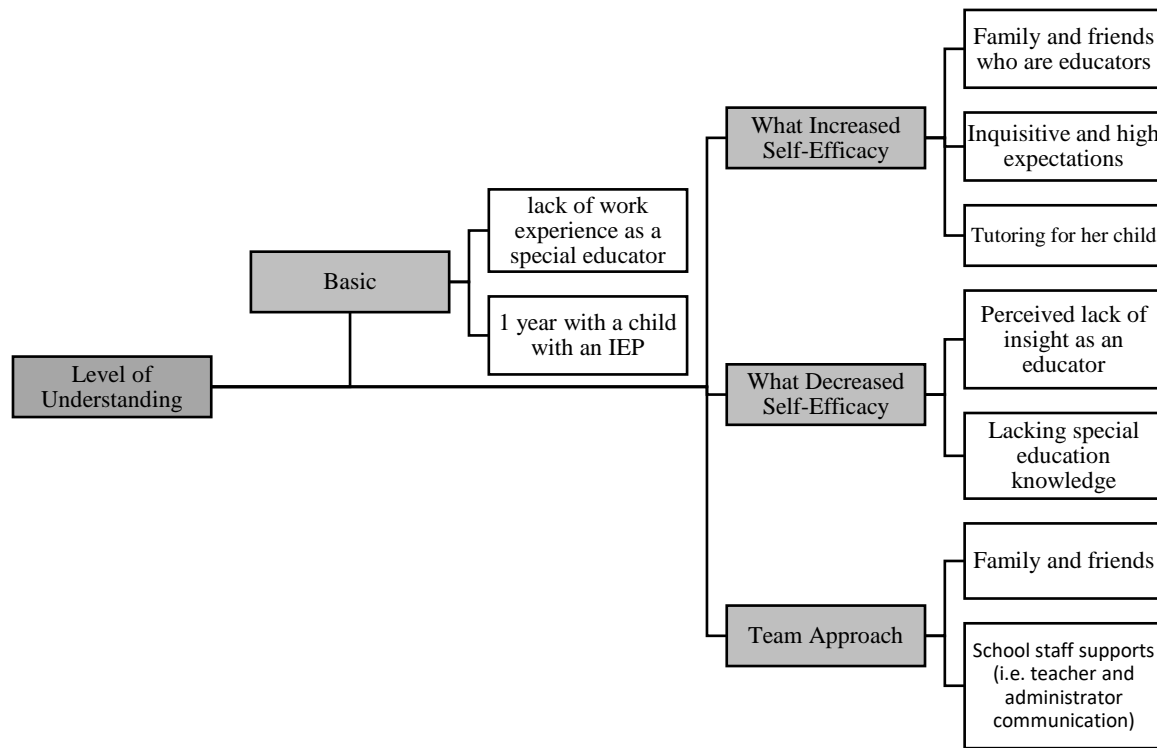


Figure 8: Lisa's perspective as a non-educator in the larger school District B

Participants' Visual Representations: Self-generated Drawings/Collages

Participant-generated drawings were included as data sources in the current study because of their potential for eliciting compelling “voices” from participants. Mey and Dietrich (2017) indicate that “GTM (grounded theory methodology) allows for all potentially relevant data to be used... consequentially, to look at text-based data alone is insufficient” (p. 296). Further, the literature suggests that drawings can provide a window into one’s inner-most thoughts and ideologies (Baron, 2001; Bessette & Paris, 2019; Leitch & Mitchell, 2007).

In Bessette and Paris’ (2019) study on teachers’ professional roles and identities, it is asserted that “visual data are a means by which key insights can be elicited” (p. 184). They sought participant-generated visual representations (drawings/collages) as “devices for helping

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participants reach intentionally into their sphere of past and present experience and describe who they conceive themselves to be in their teaching contexts” (p. 184) Similarly, for the present study, participant-generated visual representations (drawings/collages) were requested as a tool to allow participants to delve deeper into their experiences and to present their perception of themselves in the context of an advocate for their child(ren).

In the present study, participants were asked to generate an original drawing or collage based on a prompt, participant-generated visual representation (Appendix F), to visualize their role as an advocate and all factors that surround that role for the social, emotional and academic well-being of their child with an exceptionality. In order to alleviate “issues related to misinterpretations or ambiguity of a participant’s message... of (the) visual data” (p. 175), an additional prompt was provided, participant-generated diary entries (Appendix G), requesting that participants provide, in their own words, not only a written description of their drawing or collage, but to also include any inferences the viewer should note.

Daisy. In response to the prompt, “visualize your current role as an advocate for your child who has an exceptionality and all the factors that influence your child’s academic, social and emotional well-being; what does that partnership currently look like to you?,” Daisy chose to free draw a concept map for her visual representation. She saw herself as the organizer of her child’s life (Appendix H). She drew a large bubble in the middle of the page with a word organizer surrounded by branches of topics such as “friends,” “test,” “homework,” “clothes,” “backpack,” and a question. During member checking, Daisy revealed that her child struggles with social anxiety, depression and maintaining appropriate friendships. She was constantly feeling out her child’s social and emotional state by remembering to ask questions like “how was your day?” Daisy felt that she must remember to take her child’s concerns about physical

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appearance seriously, assisting with choosing appropriate clothing for school. Daisy stated, during member checking, that her child also struggles with homework and test anxiety therefore, Daisy constantly stayed on top of her child assisting with studying and ensuring that homework was transported to and from school in the bookbag.

When describing her role as organizer she used terms of bearing the weight alone as she journaled “lots of times I feel like the organizer of her life, making sure these things are done” (Parent, Diary Entry, December, 2019a). Daisy did not indicate that this was a shared responsibility or even a partnership with the school as the prompt instructed. The large cloud bubble in the center of the page with lines protruding from the bubble appears frustrated, anxious or overwhelmed. The branches of topics surrounding the cloud center around social concerns and academics.

During constant comparative analysis, I was able to infer from Daisy’s interview transcripts, participant-generated diary entries, member checking, researcher-generated memos and visual representation that she was frustrated with her inability to advocate as freely as she wanted to for her child with an exceptionality. She felt as though she had to always “be on top of things” and “initiate” things. These phrases resonated across the data for her experience. Her drawing and statement support the finding that her frustrations may be impeding her self-efficacy towards freely advocating for her child. Daisy had the fewest forms of communication with the school so far this school year amongst the participants with zero formal or informal meetings, and three to four emails in total this year to the school to advocate for needs and services for her child with an exceptionality.

Winona. Winona used a mixture of word clouds with free draw for her visual representation (Appendix I). Winona drew herself with curly brown hair, bright blue eyes, a

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pink striped shirt and an optimistic smile at the bottom center. Her smile was not overly drawn showing eagerness or excitement, but it shows optimism. During member checking, Winona described her visual representation indicating that someone (her child) with autism holds her heart, represented by a blue puzzle piece with the heart inside. She stated that she will always be her child's biggest cheerleader indicated visually through the cheer horn positioned at the highest point on the page. Winona indicated during member-checking that she holds her emotions close to her, however, she cries often behind closed doors. The crying eye was midlevel on the page. She felt pulled in many different directions and struggled with feelings of uncertainty which was represented by the compass at the bottom of the page. Winona wanted to be a team player with her child's educators but also realized that she was her child's voice in the middle of the storm of accommodation disregard, district special education funding, and the typical issues that arise with children with executive functioning struggles. Although Winona feels tired, frustrated and stressed, which are all represented in the word cloud, she remains optimistic.

Winona's computer-generated word cloud in combination with free drawing coincides with the comparative analysis of her diary entries, in-depth biographical and open-ended interview, researcher-generated memos and member-checking. Her optimism shown in her drawing and word cloud, inferred by myself, seem to enhance her feelings of self-efficacy as an advocate for her child. She proudly identifies herself as the mother of a child with an exceptionality drawing a blue puzzle piece and positioning it at the top right corner of her page with a cheer bullhorn on the top left of the page. Winona's visualization with text identifies the word team while also representing a feeling of being overwhelmed. Her emotions appear to motivate her feelings of self-efficacy and drive her to continue to be a voice for her child.

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Tammie. Tammie chose to free draw her visual representation (Appendix J). She drew the typical one room schoolhouse with one window, one door and children stacked on top of each other. Tammie indicated that “teachers look from the outside and never take time to learn what’s inside. Kids are not all the same” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, February, 2020a). During member-checking, Tammie spoke of having to remind her child’s teacher that her child has an exceptionality. She feels that her child’s teacher does not believe that there is anything wrong with her child. Tammie indicated that the teacher implies that all children that age struggle with completing work independently and that it’s developmentally appropriate for that age. Tammie was left feeling as though teachers did not see students as individuals.

Tammie’s visual representation and her textual description indicate that she is encouraged to speak up on her child’s behalf based on her perception that teachers believe that all children are the same. My inference is that Tammie was encouraged to advocate for her child, and therefore her feeling of self-efficacy was increased. She appeared confident in her opinion about teacher beliefs and although it may appear cumbersome to remind a teacher these things, she continues to communicate when she sees a need that is not being addressed. She spoke during her interview of wanting to help them (her child’s teachers) so that they could, in turn, help her child. She feels that it is her role as a parent to support the teachers’ efforts in educating her child.

Margaret. Margaret chose to provide a photo collage with pictures of her immediate, as well as extended, family: a Christmas card and illustrations for her visual representation (Appendix K). She provided a detailed, written explanation advising how each constitutes advocacy efforts for her child. Margaret stated, “our Christmas card is a good representation of the people that love (our child) and strive every day to help (our child) have a better life and to

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be able to communicate thoughts and feelings to us” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, January, 2020b). The photos of siblings, grandparents as well as other extended family members were included and described as a part of her child’s team helping with speech, social interactions and researching treatment options. Margaret discussed her belief that “if one family member has autism, the whole family has it” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, January, 2020b).

The illustrations included pictures of praying hands, a cross, a heart, therapy visits, a child hooked up to an IV, medication bottles and the word pray. Margaret ended her description with this statement: “we are hopeful that (our child) will continue to make progress and we will find the treatment and therapies to help (him) recover” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, January, 2020b). Although Margaret did not reference religion in her in-depth interview, she did state in her written description of the visual representation, that “we have been blessed to have an incredible support system to help us navigate through this most difficult journey” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, January, 2020b). The illustrations all indicate that Margaret maintains faith and hope for her child.

Margaret’s collage mirrored her unconventional approach to advocacy. She was the only participant who produced a full collage of personal photos as her participant-generated visual representation. Margaret was undeterred when I informed her that adding photos would reduce anonymity. Her main concern was to support any effort for increased communication between parents of children with exceptionalities and the school system. A comparative analysis of Margaret’s interview transcriptions, visual representation (collage), diary entries, and researcher-generated memos reveal that her feelings of self-efficacy to advocate for her child are strong and she tackles perceived needs of her child without trepidation. Margaret spoke of her family in reference to the partnership portion of the prompt versus the school.

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Debbie. Debbie chose to provide a collage of a variety of illustrations randomly placed for her visual representation (Appendix L). She displayed three cartoon illustrations depicting frustration with self-hair pulling, boxing stance and gloves with a ready to fight face, and a frustrated visual randomly placed around the page. At the top of the page, Debbie placed a listening ear, a crying eye, a mountain of paperwork being pushed by an individual, a money bag and a clock. These represent her “role as an advocate for her children with disabilities” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, December, 2019c). She perceives herself as someone who “keep(s) up with the paperwork and pay(s) for others to advocate for my children” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, December, 2019c).

She sees herself in a fight for services, and struggles with finding the time and patience needed to be successful. Debbie included the adoption symbol as both of her children were adopted and she lists the acronym for Fetal Alcohol Spectrums Disorder (FASD) along with a name tag that shows the words “autism mom”. Debbie’s visual presents as a collection, of emotions, issues and concerns; however, in that collection are two hearts and happy children playing together and holding hands surrounding the words “awareness” and “acceptance.”

Debbie’s visual representation mirrored both Daisy’s and Winona’s in that it exhibited a sense of feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. Like Winona, Debbie used her feelings to keep fighting, as seen with the boxing gloves included in her collage. The fight is what supports Debbie’s feelings of self-efficacy and motivates her to continue to advocate for her children.

Julie. Julie provided a very simple and to the point free-drawn visual representation (Appendix M). She drew an individual sitting at a computer “emailing (the) teacher to stay on top of the accommodations” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, January, 2020a). During Julie’s in-depth interview she spoke at great lengths in terms of teaching her children

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independence. The visual displays her advocating from afar. It echoes her sentiments of allowing her children to be at the forefront of advocating for themselves, while she sits behind the scenes in support of them.

My analysis of Julie's drawing, along with transcripts from her in-depth interviews, and researcher-generated memos, supports the inference that Debbie feels less motivated to advocate on her children's behalf as she wants them to learn to advocate for themselves. She appears confident in her abilities to advocate and empowered by her role as educator-parent which reflects someone who has increased self-efficacy; however, she's using her empowered status to teach her children to find their voice (versus speaking for them). She is quietly, yet confidently, sitting behind a computer desk advocating from afar.

Carla. Carla provided two concept maps for her visual representation along with a photo of her child receiving an award (Appendix N). In the first map, Carla places her child's name in the center of the concept map. She had "school therapist," "outside therapist," "family," "medical" and "extracurricular" surrounding her child's name with arrows pointing to her child. She indicated that, in "this model, the child who already has special needs, is trying to understand everything being fed into him" (Parent, Visual Representation Description, December, 2019b). She indicated that the medical doctors never work together.

The second concept map depicts the IDEIA situation which "allows the kid to receive input of everyone working on the same page, faster growth, and hitting milestones" (Parent, Visual Representation Description, December, 2019b). In this model, Carla positions her child at the top with "extracurricular" in the middle leading up to her child. The bottom concept includes "school and therapies," "medical," "family," and "outside therapist" leading up to "extracurricular." In this model, she appears to be suggesting that school, therapies, medical,

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family, and outside therapists should all be working on the same page. Carla provided a photo of her son which I positioned on the second visual where space provided. In this photo her son was receiving a school award. Carla never defined the extracurricular activity in the visual representation description, nor did she mention “extracurricular activities” in her in-depth interview.

Carla’s drawing and written description align with her self-identified type A personality in which she is ambitious and rigidly organized. Carla’s two concept maps depict her perception of what advocacy currently looks like for her child with an exceptionality, versus a concept map of what she believes advocacy *should* look like. Unlike the other participants, Carla did not include herself in either her drawing or written description. It is inferred that Carla feels that it is the job of the educator, therapists, and medical staff to advocate for her child while she is the unseen “orchestrator.” Carla is unquestionably knowledgeable about special education policy and procedure at the state level based on her position within her state’s interagency coordinating council and her role as consultant with the states early intervention program. It is also inferred from her interview transcripts, diary entries, and my memos that knowledge gained from working within these roles has provided her with a feeling of increased self-efficacy to advocate by locating and organizing a team to support her child’s needs.

Lisa. Lisa presented a free-drawn picture as her visual representation (Appendix O). She drew a stick figure and labeled the figure, “Mom” with a happy smile and long arms lifted. Located underneath the arms are the teacher and principal on one side who are smiling with open arms and a coach on the other side, smiling with no arms. Above this image, as if being lifted, was the child who was also smiling with open arms and arrows pointing in one direction. Bubble words stemming from the child’s head include: “fun,” “middle school,” “friends,”

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“bullies,” “math,” “homework,” “family,” “death,” and “boys.” Lisa indicated that this drawing was representative of her “uplifting (her child) and moving (her child) forward” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, February, 2020c).

Lisa journaled that “these are the things that my child may think about on a day to day basis” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, February, 2020c). In clarification, at the time of the interview, Lisa had just experienced the death of her best friend’s young son. She and her daughter had returned from the funeral a few days prior to her submitting the drawing so this would explain the inclusion of the word, “death.” Lisa wrote that “this picture shows that although some of (the) teachers and faculty at the school may have (the) best interest at heart, I have the ultimate job as (my child’s) advocate to make sure (my child) is progressing” (Parent, Visual Representation Description, February, 2020c).

Lisa’s drawing exudes confidence with lifted and open arms and smiles. It can be inferred that she experiences increased self-efficacy when advocating for her child and that she feels supported by the team of educators and school staff. Lisa spoke a great deal of her hesitation and mistrust of the special education process during her interview; however, the visual representation prompt gave her an opportunity to reflect on her feelings, which showed an increase in confidence which she did not express in earlier interviews.

The following table represents how each participant identified themselves as either an “insider” or an “outsider,” as well as the social capitals inferred by myself based on participant-generated data, i.e. in-depth interviews, participant-generated visual representations, participant-generated diaries, and researcher-generated memos.

	Daisy	Winona	Tammie	Margaret	Debbie	Julie	Carla	Lisa
Self - Identified “Insider”	✓	✓			✓	✓		

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Self-Identified "Outsider"	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Social Capitals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator peers • Prof. Dev. Networks • Use of work email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator peers • Prof. Dev. Networks • Use of work email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family & Friends Network • Befriending teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family & Friends Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator peers • Prof. Dev. Networks • Use of work email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator peers • Prof. Dev. Networks • Use of work email 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family & Friends Network • Befriending teachers
Cultural Capitals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sped Education Credentials • Prof. Dev. • Role as Educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Credentials • Prof. Dev. • Role as Educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience having an older child with an exceptionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to a team of professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sped Education Credentials • Prof. Dev. • Role as Educator • Experience having an older child with an exceptionality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sped Education Credentials • Prof. Dev. • Role as Educator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NICU experience • Role as chair for ICC • Role as consult for EI • Access to a team of professionals 	

Table 3: Participant Identification

Participant Diary Entries

Participants were asked to keep either a handwritten or electronic diary throughout the duration of the current study. A number of concepts emerged while analyzing their written thoughts.

Daisy. Lack of communication initiated by the school was a recurring theme in Daisy’s participant-generated diary entries. She wrote, “I know we are all busy, so email is ok. I do wish we could meet at the beginning of the year, face to face” (Parent, Diary Response, December, 2019a). She discussed an incident in which her child was struggling to turn assignments in. She noted that instead of the teacher initiating a conversation with her or her child, it was simply reflected through a poor grade. Daisy emailed the teacher to request an agenda. The teacher complied by providing an agenda for her child. Daisy journaled, “I do

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think they listen if I email with concerns, to a degree, but they never initiate” (Parent, Diary Response, December, 2019a).

Daisy journaled about another incident in which she discovered that her child was struggling with visually manipulating scantron sheets, leading to missed responses and poor grades. She journaled that she “brought it up at the IEP meeting and accommodations were added to test manually versus through scantron. I feel heard and the school gives accommodations; however, they are not carried out unless I stay on top of it” (Parent, Diary Response, December, 2019a). Another recurring theme in Daisy’s journaling was persistence.

Winona. Winona’s journal entries centered around ignored accommodations. She journaled: “this has occurred several times this year. It appears as though both the teacher and co-teacher are struggling to understand the importance of following IEP accommodations” (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020b). She wrote about her frustration and what she perceived as blatant disregard from her child’s IEP team. She blamed poor communication, writing, “I don’t feel like it is a two-way street of communication with this teacher” (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020b). Winona provided copies of three email communications between herself and the teachers and administration to solidify her point.

Winona initiated an email to her child’s teacher to inquire about an upcoming test. Her child received a study guide for a test that was the following day. Her child’s accommodation stated that study guides are to be provided three days in advance. Winona’s initial email was a one sentence email simply inquiring about the date of the impending exam. The teacher replied with a two-sentence reply that the exam was the next day and that she was going over the study guide with the class that day. Winona followed up with two more emails, one to her child’s teacher and another to the entire IEP team. The emails were very direct and detailed and each

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between three to five paragraphs in length. Winona journaled, “my frustration is at a tipping point” (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020b). There were no additional written responses from the school to Winona.

Winona wrote that she received a phone call from the teacher in which they “came to the conclusion that it was time for a change in (my child’s) placement. (My child) will be in a more structured classroom following the break. (My child) is so excited. In fact, the response made me cry” (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020b). Although tensions were high during this time, Winona ended her journal with optimism after a full week of her child being in the new placement, writing, “I finally feel like I have my little math (child) back. I look forward to the remainder of the year” (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020b).

Tammie. Tammie’s journal entries were short and supported her preferred modes of communication, which were all through email. She wrote about an incident in which her child was denied the amount of bathroom breaks that Tammie perceived were appropriate. She indicated that she emailed all of her child’s teachers and the school counselor. Tammie wrote that she received a response within the hour from the counselor indicating that he would address her concern. Tammie journaled, however, “only one teacher responded” (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020a).

Tammie ended her journal entries by reiterating her feelings about the middle school teachers. She wrote, “I feel some of the teachers care. I feel they are overwhelmed and need more assistance. I also see some are lazy and don’t want to see the child for who they are but only for their disability” (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020a).

Margaret. Margaret’s case was unique in that her child was receiving a combination of home /private school at this point. She provided detailed information during her in-depth

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interview and explained how the therapist that they have hired to teach their child, communicates with them and the rest of the team through photos uploaded daily into a shared visual diary. The diary journal was not appropriate for this unique case as Margaret and her husband own the school and the therapists work for them.

Debbie. Debbie's journal entries encompassed the topic of legal recourse. She journaled about her experiences having to bring her attorney back in to obtain additional services for her child. Another recurring theme in her diary was email communication about both of her children's daily behaviors. She wrote, "I've been asking for additional help for (my child's) classroom all year. I was told Friday that another para is coming to the classroom and the principal stated that it was because I had hired a lawyer and thanked me" (Parent, Diary Response, December, 2019c). She wrote often about finally being heard. Debbie also wrote about her definition of a team. She journaled:

I use communication (from my child's) teacher to work as a team in order to deal with current behavior issues. I use it to think about ways to help the teacher and behavior interventions we can all try. I do the same thing with information from the administration at the school. (My oldest child's) teachers communicate about homework that is due and what has been worked on in class. (The) nurse communicates about medication. I follow through and make sure that (my child) has medicine and homework is complete. (Parent, Diary Response, December, 2019c)

She indicated that although the communication was overwhelming, it's also welcome, considering the number of behavior issues that have arisen with her children recently. Debbie wrote that her children's teachers hear her and want to do the right thing however she feels that they "have no power to provide needed help. (The) teachers, therapists, and school

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administration (all) agree there needs to be additional help in the classroom. The district doesn't listen or support them and hasn't given support to the school or classroom" (Parent, Diary Response, December, 2019c). Debbie also wrote that she does "not think that those who represent the special education department or autism trainers value my communication" (Parent, Diary Response, December, 2019c).

Julie. After repeated requests, Julie did not provide any journal entries other than her drawing. I reached out repeatedly; however, the participant sent apologies, and blamed scheduling as the reason for not producing the journal or even submitting a scanned copy of the journal. She did scan the photo of her visual representation for submission.

Carla. Carla chose texting for her journal entry submissions. She asked if this was an acceptable means of journaling as she preferred to text or type versus write. Carla provided photos through text messaging of several of her child's daily communication sheets from home to school, documenting her child's daily skills which were mostly related to food, toileting and behavior notes. The communication sheets included visuals of each academic and special activity offered and were marked with a "do-a-dot" on each day that her child participated in each activity.

Carla also provided goals and objectives created by her child's private therapist. Carla messaged that the private therapist "typed a letter she wanted me to distribute because she felt like she's seen a lot of progress and (my child) sees so many people individually she's trying to work cohesively with them" (Parent, Diary/Text Response, December, 2019b). Carla messaged about the frustration that she experiences with all of her child's individual therapists, teachers, and doctors.

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I do get frustrated at times because sometimes I think (they're) not listening to me and I can give more insight. It is a fine line that I will walk with therapist and teachers because I can give insight and sometimes it seems like they listen and sometimes they forge on with the direction that they're going. I cannot say one is right or wrong because as a mother I can be overprotective. But sometimes they're right and they get more out of (my child) than I thought (my child) could do. It's just a matter of being respectful of each way of listening to each other and a lot of communication that surrounds the individual child meaning, I usually stop listening when they give me textbook answers that pertains to all children and not what they have seen that pertains to my child. (Parent, Diary/Text Response, December, 2019b)

Lisa. Lisa journaled about her insecurities surrounding her lack of knowledge of special education. She wrote, "I try to confirm that I am interpreting the communication appropriately. I sometimes google or ask friends and family members who are educators if I'm understanding something correctly" (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020c). Lisa reiterated in her journal that email was her preferred method of communication because it provided a record which "allows time for all readers to digest and understand" (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020c).

Lisa wrote that she feels she has been heard, based on the "responsiveness from (her) child's teacher by phone and email... and in scheduling of requested meetings" (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020c). She journaled that "no new learnings have emerged as a part of her communication with the teachers or the school" (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020c). She did, however, end her journal stating that she had "learned that there are various protocols to addressing issues with students in the classroom when they are protected by an IEP" (Parent, Diary Response, February, 2020c).

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Findings Across Participants

The results suggest several findings across the participants in this study. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, “capital” was operationalized in the language of parents who have, or endeavor to have, a relationship with their child’s school or teacher for the purpose of efficaciously advocating for their child(ren) with an exceptionality. Further, examining and comparing the voices of parents of students with exceptionalities who are teachers by trade versus those who are not, provide a unique perspective from parents working within the realm of education and a better understanding of the potential variation amongst the two sectors. Thus, this section will provide an in-depth description of the findings surrounding participant social and cultural capitals (Haley, Allsopp and Hoppey 2018; Trainor, 2010a; Trainor, 2010b; Trainor, 2010c).

Social and Cultural Capitals

An important aim of this study was to operationalize instances where social and cultural capital resources for both educator and non-educator parents of children with exceptionalities existed. An example of cultural capital for an educator-parent in this instance, per Trainor’s (2010c) definition, would be my pursuit of a terminal degree in special education while other examples might include work-related professional development or the daily tasks of a special educator. These types of capitals include actions and materials that inform knowledge about the field of special education, such as obtaining the teaching credential itself and the process of using it. An instance of social capital would include the relationships that educator and non-educator parents develop with peers or family and friends, who impart their knowledge in support of their advocacy efforts (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, & Robertson-Grewal, 2011).

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What Participants Have in Common

The following constructs emerged as a result of analyzing all the data sources:

Educator's Perspective. During member checking all educator-parents spoke of utilizing information gained from their weekly professional learning community to support their own efforts in advocating for additional supports and services for their children whether it was through a requested IEP meeting or simply through a general conversation or email to their child's teacher. Daisy described gaining additional knowledge about laws and legal issues through biweekly emails from her schools LEA. Debbie continued to research special education laws, new cases, and take courses to improve her knowledge of issues pertaining to her children's ability levels.

All participants who were educators by profession (i.e., Daisy, Winona, Debbie and Julie) indicated that using their work email benefited their ability to advocate. They cited quicker response times and more welcoming responses from their child's teachers when utilizing their work email to communicate. It was also noted that district emails from student's parents are attention gainers and that they feel less "brushed off."

Daisy stated, "if I have a question about my own children, I usually get a quicker response through my work email" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019a). Winona stated, "I used to only send things through my personal email and then I realized that they weren't always taken seriously" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). Debbie conveyed that communicating through county email "helps (because) they email (me) back right away" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). It was noted by Julie, "I'll start off with my regular (email) but if I start feeling that they think I'm just some Joe

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Schmo then I'll use my school email and I get a difference response” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Early Intervention Impact. Across parent professions, educators and non-educators, six out of the eight participants, (i.e., Winona, Tammie, Margaret, Debbie, Julie and Carla), all cited early intervention programs as impactful supports to parents. Winona intuitively felt that something wasn't right with her child not meeting developmental milestones. She recalled her child's special needs preschool teacher as being impactful during that time stating, “I felt like she sat down and she really listened, and she pushed the school psychologist to reassess. Then she fought to put (my child) in the right programs” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b).

Tammie recalled the preschool referring her to the state's early intervention program for her first child. She utilized knowledge gained from the early interventions with her first child to help her in advocating for her second child. She spoke of the in-person support group of similar parents offered by the early intervention program and how being a part of that group of similar parents “really helped me understand how to deal with certain issues” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). She said that being a part of that support group made her feel “normal” and stated that “it helped for me to hear my child does that too (and) you're not by yourself. I think that's the biggest thing as a parent you sometimes blame yourself because the child is a make-up of you and your partner” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

Margaret indicated that they sought out the state's early intervention program. She said, “I felt like they were way more helpful. That panel of educators (was) more helpful than any doctors that we've seen. They said that (our child) had sensory integration dysfunction. They

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were at least telling us yes, something is wrong” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). Margaret boasts, “I have confidence in the (state’s early intervention) panel” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). As a parent who had access to resources that most parents do not, Margaret gave a raving review to the state’s early intervention program stating:

So, I think the best advice for someone with a young child (is) go through (the states early intervention program). It's a service that's available. It's covered and you will have access to speech and OT (and) they come into your home. I feel like that started us with kind of where we needed to start. That's where we need to start. Those panel (of) people evaluate kids all day long and I honestly think they're better. They can't give a diagnosis, but they can steer you and say you need to get moving on this. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

Debbie spoke of considering the state’s early intervention program with her oldest child. She stated, “at eight months we were going to have the (early intervention) consult but (our child) made so much progress we didn’t. We chose private preschool until three. Then (we pursued) special ed because the (preschool) was not handling it” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2010c). Based on this experience Debbie and her husband contacted the state’s early intervention program immediately upon the adoption of their second child to schedule an assessment.

Julie spoke briefly about how the speech therapist provided by the state’s early intervention program “was really the big link that got (her first child) to the IEP progress” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). Julie recalls that she “was the only one who could understand what (her child) was saying” (Parent, In-depth Biographical

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Interview, January, 2020a). The preschool teacher suggested that she schedule a meeting with the state's early intervention program to request an evaluation for her child's speech.

Finally, Carla had access to the state's early intervention program early into her child's life. Carla's child was diagnosed earlier on with significant medical and cognitive abilities. The children's hospital informed her about the state's early intervention program two months prior to her child's release from the NICU. Carla stated, "I went home, looked (them) up and I called them. I said OK, my (child) is supposed to be getting home (soon) and you have 45 days! They were like ma'am, when (your child) comes home we will be there" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

Lack of Impact of School-Initiated Parent Supports. Seven of the eight participants responded that they were either unaware of parent supports offered by the school district or thought negatively about the supports available, indicating that the supports such as the parent mentor programs were "weird" or that "there are none." Daisy stated, "I'm not aware of any school support programs" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019a). Julie indicated, "there aren't any support programs. I learned a lot from (the neighboring county) but my own county school system, no... I don't believe that they really have much for me. I have to go outside the school system" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). When asked about parent supports available through her child's school district, Tammie replied, "the district? I haven't had any interaction with" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). She went on to state that the middle school that her child attended was hands off and she felt that the school was "just doing whatever to get them (the children) out the way" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

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When asked about school supports, Debbie stated, “there haven't been any. I mean as far as going to the therapeutic services, they got (my child's) behavior in order. But the second they released (my child) they supposedly had wrap around services, but I never saw anything” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Debbie didn't “feel like the educators understand the laws or what's going on to be able to help” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Winona described her knowledge of the district's parent supports as “weird.” Her district provides a pamphlet during each annual IEP meeting with parent mentor information. Winona did not feel comfortable calling someone that she did not know to mentor her. Winona stated, “I think it's really good that they try. So far, my interaction is anything new that they want to try they've explained to me so that in and of itself is a support to me” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b).

Carla believed that most parents in her district are unaware that parent supports within the school district exist. She stated that “the prevailing feeling is that it is for typical kids and not our kids” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She believed that the key to getting more parent involvement in supports, such as trainings provided by the districts parent mentors, was to tailor the communication so that parents of children with exceptionalities are aware that these trainings are for them as well. Carla believed that there was a disconnect in identifying parent mentors as those who provide the supports. She stated:

Either they (the schools) were so busy and it was rolled out as an afterthought, but typical general education teachers don't know their parent mentors. I found special education teachers that didn't know that there were parent mentors in the County. I think it starts in the school district that they do a bad job of having a legend of who this person is or what they do. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

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Lisa replied with a laugh when asked about school-initiated supports for parents. She repeated the question and said, “support for parents?! Are there any” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c)? Lisa reiterated that she was the one who initiated the special education assessment for her child. Her child’s teacher brought concerns to her attention; however, she stated, “I approached the school with this. Once we saw that there were no improvements, I said OK what are my options at this point. What do we do?” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

Defining parent supports

The participants were all in consensus in defining parents supports as either a partnership or a network of like-minded individuals with one goal in mind: that of improving the well-being of the child as well as providing a platform for parents to be heard. Daisy defined parent support as “me coming along side of the teachers doing what whatever they're doing at school to help” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019a). Winona stated that having a teacher or administrator “listen to me (and) me feeling like I've been heard” was her definition of parent support (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). Tammie replied that parent support was when the teacher tells her what she can do to support her own child. She wants to know, “What can I do? What can I take off your (teacher’s) load to help (my child) get where (they) need to be? How can we do this thing together?” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

Margaret, who stepped away from the traditional school setting early on defined parents supports as those parents who related to each other based on their similar experiences in having a child with an exceptionality. She stated, “those (moms) are my best friends because we were going through it at the same time” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b).

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She discussed their inner circle recommendations of preferred doctors and therapist and new research that's on the horizon. Debbie stated, "I define it as being able to listen, being able to help. You know saying, hey I'm there too so they (parents) don't feel like they're alone" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Julie stated that parent supports are "a network of people you have a close bond with because of our kids" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Carla defined parent supports as a partnership. She stated, "a teacher is not a lead. A parent is not a lead. No one is a lead but to get to the needs of the child there has to be a partnership. There has to be a working relationship" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She went on to clarify that her definition does not limit the partnership to include only the parent and the teacher, but a partnership between the parent and anyone who's making decisions for the child. Carla believes that parents "go only as far as who immediately touches their child but they're not looking at who's actually making the decisions for their child" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). She went on to state that what parents didn't realize was,

You have a voice at the table. Your voice matters and your voice is allotted. You allow people that have no experience tell you what to do only because you've been told or taught somewhere that you need to be quiet that your voice is not important. I'm at the table and I'm talking! I could care less if you're listening, but you are gonna hear me. That's the same thing in the school system that the state fights with. I'm trying to get parents to come to these state meetings, but they don't come because they've been told that these are state people making decisions and you're not needed. No, you are needed. You're needed to put that pressure on them to say hey you, this is not a piece of paper

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you're dealing with. This is my child you're dealing with. Same thing in every aspect of the child's life. If parents could see you need to have an interaction when you go to the doctor. You need to have an interaction in all aspects of your child's life. How do parents determine who is making that decision for their child at the school? How do they figure it out? What I've had to learn to do is just step back and watch. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c)

When asked about her definition of parent supports, Lisa stated, "I don't know about parent support programs at all" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c). She talked about how much of a learning curve this experience had been for her stating, "I felt like I was advocating just by getting this done. So now that this is done, I have to figure out how (to) make sure that it's being implemented without being overbearing. My educator friends will help me" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

Challenges of parents who are educators. Educator-parents all presented with examples of internal barriers and guarded feelings that came with being an educator within the same district where their child attended school. These results mirror Haley and Allsopp's (2019) findings that district employees who are also parents of children with exceptionalities struggle to find the appropriate balance between their role as advocate and employee. Daisy discussed her struggles stemming around her husband as an employee within the district and why she felt guarded. Daisy's child attends the school where her husband teaches; however, she takes on the role as advocate to protect her husband's peer relationships. She stated, "sometimes I feel like that hinders (our advocacy) simply because you don't want to step on anybody's toes especially when you're at the same school like my husband" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019a).

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Winona referenced feeling “less hesitant now that (my child’s) at middle school but (felt), it gets a little sticky when you work with the people (teaching your child)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She described the feeling of discomfort when there was a professional relationship that existed and not wanting it to get personal. She said that “sometimes when you have to advocate for your child (and) when you're having to point out things that maybe aren't happening, it becomes personal or the feeling of personal” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b).

Debbie spoke of feeling “less than” and not taken seriously, due to her status as an employee. She began a to provide an example of a time when a teacher was hired for her child’s classroom. She stated that the teacher was hurting children and she notified the school but “they acted like it was all in my mind” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). She abruptly ended the example, but did go on to state “there was a huge meeting and you know there were apologies (but) they didn't take it as seriously (from me)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). She stated that anytime that she asks for services the school district will brush it off. Julie pays for private tutoring for both of her children because she does not believe that the public school system has the funds to service her children to the extent necessary for them to be successful based on their IEP; however, she stated that her status as an employee keeps her from getting an attorney because she doesn’t want to get in trouble with her employer. She stated, “yeah, it keeps me from getting a lawyer” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a).

Winona perceived the hierarchy within the district as a major challenge in successfully advocating for her child with an exceptionality. She stated, “the system is what makes it challenging. We all have our hands tied to a certain degree or have to do so many steps for this

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or I have to talk to this person to make sure it's... in place” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b).

Non-Educator Challenges. When asked if their lack of work experience as an educator affected their advocacy efforts, non-educator-parents (i.e. Tammie, Monica, Carla and Lisa) indicated that lack of knowledge regarding educational jargon was a hinderance to their efforts to effectively advocate. When speaking of her challenge concerning understanding the educational jargon used during her child’s IEP meeting, Tammie said “I was like you gotta just make it plain because I consider myself very smart but what is that acronyms? So just make it plain” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Margaret believed that her lack of knowledge of educational jargon hindered her advocacy efforts.

It completely hindered it because it's like a foreign language. They go in there and they say does (your child) need, and they use letters and you're like what? I don't think that's really fair because you know my husband and I are educated people. It's just that I have an education in business, and he has a degree from Georgia Tech in engineering. We don't have the (acronyms knowledge). It just intimidates me, so I feel like parents are intimidated when they go to these meetings. I feel like parents are intimidated. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

Carla spoke of not knowing the hierarchy of the district and who the players were and their roles. She believed that those who work in the school district have better knowledge of how the school district works and who can effectively support her advocacy efforts. She indicated that it’s a hinderance to her in that it’s time consuming. She stated, “because I’m not an insider I have to learn who the players are, if they’re self-sufficient or not. If not, I don't bother with them. I go to the next person up. So, it does hinder because it takes longer” (Parent,

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In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Lisa spoke of feeling like an inadequate part of the team - as someone without experience in education. She stated that she lacks the ability to even suggest things to the team to support her child's academic success.

Non-Educator benefits. Carla was the only participant who presented an optimistic view of her lack of knowledge as a non-educator. She believed that she would advocate a lot less if she worked within the school district. She stated:

I don't have the knowledge. Sometimes it helps because if you have that knowledge (then) you assume that the teacher already knows what to do. So, you don't advocate as much. But I advocate way too much on little stuff that they (the teachers) already know. I'm like well let's work on this and a lot of times teachers (already) know. My (child) is not the first kid in the rodeo but I advocate just in case they have forgotten. Just in case there's a little quirk that does not fit the mold of what they've been taught. I think what I don't know helps me. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

Parents as Change Agents. Four of the eight participants were identified as change agents based on their desire to help other parents of children with exceptionalities overcome the struggles that they have experienced when advocating for their own children (Aceves, 2014; Sikes 1998). Winona stated that "as a teacher I try to sit in a meeting with the parents and say... Do you understand when the psychologist is talking? Do you understand what they're saying? This is such a passionate thing for me, advocacy" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She was driven to do this based on how "lost" her own husband was during meetings for their child, where she would often take time to brief him before and after, in an effort to clarify the perplexing jargon.

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Margaret explained why she wanted to assist other parents in advocating for their child. She stated, “other moms can help moms. We ended up hiring an attorney to fill out the forms. But, that's a lot of money that people don't have to pay if another mom can say, let me see that form I'll help” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). She talked about her level of education as an important factor however she felt ignorant to the process of advocating for her child within the public-school system. Margaret stated:

I learned early on that it's better to just admit that you don't know and seek help from other moms and other people that have already been that route... I couldn't manage it all. It was all in these notebooks. It was so hard. If someone were to come to me now with a young child, I'd be like OK here's what you need to do. You need to get this app and you need to record it this way. You wouldn't have to do it exactly this way but there's a learning curve. Understanding (that) there's a learning curve and any time that you can cut out some of the legwork then do it. Call and ask for the help. People wanna help. They wanna feel like all the effort that they went through, that it wasn't wasted. I'm more like somebody that could help (now) as opposed to somebody receiving help. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

Debbie felt as though the school district had nothing to help the parents get involved. She felt that any training that was provided was “basically like a ‘sell’ for how great (the) county is. They try to sell us on (new software purchases) instead of trying to help us understand what's going on” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Debbie created a blog on her school website page as well as her own private social media group page to share resources for parents of children with exceptionalities. She provides information on state waivers, the law, local resources such as summer camps, sporting events, and different classes in the community -

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all targeted for children with exceptionalities. When asked why, she explained that it's because these resources were not easily available or accessible to her. Debbie and her husband found things out by word-of-mouth from other parents versus the school; she therefore wanted to make it as easy as possible for other parents who were in need of these same resources to have access to them.

Carla described an experience of knowing a mother of a child with an exceptionality who took her own life. This experience was one reason that she was so adamant to help other parents.

I'm determined to get parents educated. I have to understand that there are some parents who just don't want to be educated. They don't see a way out. But picture it, if you had informed educated parents you could make and have better services for your child in the zero to three population. When they get to be older babies, you get parents that are a little bit more knowledgeable that understand their rights and they can interact with teachers on a different level or the administration on a different level. Then when you get to Part B you have growth and it just trickles all the way up. But there are parents that's not going to want to be educated. They just can't handle it. They're broken themselves. They're broken way before. It hurts my heart when I hear about suicides or mother suicides. Parents who just felt like there was no way they were going to leave their child and there was nothing that they could do or they would just burn out. There was no help for the parents. I can't promise you that there is gonna be help there but you can advocate for your child. If you get enough people to advocate in this state you can see change, lasting change. Now how am I gonna make that happen? Where do I start? I picked the (parents of the) zero to three population. How do I make that happen across the state when services are not equal across the state? I don't know but I'm definitely going to get

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some people to work with me. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

Concept of Parents as Strategists. The “strategist” advocate relies “on their knowledge of their special education rights to advocate” (Burke & Goldman, 2017, p. 4). Tammie found her way as a strategist by experiencing questionable practices over the years pertaining to her child’s IEP. She exclaimed, “I’m a parent who pays attention” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a), describing a time “when they sent me paperwork for (the) IEP. It had the wrong date on it. It was stuff (my child) had met... It was literally as if they copied what they gave me at the end of last year” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a).

Winona gave examples in both her in-depth interview as well as her journal entries about her child’s teachers not following accommodations. She documented those times that her child’s IEP was not being adhered to and she followed through by notifying the teachers and administrators. She also spoke very firmly about the importance of parents knowing that it is their right to call an IEP meeting at any given moment. Debbie takes courses and regularly reads up on current legislations surrounding children with exceptionalities.

Legal Recourse. Three of the eight parents in this study have had to threaten legal action, with one parent choosing to remove their child and themselves from the public-school arena. Margaret felt that there were no winners with legal recourse. Two of the three participants, Winona and Debbie, both of whom pursued legal recourse, are educators within the same school district where their child(ren) attends. Winona’s recourse came when she perceived that her child’s accommodations were not being followed. She informed an administrator that “you have one of two choices - you can either get your teachers in line or my attorney and I will be at our next meeting” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b).

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Debbie followed through by obtaining an attorney to ensure a more restrictive therapeutic classroom setting offered by the district. She described her efforts to obtain a more restrictive environment as atypical in that “people don't normally do that AND (emphasis), we had to ask the director of (the therapeutic program) if we could do a parental referral and how to do it so she would help us get in” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Debbie also journaled about obtaining legal services to garner additional support within her child's classroom through the means of an additional paraprofessional.

For the educator-parents, the decision to threaten legal recourse did not come lightly. Winona stated that it's “really the most uncomfortable place to be in because I have enough respect for my fellow profession that we can handle this. But I had 15 weeks of we aren't handling this” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). Debbie describes her struggle with ensuring that her children's teachers are aware that their use of an attorney does not mean a fight against them. She stated, “even when we're fighting and have a lawyer involved, we make sure that the teachers know that it's not them, it's the district. (We know) going in that they (teachers) are doing the best that they can” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Carla, one of the non-educator parents, felt no hesitation or remorse when she chose to bring a child advocate attorney to her child's IEP meeting. She described being blindsided with the news that her child was being placed at a different school. She indicated that she was not given a viable explanation why this change was being made. Therefore, she requested an IEP meeting and brought a legal advocate with her.

I felt like they weren't listening. I felt like they were ganging up on me. I came back, regrouped, brought my husband and got an advocate, a special needs advocate to come

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in. The school system was not open and honest with me, so I was not open and honest with them about who he was. He sat at the table and took notes like a bumbling idiot. It was just a goofy friend but at the end the lawyer part of him came out but then they asked who it was and he introduced himself and they were mad as a hornets nest but hey, you started the game and I finished the game. So, the truth and honesty weren't there, so I didn't feel slighted at all. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

Suggestions for supports. Six of the eight participants provided unsolicited advice for other parents of children with exceptionalities, as well as for school districts in how they can support effective advocacy. Both Daisy and Winona offered the advice that all parents of children with exceptionalities should notify their child's teacher at the beginning of the year explaining accommodations listed in the IEP. Daisy stated, "I know to do that because I'm in the school system. I feel like it is very important, but some parents may not know to stay on top of things" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019a). While Daisy preferred to email the list of accommodations, Winona preferred to schedule a beginning of the year meeting each year to present the accommodations face to face to her child's teachers.

Tammie believes that the typical "curriculum night" targets parents of students who are typically functioning and in general education. She suggested that "kids that have an IEP should have their own curriculum night 'cause it kinda doesn't focus on those kids that much" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Margaret indicated that utilizing the state's early intervention program was beneficial for parents who are learning about advocacy for their child with an exceptionality. She felt that aside from any doctor or teacher in the public-school system, the early intervention staff were the most upfront with her about her child's challenges and led her on the path to gaining a diagnosis for her child.

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Both Debbie and Carla believed that it's the parents' responsibility to educate themselves. They do, however, work to support parent education. Carla, for example educates parents through her work as a parent resource coordinator and chair of her state's interagency coordinating council, and Debbie through her role as teacher providing resources on her school blog as well as creating a social media page for parents of children with exceptionalities. Debbie stated, "I really feel like every parent should read the Wrights Law book, *From Emotions to Advocacy*. You don't have to be a teacher or an educator to understand. I've read a ton more, but I feel like you've got to educate (yourself)" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

Emerging Concepts

The research questions guiding this investigation were: (1) how do educator-parents and non-educator parents perceive their efficaciousness as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities? and (2), how do educator-parents and non-educator parents construct the narrative of their efficaciousness as advocates as embodied in social and or cultural capital?

Several concepts emerged as a result of cross-comparison of participants' voices, as embodied in social and cultural capital (Haley, Allsopp and Hoppey 2018; Trainor, 2010a; Trainor, 2010b; Trainor, 2010c). These concepts, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five, are summarized below:

Concept of Educator-Parent Capital. Social and Cultural Capital benefits described by parent participants who were educators by profession included professional learning communities (independent and through work networks), peer mentors, years of experience learning about special education, and utilization of work email were used to gain attention and a

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quicker, more productive response from teachers and administrators. Two educator-parents also gained knowledge through their experience of having an older child with an exceptionality.

Concept of Non-Educator Parent Capital. Parents who weren't educators by profession typically relied on family and friends to gain needed resources, while a couple gained experience from having an older child with an exceptionality. One participant was able to gain resources through financial means such as ultimately building their own private school and hiring a full-time private therapist to teach their child. Another non-educator-parent gained knowledge through her life experience as a parent of a premature baby, now a child diagnosed with failure to thrive, and having to advocate for her child consistently due to medical and cognitive challenges.

Concept of lack of impact of school-initiated parent supports. All participants noted either a lack of knowledge regarding school-initiated parents supports or a lack of impact of school-initiated parent supports. Only two parents, one educator and one non-educator, both from the larger school District B, had knowledge of school-initiated parent supports; however, both felt that there was a disconnect with the resources that the school district was offering. They both indicated that parents need more communication about specific and individualized needs. The remaining six parents indicated that they were unaware of school-initiated supports. When asked about school supports, Debbie stated, "there haven't been any. I mean as far as going to the therapeutic services, they got (my child's) behavior in order. But the second they released (my child) they supposedly had wrap around services, but I never saw anything" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c).

The participants were all in consensus when defining parent supports as either a partnership or a network of like-minded individuals with the one goal of improving the well-

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being of the child, as well as providing a platform for parents to be heard. Daisy defined parent support as “me coming along side of the teachers doing what whatever they're doing at school to help” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019a). Winona stated that having a teacher or administrator “listen to me (and) me feeling like I've been heard” was how she defined parent supports (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). Tammie replied that parent support was when the teacher tells her what she can do to support her own child. She wants to know, “What I can do? What can I take off your (teachers) load to help (my child) get where (they) need to be? How can we do this thing together?” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Julie stated that parent supports are “a network of people you have a close bond with because of our kids” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). These examples, provided by participants, of partnerships with the child(ren)’s teachers and networks with likeminded people, are inferred by myself to be social capital.

Concept of Parents as Change Agents. Four of the eight participants were identified as change agents based on their desire to help other parents of children with disabilities overcome the struggles that they have experienced advocating for their own children (Sikes 1998; Aceves, 2014). Winona stated that “as a teacher I try to sit in a meeting with the parents and say... *Do you understand when the psychologist is talking? Do you understand what they're saying?* This is such a passionate thing for me, advocacy” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She was driven to do this based on how “lost” her own husband was during meetings for their child where she will often take time to brief him before and after to clarify the perplexing jargon. Winona described her desire to create a network between herself and other parents, exchanging information for the benefit of their child(ren) with an exceptionality. This network is identified by myself as a social capital.

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Debbie and Margaret both indicated that they want to help other parents because they've gone through it already and would have benefited from having additional supports and resources readily available to them. Debbie described how confusing and overwhelming the process was stating, "you had to meet the right person to get the right email to find out there was this music class here or there was this other thing there" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2020c). Margaret expressed a shared experience of overwhelming confusion. She reported that trying to locate the supports and manage it all, "it got crazy. Like I couldn't manage it all. It was so hard. If someone were to come to me now with a young child I'd be like OK, here's what you need to do" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). Finally, Carla's admitted type A personality can be credited to her role as change agent. She described experiencing feelings of abandonment and loss of her IDEIA of raising a "typical" child when her own child was diagnosed with failure to thrive. She also expressed feelings of being consumed with the IDEIA of parents who are broken and hearing of mother's who commit suicide due to hopelessness. She took these emotions on and used them as fuel to advocate for change.

These examples provided by participants identify social capital. The parents spoke of creating a network in which information could be exchanged between parents of children with similar exceptionalities. Their desire to create these networks derived from their own experiences and lack of resources available while attempting to increase their self-efficacy to advocate for their child(ren).

Concept of Parents as Strategists. The "strategist" advocate relies "on their knowledge of their special education rights to advocate" (Burke & Goldman, 2017, p. 4). Tammie found her way as an entry level strategist by experiencing questionable practices over the years pertaining

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to her child's IEP. She exclaims, "I'm a parent who pays attention" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a) then she goes on to describe a time "when they sent me paperwork for (the) IEP. It had the wrong date on it. It was stuff (my child) had met... It literally is (as) if they copied what they gave me at the end of last year" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). Tammie was identified as an entry level strategist because she still struggled with her knowledge of special education rights. She had learned enough over the years to gain confidence to speak up when she saw something blatantly wrong.

Both Winona and Debbie, educator-parents who have had several years of experience in the field of education, are identified as strategists due to their gained knowledge and level of advocacy. These experiences are inferred by myself as cultural capital. Winona discussed her strategy of scheduling an individualized meet and greet with her child's teachers at the beginning of each year so that she and her husband could meet the entire team and give a "breakdown of who (her child) is and what kind of things have helped" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). She goes on to describe a hierarchy of communication when a problem arises and stated, "I always try to give the benefit of the doubt" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). Winona provided an example in her dairy submission of how she initiates communication to address a concern. She started off with an email to her child's teacher from her work email then proceeded to email her child's case manager when the initial concern was not addressed to her liking. Finally, Winona includes administration and requests an IEP meeting.

Winona and Debbie learned through their experience, as educator-parents, how to better advocate for their child(ren). It was through the school culture and their role as an educator, that they were able to learn their rights to call an IEP meeting at any time. Both participants

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indicated that they knew what to say to school personnel and they learned the hierarchy of communication in order to address a concern. These are examples of cultural capital as inferred by me in that this knowledge was not gained through relationships and networks but through experience.

Debbie provides a very similar description of following a hierarchy of starting the school year off with “emailing every teacher the second the class list came out introducing myself with a couple (of) documents that just summarized (my child) and effects of (the exceptionality)” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c). Debbie, however, takes a more casual approach to tackling concerns. She stated that, “I try to wear 2 different hats” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019c) because she is or has been a mentor to her children’s teachers in the past and she doesn’t want to be a threat to them. These are additional examples of cultural capital based on knowledge gained through experience.

Carla was the non-educator strategist and spoke of meticulously identifying ways to work herself into the school system. She indicated that with every new school her child attends, she goes in asking “what can I do with this school (and stating), “whatever hells my kid trudges his mom trudges with him” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b). Carla stated that they immediately direct her to positions of room mom and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) so she uses those positions to gain access. From that point Carla is typically able to determine who the “players were” who can support her efforts towards effectively advocating for her child. Carla is not associated with a network of individuals exchanging information nor did she reference gaining supports and services through a relationship. She spoke of gaining knowledge through her experiences in roles such as PTA, chair of her state’s

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ICC and consultant for early intervention programs. I inferred these examples provided by Carla as cultural capital.

Summary

Chapter four provided an in-depth description of each participant along with a narrative of their lived experiences while advocating for their child(ren) with exceptionalities. The data presented in this chapter were elicited from: excerpts from interview transcripts and participant diary entries, descriptions of the participant-generated visual representations, documents for review and data from researcher-generated memos. I explained how inferences were derived from participant-generated data representative of social and cultural capitals and the capitals' effects on parent self-efficacy. The concepts of educator-parent capital, non-educator parent capital, lack of impact of school-initiated parent supports, parents as change agents, and parents as strategists were identified.

It was found that educator-parents expressed an increase in self-efficacy through the social capitals gained by networking with peers, engaging in professional development networks, and use of work email. These were identified as social capitals which support participants' advocacy efforts. The cultural capitals identified were participants' academic credentials in education, independent professional development, and experience as an educator. These capitals provided participants with knowledge through cultural means, such as books, tools, and experience learned in the day to day role as a teacher.

Non-educator parents expressed an increase in self-efficacy through the social capitals represented by networking with family and friends and befriending teachers. It was found that not all non-educator parents had access to educator-friends or the ability to befriend a teacher. Some of the noneducator-parents developed their own network of mentors and parents who also

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had children with exceptionalities. Cultural capitals were found to be limited for non-educator parents. Some non-educator parents had access to a team of professionals (i.e. medical, therapeutic and behavioral specialists) that provided them with knowledge through pamphlets and instruction; however, this was not knowledge gained through a relationship or network with a mutual exchange of resources, making them cultural capital. One non-educator parent worked within positions outside of the role as an educator (i.e. chair of her state's interagency coordinating council, PTA, and early intervention consultant) which increased her self-efficacy for advocating for her child. Her experiences were identified as cultural capital resources.

Chapter five will begin with an introduction and include: a) a summary of the study, including what was learned and what was not learned; b) discussion of concepts (findings) as embodied within Bourdieu's Concept of Social and Social Culture framework (1986) and secondary theories; c) Researcher-generated theory emerging from data; d) limitations and delimitations of the study; e) suggestions for future research; and f) the conclusion.

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Chapter V: Summary, Discussion, Researcher-Generated Theory, Limitations and Delimitations, Suggestions for Future Research, and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter will include: a) a summary of the study, including what was learned and what was not learned; b) a discussion of concepts (findings) as embodied within Bourdieu's Concept of Social and Culture framework (1986) and secondary theories; c) Researcher-generated theory emerging from data; d) limitations and delimitations of the study; e) suggestions for future research; and f) the conclusion.

Summary

The research questions guiding this investigation were: (1) How do educator-parents and non-educator parents perceive their efficaciousness as advocates for their own children with exceptionalities? and (2), How do educator-parents and non-educator parents construct the narrative of their efficaciousness as advocates as embodied in social and or cultural capital?

“Capital” in this study was operationalized in the language of parents who have, or endeavor to have, a relationship with their child's school or teacher for the purpose of efficaciously advocating for their child(ren) with an exceptionality. Further, examining and comparing the voices of parents of students with exceptionalities who are teachers by trade versus those who are not provides a unique perspective from parents working within the realms of education and a better understanding of the potential variation amongst the two sectors. As Cosford and Draper (2002) posit, “parents need to be understood as a differentiated group; all parents are not the same and do not have the same experience, nor the same grasp, of educational issues” (p. 359).

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The methods used for this qualitative study encompassed strategies common to Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000, 2006). I utilized an initial literature review to orient the reader to the topic of parent-school relationships, parent-teacher relationships, advocacy for children with exceptionalities, and parents' notions of their efficaciousness as advocates for their children. Of the three (3) prevailing Grounded Theory traditions - Classic, Straussian, and Constructivist, which share a number of methodological techniques (Kenny & Fourie, 2015) – the current study was built on the Constructivist orientation and drew on the Constant Comparative method of data analysis. The study's philosophical position and use of more than one theoretical review of the literature are consistent with the Constructivist approach. The data sources included: in-depth biographical and open-ended interviews, participant-generated diary submissions, participant-generated drawings, document review, and researcher-generated memos (Glaser, 1967; Charmaz, 2014). The theoretical sampling process used for this study can be seen in the figure below:

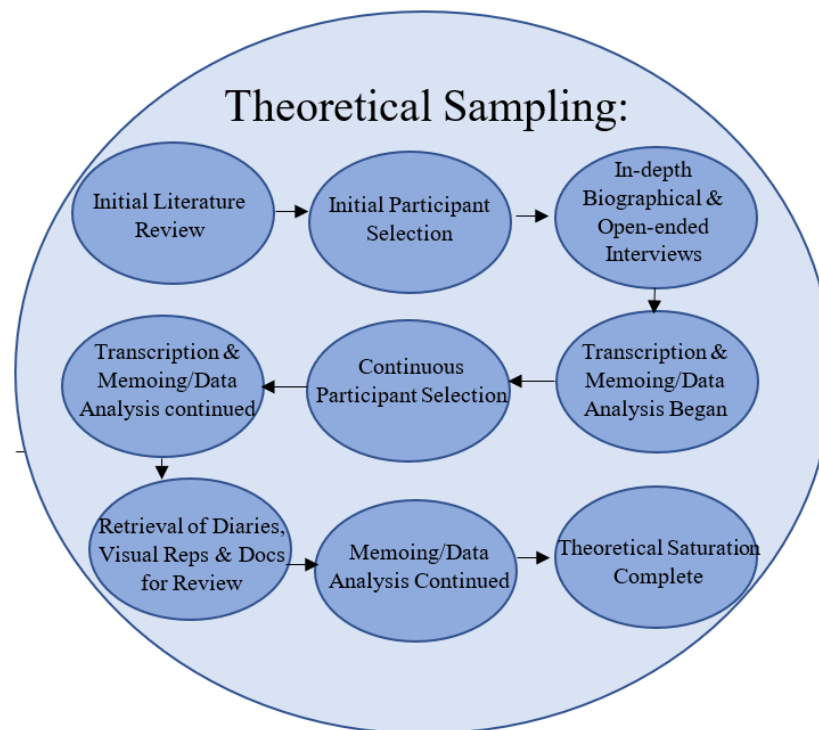


Figure 9: Theoretical Sampling

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All three traditions of grounded theory - Classic (Glaser & Holton, 2004), Straussian, (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and Constructivist (Charmaz, 2000, 2006) are similar in that they are deeply embedded with the following features: “theoretical sampling, saturation, comparative analysis, (researcher-generated) memos, and substantive versus formal theory” (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1272). Theoretical sampling requires the researcher to refine the data “for the purpose of filtering out” (p. 1273) until saturation occurs and theoretical relationships develop. The Constant Comparative method of data analysis is a continuous act of analyzing data sources against one another towards concept development until conceptual categories are created. Researcher-generated memos are informal data sources, typically notes jotted down by the researcher, that remind the researcher about specific details throughout the data collection and analysis phase of the study. The three traditions support a substantive theory which limits theory development to the specific field of study (Kenny & Fourie, 2015).

The three traditions differ in their coding procedures, philosophical positions and use of literature. The Classic tradition calls for an unstilted coding system that allows for an emergence of a theory, whereas the Straussian tradition calls for a strenuous, and highly criticized coding system that is structure(d) to create a rigorous theory rather than to discover one (Kenny & Fourie, 2015). The Constructivist tradition resists the stifling coding approach presented by the Straussian tradition and presents adaptable guidelines for the researcher to code by cues. The Constructivist approach then seeks out recurring or significant codes to produce theoretical categories. Charmaz (2006) emphasizes co-construction and co-interpretation of data through in-depth interviews to “construct theory” versus discovering or creating it, as in the Classic and Straussian traditions.

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Glaser and Holton's (2004) Classic GT appears to be "closely correlated with traditional positivism" (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1281), although Glaser (1999) rejected association with any paradigm. Despite Charmaz's (2000) belief that the Straussian tradition echoed a positivist paradigm, Strauss and Corbin (1990) argue that their approach is from a "post-positivist critical realist ontology" (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1282), i.e., a reality external of our thoughts.

Charmaz (2000) presents Constructivist GT from a paradigm "encompassing many realities... closely correlated with a postmodernist philosophy" (Kenny & Fourie, 2015, p. 1284). The Constructivist tradition, as presented by Kenny and Fourie (2015), presents social realities with a focus on meaning, language, and co-construction of concepts between researcher and participant.

The approaches vary greatly, for example, regarding their use of the literature review. Glaser and Holton (2004) support a delay in the review of literature until the study summary as not to lead the researcher to a presumed theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest a scattering of literature throughout the study with continuous engagement of the supporting literature that is beneficial in reducing researcher influence. Charmaz (2006) fears that an extensive literature review would cause the researcher to become immersed in the literature, squelching researcher creativity. The Constructivist Grounded Theory approach is consistent with the current study in that it supports in-depth interviews, allows for the Constant Comparative method of analyzing data, and gives voice to the participants in the co-construction and co-interpretation of data.

Discussion

Charmaz's (2000, 2006) Constructivist GT approach suggests positioning a summarizing literature review after data analysis as a reinforcing tool to support credibility. The following theoretical literature review both undergirds and supports the concepts and theories generated by the data.

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Conceptual Literature Review: Social and Cultural Capital. Cosford and Draper's (2002) qualitative interview study on parenting as a professional development found that "being a teacher was found to have an impact on personal development in that parent teachers understood how schools work, knew the curriculum and were familiar with major educational issues" (p. 359). This supports the concept of parents perceiving themselves as "insiders" or "outsiders" and the ensuing participant findings that educator-parents have "insider" knowledge that impacts their personal development towards their parental role. In other words, it increases their self-efficacy as advocates.

The purpose of investigating social and cultural capital was to reveal the influence, if any, that these resources had on parents' constructions of their roles as advocates for their children. It was necessary for participants to examine their role/experiences as advocates in order to be able to construct their self-efficacy around those roles. This was completed through a method of individual participant interviews with open-ended questions intended to extract instances of how, why, when, where and what knowledge parents acquired to support their role as their child's advocate. Hovart, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) take on a different approach through the means of ethnographic research. They chose to investigate a similar phenomenon to determine if:

parents differ in how they put their network ties to use in resolving problems with schools to secure advantageous outcomes for their children. In particular, (they) take up the question of whether and how social capital can enable certain actors to *contest* the judgments or behavior of agents who occupy positions of institutional authority—in this case, educators and school officials. (p. 323)

Hovart, Weininger, and Lareau's (2003) qualitative study, focused on how parents of differing social classes network through social capital. They further sought out how parent

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networking choices (whom they networked with) determine how they advocate for their child when a need arises within the school setting. One of the findings of this study suggests that “network differences are clearly associated with differences in the way that problems with the school are handled” (p. 344). This supports the participant voice in the present study that indicate the educator-parents are inferred to have higher increases in self-efficacy based on their varied social capitals (i.e., professional development networks, peer networks), as compared to non-educator parents whose social capitals were often limited only to friends and family networks. Hovart, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) focused on “characteristics of networks across different classes” (p. 319) versus my approach in focusing on types of social and cultural capitals across educator-parents and non-educator parents. The present study did not focus on class, but rather two groups of parents who were perceived to have access to a variety of social and cultural capitals through varying means.

Studies have found that the acquisition of certain types of capital are essential to increasing parent self-efficacy in terms of advocating for a child with an exceptionality (Fenton, Ocasio-Stoutenburg & Harry, 2017; Trainor, 2010a). Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, and Robertson-Grewal (2011) did not specifically mention the word “capital” in their 2011 study on parental advocacy; however, they found that parents who “knew their rights and had access to information about resources... (through affiliation with the school) were able to influence the outcomes of the formal meetings with educators and ensure that IEPs were read and followed” (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, & Robertson-Grewal, 2011, p. 131). Trainor’s (2010a) focus group study on parental perception of involvement in the special education process found that:

....strength and efficacy in advocacy seemed to stem from a combination of specialized cultural capital (i.e., knowledge of IEP content and parents’ rights) and social capital in

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the form of relationships between key players (e.g., extended family, other parents with children with disabilities, teachers and disability service providers, and administrators) (p. 46).

The premise for selecting educator and non-educator parent participants for this study was to determine whether parents who are educators by profession perceive themselves as possessing social and cultural resources that contrast with those of non-educator parents and what the effects of these differing resources might have on parental self-efficacy when advocating for their child(ren). Studies exist that identify and examine forms of educator capital and their positions of authority (Spillane, Hallett, & Diamond, 2003). There are also studies that identify and examine forms of capital resources possessed by parents not identified as educators by profession (Curry and Holter, 2019; Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau, 2003). Further, the literature provides studies, although limited, on relationships between parents who utilize social and cultural capital to advocate for their child, as well as educators who possess social and cultural capital through their professional position (Addi-Racah & Grinshtain, 2018; Trainor, 2010b).

Do parents who are educators by profession perceive themselves as holding an advantageous position due to their professional position(s) as compared to parents who are not educators who similarly advocate for their children with an exceptionality? Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, and Robertson-Grewal (2011) addressed this topic in their qualitative investigation of parents who were board members at a school where their child attended and their dimensions of advocacy, in comparison to parents who held limited knowledge of the inner workings of the school. It was found in this study that the dimensions of advocacy provided a useful framework

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for understanding the participants' experiences and parents could be categorized as insiders, outsiders, allies, and adversaries with different advocacy outcomes.

Haley (2014) completed a study on district employees who advocate for their child with an exceptionality within the same district where they are employed. The results of this study indicate that services and supports which addressed the needs of the children helped parents to advocate. Her study also found that open lines of communication and having someone else "on the inside" who knew what needed to be done and who also advocated for children as much as the participants did, helped increase parents' self-efficacy when advocating for their child.

This query of comparison of the advocacy efforts of educator-parents by profession and the efforts of parents who are not educators had remained unexplored in the literature until now. Studies found that educators hold social and cultural capital resources derived from interactions with colleagues, professional learning communities, work experience and formal educational training (Addi-Racah & Grinshtain, 2018; Spillane, Hallett & Diamond, 2003; Trainor, 2010b; Trainor, 2010c). Trainor (2010c), for example, indicated that "teachers and school personnel may acquire and maintain capital resources by sharing information, professional knowledge, and making connections with one another as a routine part of their job responsibilities" (p. 259). Here Trainor is referring to social capital.

Jackson (2017) provides an explanation of a metaphor provided by Bourdieu (1992) in terms of sports and cultural capital. He stated:

Bourdieu offers the metaphor of a sports field, to clarify the relationship between these concepts (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Players on the field act according to doxa (rules of the game) and their own habitus (sense of how to play). In doing so, they activate and accumulate various forms of capital (such as cultural capital gained from training, or

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symbolic capital gained from status). The position of any given player on the field is determined by the capital that they possess, its value on the field, and their position in relation to the other players. (as cited in Jackson J. , 2017, p. 799)

Based on the literature, it is suggested that educator-parents hold both social and cultural capital that provide both seen and unforeseen advantage and/or value in increasing parent self-efficacy when advocating for their child with an exceptionality.

The results of the present study found that parents who are educators by profession acquired some social and cultural capital resources differently from parents who were not educators by profession. Three of the four educator-parents interviewed for this study spoke of gaining support and knowledge from colleagues using words and phrases that their peers were “sounding boards,” they helped them to “problem solve” and that they shared a “mutual bond” (social capital). The findings support Trainor’s (2010b) study on educators’ expectations of parent participation that “educators' sources of cultural and social capital typically included other building-level professionals such as more experienced colleagues, behavior support team members, and social workers” (p. 45).

All four educator-parents in this study revealed that use of their work email resulted in swift and positive responses. When followed-up with the question, *do you get a different type of response?*, the educator-parents replied, using phrases such as “it helps,” “it’s taken seriously,” “it’s more effective,” “it’s deliberately done,” “that’s why I do it,” “catches their attention,” and “they email back right away.” This supports the notion that “as parents receive encouragement from others to take action, their efficacy is potentially enhanced, and mastery experiences provide impetus for continued involvement” (Curry & Holter, 2019, p. 542). Haley’s (2014) dissertation briefly broaches the topic in a participant excerpt, which implies that use of work

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email and work phone as a means of communication benefits advocacy efforts and self-efficacy of educator-parents by providing them with a perceived a “courtesy” (i.e., as an educator equal to their child’s teachers). Supporting literature remains limited for this finding.

It was also found in cross comparative analysis that both groups of participants, educators and non-educators, share similarities in acquiring and utilizing other social capital resources. Trainor suggests that parents typically gain social capital through building relationships with other parents, teachers and professionals, and through these relationships, learn strategies to access needed services for their children. Horvat, Weininger and Lareau (2003) found in their study on class differences in parent relationships with their child’s(ren’s) schools that, parents typically derive social capital from “family and friends who were in the field of education” (p. 334). Five of the eight participants in the current study, both educator-parents and non-educator parents, indicated that they sought the support of either a peer, family or friend who were all in the field of education.

Additional findings across both groups of parents, educators as well as non-educators, indicated that they experienced a lack of impact on their advocacy efforts from school-initiated parent supports, which neither increased nor decreased their self-efficacy. The topic of school-initiated parent supports was important to this research topic in that schools are mandated and guided by IDEIA, part D, section 1450 (11) to provide parental support and training toward dispute resolution, parent involvement, parent partnerships, early intervention and parent rights (United States Department of Education, 2019). The literature lacks in defining parent supports as social capital; however, Trainor (2010a), makes the connection and finds that “as parents gathered more expertise (via cultural and social capital), they were able to advocate using approaches that were more likely to result in success” (p. 45).

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A quick search of both school districts' (A and B) special education websites led to information regarding a "parent university," parent mentors as well as a barrage of links to available local and state resources targeted towards a variety of exceptionalities, IDEIA, child development, community resources, and parent education. District B's special education website was plentiful in providing direct contacts, photos and links to specific programs as well as program staff. Studies suggest that parent trainings, in the form of face to face, small group or online communication of knowledge, informs parents of their rights, how to better support the development of their child's well-being and increases parent self-efficacy and the feeling of empowerment (Hohlfeld, Harty, & Engel, 2018; Kalyanpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Turnbull et al., 2007; Wright and Taylor, 2014).

All eight parent participants in this study indicated that they were unaware of what supports were available to them through their school districts, or that they felt the school supports were, at best, superficial. Each participant used a derisive tone or demeanor (as noted by the researcher-generated memos throughout the transcription process) when responding to their knowledge of school supports. When asked to define their impression of support programs available through their schools, participants laughed, paused or provided solid and definitive responses with questions and phrases such as, "there are none," "there aren't any," "we have that brochure with the little parents that have been through it, that's weird," "do they have any?," "yeah, I'm not aware of any," "support for parents?!" "I haven't had any interaction," and "I'm still learning what support programs they have" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interviews, December, 2020 – February, 2020).

The parents in this study did, however, speak of beneficial supports in terms of open communication with the IEP team, family and friends, peers, school teachers, and administration.

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The participants overwhelmingly defined parent supports as a network of like-minded individuals who listened to them and who were working towards one goal of the success of their child(ren). Audrey Trainor's (2010a, 2010b, 2010c) research on parental advocacy experiences as it relates to Bourdieu's Theory of Social and Cultural Capital (1986), played a key role in the current study and formed the theoretical frame for the investigation.

The focus of the present study was not to identify types of advocacy, but rather unearth parents' perceptions of what supports effective advocacy and increases parents' self-efficacy. Trainor's (2010a) study identified four types of parent advocates, two of which, the "strategist" and the "change agent," were both undeniably present in the current findings. Three of the eight participants, one educator-parent from each school district and one non-educator parent, were identified as parental strategist as defined by Trainor (2010a). Per Trainor (2010a), "parents who strategized often used sophisticated knowledge about (IDEIA), including their understanding of special education documents, procedures, and parental rights to engage in advocacy" (p. 42). Both educator-parents who were identified as "strategists" had between 18 to 23 years of experience in education, followed blogs for parents of children with exceptionalities, and indicated that they remained abreast of changes in the law and regularly read case summaries. This finding of parent advocate as strategist was also supported by Rehm, Fisher, Fuentes-Afflick, and Chesla who found in their 2013 study that the parent strategist "built on a broad knowledge base and used a range of tactical maneuvers, including prioritizing their preferences among specific goods, specialized services and accommodations" (p. 10).

Carla, the third participant in the current study, who was identified as a non-educator parent strategist, was the veteran parent whose child was born prematurely and who stated that she was required to advocate for her child from birth. This participant not only followed case

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law, she worked closely with the states interagency coordinating council which is a required council developed by each state to support the implementation of IDEIA Part C. She used phrases such as “con my way” and “making inroads” and indicated strategies by stating... “I’ve had to learn to step back and watch because unfortunately I treat teachers like lab rats. I look at them and I watch them, and I see how their personality is and then I actually dig a little bit” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

She goes on to discuss how she used this tactic to situate herself as a part of the network of educators in order to gain in-depth knowledge that would support her efforts in effectively advocating for her child with an exceptionality. This finding was more in line with Rehm, Fisher, Fuentes-Afflick, and Chesla’s definition of the “strategic” parent in that she went about her advocacy in a very deliberate, persistent manner and positioned herself as a part of the network of educators while also holding a relationship with an organization, the interagency coordinating council, that supports disability rights (Rehm, Fisher, Fuentes-Afflick, & Chesla, 2013).

The same three participants who self-identified as strategists (i.e. Debbie, Winona and Carla) were also identified as change agents along with one non-educator parent (Margaret) who ultimately chose to home- school her child. Trainor (2010a) defines a parental change agent as one who advocates for systematic change. The participants in the present study are emblematic of this, as identified through the following phrases, “I’m determined to get parents educated” and “because it wasn’t there for me” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b; December, 2019c). One participant stated that she’s become an unofficial parent mentor because parents “don’t even know where to start. They don’t even know things are available. They don’t know what questions to ask” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b). The

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final participant identified as a change agent indicated, “I always like to put it out there that anybody can call me. People wanna help. They wanna feel like all the effort that they went through... it wasn't wasted” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). These participants are willing to use the knowledge that they have gained to work for change for all students, not simply their own children, which is in support of the findings of Haley, Allsopp and Hoppey (2018).

Winona, the educator from district A with 18 years of experience, indicated that her experience in advocating for her own child with an exceptionality had encouraged her to slow down when she leads an IEP meeting of a student in her class. She stated that she will now stop and question the parent to make sure that they understand the process and what has been said. This finding, although limited to one participant, was key in relation to Haley, Allsopp and Hoppey’s (2018) notion “that parents of SWLD (students with learning disabilities) who are also educators may bring a perspective and voice to the table that can enhance educational decisions for SWLD (Students with learning disabilities)” (p. 28).

What Was Learned

Perceptions of their efficaciousness of their roles as advocates. This study revealed much about this group of parents and their perceptions of their efficaciousness as advocates for their children with exceptionalities. Participants expressed feeling a range of emotions from despair, confusion, hesitation, being guarded, lost, and frustration in their quest to gain needed services and supports for the academic, social and emotional wellbeing of their children. All non-educator-parents spoke in terms of confusion and uncertainty with the type, amount and delivery of academic services that their children were receiving. They wanted to know what

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strategies were being used to ensure progress of their children's IEP goals and objectives and how those strategies were being implemented in the classroom.

The non-educator-parents asked questions such as, "*what is supposed to be happening in this class?*" "*I thought it was one on one but I think it's still small group?*" "*I'm still noticing her letters are backwards... So, what are we doing to fix this?*" (Parent In-depth Biographical, February 2020a; February 2020b). They demonstrated a lack of understanding of the delivery of special education services. Non-educator-parents used the phrases, "I don't understand" or "not understanding" a combined total of 37 times in relation to their children's services and supports within the school setting. This lack of understanding caused parents to be guarded and mistrusting and even apprehensive of the special education process. Participants openly pondered, "*is she being challenged enough? I don't know?*" and, "*I don't see any progress.... I have to take it all from what they tell me and what the data shows... but I'm not that trusting of what I'm hearing*" (Parent In-depth Biographical, February 2020b).

Five of the eight parent participants, educators and non-educators, spoke in terms of feeling despair in their quest to gain early interventions. Parent's intuition led them to believe the following: "*this is not right,*" "*I knew from the beginning that she struggled... it was my own observations,*" "*I was the only one who could understand what he was saying. It was like wait a minute, something's not right,*" "*he only had about 11 or 12 words as he was approaching two. I thought something is not right about this,*" "*He would have outburst... just lay flat on the floor and just lose his mind,*" "*I just felt like she needed that one on one instruction,*" "*(it was) his facial features and he rocked. So that was all concerning*" (Parent In-depth Biographical, December, 2019a - February 2020b).

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These same parents indicated that their intuitive disposition did not effectively support them in gaining early interventions. This supports Trainor's (2010a) finding that "intuitive approaches to advocacy were less likely to result in parents' desired outcomes" (p. 45). Two of the educator parents (one, an 18-year veteran and the other, having just one year of experience) indicated, "*it was a struggle to get it. I think had I not known the jargon to throw out he wouldn't have been assessed*" (Parent In-depth Biographical, January, 2020a) and "*it was not something that was really being flagged...until I was like wait a minute something's not right. I don't know what would have happened. It would have [dragged] out longer*" (Parent In-depth Biographical, February 2020b). The non-educator parent stated,

I was assured that he was fine... they said, well, he's a boy, and I'm sure he's a late talker... I didn't know what to do. The doctors claiming nothing's wrong. I just was desperate. They weren't like handing out diagnoses. I understand you don't want to label a child but it's hard for parents to understand what they need to do. (Parent In-depth Biographical, January, 2020b)

One parent spoke of feeling intimidated during the advocacy process. She stated, "*I feel like parents are intimidated when they go to these meetings*" (Parent In-depth Biographical, January, 2020b). Nearly all educator and non-educator-parents expressed feelings of overall frustration. Some had specific frustrations with their children's accommodations not being met, stating, "I know their excuses probably always seems like they always have a lot of students so they might not know who has what accommodations but I feel like some of (my child's) accommodations are not being met" (Parent In-depth Biographical, December, 2020a). Another participant indicated that teachers appeared to not "understand the importance of following IEP accommodations" (Parent Diary Response, February, 2020b).

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Three of the four educator-parents indicated that their role as an educator supported them in their advocacy efforts. One participant spoke of a professional development opportunity stating, “I did the first part of the training in Wilson Reading so that helped me know how to help my children... (and) in my Masters (program) I got a dyslexia certification through school” (Parent In-depth Biographical, January, 2020a). This same parent stated, “yes, it afforded me to understand to get things done quicker partly because I'm a teacher. I think that they think of me differently. It's like, OK, you're a teacher, too, so we can talk the same language you know” (Parent In-depth Biographical, January, 2020a). However, these same participants stated that outside interventions supported them more in their advocacy efforts with one participant noting, “outside interventions helped more than the school” (Parent In-depth Biographical, January, 2020a).

Data gathered through participant generated diary entries, participant-generated drawings, in-depth and open-ended interviews, documents for review, and researcher-generated memos provided evidence of the ways in which parents saw themselves as either efficacious, or non-efficacious, advocates for their children. To elicit this information, the following questions were asked:

- How do you continue to gain knowledge about your child's(ren)'s disabilities?
- Does your status as a parent who is also in educator, afford you an insider track for advocating for your child(ren). Why or why not?
- Do you feel that your position as an educator helps or hinders your communication with your child's teacher?
- Would you describe these relationships (with the child's teacher and school) as positive or negative or both, and why?

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- Describe how you communicate with your child's (teacher and) school.
- Does your status as a parent who is not an educator affect your ability to advocate for your child? Do you consider yourself an insider or outsider?
- Do you feel that your position as an educator (non-educator) helps or hinders your advocacy efforts for your child? Explain.
- Thinking back to these meetings (with teacher or school), what feelings do you recall came to the surface during these meetings? Can you explain why you felt this way?

Constructing Narrative as Embodied in Cultural and Social Capital. This study revealed how parents perceived their efficaciousness as embodied in cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu's Social and Cultural Capital framework (1986) shines a light on how these parents perceived themselves and how efficacious they felt as advocates for their child(ren) with exceptionalities. This framework guided this study in unearthing the "how, and under what conditions individuals and groups employ(ed) strategies of capital accumulating, investing, and converting various kinds of capital in order to maintain or enhance their positions in the social order that constitutes a central focus of Bourdieu's sociology" (Swartz, 1997, p. 75). Whether educator or non-educator by trade, parents presented their individual experiences, emotions and perspectives under a variety of conditions which resulted in exposing their strength and self-efficacy for advocating for their child with an exceptionality (Trainor, 2010a). Some participants used their knowledge and experience (cultural capital) along with their peer networks (social capital) through their position as an educator to enhance their advocacy efforts. Non-educator-parents rarely identified supports and services that could be considered cultural capital. Their main source of support derived from family and friends (social supports). One participant who was not an educator by trade opted out of enhancing her position within this

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“social order” race by removing her child from the public-school system and building an independent school of their own. Another non-educator-parent used her impeccable drive to situate herself as a part of the network of educators to secure a perceived advantage in advocating for her child’s needs thus moving herself up within this “social order.”

Emerging Concept of Parents Perceiving Themselves as “Insider” and “Outsider.”

Parents appeared to identify strongly with the concept of “insider” and “outsider,” particularly in terms of their ability to “break into” the stores of information pertinent to special education policies and procedures. The term “insider” for the purposes of this study denoted a parent participant who through their role as educator, had access to resources and firsthand knowledge of special education policies and procedures (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders & Robertson-Grewal, 2011; Haley, 2014; Trainor, 2010c). The term “outsider” denoted one who through their role as a non-educator, was limited in their knowledge and experience of the special education process and the availability of resources (Duquette, Fullarton, Orders, and Robertson-Grewal, 2011; Haley, 2014).

Three of the four educator-parents identified themselves as “insiders” and exclaimed that their role as educator helped their advocacy efforts, providing examples of feeling an equal part of the IEP team, feeling heard, and receiving prompt and positive responses through the use of their work email to communicate with their child’s(ren’s) teachers. One educator-parent indicated that she felt both as an “insider” as well as an “outsider” because although she worked within the same school district as her child, she no longer worked within the same school as her child and found it difficult to keep the lines of communication open with her child’s teachers.

All four non-educator parents identified themselves as “Outsiders,” stating that they lacked specific knowledge regarding strategies used to teach their children and expressed

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confusion with the policies and procedures of special education. One non-educator adamantly denied her role as an “Insider,” however she boasted of situating herself within the confines of the school setting through roles on the PTA and as a chair in her state’s interagency coordinating council to “find out who the players are” (Parent In-depth Biographical, December, 2019c).

The Concept of Perceptions of Parents as Advocates for their Child(ren) with exceptionalities.

Parental Development Theory. Mowder’s Parental Development Theory (PDT) (2005) was used in this study as a steppingstone to understand parents’ role development in advocating for their child with an exceptionality. I interpreted what each participant said, wrote, and visualized through in-depth interviews, transcription review, participant-generated diaries, participant-generated visual representations (drawings/collages), and researcher-generated memos to interpret and describe how their experiences were embodied within social or cultural capital. Factors such as family dynamics, social and cultural capital (i.e. networks of family and friends and education level), and having a child with an exceptionality, come into play with parent role development (Mowder, 2005). While there are six characteristics identified by Mowder’s (2005) Parent Development Theory: (1) bonding, (2) discipline, (3) education, (4) general welfare and protection, (5) responsivity, and (6) sensitivity, for the purposes of the present study, I focused on the characteristics of education, general welfare and protection, responsivity, and sensitivity.

In recalling the definitions of each characteristic from chapter 2 of the current study, *Education*, as defined by Mowder (2005), is the transmission of information from the parent to the child. *General welfare and protection* are considered the roles that parents take to protect their child from harm, while also providing their tangible and intangible needs. *Responsivity* is

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“the extent to which parents respond to their child(ren)” (p. 51). *Sensitivity*, finally, refers to the parents ability to “discern what the child is communicating (while) matching the parent response to the child’s needs” (Mowder, 2005, p. 52). The following questions informed these four characteristics within each participants role as advocate for their child(ren) with an exceptionality:

- How many years have you interacted with your child’s school?
- How have you interacted with your child’s school?
- How do you continue to gain knowledge about your child’s exceptionality?
- How would you define your home culture regarding your child’s education? Now how would you define your child’s school culture?
- How do you gain needed services for your child in the educational setting?

Educator-Parents. There were four parent participants who were identified as educators by profession (i.e. Daisy, Winona, Debbie and Julie). These parents all worked as teachers within one of two school districts within the southeastern United States where their child(ren) attend. Data provided by educator-parents through in-depth and open-ended interviews, participant-generated diaries, participant-generated visual representations and through researcher-generated memos identified peer networks, professional development networks, academic credentials, work experience in their role as an educator, and use of work email as the collective embodiment of social and cultural capitals.

All educator-parents gave examples of using their peer networks to gain knowledge about policies, procedures, and cultures. Daisy gained knowledge about the middle school culture and how to hold teachers accountable through emailing a brief student profile with a list of accommodations and how her child works best. This knowledge was gained from her husband

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who also happened to be an educator peer as a middle school teacher. Winona, Debbie and Julie all gave examples of having a mentor within the school where they worked as a “sounding board” for when problems arose with their own children. Debbie discussed problem solving with her peers, not only with students in the classroom, but when issues arise with her own children. Julie identified “a coworker that had a child with similar exceptionalities” (Parent In-depth Biographical, January, 2020a) as her “go-to” person.

The educator-parents made reference to professional development opportunities that supported their efforts and increased their self-efficacy to advocate for their child. Daisy and Winona referenced attending required in-person work trainings (i.e. professional development) on special education law. Debbie and Julie spoke of special education specific courses that they took online individually as professional development that supported their efforts.

Three of the four educator-parents spoke of acquiring additional knowledge about their child’s(ren)’s exceptionality through their advanced degrees. When asked, “*how do you seek information to assist you with effectively advocating for the needs of your child,*” Debbie responded, “I took a lot of classes as part of my Ed.S (Education Specialist) degree” (Parent In-depth Biographical, December, 2019c). Winona spoke of her educational advances providing her with the knowledge that she needed to assist her with advocating for her child. In answering the question, “*how do you continue to gain knowledge about your child(ren)’s exceptionalities,*” Julie responded, “in my Masters (program) I got a dyslexia certification through school” (Parent In-depth Biographical, January, 2020a).

When asked, “do you feel that your position as an educator helps or hinders,” all four participants responded that it helped their feelings of self-efficacy as advocates. All participants also indicated that their use of work email to communicate with their child’s(ren)’s teachers was

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an across-the-board benefit in supporting their advocacy efforts. The prompt and positive reply that ensued with each email sent to their child's(ren)'s teachers when a problem was being addressed was noted by all participants.

The peer relations noted by educator-parents were categorized by myself as social capital. These were analyzed as knowledge gained by the participants through their relationship with another individual. Professional development was denoted by myself as both social and cultural capital as some professional development was regularly held in-person with participant peers, while some were individual and online learning opportunities. The participants described their knowledge gained through their position as an educator in terms of learning from experience and learning over the years from others. I identified both work experience and independent professional development educator as cultural capital. These findings were derived as the knowledge is gained through on -the-job learning experiences that include educational credentials.

Non-educator Parents. There were four parent participants who were identified as non-educators by profession (i.e. Tammie, Margaret, Carla and Lisa). The professions that these four participants held included homemaker, mortgage servicing, insurance professional, and sales representative. Three of the four non-educator-parents had children who attended public school districts within the southeastern United States while the final participant had a child placed in a private school setting. Noneducator-parents were inferred to indicated family and friend networks as social capital and access to professionals (i.e. medical, therapeutic and behavioral) as cultural capitals.

Three of the noneducator-parents relied on their family and friends to support them when advocating for their child(ren) with an exceptionality. They sought out friends who similarly had

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children with exceptionalities and then family members who supported them in their efforts to advocate. They spoke of befriending their children's teachers or teachers that they met along the way to gain access to perceived educator knowledge. One participant, Lisa, indicated that she had educator friends in her inner circle prior to her child's IEP and they helped her to understand special education verbiage that was foreign to her. Tammie spoke of a friendship that she's developed with a teacher who taught her oldest child years ago and how that teacher is now teaching her second child. She indicated, "I know she cares" (Parent In-depth Biographical, February, 2020a). That feeling of familiarity with her child's teacher gave her the confidence to speak up immediately and often when she saw a need. These experiences were categorized as social capital as they are supports derived through relationships and networks of sharing and acquiring information.

Two of the noneducator-parents discussed access to professional services as supports. Carla was able to obtain a one on one paraprofessional for her child and because of her child's significant medical needs, also had several private therapist and therapist assigned to her child within the school setting. Monica also had access to several therapist to support her in her efforts to advocate for her child with an exceptionality. Carla's work experience as chair to the state's ICC and a consultant with an early intervention program, provided her with the knowledge of what services she should request. I categorized these experiences of non-educator parents as cultural capital as this knowledge is derived from experiences.

The Concept of Self-Efficacy Among Educator-parents and Non-Educator Parents.

The construct of self-efficacy was found to be very individualized per participant among both educator-parents and non-educator parents. Six of the eight participants used phrases to indicate they had relied on their intuition to seek supports and services. Participants recalled, "*I felt this*

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is not right,” “I thought something is not right about this,” “I knew from the beginning that she struggled,” “I was like wait a minute something's not right,” “something isn't clicking,” “that was all concerning”. The recollection of these feelings was often followed up by participants stating that nobody would listen to them. For example, medical professionals offered Margaret a pamphlet on “time out,” other parents recalled responses from family and teachers that their child would “grow out of it.” It was often the participants’ intuition that increased their self-efficacy to advocate for supports and services through early interventions.

Those parents who were not educators by profession often sought to befriend either their child(ren)s teachers or sought the support of family and friends who had children with similar needs. Lisa constantly referred to her friends who were educators during her interview. She perceived that they had valuable knowledge for supporting her by noticing if something was awry with the IEP. Her relationship with those educator-friends increased her self-efficacy. She ended her in-depth interview with the following statement about her confidence level in the implementation of her child’s IEP: “I’m working on now trying to figure (it all) out. All of my educator friends will be able to help me with that” (Parent In-depth Biographical, February, 2020c).

In this study it was found that experiences also influenced parent self-efficacy. Margaret and her husband had a negative experience during their child’s IEP in which school professionals yelled at them. That experience and frustration, along with their lack of understanding of the policies, procedures, and context of special education procedures, caused Margaret and her husband to remove their child from the public-school system. Carla’s experience of having a child prematurely and spending a year with him in the NICU increased her self-efficacy to advocate for the needs of her child from birth. This experience resonates with her today and

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continues to empower her to continue to advocate for supports and services within the school setting.

The educator-parents spoke of empowering moments when they realized how effective a work email could be in obtaining a response. All four educator-parents chuckled and spoke-matter-of-factly when discussing the quick response. They indicated that it made them feel a part of the team and heard. This was inferred by myself to be an unspoken advantage that increased parent self-efficacy.

Cultural Considerations in the Quest for Equity.

Three of the eight participants in this study were African American and non-educators by profession. Linan-Thompson and Jean (1997) completed a pilot study investigating the perceptions of culturally and linguistically diverse parents related to the special education process for their children with exceptionalities. As the researchers indicate, “each culture and society defines the parameters of what is considered normal” (Linan-Thompson & Jean, 1997, p. 47). Although none of the questions posed to each of the eight participants in this study focused on sociocultural considerations specifically, all three participants of African American descent spoke of culture and its effect on their position as an advocate. One participant spoke of growing up in the African American community and stating that her family and friends “put in my head that my child was slow... It's very hard to talk to relatives because you don't want the judgment for your kids or for them to be looked at as quote unquote slow or whatever” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a). This supports the findings of Linan-Thompson and Jean (1997), that parents from culturally diverse backgrounds defined their children with exceptionalities as “slow” and often held “a broader definition of disability” (p. 47).

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Another participant indicated that she “had a very different view of it (special education). I believed a lot of the stereotypes from when I was in school. Myself and my husband were hesitant to quote, unquote, labeling her. That was what our impression was” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c). Again, this aligns with Linan-Thompson and Jean’s (1997) findings that “lack of compatibility in perceptions can lead to misunderstandings between the school and families... (and) misconceptions about the purpose of special education” (pp. 47-48). Two of the participants, who were African American, stated that they sought the support of their family and friends who were teachers or who had experience in the education system to help them understand the services provided and strategies used to help their children make progress (Harry, 1992; Linan-Thompson and Jean, 1997).

One participant’s response to the question of whether her position as a non-educator parent hindered her efforts to advocate, led to a discussion of her never wanting to be a “slave to the plantation.” She positioned the school district as the “plantation,” and stated:

When parents get mad at the Department of Education, they don’t realize that the department is a proponent of the child. At least the people that I’ve spoken to. They’re appalled that the districts are doing it different. So, there’s a two-tiered system. There’s the system that is set up that follows and knows the mandates that ‘you can’t do this.’ I was shocked when they were saying you know that they look at economically disadvantaged children but they look at parents that make speak differently like someone may say you know and a good example is when the Department of Education person said this... sometimes when you go to a school system and they’re saying, “OK, everybody, criss-cross applesauce” and little Johnny, I’ll just say, is African American and he’s still running around and doing what he wants to and they send a letter saying that he’s being

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disobedient in class. Well, you know he doesn't know what 'criss-cross applesauce' is because his momma didn't raise him that way. She came from a poor family and she may say, 'Johnny sit your lil' butt down and he will respond to that.' But he doesn't know. So for them to understand that and have to pull teachers and educators in and say, 'no you're at fault.' Did you try this, that, and the other?... but you don't see that when you get to the district level. It becomes more of a tyrant system where they're saying you're gonna do it the way we say. We're gonna educate this way. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b)

This excerpt supports what the literature has traditionally indicated, and that is, that cultural reciprocity is a necessary link in supporting the advocacy efforts and increased efficacy of parents who are culturally diverse (Fenton, Ocasio-Stoutenburg & Harry, 2017; Harry, 1992; Harry & Kalyanpur, 1997; Linn, 1990).

All three participants, who were African American, identified themselves as outsiders by their own definition in terms of "not having the full picture" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020a), "no formal training in teaching" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b), and not knowing how everything 'works' or what resources were available. Their definition of outsider was according to the same standard by which one participant, who was White American, identified herself. She indicated that she had training in behavior modification; however, considered herself an outsider as far as training and knowledge of a special educator was concerned. A educator-parent, who was a White American, perceived herself as both an "insider" and "outsider" based on her perceived resources and increased self-efficacy as an advocate. She spoke of considering herself an insider when she worked in the same school as her child. She did, however, indicate that she was reluctant to call herself an

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insider now because she is no longer working at the same school. She also stated that her fear of “stepping on toes” and causing peer tensions between her husband and his co-teachers, superseded any perceived benefits towards self-efficacy.

The lack of understanding of special education policies and procedures, in addition to the stigma associated with having a child with an exceptionality within the African American community, was found to decrease self-efficacy among two of the parents who were African American. Tammie spoke of her reluctance to seek support from family and friends (social capital) with her second child based on the negative feedback that she received from them regarding his exceptionality. Lisa indicated that she did not want to “label” her child based on learned stigmas from her community. Lisa recalled her best friend, who is African American, saying, “if my mom would have done this for me, I would be further along... (Lisa stated) She struggles as an educator now of 25 years... and realizes if she had those additional services it would have been a different outcome” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020c).

Both participants, Tammie and Lisa, spoke of the dilemma of having a child with an exceptionality within the African American community. They both indicated that although they do rely on their social network of family and friends, they are intentional in leaning heavily on those who are also educators or who have children with exceptionalities of their own. This finding highlights a difference in available social capital based on stigmas associated with special education within the African American community.

The third participant, Carla who is African American, spoke of being “self-taught” and did not speak in terms of social capital. She sought out opportunities to gain cultural capital through her role as chair of her state’s interagency coordinating council and through her role as a

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consultant for the state's early intervention program. She did not identify these roles as opportunities for social capital. She identified them as learning opportunities for herself, which, for the purposes of this study, would be considered cultural capital.

What Was Not Learned

The findings did not indicate any clear cultural capitals used by non-educator parents which might increase or decrease self-efficacy in advocating for their child with an exceptionality. Non-educator parents spoke only in terms of social networks and personal experience. Educator-parents overall spoke of peer relationships, work experience, professional development, work email and academic credentials. This data was inferred, by me, to be resources that educator-parents used and embodied in social and cultural capital. What was not learned through the data provided by the noneducator-parents was why there was little to no indication of cultural capital for non-educators.

One educator-parent contacted me after data analysis and indicated that she had chosen to homeschool her child the following school year. She cited the lack of supports available in the public-school setting for her child's social and emotional well-being. This resulted in two participants, Daisy, educator-parent, and Margaret, non-educator parent, expressing such dismay with the public-school setting that they chose to unenroll their children. What was not learned with the data presented by these two participants was what social or cultural capitals were missing that might have increased their self-efficacy and produced the impetus for them to continue as their child's advocate in the public-school setting.

The Theory of Establishing Social and Cultural Capital to Enable Self-Efficacy Among Parents Who Advocate for Children with Exceptionalities

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As this study has revealed, it is the confluence of parents' experiences, expectations, and social and cultural affordances that help them conceptualize their efficaciousness as advocates for their child(ren) with exceptionalities. Social and cultural capitals, when they exist, are the driving forces that parents utilize to either establish or increase their sense of self-efficacy as advocates for children with exceptionalities. Further, cultural reciprocity is a necessary link in supporting the advocacy efforts, and increased self-efficacy related to those efforts, of parents who are culturally diverse.

Social capital appears to benefit non-educator parents more than cultural capital in terms of increasing feelings of self-efficacy. Where this is not completely true is when there are early interventions applied by the school and parents have access to specialists beyond special education teachers, i.e., speech pathologists, physical therapists, behavioral aides, etc. Feelings of self-efficacy among educator-parents appears to be increased not only by social capitals such as peer networks, use of work email, and professional development networks, but also by cultural capital resources by which educator parents appear to have an advantage, such as academic credentials, work experience, and independent professional developments. Further, social capital appears to be of greater influence than cultural capital among non-educator parents in terms of increasing their feelings of self-efficacy.

The following themes were critical to the development of the Theory of Establishing Social and Cultural Capital to Enable Self-Efficacy Among Parents Who Advocate for Children with Exceptionalities:

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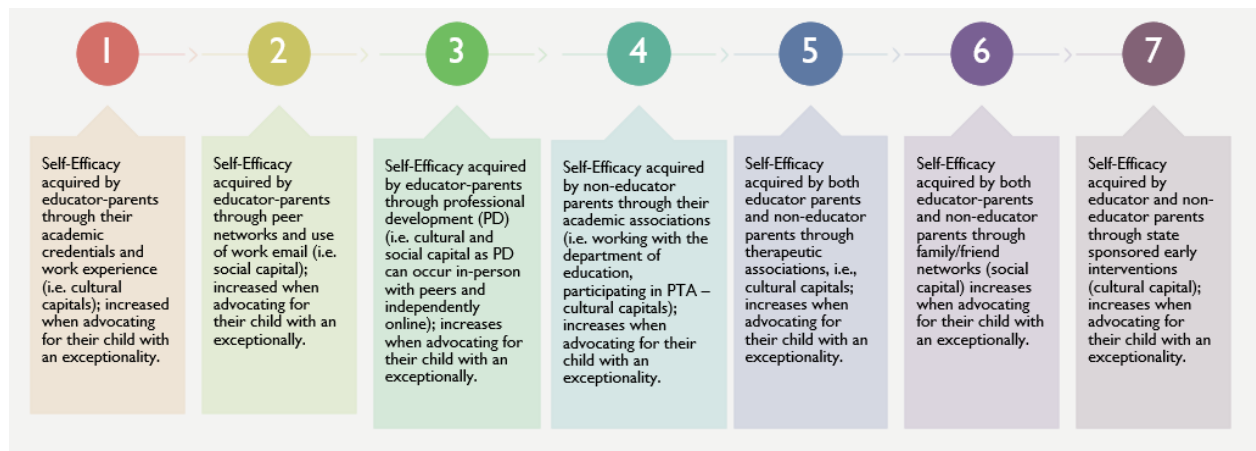


Figure 10: Themes/Findings

- 1.) Self-Efficacy acquired by educator-parents through their academic credentials and work experience (i.e. cultural capitals) increased when advocating for their child with an exceptionality;
- 2.) Self-Efficacy acquired by educator-parents through peer networks and use of work email (i.e. social capital) increased when advocating for their child with an exceptionality;
- 3.) Self-Efficacy acquired by educator-parents through professional development (PD) (i.e. cultural and social capital as PD can occur in-person with peers and independently online) increased when advocating for their child with an exceptionality;
- 4.) Self-Efficacy acquired by non-educator parents through their academic association (i.e. working with the department of education, participating in PTA – cultural capitals) increased when advocating for their child with an exceptionality;
- 5.) Self-Efficacy acquired by both educator parents and non-educator parents through therapeutic associations, i.e., cultural capitals, increased when advocating for their child with an exceptionality;

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- 6.) Self-Efficacy acquired by both educator-parents and non-educator parents through family/friend networks (social capital) increased when advocating for their child with an exceptionally;
- 7.) Self-Efficacy acquired by educator and non-educator parents through state sponsored early interventions (cultural capital) increased when advocating for their child with an exceptionality.

The terms “insider” and “outsider” were not as relevant as I thought they would be in the final analysis; however, those terms did allow the participants to conceptualize their efficaciousness as child advocates.

Conceptualizing the Dual Role of the African American Educator-Parent. None of the educator-parent participants selected for this study were of African American decent. I was only able to identify non-educator parents of African American decent through the participant selection process. As an African American and educator-parent myself, however, I broached this topic within the study with significant, albeit unintended, bias. There is an abundance of literature that exists identifying the overrepresentation of African American children within the realm of special education. As an African American mother of an African American son with an exceptionality, my experience has been one of discontent in obtaining the resources needed - not because of cultural diversity or him being a statistic of overrepresentation - but because I have struggled for years with teachers not identifying him as a striving learner in need of learning supports.

I was able to relate to the findings within this study of educator-parents in that my peer networks, education, and work experience within special education have increased my efficacy in advocating for the needs of my child. I have found, however, that many educators are

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reluctant to pursue or encourage maintaining a label of special education for children of African American decent for fear of being accused of suppression. I have no doubt that overrepresentation of African Americans in special education exists and is a problem. A review of relevant literature supports this. However, I have a child entering middle school who still inverts letters and numbers and struggles to spell lower elementary grade level words because early interventions were missed, possibly as a result of my preoccupation with fighting to keep his services in place. My experience of having him identified as needing specially designed instruction was an uphill battle; I was fully aware of what was needed in order for him to continue to receive the supports and services that *he* needed for academic success.

Evaluation of Validity

One way that I attempted to maintain consistency, reliability, and confirmability was through acknowledging my own bias throughout this study. I consistently resorted to member-checking when a question arose about the intent of a participant's response. At times I felt hesitant to "bother" participants after completing the interview process; however, it was important for me to present their lived experiences, in their own words. This was why the grounded theory method fit this investigation so well; it allowed (and called) for a variety of sufficiently "rich, substantial, and relevant data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 32). My goal in presenting in-depth biographical and open-ended interviews, diary communications, participant-generated visual representations, and communications between home and school was to provide a strong foundation for theory development, one that would be based on data and not perception.

Respecting People with a Story to Tell. My role as interviewer was to listen. Although I went into each interview with an agenda in mind and the expectation of getting all questions answered, as the interviews progressed, I realized that if I allowed the participant to lead the

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conversation then I gained more knowledge of their lived experience. Had I not allowed for unanticipated ventures off the beaten path in participant responses then I would not have the depth of data that I have been able to present in this study. (Charmaz, 2014)

Allowing the participant to lead the conversation did not mean that I did not revisit questions that were missed or misunderstood. I simply allowed participants the freedom to speak without interrupting. This resulted in the participants not only “feeling positive about the interview experience and about (themselves) (Charmaz, 2014, p. 70) but it also resulted in a very therapeutic conversation between myself and participants. Prior to initiating the interview and reading the interview script (Appendix B), I began with a brief introduction of myself and explained my “why” of becoming an educator and interest in constructs of parental advocacy and self-efficacy for children with exceptionalities. I found that this introduction put parents at ease and immediately encouraged them to let down any guards.

Limitations and Delimitations

The limitations of the present study include using a small participant group, which may have compromised the depth and breadth of what was learned. It might have been delimiting to obtain a male perspective rather than that of an all-female roster of participants; therefore, the inclusion of father participants would have added to the richness of this work. The participants were limited to African American and Caucasian parents based on availability and accessibility. In order to delimit this concern, a more culturally diverse mix of participants would have benefited this study. In asking parents to conceptualize their roles as advocates, had I provided them with a definition of the social and cultural capital perspective at the very beginning of the investigation, it may have benefited them in conceptualizing their advocacy efforts in those terms.

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Theoretical Implications

There was a resonating thread amongst all participants indicating a disconnect between parent advocates of children with exceptionalities and the public-school system. This finding was not specifically related to social and cultural capital, nor parent self-efficacy. It was, however, an important enough topic that it merits inclusion in the implications of this study. At the end of each interview, participants were provided an opportunity to define what they viewed as significant when it came to the topic of self-efficacy in advocating for their child with an exceptionality. The excerpts below represent their parting thoughts.

Five of the eight participants spoke in terms of the public-school system being broken. Participants shared these feelings unprompted in the open-ended section of the interview. Three of these five respondents were educator-parents. While the fourth educator-parent did not discuss her thoughts, in general, on the public-school system, she was the participant who chose to leave the school setting to home-school her child. One educator-parent indicated that parents are oblivious to “the depth of how wrong things are” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, February, 2020b) in the education system. Another educator-parent stated, “I can tell you as a parent for so long not in the system... once you get in, you really can see how broken... I really can't believe how broken the school system is. It's so scary. It really is” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020a). While another educator-parent stated, “the school district just has no clue and is unwilling to give support” (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

These excerpts from educator-parents indicate that the struggle with attaining effective supports and services is not an “insider” versus an “outsider” struggle. Instead this is a “parent of a child with an exceptionality” struggle. Many of the educator-parents spoke of a perceived

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lack of funding as a rationale for the dearth of services for not only their own child(ren) with exceptionalities but their students with exceptionalities as well. If school districts are unable to find ways to eliminate the perception of a lack of funding, or the perception of an unwillingness to fund supports and services for students with exceptionalities, then the perception will continue to exist and parents will continue to struggle to successfully advocate for their children. This perception yields to other beliefs that students with exceptionalities are the least important beneficiaries of educational equity and therefore aren't afforded the same consideration when it comes to equal allocation of educational funds.

A non-educator-parent indicated, "the vast majority of the population is relying on the public-school system and it's failing them" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b). While another non-educator stated, "the system is broken and it's not just this county - it's every school in this state" (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, December, 2019b).

Margaret offered the following:

If somehow there could be a bridge between the educators that are in special education. They love these kids. I mean most of them do. Everybody wants what's best for the child. It's the whole litigious environment. If we could somehow bridge that. I don't know how to do it because I can't promise that somebody's not gonna sue. It's gotten to the point to where people are actually told, oh you need to sue the school system. Well do you? I mean that's time consuming on both ends and expensive. I just wish that somehow the school system and the parents could communicate on the same level. Let's use words that we all understand. If you use an acronym, define what that it is. People are new to this. They're shocked that they're in this room. They're shocked that their child has a special need. Show compassion for what the parents are going through.

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(Show) compassion for what the children need. Show compassion for the teachers that are trying to provide it without getting sued. I don't know how we bridge that, but that would be just like the ideal. (Parent, In-depth Biographical Interview, January, 2020b)

These participants agreed to participate because they genuinely wanted to be a change agent and support other parents who struggle with self-efficacy when advocating for their child(ren).

The generated *Theory of Establishing Social and Cultural Capital to Enable Self-Efficacy Among Parents Who Advocate for Children with Exceptionalities* could equally resonate for parents of English language learners and parents of children with varied ethnicities, social, and cultural affordances. If school districts are unable to build stronger connections and affiliations with parents, then parents of children within these disproportionate categories will continue to struggle with effectively advocating for supports and services. Schools need to continue to prioritize creating pathways for parents who do not speak the language and create avenues for parents to affiliate with available networks. School leaders need to also provide access to, and application of, appropriate supports and services for those parents who lack an understanding of the affiliation, access and application process. The goal is to level the playing field so that all children have the same opportunities to be successful, socially, emotionally and academically. Bridging the gap so that all parents have equal access to impactful social and cultural capitals, is the resonating significance of this study.

Suggestions for Future Research

If I, or another researcher, were to replicate this study, I would recommend replacing (or at least augmenting) the insider/outsider metaphor with exemplars of social and cultural capitals, thus bringing the participants into the larger interpretation arena. The inclusion of male

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participants would expose a different perspective that would benefit this study. The addition of opinionnaires and questionnaires would bring about a mixed methodology with quantitative results however the inclusion of this data source would have added to the richness of the data.

I would also suggest eliciting input from diverse parents regarding their experiences with cultural diversity and its effect on their self-efficacy as advocates for children with exceptionalities. This was not a major topic of discussion for this particular study; however, it is an important one. A future study specifically designed to address the topic of self-efficacy among parents of varied ethnicities, i.e., outside the racial majority of White Americans, would be both timely and substantive. The findings of this study suggest that racial disparities, cultural stigmas, and inequalities within the realm of special education play a role in the availability of social and cultural capital to parents who are of the racial minority. How African American parents perceive themselves as advocates for children with exceptionalities would be an important contribution to the literature, as future research that included diverse groups of parent participants would provide significant insight into the cultural and sociocultural aspects of “capital,” and how cultural and social capital might look and be constructed in ways that privilege parents and families from all social and cultural groups.

Finally, as mentioned within the implications, studying the establishment of social and cultural capital to enable self-efficacy among parents who advocate for their children who are English language learners would add to the research and substantiate the generated theory. How many educator-parents exist whose native language differs from the national language of the country where they teach and where their child(ren) attend?

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Conclusion

I have chosen to conclude with a recollection of my own vignette presented at the beginning of the study – and a brief epilogue - to emphasize my personal stake in this study's execution and completion:

It's a Wednesday, late morning around 9am. My three year old son and I are sitting in the main lobby of a one-story, mature, brick building surrounded by the pitter patter of toddler steps, crying babies and immersed in a room full of mothers, babies and fathers of varied ethnicities. The staff appear oblivious behind sliding glass windows as the lobby continues to fill with young mothers and their children. They all present with a look of concern, even suspicion. I feel out of place, awkward and find myself undertaking the same demeanor of concern and suspicion as the time slowly creeps by. After a thirty-minute wait, a younger woman enters the lobby from a back room with a clipboard and reads aloud the name "Binion" without looking up. We quickly gather our things and follow her through the heavy door to the right of the lobby.

The room is darker than expected when we enter. The lights are turned off but the blinds are opened letting in natural light. The smell is old and moldy. There is a table in the middle of the room with mounds of papers. There are two women seated at the table facing us. The third woman who walked us in gestured for us to sit in the corner by pointing towards two chairs. She sat down behind the table next to her counterparts. There is a smaller round children's table and chair a few feet away from the staff table. I am afraid. I can only imagine that he's also afraid, so I hold him tight. The atmosphere is so formal and cold. There are dirty old toys scattered around and beneath the tables on the dirty old carpeted floor. It is not kid friendly. It looks more like an area for pets to play instead of children. The women talk quietly amongst each other as if we're not there. One of the women eventually stands up with her clipboard of

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paper and a pen and walks towards us and says, “let’s get started”. She takes him from my arms, places him on the floor and leads him by his hand to the children’s table. She tells him to have a seat. She sits down next to him and begins presenting him with the dirty toys from the floor. He looks back at me for assurance and I nod and give him a brave smile.

He begins to fiddle with the toys on the table. She asks questions at him, not of him. He does not respond. She marks her paper. He does not look up. He continues to fiddle with the toys. She calls his name and repeats the question. Again, he does not look up. She continues to mark her paper and read through her script pausing after each verbal and gestural prompt. This goes on for roughly 30 minutes with a rotation of dirty toys being handed to him and taken away with directions of place them here or questions such as “what color is that?” or “what is that toy”? My breathing is shallow and I’m holding my purse tightly.

He has an eligibility of significant developmental delay I’m told. It hurts to swallow. I believe that my breathing stops. The world stops. What does that mean? Will he ever speak? What does that mean for his future? “Ma’am, we don’t know, we can’t say and let’s just focus on getting him the services that he needs. Don’t worry.” But I don’t know what this means. Will my child be ok? “Ma’am, sign here, and here and on the next several pages. Take this home and review it. You will be contacted shortly with the date and time that his services will begin.”

Years later, this experience continues to be the driving force behind my qualitative inquiry into the constructs of parent advocacy and self-efficacy as embodied in social and cultural capitals. My own experience as a parent of a child who is a striving learner, a parent who was thrust into the world of special education with all of its formalities, educational jargon, and matter of fact disposition, is not a unique one. The correlation between parent knowledge, experience, available resources, and advocacy for a child with an exceptionality is an important

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focus that I do not feel can be defined by data alone. There are so many other factors and barriers to securing needed resources for children with exceptionalities, which I hope have been presented in this study with respect and honesty. I could never fully do justice to every single experience shared with me, but hope that my participants benefited from taking part in the reflection, description, and conceptualization of their roles as their children's advocates.

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Appendices

- A Consent Cover Letter
- B Script for Parent Participants
- C Parent Open-Ended Interview Protocol
- D Literature Review Matrix
- E Data Reduction Matrix
- F Prompts for Participant-Generated Visual Representation (Drawings/Collages)
- G Prompts for Participant Diary Entries
- H Participant (Daisy) Visual Representation
- I Participant (Winona) Visual Representation
- J Participant (Tammie) Visual Representation
- K Participant (Margaret) Visual Representation
- L Participant (Debbie) Visual Representation
- M Participant (Julie) Visual Representation
- N Participant (Carla) Visual Representation
- O Participant (Lisa) Visual Representation
- P Therapy House Description

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Appendix A

Consent Cover Letter

Title of Research Study: Parent Involvement and Advocacy in Special Education:

Insider/Outsider Knowledge as Embodied in Social and Cultural Capital

Researcher's Contact Information: Karmen Binion, (678) 561-8048,

kbinion@students.kennesaw.edu

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by Karmen Binion of Kennesaw State University. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

Description of Project

The purpose of the study is to explore the ways in which parents who are “insiders” (i.e., those who are affiliated with their child’s school or district in a professional capacity) and those who are “outsiders” (i.e., parents who are not affiliated with their child’s school or district in a professional capacity), advocate for the social, emotional, and academic well-being of their child with an exceptionality.

Explanation of Procedures

First, this Consent Cover Letter will be distributed in- person to a purposeful sample of parents whose children currently receive special education services. Next, participants will be apprised of the purpose of the research and that their participation is voluntary. Participants will also be informed that they have the right to stop participation at any time without penalty and will understand that the research has no known risks, and they will not be identified. By completing this survey, you will be agreeing to participate in this research project. Finally, interviews will be conducted in-person once an agreed-upon place and time have been arrived at and will be audiotaped. They will be conducted in a public location to ensure the safety of both the interviewee and interviewer. Collection of diary entries and participant-generated drawings will follow all interviews.

Time Required

The participants will be asked to input a minimum of one diary entry per week (no more than 15 minutes anticipated per entry) over a period of one month. The final diary entry requested will include a visual representation, either a drawing or collage, depicting their perception of their advocacy efforts for their child with an exceptionality with a written explanation of the drawing attached. This visual representation along with the written description should take no longer than between 30-60 minutes to complete. The open-ended interview sessions are expected to last no longer than 20 minutes each, and the final member checking interview session is expected to last no longer than one hour. The total time requirement for participants is expected to be no longer than 3 hours and 30 minutes.

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Risks or Discomforts

There are no psychological, social, legal, economic, or physical risk likely to occur to participants related to their participation in this study.

Benefits

Possible benefits may include a participant's greater understanding and/or appreciation for their involvement with their child's school and/or teacher and the ways in which they have advocated, and may continue to advocate, on their child's behalf.

Compensation

Each participant will receive a \$25 gift card for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

The results of this participation will be anonymous. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, no identifying information will be collected. Parent respondents will be assigned a number (e.g., #1M = first male participant; #1F = first female participant; #2M = second male participant, etc.). This Consent Cover letter will serve as an introduction and invitation to the current study for each potential participant in lieu of a signed consent form.

Inclusion Criteria for Participation

Only participants aged 18 and over may participate in this study.

Statement of Understanding

The purpose of this research has been explained and my participation is voluntary. I have the right to stop participation at any time without penalty. I understand that the research has no known risks, and I will not be identified. By completing this survey, I am agreeing to participate in this research project.

I agree and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

I do not agree to participate and will be excluded from the remainder of the questions.

IRB Study #20-243

THIS PAGE MAY BE REMOVED AND KEPT BY EACH PARTICIPANT

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3417, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-6407.

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Appendix B

Script for Parent Participant Interview

Interview #/Participant # _____

Date ____/____/____

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Karmen Binion and I am a doctoral student at Kennesaw State University conducting research on parent involvement and advocacy in special education. This segment of the interview is estimated to take no longer than 20 minutes and will include approximately 15 questions eliciting your experiences in partnership with your child's school and teacher for the purpose of advocating on behalf of your child with an exceptionality. There will be approximately 2 additional interviews which will follow this same format as the first. I would like your permission to audio record this interview so I may accurately document the information you provide. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. A numeral and accompanying letter (i.e., "M" or "F") will be used to protect your identity and responses will remain confidential and will be used only for educational purposes.

At this time, I would like to ask for your verbal consent and also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? With your permission we will begin the interview.

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Appendix C

Parent Open-Ended Interview Protocol

- Describe your child’s educational setting.
- How many years have you interacted with your child’s school?
- How have you interacted with your child’s school?
- How did you initially gain knowledge about your child’s exceptionality?
- How do you continue to gain knowledge about your child’s exceptionality?
- What is the age of your child with an exceptionality?
- What is your race?
- What is your age?
- What is your education level?
- What is your career or vocation?
- How long have you been in this line of work?
- What is your socioeconomic status?
- What is your marital status?
- How would you define your home culture regarding your child’s education? Now how would you define your child’s school culture?
- How would you describe your current relationship with your child’s teacher?
- How would you describe your current relationship with your child’s school?
- How did both relationships develop?
- Would you describe these relationships as positive or negative or both, and why?
- Describe how you communicate with your child’s teacher.
- Describe how you communicate with your child’s school.
- How do you gain needed services for your child in the educational setting?
- *(Question for participants who are educator-parents in the district in which their child attends):*
 - a. Does your status as a parent who is also an educator afford you an “insider’s track” for advocating for your child? Why or why not?
 - b. Do you feel that your position as an educator helps or hinders your communication with your child’s teacher or school? Explain.
 - c. Do you feel that your position as an educator helps or hinders your advocacy efforts for your child? Explain.
 - d. Describe how you feel that your advocacy efforts would be more effective if you were not a school district employee in the district where your child attends.
- *(Question for participants who are NOT educator-parents in the district in which their child attends):*
 - a. Does your status as a parent who is not an educator affect your ability to advocate for your child? Do you consider yourself an insider or outsider?
 - b. Do you feel that lacking experience as an educator helps or hinders your communication with your child’s teacher or school? Explain.
 - c. Do you feel that your lack of experience as an educator helps or hinders your advocacy efforts for your child? Explain.

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- d. Describe how you feel that your advocacy efforts would be more effective if you were a school district employee in the district where your child attends?
- How many formal meetings have you had with your child's teacher this year (i.e. regularly scheduled parent/teacher conference, IEP meetings) and what topics were covered in these meetings?
 - Thinking back to these meetings, what feelings do you recall came to the surface during these meetings? Can you explain why you felt this way?
 - How many formal meetings have you had with your child's school this year?
 - How did you prepare for these formal meetings?
 - How many informal meetings have you had with your child's teacher this year?
 - How many informal meetings have you had with your child's school this year?
 - How did you prepare for these informal meetings?
 - Describe the affordances (contributions) you have gained either from a parent, teacher friend or family member regarding the acquisition of services for your child with an exceptionality.
 - Describe how this affordance elevated your understanding of your child's exceptionality.
 - How are you supported in your efforts to gain needed services for your child with an exceptionality? List all of the resources at your disposal as well as the amount of support they provided.
 - Describe the most significant or impactful support that you have received from someone or something regarding needs for your child with an exceptionality.
 - How do you define "parent support" in relation to meeting the needs of your child in the school system?
 - Describe your impression of support programs available through your school or school district.
 - Describe the benefits to your child as the result of attending a parent support program (i.e. online, through your child's school or in the community).
 - How do you define advocacy in relation to meeting the needs of your child?
 - How do you seek information to assist you with effectively advocating for the needs of your child?
 - How, if at all, does the parent support that you have received alter the way that you advocate for your child?
 - Describe what you have learned as the result of being engaged in a parent support program that has helped you to become a better communicator.
 - How has this helped you become more efficacious in communicating for resources and services for your child in the school setting?
 - Describe your greatest achievement in advocating for your child's educational needs. What was most impactful in helping you to achieve this?
 - Describe an experience where your efforts to advocate for your child with an exceptionality were hindered and what you think might have made this effort more productive.
 - Describe your relationship with other parents of children with exceptionalities who you perceive are effective advocates.

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- Describe what makes those parents effective advocates?
- Describe how you resolve disagreements you have with the school when it comes to obtaining resources and services for your child. How do you elicit support from others?
- Describe how your advocacy efforts are received by your child's school.
- Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share?

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Appendix D

Literature Review Matrix

- P - Parent
- PE - Parent Educator
- T - Teacher
- A - Advocacy
- I - Issues
- C - Comparison

Literature Review Matrix																	
No.	Topic	Name of Article	Author	Method/Research Design	Theory or Approach	Main Idea/Purpose	Data Source	Limitations	No. of Participants and Site	Findings	What are your study would add	Differences from my study	Currency	Relevance	Authenticity	Appropriateness	Purpose
PE	A	When a parent of a student with a learning disability is also involved in the same school district, a literature case study	Haley, K.A., Thompson, D., & Thompson, D. (2011). <i>Learning Disability Quarterly</i> , 43(1), 1-11.	Qualitative Interview	Theory of social/cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986)	The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of a parent advocate who is also involved in the same school district where her child attends school.	Interviews with one parent advocate	Convenience sample used with only 1 participant	1 participant	Themes: 1. Parental involvement 2. Advocacy 3. Family 4. School 5. Disability	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Interview, Focus Group, Document Analysis, Content Analysis	A = Haley, D., & Thompson, D.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental involvement Advocacy Family School Disability
P	A	Parental Perceptions of Learning Disabilities and Their Impact on Family Quality of Life	Wang, W., Wang, W., & Wang, W. (2011). <i>Journal of Special Education</i> , 45(1), 14-21.	Quantitative Survey	Family Context, Parental Perceptions	The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between parental perceptions of learning disabilities and family quality of life.	Survey of 100 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	100 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with learning disabilities reported lower family quality of life. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower family quality of life.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Survey	A = Wang, W., Wang, W., & Wang, W.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Context Parental Perceptions
P	A	Parental Perceptions of Learning Disabilities and Their Impact on Family Quality of Life	Wang, W., Wang, W., & Wang, W. (2011). <i>Journal of Special Education</i> , 45(1), 14-21.	Quantitative Survey	Family Context, Parental Perceptions	The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between parental perceptions of learning disabilities and family quality of life.	Survey of 100 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	100 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with learning disabilities reported lower family quality of life. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower family quality of life.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Survey	A = Wang, W., Wang, W., & Wang, W.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Context Parental Perceptions

P	A	The experiences of parents of children with learning disabilities	Parental Perceptions of Learning Disabilities (2011). <i>Journal of Special Education</i> , 45(1), 14-21.	Qualitative Interview	Theory of social/cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986)	The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of a parent advocate who is also involved in the same school district where her child attends school.	Interviews with one parent advocate	Convenience sample used with only 1 participant	1 participant	Themes: 1. Parental involvement 2. Advocacy 3. Family 4. School 5. Disability	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Interview, Focus Group, Document Analysis, Content Analysis	A = Haley, D., & Thompson, D.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental involvement Advocacy Family School Disability
P	A	Parental Perceptions of Learning Disabilities and Their Impact on Family Quality of Life	Wang, W., Wang, W., & Wang, W. (2011). <i>Journal of Special Education</i> , 45(1), 14-21.	Quantitative Survey	Family Context, Parental Perceptions	The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between parental perceptions of learning disabilities and family quality of life.	Survey of 100 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	100 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with learning disabilities reported lower family quality of life. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower family quality of life.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Survey	A = Wang, W., Wang, W., & Wang, W.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Context Parental Perceptions
P	A	Parental Perceptions of Learning Disabilities and Their Impact on Family Quality of Life	Wang, W., Wang, W., & Wang, W. (2011). <i>Journal of Special Education</i> , 45(1), 14-21.	Quantitative Survey	Family Context, Parental Perceptions	The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between parental perceptions of learning disabilities and family quality of life.	Survey of 100 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	100 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with learning disabilities reported lower family quality of life. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower family quality of life.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Survey	A = Wang, W., Wang, W., & Wang, W.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Context Parental Perceptions

P	A	Family of children with disabilities in elementary and middle school: Advocacy models and strategies.	Alper, S., Sullivan, P. J., & Johnson, C. N. (1995). <i>Exceptional Children</i> , 62(1), 241-276.	No method used	No theory used	No theory used	No data source	Limitations: 1. No data source 2. No theory used	No participants	Informational	The information presented in this article is beneficial to expanding the role of parent advocates and not useful to my study.	This article is not a study but more of a review.	C = 1995	A = Advocacy	A = Alper, S., Sullivan, P. J., Johnson, C. N.	P = Informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy models and strategies
P	A	The Advocacy Experiences of Parents of Exceptional Children	Hecker, R., Newman, J., Floyd, A., Jones, F., & Jones, C. (2011). <i>Special Child Quarterly</i> , 59(2), 118-123.	Qualitative Interview	Qualitative Interview	The purpose of this study was to explore the advocacy experiences of parents of children with exceptionalities in order to gain insight into the advocacy process. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.	Interviews with 10 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	10 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with exceptionalities reported lower advocacy experiences. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower advocacy experiences.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Interview, Focus Group, Document Analysis, Content Analysis	A = Hecker, R., Newman, J., Floyd, A., Jones, F., & Jones, C.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy Experiences
P	A	Disability Experiences Through Public Education	Hacker, R., Miller, B., & Sank, C. E. (2011). <i>Disability Experiences Through Public Education</i> , 17(1), 218-241.	Qualitative Interview	Qualitative Interview	The purpose of this study was to explore the advocacy experiences of parents of children with exceptionalities in order to gain insight into the advocacy process. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.	Interviews with 10 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	10 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with exceptionalities reported lower advocacy experiences. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower advocacy experiences.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Interview, Focus Group, Document Analysis, Content Analysis	A = Hacker, R., Miller, B., & Sank, C. E.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability Experiences
P	A	Parenting a Child With Special Needs	Moses, C. (2008). <i>Journal of Learning Disabilities</i> , 41(3), 34-40.	Qualitative Interview	Qualitative Interview	The purpose of this study was to explore the advocacy experiences of parents of children with exceptionalities in order to gain insight into the advocacy process. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.	Interviews with 10 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	10 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with exceptionalities reported lower advocacy experiences. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower advocacy experiences.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2008	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Interview, Focus Group, Document Analysis, Content Analysis	A = Moses, C.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parenting a Child With Special Needs
P	A	Disability Experiences Through Public Education	Hacker, R., Miller, B., & Sank, C. E. (2011). <i>Disability Experiences Through Public Education</i> , 17(1), 218-241.	Qualitative Interview	Qualitative Interview	The purpose of this study was to explore the advocacy experiences of parents of children with exceptionalities in order to gain insight into the advocacy process. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.	Interviews with 10 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	10 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with exceptionalities reported lower advocacy experiences. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower advocacy experiences.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Interview, Focus Group, Document Analysis, Content Analysis	A = Hacker, R., Miller, B., & Sank, C. E.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability Experiences

P	A	Family of children with disabilities in elementary and middle school: Advocacy models and strategies.	Alper, S., Sullivan, P. J., & Johnson, C. N. (1995). <i>Exceptional Children</i> , 62(1), 241-276.	No method used	No theory used	No theory used	No data source	Limitations: 1. No data source 2. No theory used	No participants	Informational	The information presented in this article is beneficial to expanding the role of parent advocates and not useful to my study.	This article is not a study but more of a review.	C = 1995	A = Advocacy	A = Alper, S., Sullivan, P. J., Johnson, C. N.	P = Informative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy models and strategies
P	A	The Advocacy Experiences of Parents of Exceptional Children	Hecker, R., Newman, J., Floyd, A., Jones, F., & Jones, C. (2011). <i>Special Child Quarterly</i> , 59(2), 118-123.	Qualitative Interview	Qualitative Interview	The purpose of this study was to explore the advocacy experiences of parents of children with exceptionalities in order to gain insight into the advocacy process. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.	Interviews with 10 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	10 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with exceptionalities reported lower advocacy experiences. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower advocacy experiences.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Interview, Focus Group, Document Analysis, Content Analysis	A = Hecker, R., Newman, J., Floyd, A., Jones, F., & Jones, C.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy Experiences
P	A	Disability Experiences Through Public Education	Hacker, R., Miller, B., & Sank, C. E. (2011). <i>Disability Experiences Through Public Education</i> , 17(1), 218-241.	Qualitative Interview	Qualitative Interview	The purpose of this study was to explore the advocacy experiences of parents of children with exceptionalities in order to gain insight into the advocacy process. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis.	Interviews with 10 parents	Limitations: 1. Convenience sample 2. Cross-sectional design	10 participants	Findings: 1. Parents with children with exceptionalities reported lower advocacy experiences. 2. Higher parental perceptions of learning disabilities were associated with lower advocacy experiences.	This study focuses on parent advocate professional challenges in an advocacy study.	C = 2011	A = Advocacy & Parent Educator	A = Interview, Focus Group, Document Analysis, Content Analysis	A = Hacker, R., Miller, B., & Sank, C. E.	P = Informative Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability Experiences
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CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

1	Understanding the Systems, Contexts, Behaviors, and Strategies of Parents Advocating for Their Children With Down Syndrome	Kathryn Krugger, Jessica E. Cline, Meghan Dwyer, Robert Steice, and Brian S. Nelson Soc. Sci. Res. 146, 157	Mixed Methods Qualitative/Quantitative	Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory of Development	The purpose of this study was to focus on understanding the ecological systems, contexts, behaviors, and strategies of parents (N = 432) advocating for their children with an intellectual and developmental disability diagnosis, specifically Down syndrome	Interview and focus group questions	101 participants provided	Results from this study indicated that mothers and fathers advocacy varied across different social and cultural contexts. That exist between mothers and fathers advocacy, behavior, and function of advocacy	My study would fit in the gap addressed by the limitations of this study. The path to advocacy would be expected across children with special needs in general.	How my study differs is that a comparative case study and qualitative only, not mixed methods and my study is not about any particular advocacy would be expected across children with special needs in general.	C - 2019 R - Parents, Advocacy, SWD	A - Krugger, Jessica E. Cline, Meghan Dwyer, Robert Steice, and Brian S. Nelson Soc. Sci. Res. 146, 157	A - Qualitative and Developmental Disabilities - Peer Reviewed	D - Infomed
2	Parent Advocacy Styles in Special Education: Making the Transition to Adulthood	Roberta S. Rubin, Lucille N. Fuchs, Elina Frensch, AFrick, Catherine A. Chhabra Qualitative Health Research 13(7): 1387	Ethnographic Qualitative	Transition Theory	The purpose of this article is to present findings about advocacy styles of parents of youth who had both chronic medical conditions and developmental disabilities as they negotiated with school officials.	Interview	12 participants	Results indicate that the parents who were interviewed for their child's education advocacy styles had 3 types of advocacy styles: High Profile parents, strategic parents, and parental mediator parents. The parents who were interviewed were most successful in negotiating with school officials.	My study would address the findings of this study by not only focusing on advocacy styles but the path to advocacy by parents of children with disabilities and comparing and contrasting mediator parents to strategic parents. This study focuses on advocacy styles, not what led to them.	The differences in this study versus my study is that my study is a comparative case study and focuses on mediator path to advocacy versus outcomes. My study would add to the literature by exploring what factors led to the advocacy styles that each type of parent possesses.	C - 2013 R - Parents, Advocacy, SWD	A - Rubin S. Fuchs Lucille N. Fuchs, Elina Frensch, AFrick, Catherine A. Chhabra	A - Qualitative Health Research - Peer Reviewed	D - Infomed
3	Parenting success and challenges for families of	Alford, Carl L., Harris, Cynthia			The purpose of this study was to determine						C - 2013			

3	Children with disabilities: An ecological systems analysis	Hong, Jun-Hyung 2013, <i>Journal of Human Behavior on the Internet: E-Intelligence</i> (12), 156			if progress is needed, both in the understanding of the factors that contribute to or mitigate parenting success of caregivers of children with disabilities and in the development of intervention strategies that enhance parenting success.				R - Parents, Advocacy, SWD A - Alford, Carl L., Harris, Cynthia, Hong, Jun-Hyung A - <i>Journal of Human Behavior on the Internet: E-Intelligence</i> - Peer Reviewed D - Infomed
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CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix E

Data Reduction Matrix

DATA REDUCTION MATRIX TO LINK RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DATA GATHERING METHODS					
What do I need to know?	Why do I need to know this?	What kind of data will answer the questions?	Where can I find the data?	Whom do I contact for access?	Timeline for acquisition
<p><u>Question A</u></p> <p>How do parents' perceptions of their roles as advocates vary within and across groups based on their position as an insider or outsider?</p>	<p>To examine the perceived impact, if any, of educator-parents over parents who are not educators by profession on their advocacy experience.</p>	<p><u>Data Source A:</u> Open-Ended Interview</p> <p><u>Data Source B:</u> Dairy Entries</p> <p><u>Data Source C:</u> Participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collage)</p> <p><u>Data Source E:</u> Documents for Review</p>	<p><u>Data Source A:</u> Participant Interviews</p> <p><u>Data Source B:</u> Participant Data Entries</p> <p><u>Data Source C:</u> Participant-generated visual representation (drawings/collage)</p> <p><u>Data Source E:</u> Discretionary Documents provided by Participants</p>	<p><u>Place/organization/person</u> Public Locations/Study Participants</p>	<p>3 months for concurrent data collection and analysis</p>

CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix F

Prompts for Participant-Generated Visual Representation (Drawings/Collages)

1. Prompt: Visualize your current role as an advocate for your child who has an exceptionality and all the factors that influence your child's academic, social and emotional well-being. What does that partnership currently look like to you? You have the option to draw your response or create a collage if you feel more comfortable with that option.

CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix G

Prompts for Participant Diary Entries

(Please complete all below; you may add any additional information that you like)

1. Describe how you make meaning of communication that is initiated from your child's teacher/school.
2. What forms of communication are most often used? Has this communication been electronic or face-to-face and which is your preference and why?
3. Describe the content of the communication that you have had with your child's school or teacher. Have the content and the format been appropriately conceived and delivered? Why or why not?
4. Describe a time when communication between you and your child's school or teacher has resulted in the acquisition of needed resources or services for your child. Include the origin of the communication, the type of communication, and any "asks" on your part or the school's or teacher's part.
5. Explain if, and how, you feel heard by the party with whom you currently communicate at your child's school. Please provide examples.
6. Explain if and how you feel valued by the party with whom you currently communicate at your child's school. Please provide examples.
7. What new understandings have emerged for you as a result of your communication with your child's teacher or school?

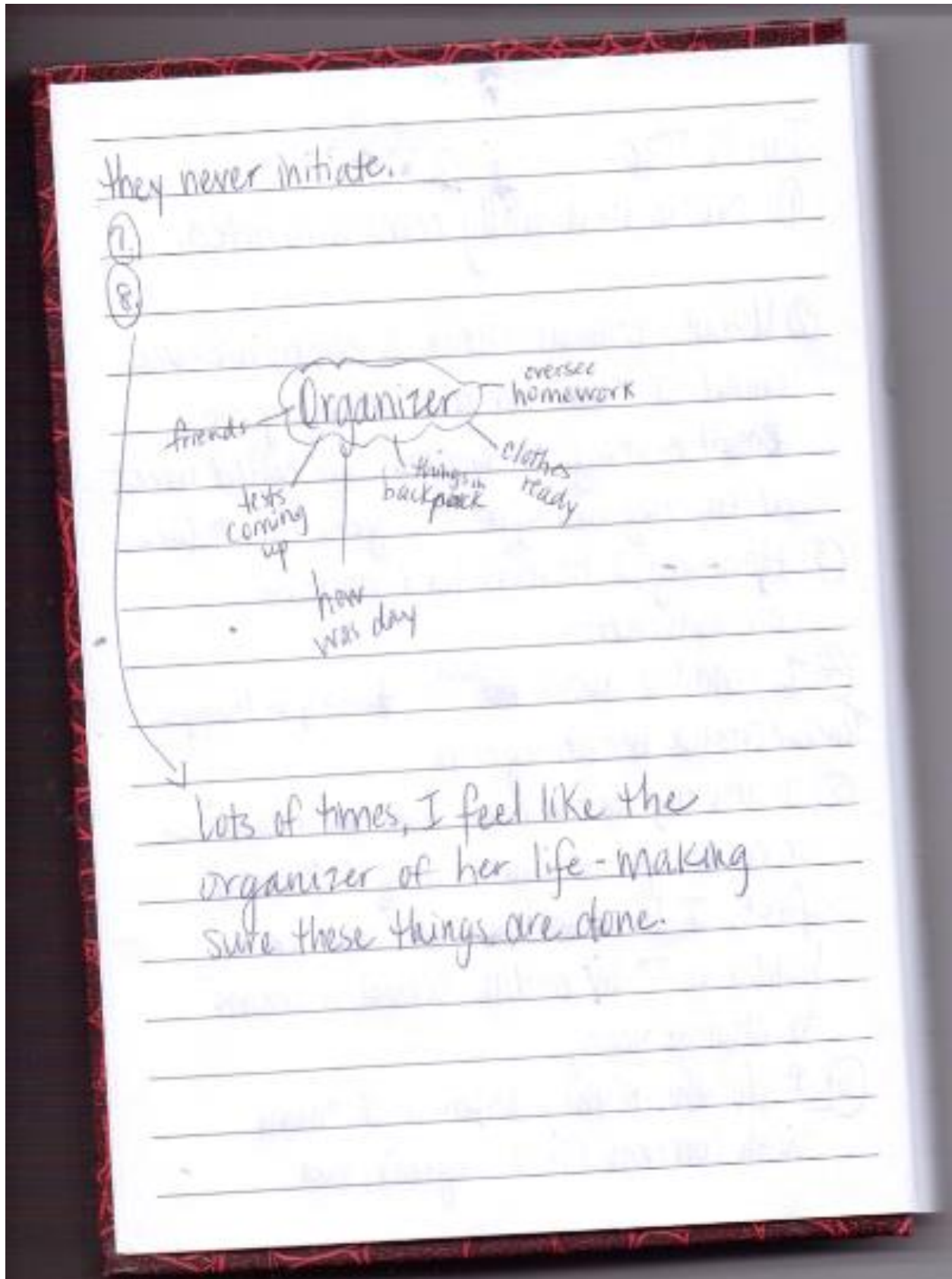
CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

8. Provide a written description of your drawing or collage and include any inferences the viewer should note.

CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix H

Participant (Daisy) Visual Representation



CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix I

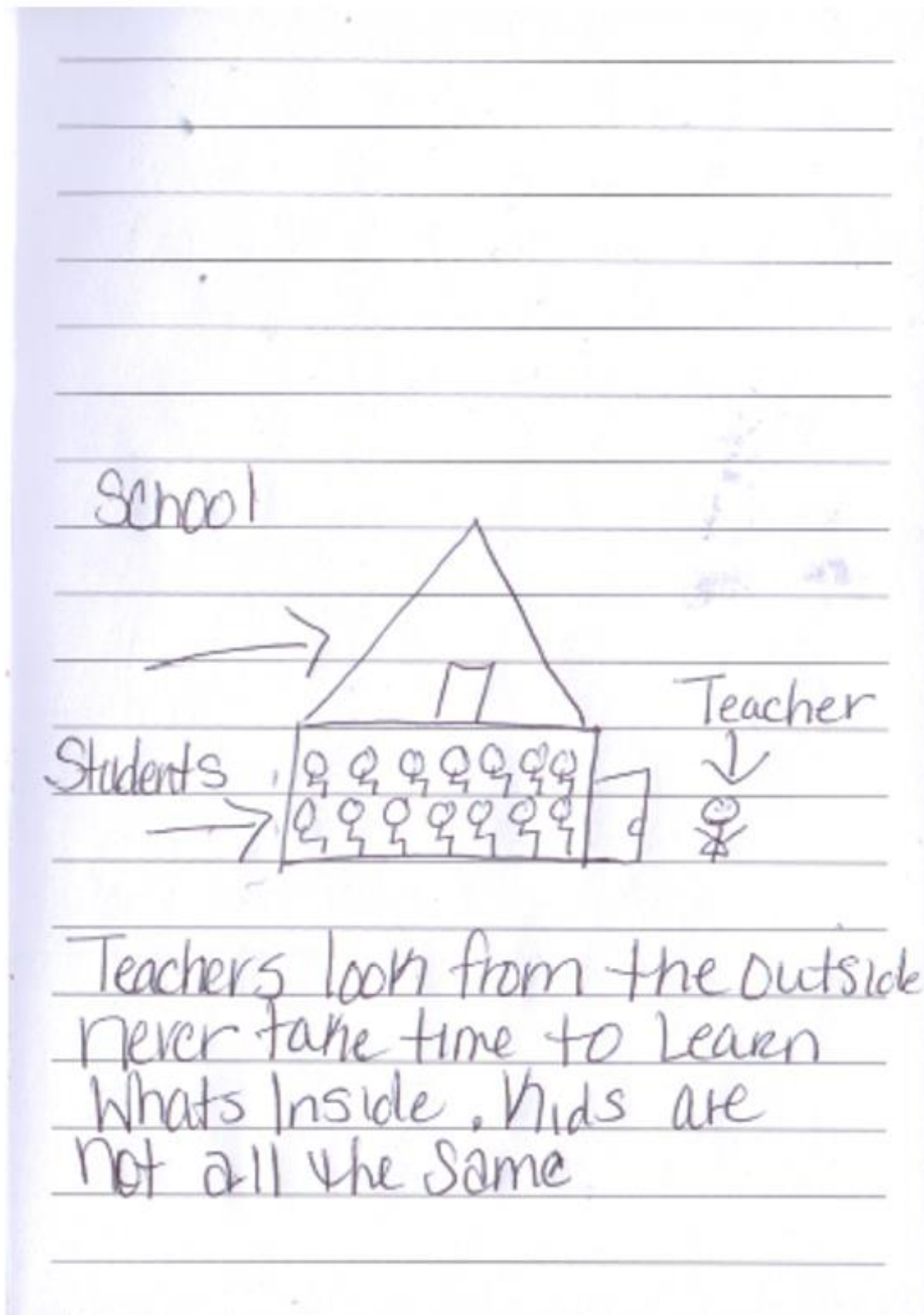
Participant (Winona) Visual Representation



CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix J

Participant (Tammie) Visual Representation



Teachers look from the outside
never take time to learn
Whats inside. kids are
not all the same

CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix K

Participant (Margaret) Visual Representation



CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Advocating for Gavin started when he was 18 months old. He had stopped meeting his milestones and regressed into Autism after receiving the MMR vaccine. We have been blessed to have an incredible support system to help us navigate through this most difficult journey. The pain of not being able to communicate properly with your child is indescribable. He has medical issues that cause him a lot of pain and helping him is extremely difficult since he cannot communicate effectively. He would cry in pain and tell me "Make it stop." I didn't know where the pain was coming from and he couldn't tell me. We have been all over the country seeking help from various specialists. We finally determined that he has bowel disease, which is similar to Chron's Disease. He sees a specialist in New York that specializes in children with Autism with bowel disease. The pain that Gavin endured because of his disease was immense and it caused him to be very aggressive. When we finally found the proper medication to help him it changed his life and ours. The task of advocating for him has been my mission for the last 17 ½ years. He has made incredible progress however, he still has a long way to go. He has a family that loves him dearly and we have tried to enrich his life and help him to make as much progress as he can.

Our Christmas card is a good representation of the people that love him and strive every day to help him have a better life and to be able to communicate his thoughts and feelings to us.

His brother and sister love him and have learned ways they can help and interact with Gavin. His younger brother, Bryson, learned at the age of three how to phonetically cue Gavin to help him to answer a question. Bryson became a big part of the therapy team when the boys were little. Gavin's baby sister is now like a "mini" Mom always wanting to help him and keep him safe.

Gavin's grandparents have been a huge part of his journey. His Grandma researches treatment options and helps facilitate getting him to those Doctors and treatment. We couldn't have done it without their help. We took the entire family to St. Louis to the Judevine Center for Autism when he was two. We lived there for two months while we trained on how to teach and communicate with Gavin. He has been to doctors in Arizona, New York, Florida, California, Connecticut, and Georgia. He has had IVIG infusions, Hyperbaric Oxygen treatment, MRT Brain Treatment (California), treatment for Lyme's Disease, Endoscopies, Colonoscopies (with pill camera), and Ionclense Therapy. We continue to research and try new interventions to help him. We will never give up on him.

He has had a team of therapists in place since he was two years old. He has had ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) since he was two. He has received Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Hippo Therapy, Physical Therapy, Music Therapy, Vision Therapy and many other educational therapies along the way.

CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

We learned early on that Gavin would need one on one attention in order to make progress academically. He went to several different private schools over the years that would allow his therapist to attend school with him. He is home schooled now. He continues to work on academics and life skills.

He grew up going to his grandparents' lake house and learned to fish, drive a golf cart and ride on a jet ski. All of these accomplishments took an incredible amount of patience and work but now they are hobbies he can enjoy. His incredible team of Christian therapists join us at the lake house once a year to enjoy time with him there.

CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix L

Participant (Debbie) Visual Representation



8. Provide a written description of your drawing and include any inferences the viewer should note.

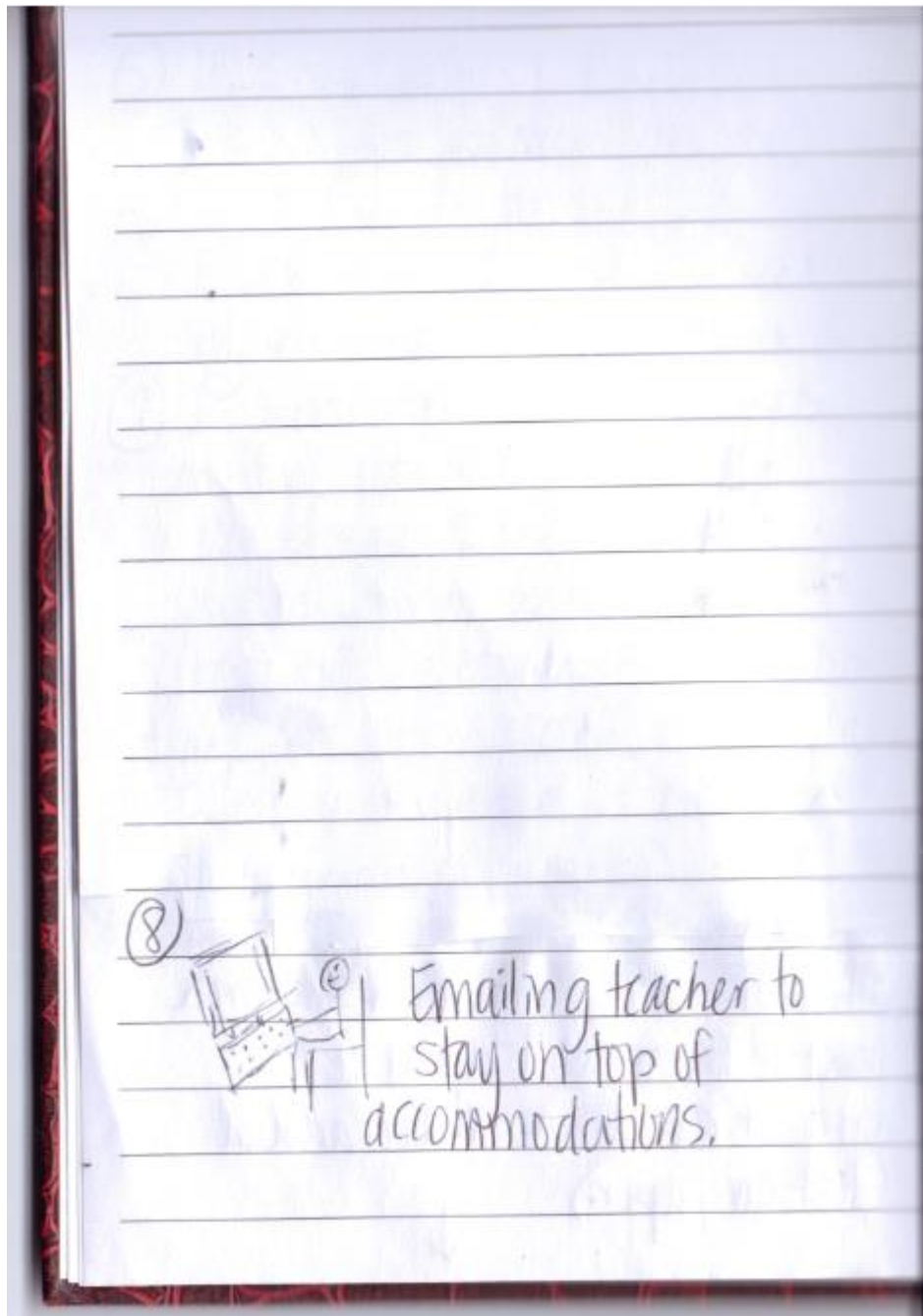
My role as an advocate for my children with disabilities is that I keep up with paperwork and pay for others to advocate for my children and therapies that are necessary. I must have time and patience despite having to fight for services which is frustrating and often sad.

Factors that influence my children's academics, social and emotional well-being are my children's disabilities which are fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and autism. My children's age of adoption and the conditions of their orphanages are also factors (the adoption symbol). My children need love, patience, social skills, life skills, behavior intervention, and academics like basic reading skills to be successful. Partnership looks like trying to engage in team work when allowed.

CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix M

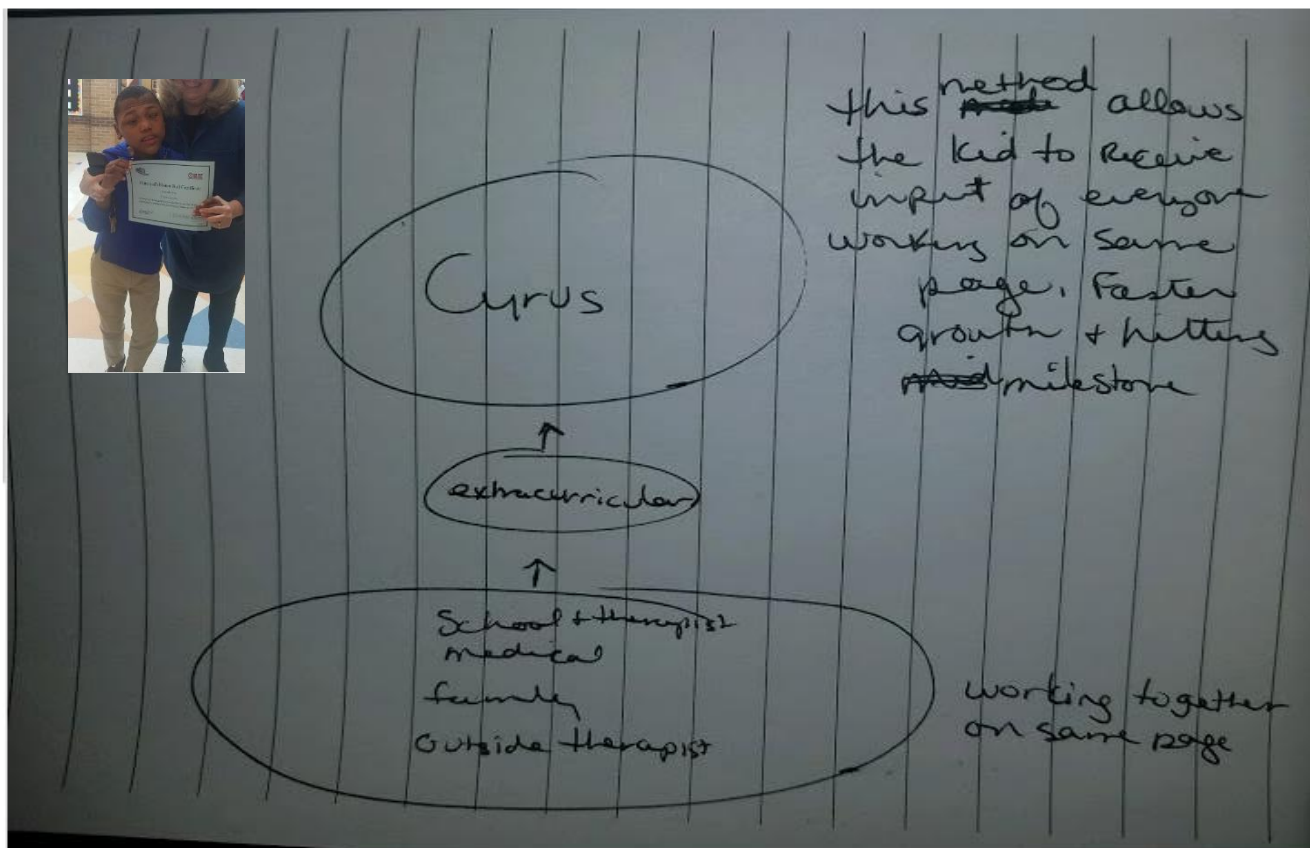
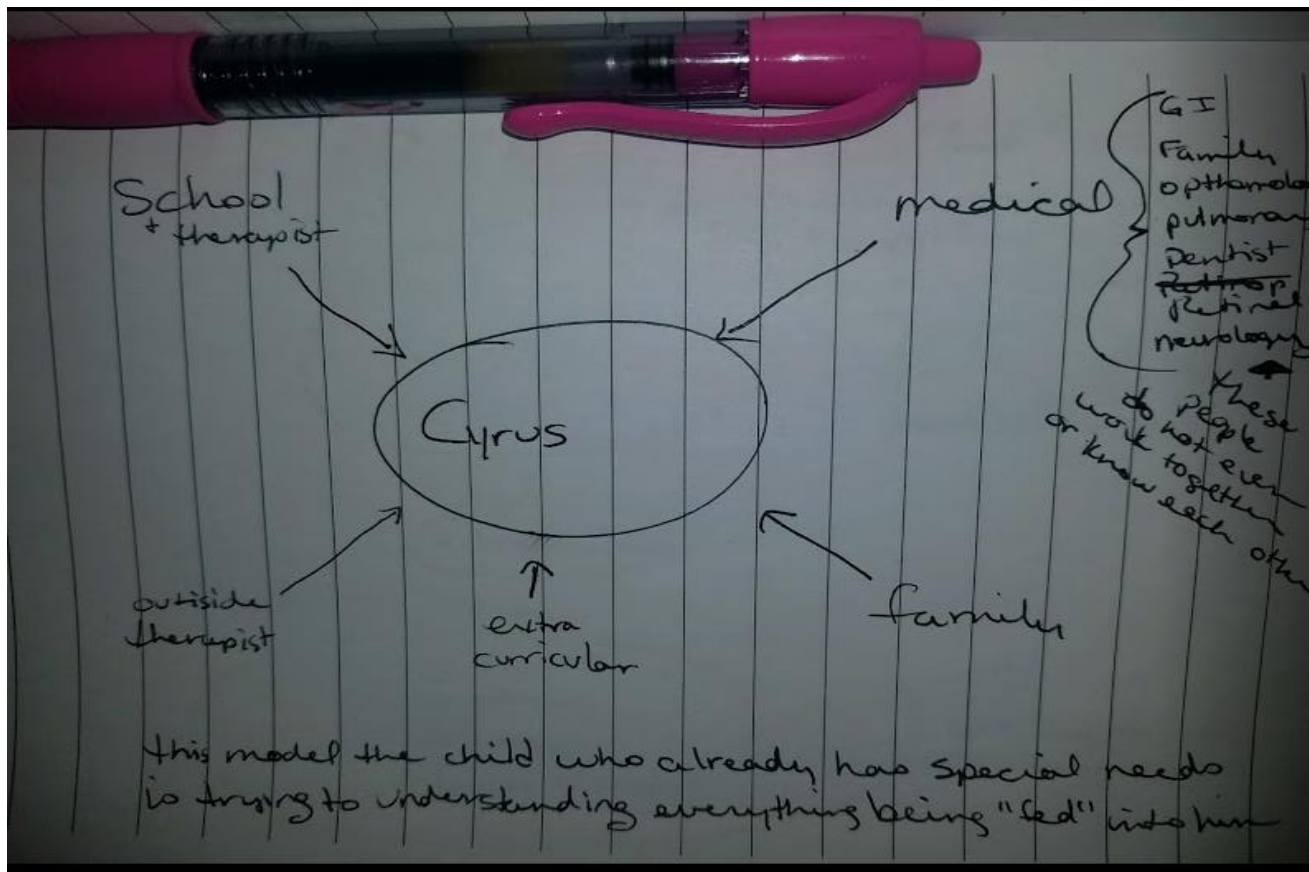
Participant (Julie) Visual Representation



CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix N

Participant (Carla) Visual Representation

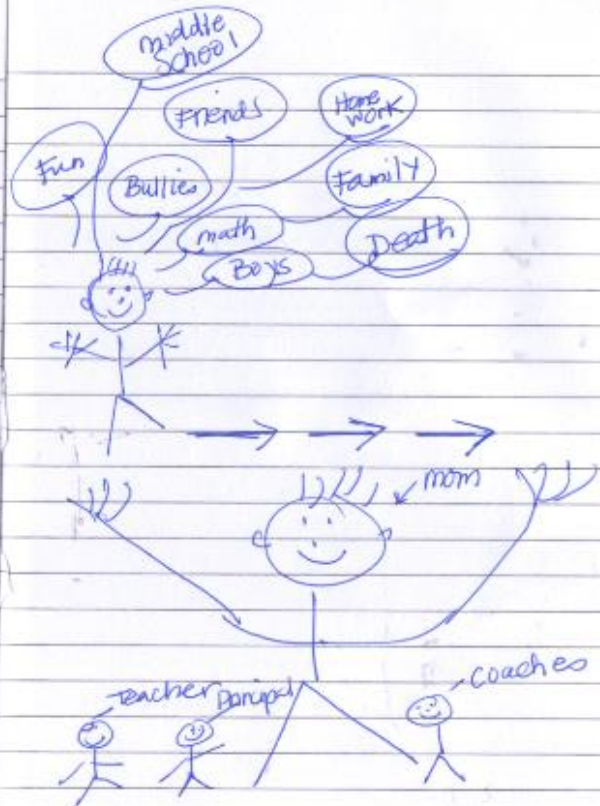


CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix O

Participant (Lisa) Visual Representation

8. This picture is showing the things my child may think about on a day to day basis. This picture shows that although some of her teachers and faculty at the school may have her best interest at heart, I have the ultimate job as her advocate to make sure she is progressing as she should. It shows me uplifting her and moving her forward.



CONSTRUCTING SELF-EFFICACY AS ADVOCATES

Appendix P

Therapy House Description

Currently he has 2 therapists a day. He has a morning therapist and an afternoon therapist. In the morning he's taken to The Therapy House where it's set up. He has an education room, a music room and an exercise room. So, he works on academics obviously in the academics room but he works on math skills, reading skills, you know things like that. Part of academics would be I guess like his science type of activities. He has a garden there so they grow vegetables. I mean it's just a little garden, but it does produce, and he does help with it. It does produce plants and for example tomatoes. He'll pick the tomatoes and bring them home. I will eat them. He will grow sweet potatoes. They take those up and once they're ready he'll make sweet potato pancakes with his sweet potato. So educational in that regard. He is able to and he does help with the garden. He likes flowers (so) they grow flowers and things like that. So, they talk about that.

He goes to the chiropractor and he's very, very thin. He's about 6'2 / 6'3 and he weighs 135 pounds. So, we're working on strengthening his you know his whole body. So, he has an exercise routine that he goes through. They also work on life skills. He has a lot of trouble making any type of decision. So, they're trying to help him make decisions. The Therapy House is set up for him so that when it's snack time he has to pick his own snack. Everything that's in there is for him. So, that makes it kind of easy. He works on cooking skills. They bake there and everything. We consider that pretty much morning from 8:30am /9:00am till 1:00pm is his academic time.

Then the afternoon therapist will take him out in the environment and work on life skills. One example when he was younger, he just couldn't fix his own drink at a fast food restaurant. So, they would take him there specifically to learn how to get the ice. You know it's hard for him to put the cap on. He can do that now, but you know working on things like that. Now he can go to Walmart or whatever store and he could actually check himself out. He can't go to the store by himself, but they work on using his language interacting with the clerks, you know, things like that out in the natural environment working on things. (They) work on language through naturally occurring things.

So, it's when it's warm they'll take (him) to the park. They'll discuss things that they see in the park. They'll see people and sometimes people are really nice. They'll stop and talk to him. He goes bowling. They take him all over the community in the afternoons. So, then he's able to get life experiences in real time so to speak. Everybody that is with him takes pictures of what they're doing on their I-phone. We have a shared album where it hits every therapist phone. So that when we talk to him about his day, we actually have a visual diary of what he's doing. So, that's Monday through Friday and then on Saturday he has a therapist that comes. We really try to make Saturday fun but our Saturday therapist is also an educator so he can't help himself but to try to teach some academics as well! (laughing). But, we're trying to not force that because we really would like for him to just go swimming and do fun things on Saturday.