The Experiences and Educational Involvement Practices of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

Parents of Preschoolers with Disabilities: An Exploration of Cultural and Ecological Factors

During the Kindergarten Transition

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
under the Executive Committee
of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2023

Abstract

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This dissertation consists of three studies which examine the experiences and involvement of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as their preschooler with disabilities underwent the transition into kindergarten. The first study was a systematic review which explored the transition experiences and perceptions of parents ($n = 467$) across 20 studies as their children transitioned from early childhood special education services to school-based special education services. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines and thematic analysis was used to synthesize parent experiences across included studies. Themes revealed that parents' transition experiences were rooted in various ecological contexts (i.e., family, school, and system levels). Parents reported challenges to the transition, including inconsistent communication and disconnects with their new schools, but also facilitators, such as support from their early childhood settings, and these experiences influenced their subsequent role on the school teams.

The second study used a one-year, prospective, longitudinal design to examine the transition and virtual learning experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse families ($n = 15$) as their families adjusted to kindergarten and kindergarten special education services during the COVID-19 pandemic (summer of 2020 to summer of 2021). Qualitative interview and focus

group data was collected from families at five timepoints across one year, and interviews were conducted once with educational stakeholders ($n = 10$; teachers, social workers, psychologists, and administrators) who supported these families during the transition. Thematic analysis revealed that parents experienced a turbulent year characterized by disruptions to their children's learning experiences, as well as shifts in their parent role and family functioning as their children transitioned to kindergarten during the pandemic. However, facilitators such as supports from their schools promoted parents' coping.

The third study was a mixed method study which investigated the cultural values and involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse parents ($n = 53$) of preschool children with and without disabilities. Pearson correlations revealed positive relationships between parents' home-based educational activities and aspects of their parent involvement. Hierarchical regressions revealed that educational values predicted parents' home-based activities, and an interaction suggested the protective nature of educational values on parents' home-based educational activities when parents reported low cognitive and contextual resources. Qualitative data were used to triangulate quantitative findings. Thematic analysis of eight family interviews revealed that parents reported strong educational values which they promoted with their children, along with various ways they engaged with their children in the home context.

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to the many, many people who played a role in the completion of this dissertation. I am not sure this page can fully express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all of you and your integral part in this endeavor. Thank you for your support and contributions.

First and foremost, Dr. Laudan Jahromi. Thank you for your mentorship over the years. I am truly grateful to have you leading my doctoral journey. Thank you for so generously dedicating so much of your time and energy to me. The countless opportunities you have provided and wealth of expertise you have shared has nurtured my love of research and supported my growth as a researcher and academic. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had you as my doctoral advisor and to continue to have your mentorship in my career.

Dr. Matthew Zajic, thank you for your enthusiastic, insightful feedback on my dissertation studies and your willingness to answer so many of my questions. I have truly enjoyed our research discussions. Dr. Serra Acar, thank you for your guidance, kindness, and learning opportunities. To the other members of my committee: Dr. Elaine Smolen and Dr. Sonali Rajan. You have provided invaluable input and support throughout this process, and I am honored to learn from each one of you.

Dr. Mary Ellen Rooney, thank you for your exceptional dedication to these research projects. You have been such a positive, key part of this process and have provided an exemplary partnership experience. To the Association to Benefit Children (ABC) advisory committee and other members of the ABC family. I have learned so much from you all. The invaluable dimensions you have added to this research cannot be overstated. To the research assistants who have worked on these projects: Candelaria Ponceliz, Esther Kim, Celia Castillo, Caroline Hsu,

and Divya Sahay. Thank you for the hours of detailed coding and analysis that you have devoted to this work.

To the many families who participated in these research projects. I will forever be grateful for your time, openness, and perspectives, which taught me so much and were so incredibly integral to completing this dissertation.

To my former colleagues and mentors from my teaching career: Beth, Amy, and Sarah. My experiences teaching with you, learning from you, and supporting students and their families, ultimately motivated me to pursue my PhD. Before I started graduate school, you told me to always remember my practical experiences and roots as an educator. Thank you. Your words have played in my mind throughout my studies and remind me why I do what I do.

To my family. My parents, who have always encouraged and supported my dreams. Thank you for encouraging my curiosity and independence, giving me a love of learning, and teaching me about hard work and determination. To my brother and sister. Thank you for your lifelong friendship and always being there for me over the years. To my other family and friends. Thank you for cheering me on and supporting me during this journey. To Misty and Ollie. Thank you for being the best little co-workers and spending countless hours by my side, providing joy, comfort, and laughs on even the longest of days.

To Christian. We've climbed another mountain together. Thank you for your endless love, support, and partnership. Every day you empower me and inspire me to make the world a better place. You have made this journey, this achievement, so much fuller and more beautiful. I love you. Thank you for everything you do.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Studies

The Individuals with Education Act (IDEA, 2004) mandates educational services for children with disabilities from birth through age 21. Under Part C of IDEA, children receive family-focused programming through state-run, health focused, early intervention services until the child reaches three years of age. Upon turning three, their services shift to Part B, which emphasizes school-based, child-centered services administered by the state's public school system. Services once covered under Part C, such as home-based therapies, may not be covered any longer. Children's services are shifted from an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), focused on both child and family interventions, to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), concentrated on child- and school-based interventions (Fox et al., 2002; IDEA, 2004). A transition plan created by the team is used to make the transition seamless and smooth (IDEA, 2004). The transition plan describes each step of the process and roles for all involved (IDEA, 2004), including parents. Transition planning aims to alleviate the stress of the transition and lessen the interruption of supports caused by switching locations and providers and expand upon the continuity of services (Fox et al., 2002). Despite these procedures, there is growing evidence that parents and children experience difficulties during the kindergarten transition. Such challenges may have a negative effect on parents (Lam et al., 2014) and children's subsequent outcomes (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Thus, there is a need to examine parents' experiences to inform programming and resources which support families and children during this period (Fontil et al., 2020).

While IDEA instructs early intervention transition into preschool, there are no formal federal regulations for children's transition into kindergarten (Ross & Hallam, 2012).

Kindergarten is the children's introduction to a formal school setting, with a full day of learning and an increased emphasis on academics (Steen, 2011). A lack of federal governance for this transition has made it difficult to ensure a consistent experience for all children and families (Rous & Hallam, 2012). However, individual states have moved toward regulation of this transition. A recent report from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) identified seven states, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Oregon, which reference kindergarten transition practices in statute, and fourteen more which reference this transition in regulatory code (ECS, 2018). As the largest school district in the country and approximately 25,000 children classified as "preschoolers with disabilities" (Porter, 2021), New York City (NYC) has formalized the kindergarten transition for students with disabilities as the Turning Five Process, defined as "how special education services and supports are determined for children entering kindergarten" (NYC DOE, 2021). Turning Five begins the year before a child enters kindergarten and includes activities such as developing the IEP for kindergarten, meetings with the Turning Five team (e.g., NYC DOE representatives, parents, preschool staff, and more) (Levine, 2016). In addition to Turning Five procedures, parents must also undergo the kindergarten placement process, where families rank, apply, and are eventually accepted into or assigned to elementary schools based on preferences, zoning, and child needs (Levine, 2016).

The three studies in this dissertation examined parents' experiences and practices during early childhood transition periods for parents of children with disabilities. Specifically, Study 1 reviewed prior empirical work on the early childhood special education transition and provided a unified synthesis of parent experiences. Study 2 examined the perspectives of parents of students of color with disabilities who transitioned from preschool to kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic and documented the mechanisms influencing parents' experiences during this period.

Finally, Study 3 examined the links between culture and families' involvement in the early childhood period and the kindergarten transition. Results provide evidence for a strengths-based, culturally informed view of parents' participation.

Researcher Positionality

The dissertation's author is a former special educator who taught culturally and linguistically diverse children with disabilities in a Title 1 elementary school. She identifies as a White, nondisabled woman. This dissertation represents an exploration of the experiences and involvement practices of culturally and linguistically diverse families of young children with disabilities. While the research was undoubtedly influenced by the author's experiences as a scholar and special educator, it was largely guided by input from stakeholders within the community of interest, including team members from the early childhood center where recruitment took place, as well as input from the academic community including faculty and research assistants. Throughout the analysis and writing of this dissertation, the author recognized areas for growth in her own knowledge and wrestled with how she may have upheld or benefited from biased societal systems in her own life. To better represent diverse, meaningful views, she continually turned to perspectives from both the academic and target community, as well as work from other scholars cited throughout this dissertation.

The Transition as a Developmental Context for Children and Families

The kindergarten transition has been labeled a "sensitive period" for children's development (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Children undergo transformations in their social and cognitive development, with the advent of new social networks and neural shifts (Moriguchi & Hiraki, 2009; Quinn & Hennessy, 2010). In the kindergarten classroom, children encounter different environments and increased demands (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). Increased

support from home and school may buffer children's adjustment (Cook & Coley, 2017), which is critical as the nature of students' transitions sets the foundation for their long and short-term outcomes (Entwistle & Alexander, 1993). Children with developmental disabilities have been shown to struggle with kindergarten transitions (Fontil et al., 2020; McIntyre et al., 2006), with difficulties adjusting to kindergarten academic and social domains (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) that may have lasting consequences for their educational trajectories. A positive transition experience may impact future child outcomes (Pianta & Kraft-Sayre, 2003), as children with positive early school experiences typically experience stable, continued school success (Belsky & MacKinnon, 1994). However, negative experiences place the child at substantially greater risk for long-term difficulties (Entwistle & Alexander, 1999). Given the gravity of the transition, it is important to understand the supports available to children and the factors surrounding them which allow for optimal support.

Theoretical Frameworks on the Role of Parents

Parents are a key support for children during the transition period and they play a pivotal role in student outcomes (Ma et al., 2015). The three studies in this dissertation were informed by Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Ecological Model of child development which proposes that children develop within a series of embedded contexts such that each context represents a different level of interaction that influences the child's development. Parents, teachers, and schools represent the microsystem level as they proximally interact with the child and directly influence their development. Home-school relationships reflect the mesosystem, which consists of interactions between microsystems. Broader contexts, such as the school system or child's neighborhood, make up the exosystem as they indirectly influence the child's development. The

surrounding environments such as cultural beliefs, socioeconomic status, and societal norms comprise the macrosystem, which describes cultural elements influencing development.

Defining Parent Involvement. The three dissertation studies were also informed by theoretical notions on parent involvement. Broadly, parent involvement has been described as one's commitment to parenting and fostering optimal child development (Maccoby & Martin, 1983) and parents' beliefs and actions which define children's experiences (Desimone, 1999). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) posit that parent involvement does not necessarily require purposeful action from the parents. Parents may be explicitly involved; active and aware of their role, but also implicitly involved, where participation responses may be unevaluated or occur in response to external demands (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Traditionally, involvement has had a narrower conceptual scope and has been directly related to schooling, such that parents' behaviors and attitudes directly impact children's cognitive and educational processes (Fantuzzo et al., 1995; Jeynes, 2005). This school-centered view of engagement has been endorsed by the U.S. education system which encourages parents to be involved through actions that prioritize education at home and school (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Strategies to promote parent involvement are often delivered from this school-based perspective, such as Epstein's (1995) guidelines for teachers to promote parent involvement: 1) help create a home environment which supports the child as a student, 2) use effective home-school communication, 3) encourage parent volunteering at school, 4) provide support for parents to assist with homework, 5) involve parents in school decisions, and 6) collaborate with the community to strengthen school programming.

However, parents can support children's learning through non-academic activities (Wallace & Twardosz, 2014). Home-based involvement has increasingly grown as a studied area

of parent engagement and findings have demonstrated that parents are more involved at home than at school (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Some examples of home-based participation include behaviors related to literacy, including book reading and keeping learning materials at home (Puccioni et al., 2020); modeling social-emotional skills, such as having high quality conversations on topics like emotions and morality (Lagattuta et al., 2002; Reese et al., 2007); promoting community engagement, including visiting parks, museums, zoos, or attending religious services or community events (Powell et al., 2012), or cultural socialization activities such as teaching about the family's cultural heritage, language, and values (Ayón et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2006).

The Context of Transition. An extension to the Ecological Model and illustration of parents' role in the transition process is the Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000), which highlights the relationships and connections from family, community, and schools that support children's development as they shift to the next phase of their educational career. Parents, schools, and community share responsibility in supporting the child's adjustment and do so through interactions with the child and other team members across preschool and kindergarten contexts. The relationships which result from these interactions bridge the gap between preschool and kindergarten and support the child in their adaptation to the new educational setting (Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2000).

The Ecological and Dynamic Model provides a framework to understand parents' role in the transition. In early intervention, services are family-focused, and parents play a hands-on role on the education team and receive high levels of information-sharing and input in their child's services. Research shows that parents have experienced a similar role during preschool services (Luke et al., 2020). However, once their child entered the formal school setting, services become

school-based and integrated into the school day, which shift the team dynamics from family-centered to more school-focused. As parents cope with this change and navigate their altered role, it is important to remember the vital role parents play in the child's development and progress (Cornish & Hiatt-Michael, 2008). Special education law mandates that parents remain as key team members and engage with decision-making throughout the process (IDEA, 2004). As such, it is crucial to understand parent perspectives and input throughout the transition process.

The Experiences of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families During the Kindergarten Transition

Much of the research on parent involvement to date has focused on White, middle-class families. As such, there have been criticisms to the traditional concept of parent involvement, especially the notion of explicitly school-centered involvement. Such perspectives emphasize the culture and practices of middle-class families and define an optimal model for parent participation rooted in White, middle-class values, meanwhile excluding families of color who do not fit this mold (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Families are faced with a one-size-fits-all participation structure and may be stigmatized if they participate outside the bounds of the optimal structure (Lightfoot, 2004). As a result of such centering, culturally diverse families may be viewed through a deficit-based lens where the focus falls on what families "lack" relative to White, middle-class families, which families are not involved in traditional ways, and the "incorrect way" families manifest their involvement (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). Viewing parents of color through a deficit-lens has resulted in the stigma that these parents are not involved and do not prioritize involvement, when in fact, research evidence supports that these

parents highly value education and display different types of engagement (Lee & Bowen, 2006) often rooted in their cultural backgrounds and practices (Bornstein, 2012).

Purpose of Study 1

To capture the current state of research on the above-mentioned processes, Study 1 synthesized past literature on parents' perspectives and experiences during the early childhood special education transition. The study extends previous work by qualitatively examining themes in early childhood transition literature to summarize trends in parent transition experiences. Specifically, the study utilized systematic review guidelines (Page et al., 2021) and thematic analysis (Thomas & Harden, 2008) to investigate themes across the 20 peer-reviewed articles identified on the topic in the set time period. Additionally, a quality assessment was conducted to assess the appropriateness and robustness of the 20 articles.

Purpose of Study 2

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, parents have been forced to reexamine their role in their child's education. Lines between home and school-based involvement were blurred (Knopik et al., 2021) and virtual learning formats shifted home-school dynamics (Bhamani et al., 2020). It is important to examine parents' experiences during the pandemic to inform future practice, ensure successful home-school connections, and develop adequate student and family support. To this end, Study 2 investigated the experiences of parents of students with disabilities as they are transitioning from preschool to kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic and mechanisms that are involved in this period such as virtual learning formats, transition procedures, and home factors. As COVID-19 is a new and dynamic phenomenon, little is known on how it influenced parents of students with disabilities; thus, it is imperative to extend literature on this topic and examine family perspectives. The study used qualitative data from

two focus groups (collected prior to, and immediately following, the child's kindergarten year) and three waves of interviews (fall, winter, and spring of kindergarten) from fifteen parents and one wave of interview data from ten educational stakeholders. Data was collected as part of a larger longitudinal investigation which used Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methods to examine the experiences of parents and stakeholders during the kindergarten transition.

Purpose of Study 3

Culture is an important factor which influences parents' involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), behaviors, and perspectives on education (Ryan et al., 2010; Valdez et al., 2007). Parents' cultural backgrounds, including beliefs, norms, and practices may shape their behaviors (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Past work has shown that parents' connections to their native culture are associated with higher involvement (Calzada et al., 2014), but often, education processes, especially in special education, focus on differences among these families as deficits (Rogoff et al., 2017) and lack consideration of cultural backgrounds and strengths. As such, there is a need to expand perceptions of parent involvement and work towards a culturally informed definition of participation.

The purpose of Study 3 was to examine the relationships between parents' culture and their involvement behaviors for culturally diverse preschool parents of students with and without disabilities. Specifically, the study explored the relationships between cultural characteristics (e.g., values, behavior) and aspects of the involvement (i.e., personal experiences, involvement beliefs, time and energy, and knowledge and skills) of culturally diverse parents and their home and school-based educational activities and examine the roles of parents' ethnic centrality and educational values in these relationships. The study sought to fill gaps in research on the

influence of culture for children and their families and add a strengths-based lens to current literature on parent involvement and culture. The study utilized mixed methods, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, with a cohort of families of color and their children preparing to transition to kindergarten special education.

Chapter 2: Parent Perspectives of Early Childhood Special Education Transition: A Systematic Review

Early childhood is a time of great development and is an especially critical period for children with disabilities. During this time, families of children with disabilities face adjustments in childcare, family life, and self-efficacy (DePape & Lindsay, 2015), and report significant challenges in parenting their children, including decreased mental and physical health, restricted allocation and distribution of resources (e.g., time, finances, employment), impacted social relationships, and increased strain on family ties (Plant & Sanders, 2007; Stuart & McGrew, 2009). However, some burden may be relieved by the child's entry into school and subsequent receipt of special education services due to the reallocation of families' time, changes in financial stressors, and increased support services (Janus et al., 2008).

Young children's participation in early intervention and preschool programs promotes early childhood development (Tran et al., 2017), and can improve the developmental trajectories of young children with disabilities (Guralnick, 2005) and increase their school readiness (Weiland, 2016). Parents of children with disabilities also benefit from early schooling such that they report a higher quality of life when their children receive early support services (Mas et al., 2016) and have an improved outlook on the future and their own self-competencies after their children begin receiving these services (Bailey et al., 2005). Early childhood services often utilize family-centered approaches where services focus on the child's functioning within the family system, and emphasize collaborations between parents and education professionals, with families acting as key players in educational decision-making (Rosenbaum et al., 1998).

Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological model on child development highlights the role of several interactive systems (e.g., microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem) as they influence reciprocal child, family, and community factors (Rous et al., 2007). The parenting context, school environment, and parent-school relationship may each influence children's developmental outcomes. In special education, decisions and processes for students with disabilities are intertwined with these ecological contexts, including parents, teachers, and service providers (i.e., microsystems), the broader special education team (i.e., mesosystems), community factors (i.e., exosystems), and policies (i.e., mesosystems) (Ruppar et al., 2017). Transitions, including school transitions, fall under the chronosystem as they are life changes that affect the interactions of the inner ecological levels (Ruppar et al., 2017).

When children begin school-based services, the developmental focus shifts from family and home functioning to inclusion, academics, and children's functioning within the classroom (Fox et al., 2002). This transition, which encompasses new events, activities, and processes (Division for Early Childhood, 2014), is complex and dependent on a variety of factors such as geographic location, cultural beliefs, and available programs (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2005; IDEA, 2004). While specific transition practices and timeframes vary by geography and culture, the key role of parents and families remains a central focus across these processes (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2005; Early Childhood Australia & Early Childhood Intervention Australia, 2012; IDEA, 2004; Janus et al., 2007; Ravenscroft et al. 2017; United Nations, 1989). Much can be learned from international, cross-cultural parenting experiences (United States Department of Education (USDE), 2018; 2021c), especially as geographies and schools across the globe are becoming increasingly diverse (de Brey et al., 2019; United Nations, 2019).

The kindergarten transition is often the first major school-related change experienced by families and is a significant shift in children's daily routines (Welchons & McIntyre, 2017), and source of stress for parents (Lam, 2014). Experiences during this period can have long-term impacts on children's educational trajectories (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) so it is crucial to have a robust understanding of transition processes, including the perspectives of parents, as they play a pivotal part, balancing their caregiving duties and role as an educational team member. As such, a growing body of work has examined the experiences and perceptions of caregivers during early childhood special education transitions. The purpose of the current study is to synthesize empirical works on this topic and provide a unified overview of parent experiences.

Prior reviews have been conducted in this area of research. A recent qualitative metasynthesis by Douglas and colleagues (2022) reviewed perspectives of families in the United States transitioning from *early intervention* to early childhood special education (i.e., at child age of 3 years) and reported themes related to communication, interagency structure, and family factors which contribute to parent experiences in this period. An earlier review by Lee and colleagues (2014) examined qualitative trends in parent perspectives of the academic transitions of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) across their education and found that parents' perceptions of each transition period changed based on prior transition experiences and children's needs. While offering valuable insights and contributions to research, these prior reviews employed a narrower focus on developmental period, disability classifications, and geographical location.

The present review extends prior work by providing a broader, comprehensive consideration of the experiences of families from a variety of disability and geographical backgrounds, during all early childhood transitions including the transition to kindergarten, and

by examining peer-reviewed studies with qualitative, quantitative, and mixed designs. An ecological lens was used to examine parents' perspectives on their experiences in varied contexts. As such, the present review seeks to answer the following questions:

Research Question 1: What are the experiences of families of young children with disabilities as they transition into school-based special education services?

Research Question 2: Which ecological contexts of development do parents report as influential to their transition experiences?

Method

Search Procedures

The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The search used SPIDER, a tool for qualitative synthesis (Cooke et al., 2012) that identifies the sample studied (S), the phenomenon of interest (PI), the targeted study design (D), the evaluation of the phenomenon (E), and the type of research (R). In the present study, the sample (S) was parents, the phenomenon of interest (PI) was the early childhood special education transition, the designs (D) were interview, surveys, and questionnaires, the evaluation types (E) were experiences, perceptions, and responses, and the research types (R) were qualitative, quantitative, and mixed design studies.

The search was conducted between July 2022 and September 2022. Search procedures and selection processes are summarized in Figure 1. The initial search used five databases (EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ProQuest, SAGE, and Scopus) to identify empirical research studies published in peer-reviewed journals between 2010 and 2022. Search terms included combinations of the following keywords: *early intervention, disabilities, disability, parent perception, transition, parent experience, kindergarten, preschool, family,* and *families* in titles

and abstracts. Articles were then further reviewed for duplicates and inclusion criteria was applied. Database searches were supplemented by manual searches of reference lists of related articles. The first author and a research assistant independently conducted the search and selection procedures, then met after each database search to discuss agreement on included and excluded articles.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Peer-reviewed qualitative, and quantitative empirical studies that examined parent perceptions in relation to the school transition within the last ten years were targeted for this review. The current analysis considered early childhood special education as schooling for children with disabilities under the age of seven, prior to starting compulsory school, with school-based special education services beginning in either preschool or kindergarten. School entry age is often ambiguous (Barakat & Bengtsson, 2017), thus included articles had child participants between three and six years of age as most children are required to start compulsory school, where school-based services would be delivered, between ages five to seven (World Bank, 2021). The timeframe (i.e., 2010-2022) was selected to target studies that were published after significant U.S. legislation was passed concerning policies and procedures for Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (USDE, 2011). Studies written in English were included, from any country. The present review follows the IDEA definition of a parent, which includes natural parents, guardians, and individuals acting in the place of a parent (IDEA, 2004). Children could be classified with any disability, and transitions could be from early intervention services to preschool, or preschool special education into kindergarten. For studies which included both children with and without disabilities, only the subset with disabilities was

used. Studies not published in a peer-reviewed journal were excluded, as were those that did not describe parents' perceptions about the early childhood special education school transition.

Quality Appraisal

Methodological quality of included studies was assessed by the two authors using a modified version of the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) (Hong et al., 2018), which provides a framework for the appraisal of systematic reviews which include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed design studies on indicators including appropriateness of research approach and measures, robustness and interpretation of data, and risk of bias. The MMAT was modified by incorporating elements of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) and Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research Guidelines (CLEAR, 2014) to allow for additional detail and alignment between study designs. Modifications resulted in the addition of three subitems for each of the first four MMAT indicators (i.e., justification of approach used, adequacy of methods, appropriate use of data, appropriate interpretation of results) that allowed for more detailed appraisal of included studies on the four indicators. The added subitems were consistent across quantitative, qualitative, and mixed MMAT checklists. Using recommended MMAT scoring, each subitem was scored as "Yes", "No", or "Cannot Tell", then assigned a value (i.e., Yes = 1, No = 0, and Cannot Tell = 0.5) which were then totaled for an overall score, and assigned *High, Moderate*, or *Lesser* based on this score. The author and a second coder individually assessed the quality for each paper using the abovementioned rubric, then met to discuss scoring on an item-by-item basis. Each discrepancy on individual items in the MMAT checklist was identified and discussed, and the coders came to a consensus decision.

Analysis

The review utilized NVivo 12 software to conduct a thematic analysis of trends in parent experiences (Braun & Clark, 2006). To complete the analysis process, the first author and a trained research assistant employed a pragmatic approach (Patton, 2002). Coding was conducted using an iterative process wherein consensus between coders was obtained on each identified theme. Specifically, the coders 1) independently reviewed studies using an ecological framework and created a set of broad themes based on ecological levels (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), 2) reviewed the themes and consolidated their lists of themes into one unified set of themes, 3) independently reviewed the results sections (i.e., reports of parent perceptions) of included studies and applied the themes to the data, 4) discussed all disagreements to reach a consensus through a collaborative work approach that included weekly meetings over the span of three months to triangulate observations (Brantlinger et al., 2005). During this process, the coders determined that the data warranted the development of subthemes, which were developed collaboratively to accompany each main theme. Subthemes were used to organize broader data that fell within main themes. The coders individually reviewed themes and grouped data within each main theme into subthemes, then met to review agreement so a consensus was reached for all subthemes. See Table 1 for theme definitions.

Results

The initial searches yielded 664 total articles, with 566 included in title and abstract screenings for inclusion criteria. After these screenings, 532 did not meet inclusion criteria and 34 articles did meet criteria and were retrieved for the next step of full text review and application of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Of these, 20 met eligibility criteria and were included in the review. Characteristics of included articles are included in Table 2. A pair of articles from Podvey and colleagues (2010; 2013) utilized the same data for each article (i.e.,

from the same six families). Nine articles employed qualitative designs, seven mixed methods, and four employed quantitative designs. Out of the 20 articles, 13 were rated as high quality (65%), five were rated as moderate (25%), and two were rated as lesser quality (10%). See Table 2 for quality results. The articles were from a variety of countries: six from Canada, six from the United States, three from Australia, two from New Zealand, one from India, one from Turkey, and one from the Netherlands. Studies focused on the transition into preschool special education ($n = 7$) and kindergarten special education ($n = 13$). The total number of parent participants across all articles was 467. The articles covered a variety of child disabilities including developmental disabilities ($n = 10$), autism spectrum disorder ($n = 3$), deaf and hard of hearing ($n = 3$), multiple disabilities ($n = 1$), cerebral palsy ($n = 1$), or unspecified ($n = 2$). The articles did not provide consistent demographics to report aggregate totals. Parents were the primary participants across all articles. The synthesized results from the thematic analysis found that parent-reported experiences fell into three ecological-related groups (Bronfenbrenner, 2005): family, school, and special education system level. Based on the three ecological levels, a subsequent theme emerged on parents' reported involvement (Table 3).

Family Level

Several subthemes emerged at the family level, including the numerous emotions and barriers that parents reported in the transition period. Parents discussed strategies and preparation efforts they used to navigate the transition and described their expectations for the transition and ways they felt their role changed throughout the process. Quality analysis data revealed that studies that contributed to the "Family Level" theme were all rated as moderate and high-quality.

Parent Emotions during the Transition

Parents described varying emotion evoked during the transition period. Some parents felt worried (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Starr et al., 2016; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Welchons & McIntyre, 2015; Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019) and described anxiety and fears centered around their children's entry into school (Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Podvey et al., 2010; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Welchons & McIntyre, 2015). Parents were especially concerned about their children's skills and functioning within the new school environment (Dockett et al., 2011; Hacıibrahimoğlui, 2022; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; McIntyre et al., 2010; Starr et al., 2016; Warren & Harden-Thew, 2019; Zaidman-Zait et a., 2019) or their own coping as they adjusted to the new school, staff, and procedures (Siddiqua & Janus, 2016; Villaneuve et al, 2013; Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019). Parents felt stressed in the transition. Changes in school services and communication especially caused parents frustration and difficulty, feelings which lingered even after the transition period ended (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Starr et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2012; Waters & Friesan, 2019). Other parents felt confusion from the inconsistencies in information they received (Dockett et al., 2011; Starr et al., 2016; Villaneuve et al., 2013), and described the transition procedures as overwhelming and foreign (Dockett et al., 2011; Starr et al., 2016). In some instances, parents felt lost and uncertain as their child began new, unfamiliar services (Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Waters & Friesan, 2019).

The transition also highlighted feelings of isolation in parents. They felt alone in raising a child with disabilities and found the transition experience lonely (Podvey et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019; Villaneuve et al., 2013). In two studies, they felt their friends and other parents could not relate and desired a community with similar needs and challenges (Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Waters & Friesan, 2019). Some described feeling judged or stigmatized by their peers

(Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2015; Mahurin-Smith, 2022) and in one study, they felt blame for any difficulties experienced in the transition (Dockett et al., 2011). However, some parents did feel positive emotions in the transition. In some instances, parents described happiness when their children progressed and when their children were happy (Podvey et al., 2010; 2013) and if they were found eligible for their desired services (Dockett et al., 2011).

Parent-Reported Barriers

Many parents described limited resources as an obstacle to the transition and described how it influenced their self-reliance (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2015; Vinila et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019; Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019). Time and transportation were limitations for families in two studies, which hindered their attendance at meetings and other transition-related activities (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011). Other families felt financial strain, which influenced the support and services they could access (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2015; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Waters & Friesan, 2019), including private therapies, school materials, and parental education.

Families also juggled multiple commitments outside of their child's transition. In one study, parents described the pull of work schedules and long work hours as distractions to the transition (Dockett et al., 2011), as well as the needs of other family members and siblings (Dockett et al., 2011; Podvey el., 2013). Some parents reorganized their families' daily schedule in response to the transition and new school commitments (Podvey et al., 2013), and made tough decisions on which commitments to focus on (Dockett et al., 2011).

Parents felt they had limited knowledge about the transition. In one study they were uncertain about services and procedures to continue or obtain services across the transition (Siddiqua & Janus, 2017). Some felt they did not understand their children's IEPs (Starr et al.,

2016; Villaneuve et al., 2013). In two instances, parents who moved schools or school systems had trouble navigating the new procedures (Dockett et al., 2011; Waters & Friesan, 2019).

Families with different language or cultural backgrounds reported additional barriers (Fontil & Petrakos, 2015; Starr et al., 2016; Waters & Friesan, 2019). In two studies, these families described less support and individualized care throughout the transition (Fontil & Petrakos, 2015; Starr et al., 2016). Some felt they had inadequate understanding of the transition process and disabilities (Fontil & Petrakos, 2015). Parents who spoke a different language had difficulty accessing information and felt they could not effectively advocate for their child or communicate their needs (Fontil & Petrakos, 2015; Starr et al., 2016). In one study, these families also reported discrimination and differential treatment from schools (Starr et al., 2016).

Parent Preparations and Supports during the Transition

To cope with the barriers and emotions of the transition, families described utilizing supports and preparative strategies. Some relied on social supports, including family and close friends, for sources of help and comfort (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Podvey et al., 2010; Starr et al., 2016; Waters & Friesan, 2019). Others sought outside help from external professionals, disability organizations, and medical care to guide them through the transition and provide them necessary supports (Dockett et al., 2011; Podvey et al., 2013; Starr et al., 2016; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019). Many found support in the disability community, specifically from other families of children with disabilities (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Waters & Friesan, 2019). These families described the comfort they felt connecting with other families with similar experiences and emphasized their appreciation for these social connections (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Waters & Friesan, 2019).

Parents detailed individual strategies they employed to prepare themselves and their child for the transition. Some parents relied on their own knowledge (Podvey et al., 2010), and others desired to visit the new schools or attend orientation sessions (Hacıibrahimoğlui, 2022). Some sought typical experiences for their children, like school readiness activities, to ensure their children had similar experiences to their typically developing peers (Podvey et al., 2013; Villaneuve et al., 2013). Many enrolled their children in outside, supplemental services (Schishkwa et al., 2012; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Villaneuve et al., 2013) and some acquired toys, games, and other materials used at school to practice school readiness skills and emphasize the value of education (Podvey et al., 2013; Schishkwa et al., 2012).

Parent Expectations and Roles in the Transition

Parents had expectations coming into the transition. They had ideas and concerns about their child's performance in school. Some had specific schools they wanted their child to attend (Dockett et al., 2011), and hoped the new schools would be means to regular, adequate support for the child and their specific needs (Dockett et al., 2011; McIntyre et al., 2010; Zaidman-Zait et al, 2019). Parents also emphasized their desire for their children to progress and be included with their typically developed peers (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Podvey et al., 2013; Villaneuve et al., 2013), and hoped this would decrease any stigma their children faced (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016).

Along with expectations for their child, parents explained their ideas for their own role in the transition. In two instances, parents expected they would play a fundamental, hands-on part in the transition (Podvey et al., 2013; Villaneuve et al., 2013), yet many described shifts in their role as the transition progressed (Fontil & Petrakos et al., 2016; Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan et al., 2019) where they became less involved and less integral members of the team (Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Waters &

Friesan, 2019), and received little communication from other team members (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019).

School Level

Subthemes at the school level consisted of parent descriptions of their early childhood settings, and their perceptions of school-related changes they experienced in the transition. Subthemes also included parent descriptions of their child's services and their own relationships with the schools, including communication and tensions. Although *all* the studies that were rated as lesser quality contributed exclusively to the "School" theme, this theme was also informed by the moderate and high-quality studies. Thus, an adequate proportion of studies had both high quality and contributed to this emergent theme.

Parents' Experiences with Early Childhood Settings

Parents described their early childhood settings with enthusiasm and positivity and emphasized the trusting, caring relationships they had developed with their providers (Curle et al., 2017; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Podvey et al., 2010; Waters & Friesan, 2019). Parents described a family-like familiarity and comfort between themselves and the providers and felt they were understood, accepted, and supported (Curle et al., 2017; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Larson, 2010; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Starr et al., 2016; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019). These relationships were fostered through effective communication, with parents reporting frequent and detailed contact with the early childhood settings (Curle et al., 2017; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Waters & Friesan, 2019; Welchons & McIntyre, 2015).

Parents also described the transition preparation efforts provided by their early childhood settings and credited their early childhood teams with teaching them necessary skills and

information about the transition (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Schishkwa et al., 2015; Starr et al., 2016; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019). In one study, parents one study felt their early childhood programs helped them gain self-efficacy and useful, practical skills for navigating their children's future services (Mahurin-Smith, 2022). Other providers supplied parents with hard copies of transition resources and information (Curle et al., 2017; Starr et al., 2017; Villeneuve et al., 2013), while some shared verbal tips and advice (Curle et al., 2017; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Starr et al., 2016; Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019) or held meetings and outlined transition plans (Schishkwa et al., 2012; Villaneuve et al., 2013).

Changes in School Experiences During the Transition

As the transition progressed, parents noted unexpected differences in their school experiences that they felt ill prepared to handle. Many families described shifts in communication and felt collaboration with the school decreased once the child transitioned (Alsem et al., 2016; Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019). Others noted a shift in the family-centeredness, with new school programs having less of a family emphasis (Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Starr et al., 2016), and some felt less satisfaction with their children's new services (Alsem et al., 2016; Dockett et al., 2011; Larson, 2010; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017), especially as they had less involvement with the services and service providers (Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Villeneuve et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019).

Parents' Communication with the School

Parents described their communication with the new school setting, wherein the studies reported mixed findings. Some reported that their input was minimized and unwelcome on their new team (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Podvey et al., 2013; Siddiqua & Janus,

2017; Villaneuve et al., 2013) and in three articles, emphasized the lack of family-centeredness at the new schools (Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017), feeling their partnerships were less genuine and less valued (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019). Families in one study wished that schools would acknowledge the difficulty and temporary-nature of the transition period (Mahurin-Smith, 2022).

However, some families did feel respected by the new schools (Alsem et al., 2016; Schishkwa et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2012) and in some instances, expressed great appreciation and relief when they encountered staff that recognized their needs and welcomed their input (Starr et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2012; Warren & Harden-Thew, 2019). In one study, parents recounted that the presence of responsive, proactive staff supported their confidence and comfortability with the transition (Warren & Harden-Thew, 2019).

Parents also perceived a lack of communication from the schools. Many valued strong communication among the school team (Podvey et al., 2010; Starr et al., 2016; Warren & Harden-Thew, 2019; Zaidman-Zait, 2019) and felt communication increased their comfortability with the transition (Podvey et al., 2010), but noted concerns with school communication (Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019). Many described infrequent contact and interaction with school staff (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Starr et al., 2016; Villeneuve et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019; Welchons & McIntyre, 2015). Some felt the information they did receive was indirect and communicated poorly (Alsem et al., 2016; Larson, 2010; Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Vinila et al., 2013), and others felt the information was conflicting and inconsistent with prior advice (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Mahurin-Smith, 2022). In one study, parents expressed desire for increased communication of

information relating to areas such as preparation strategies, new classrooms and teachers, and their children's skills (Hacıibrahimoğlui, 2022). Parents valued consistency between stakeholders on their transition teams (Warren & Harden-Thew, 2019), but some detailed a significant disconnect in the communication between school professionals, especially between early childhood settings and schools (Larson, 2010; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Villeneuve et al., 2013; Waters & Friesan, 2019). In two instances, parents also reported that schools were disorganized and lost paperwork or other records that impeded the transition process (Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Villeneuve et al., 2013). To cope with the poor communication they experienced, some parents felt they were responsible for initiating communication with schools (Curle et al., 2017; Larson, 2010; Podvey et al., 2010; Villaneuve et al., 2013). They reported efforts to maintain this contact such as requesting updates or stopping by the school (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Podvey et al., 2010; Villaneuve et al., 2013).

Tensions with the School

Families highlighted tensions felt between themselves and the schools during the transition process. In some studies, parents' beliefs and expectations about the transition did not align with the schools, such as ideas about placements (Dockett et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2012) and child needs and outcomes (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Larson, 2010). Parents were worried about straining their new relationships with the team. They were reluctant to share input and felt cautious when speaking up (Curle et al., 2017; Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Starr et al., 2016). Despite this careful behavior, parents described a power struggle between themselves and the professionals. Some felt their input was minimized (Dockett et al., 2011; Podvey et al., 2013), rushed (Warren & Harden-Thew, 2019), or perceived as adversarial

(Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Starr et al., 2016). Some felt judged by schools and described feelings of blame and stigma from staff (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Starr et al., 2016).

Shifts in Services

In addition to team dynamics, parents reported dissatisfaction with the services their children received in the transition. They felt the services provided by the new schools were inadequate for their children's needs (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Schishkwa et al., 2012; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Starr et al., 2016; Waters & Friesan, 2019), especially compared to services before the transition (Alsem et al., 2016). In some studies, parents were unsatisfied with the service options available to their child (Podvey et al., 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017) and noted that schools were resistant to the inclusive placements they desired (Villaneuve et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2012). In two instances, parents felt the need to advocate and bear responsibility for their child's services (Dockett et al., 2011; Villaneuve et al., 2013).

Once their child began school at their new placements, parents reported that schools did not follow the service plan agreed upon by the team or desired by the parent (Dockett et al., 2011; Larson, 2010; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2012). Parents in one study noted that service provision was inconsistent and disorganized at the new schools (Siddiqua & Janus, 2017). Some parents reported extended gaps of time with no services or targeted support given to their child (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Schishkwa et al., 2012; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Villaneuve et al., 2013) or delayed access to school services (Dockett et al., 2011; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017). To further dissatisfaction, some parents felt the new schools were lacking in knowledge, including inadequate understanding of their children, their disability, and their needs (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Schishkwa et al., 2012; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Starr et

al., 2016; Walker et al., 2012; Waters & Friesan, 2019), and some felt staff did not have the training or resources necessary to support their child (Starr et al., 2016; Waters & Friesan, 2019).

However, some parents noted positive perceptions of the new services (Dockett et al., 2011; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Schishkwa et al., 2012; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2012). Some parents appreciated respectful care (Alsem et al., 2016) and helpful, responsive school staff (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Welchons & McIntyre, 2015; Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019) that made them feel comfortable (Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Waters & Friesan, 2019). Parents also expressed happiness and reassurance when their child received personalized, inclusive support (Schishkwa et al., 2012; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Villaneuve et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2012; Warren & Harden-Thew, 2019).

Special Education System Level

Parents expressed thoughts related to the broader special education system. They felt overwhelmed and confused by the special education system (Dockett et al., 2011; Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Starr et al., 2016; Waters & Friesan et al., 2019) and expressed dissatisfaction with procedures (Siddiqua & Janus, 2017). In one instance they worried the special education system didn't offer adequate school choice or service options for their child (Dockett et al., 2011), while others noted inconsistencies in procedures, wishing for a more streamlined, transparent process (Mahurin-Smith, 2022; Villeneuve et al., 2013). Some parents felt the special education system was not designed in a family-friendly manner (Podvey et al., 2010; 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017) and felt it devalued their children (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016) and the family (Podvey et al., 2010). Studies contributing to the "Special Education System Level" theme were all rated as moderate and high-quality.

Parents' Subsequent Involvement

A final trend emerged such that parents discussed their involvement experiences and attitudes as a result of their transition experiences. Involvement was characterized by two divergent pathways: resignation and advocacy. This theme was informed by studies rated as moderate and high quality.

Resignation

Some parents felt subdued and defeated from the transition. In one study, parents reported feeling drained and exhausted after the transition (Dockett et al., 2011). Others were disappointed, overwhelmed, and tired of battling the schools (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Villaneuve et al., 2013) and felt they had lost control (Podvey et al., 2010). Others felt powerless to make change or support their child, that their involvement did not make a difference (Dockett et al., 2016; Starr et al., 2016) and feeling disengaged and taking a passive role on the school team (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Podvey et al., 2013).

Advocacy

Other parents felt impassioned as a result of their experiences and this pushed them to take an active, advocacy role on the school team. One study found these parents were more involved with their children's education (Welchons & McIntyre, 2015) and others were empowered to ensure proper support for their children (Dockett et al., 2011; Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017). Parents advocated for their child's needs (Dockett et al., 2011; Siddiqua et al., 2017; Starr et al., 2016; Villaneuve et a., 2013) and stood their ground with the school (Dockett et al., 2011; Podvey et al., 2013; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017). In some instances, they described taking matters into their own hands such as seeking information (Podvey et al., 2013), initiating assessments, (Dockett et al., 2011), and contacting service providers (Siddiqua

& Janus, 2017; Villaneuve et a., 2013) to ensure they had an active role on the team (Zaidman-Zait et al., 2019) and in their children's lives (Podvey et al., 2010).

Discussion

In the present systematic review, several trends emerged in parents' perceptions of their child's transition from early childhood special education services to school based special education services. Consistent with the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), parents reported family, school, and special education system contexts as influential to their experiences, which led to two divergent paths related to their participation: resignation and advocacy. This review makes an important contribution by including an assessment of quality indicators of reviewed articles. Of the 20 articles reviewed, the majority ($n =13$) were rated as high (65%), five were rated as moderate (25%), and two were rated as lesser quality (10%). Table 4 illustrates the distribution of themes by quality of article. Of note, the higher and moderate quality articles were the main contributors to the majority of themes, while the two lesser quality articles both only contained 33% of themes, and exclusively contributed to the school level which also had high amounts of higher and moderate contributors.

Parent Resignation and Transition Challenges

Prior work shows that challenging interactions with schools may lead parents to feel demoralized and discouraged and reduce their involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), which is important to children's outcomes (Jeynes, 2007). Overwhelmed by special education procedures and lack of school support, parents in this review felt their participation did not matter or created conflict. As such, these findings suggest that current transition practices may dissuade parent participation; a concerning realization as parent perceptions of later school

transitions are influenced by earlier transitions (Lee et al., 2014), suggesting that negative

perceptions may begin with the shift from early childhood services.

At a *school level*, parents in the present review described challenges consistent with prior

work which found a lack of communication and poor collaboration efforts from the schools

(Douglas et al., 2022; Leonard et al. 2016). At a *special education system level*, the present

review showed that parents were confused and overwhelmed by the transition process. Parents

often require assistance acquiring the social and cultural capital needed to navigate the special

education process (Trainor, 2010), and look to schools to provide this guidance (Malone &

Gallagher, 2009). Unfortunately, findings in both the present review and prior work show a lack

of collaboration between schools and families, which can result in conflicting, adversarial

relationships (Wang et al., 2004) rather than providing necessary support. At the *family level*,

parents noted family factors which hindered their transition experiences. These factors align with

prior findings, which have found lack of resources, limited self-efficacy, and cultural factors as

major barriers to parent participation (Hirano et al., 2018; Leonard et al., 2016). As a further

barrier, families in the present review noted difficult emotional reactions to the transition,

including stress, worry, confusion, and loneliness. Literature has found significant differences in

stress and wellbeing of parents of children with and without special needs (e.g., Olsson &

Hwang, 2008). A difficult transition may play a key role in parent emotional wellbeing, it may

be the responsibilities related to caring for a child with a disability which impacts parent

overload rather than the child themselves (Olsson & Hwang, 2008). Navigating specialized child

needs, behaviors, and services, like in the transition, places these parents at increased risk for

stress (Hodgetts et al., 2017; Plant & Sanders, 2007).

Parent Advocacy and Transition Facilitators

On the second pathway, parents employed advocacy tactics to secure an active role on the school team and ensure they had a voice in their child's programming. Parents who engage in advocacy view these efforts as necessary (Wang et al., 2004). Literature has documented the varying approaches parents use in advocacy, including emphasizing their knowledge on the child, applying self-taught expertise on the child's disability, and exercising their understanding of the process and parental rights (Trainor, 2010). Like in the present review, parents' decisions to advocate has been connected to their perceptions and experiences. In a 2004 study by Wang and colleagues, parents cited poor educational quality and dissatisfaction with school experiences as reasons for advocacy. This advocacy added to the parents' already heavy burdens, and they noted the exhausting battles they engaged in against the school system (Wang et al., 2004). While difficult, research shows that advocacy often results in positive outcomes for their children (Wright & Taylor, 2014), like improved services and overall experience (Burke et al., 2017).

Advocacy efforts such as initiating contact with new school staff can be beneficial for families. These *school level* relationships can help parents feel more knowledgeable and prepared to participate (Wright & Taylor, 2014). Families report increased empowerment with family-centered and collaborative school partnerships (Fordham et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2004), and these relationships subsequently increase parent involvement (Rispoli et al., 2018). Increased school communication can also buffer negative factors which arise from parenting a child with a disability, such as depression (Rispoli et al., 2018). These findings are encouraging and suggest that effectively implemented family programming could increase involvement and wellbeing.

One possible model for effective home-school partnerships are early childhood programs. Consistent with prior work on early childhood provider-parent relationships (Popp & You, 2016), parents in the present review were satisfied at the *school level* in terms of their early

childhood special education programs. They trusted the staff and relied on their support. These findings align with teacher and school factors depicted in a model on parent-school trust by Angell and colleagues (2009). In this model, factors such as school climate, services, and collaboration contribute to parent trust at the school level while factors such as communication, care, and knowledge reinforce parents' trust at the teacher level (Angell et al., 2009). These elements are evidenced in previous work on successful parent-school connections. Parents felt more satisfied with programs that they perceived as family-centered (Law et al., 2003) and where they made active decisions on school teams (Gasteiger-Klicpera et al., 2013). These findings reinforce the potential of healthy home-school relationships on parent participation and trust.

To cope with the transition, parents in the present review looked to the *family level* and relied heavily on family members and close friends who supported them emotionally and provided information and networking opportunities. Connections with family members and close friends can combat the isolation of raising a child with a disability, especially if these individuals also have experience with disabilities (Boshoff et al., 2016), and parents often feel more empowered and effective when they have these collaborations (Hirano et al., 2018).

Overall, results from the present review align with findings from prior reviews. A 2014 review by Lee and colleagues found that in the transition to school-based services, parents of young children with autism felt that their preschool services were involved in the transition and reported that communication was vital to a successful transition. A 2022 review by Douglas and colleagues similarly documented the importance of communication: strong communication facilitated caregivers' transition perceptions, while weak communication and collaboration were perceived as barriers. Like in the present review, Douglas and colleagues (2022) found that parents experienced family barriers, changes in services, and many felt less involved. Those who

did report involvement also reported empowerment, as they felt they could advocate for their children, further aligning with the findings from the present review.

Limitations of the Analysis

It is important to note study limitations. First, while the search procedures covered electronic databases and hand searches, it is possible these strategies did not uncover all articles meeting inclusion criteria. As only peer-reviewed studies were included, other sources such as theses, dissertations, or conference papers may also include meaningful findings. The analysis process itself may also vary between researchers. While the steps have been detailed, it is possible others may utilize different coding arrangements and judgements. The somewhat limited number of studies included in the analysis could also be considered a limitation to this analysis. The studies themselves included inconsistent demographic reporting which limited the group-level patterns that could accurately be analyzed. More research is needed to understand the experiences of different subgroups. The studies also covered a wide range of countries. While the analysis looked at parent data at a broad level, each country differs in special education procedures and these differences may have influenced parent perspectives. The variation in countries made it difficult to tease apart country-level effects in the present study, however, this would be a valuable line of further inquiry to explore in future research.

Implications

The present review examined data from 467 families across 20 studies to summarize parents' experiences of the transition from early childhood special education to school-based special education. Patterns that emerged from this study indicate a need for increased parent support for special education transitions. This support could be delivered through wraparound programs, such as the Achievement for All (AFA) initiative in the United Kingdom where one

key component, among others, lies in partnering with families. The program provides guidance for structured conversations between parents and schools on active listening, clarification on programming and progress, collaborative planning learning goals and next steps. This program has proven effective in changing the dynamics of parent-teacher relationships and strengthening home-school connections so that parents have a greater voice (Lendrum et al., 2013).

Support could also be provided through offering targeted, supplemental parent programming at schools. Similar programs have been shown to lead to increased parent awareness and involvement, decreased caregiver strain, and improved child academic and behavioral outcomes (Duchnowski et al., 2013). Parents may benefit from personalized one-on-one support, possibly through a school parent liaison, who provide valuable direct guidance for families and aid parent communication, involvement, and knowledge on their child's schooling (Sanders, 2008). As this analysis shows gaps in staff-parent interactions, it may also be beneficial to better prepare teachers for fostering parent relationships. Pilot programs have begun to target teacher training in parent involvement practices and resources (Strassfeld, 2018).

It is important to note that transition services are often inconsistent in both implementation quality and governance (Rous & Hallam, 2012). In the United States, IDEA only addresses transition practices at age three, with no regulations for kindergarten transition. The quality of services, too, may differ between agencies and school systems, especially for family support. Current guidelines for family support are lacking and programs are not held accountable for the outcomes of their families (Bailey et al., 2012). A centralized, universal measure of family support would be helpful to promote the wellbeing and involvement of families.

Finally, future research should examine the factors leading families to engage in each involvement pathway to gain further insights into the processes and mechanisms influencing

family participation. It may be useful to investigate transitions of individual family subgroups to better understand the experiences, needs, and facilitators of unique parent populations.

Table 1

Theme definitions

Theme		Subtheme	
Family	• Occurring at the individual level, involving characteristics of the families' microsystem	*Emotions*	• Feelings occurring during the transition period
		Barriers	• Challenges encountered in the transition period
		Preparations and Supports	• Strategies used to cope with and navigate the transition period
		Expectations and Roles	• Preconceived ideas parents held about the transition period and their part in the process
School	• Occurring within the school setting, involving school personnel and procedures	*Early Childhood Settings*	• Experiences and comments related to early childhood settings
		Changes in School Experiences	• Shifts in perceptions of school or school-related factors
		Communication	• Related to communication and information-sharing in the transition period
		Tensions	• Strains in home-school relationships in the transition period
		Shifts in Services	• Changes in children's special education or school services in the transition period
System	• Relating to the broader educational system and procedural factors		

Subsequent Involvement	• The feelings and actions reported by parents following the transition period	*Resignation* *Advocacy*	• Feelings of defeat or withdrawal from the transition period • Feelings of empowerment and strength from the transition period

Table 2

Summary of Included Studies

Authors	Year	N	Child Disabilities	Transition	Country	Design	Quality
Alsem *et al*	2016	59	Cerebral palsy	Kindergarten	Netherlands	Quantitative	High
Curle *et al*	2017	6	Deaf and hard of hearing	Kindergarten	Canada	Qualitative	High
Dockett *et al*	2011	24	Developmental disabilities	Kindergarten	Australia	Qualitative	Moderate
Fontil & Petrakos	2015	11	Autism spectrum disorder	Kindergarten	Canada	Mixed	High
Hacıibrahimoğlui	2022	54	Developmental disabilities	Kindergarten	Turkey	Mixed	High
Larson	2010	1	Autism spectrum disorder	Kindergarten	New Zealand	Mixed	Lesser
Mahurin-Smith	2022	8	Developmental disabilities	Preschool	United States	Qualitative	High
McIntyre *et al*	2010	29	Unspecified disabilities	Kindergarten	United States	Quantitative	Moderate
Podvey *et al**	2010 2013	6 "	Developmental disabilities "	Preschool "	United States "	Qualitative "	High High
Schischka *et al*	2012	17	Developmental disabilities	Kindergarten	New Zealand	Qualitative	Lesser
Siddiqua & Janus	2017	37	Developmental disabilities	Kindergarten	Canada	Mixed	High
Starr *et al*	2014	11	Autism spectrum disorder	Kindergarten	Canada	Qualitative	High
Vinila *et al*	2013	35	Deaf and hard of hearing	Kindergarten	India	Quantitative	Moderate

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Villenueve *et al*	2013	3	Developmental disabilities	Kindergarten	Canada	Qualitative	Moderate
Walker *et al*	2012	54	Developmental disabilities	Preschool	Australia	Mixed	High
Warren & Harden-Thew	2019	10	Unspecified disabilities	Preschool	Australia	Mixed	Moderate
Waters & Friesen	2019	10	Multiple disabilities	Preschool	United States	Qualitative	High
Welchons & McIntyre	2015	52	Developmental disabilities	Kindergarten	United States	Quantitative	High
Zaidman-Zait *et al*	2019	40	Deaf and hard of hearing	Preschool	Canada	Mixed	High

Note. *The two papers by Podvey et al. (2010, 2013) are based on the same set of data from six families

Table 3

Summary of Themes (alphabetical)

Study	Family					School				System	Subsequent Involvement		Row %
	Emotions	Barriers	Preparation and Supports	Expectations and Roles	Early Childhood Settings	Changes in School Experiences	Commun-ication	Tensions	Shifts in Services		Resignation	Advocacy	
Alsem et al	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	25
Curle et al	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	50
Dockett et al	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Fontil & Petrakos	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Hacıibrahimoğlui	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	25
Larson	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	33
Mahurin-Smith	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	67
McIntyre et al	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	17
Podvey et al (2010)	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	83
Podvey et al (2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	100
Schischka et al	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	33
Siddiqua & Janus	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	67
Starr et al	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	92
Villenueve et al	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	92
Vinila et al	X	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	17
Walker et al	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	33
Warren & Harden-Thew	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	33
Waters & Friesen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	75
Welchons & McIntyre	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	42
Zaidman-Zait et al	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	67
Column %	80	50	60	35	70	60	95	45	75	45	30	45	

Note. "X" denotes the presence of the subtheme in the article. Row % refers to the percentage of themes present in the individual article. Column % refers to the percentage of themes present across all included articles.

Table 4

Summary of Themes (by quality)

Study	Family						School			System	Subsequent Involvement		*Row %*
	Emotions	Barriers	Preparation and Supports	Expectations and Roles	Early Childhood Settings	Changes in School Experiences	Commun-ication	Tensions	Shifts in Services		Resignation	Advocacy	
High													
Alsem et al	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	*25*
Curle et al	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	*50*
Fontil & Petrakos	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*100*
Hacıibrahimoğlui	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	*25*
Mahurin-Smith	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	*67*
McIntyre et al	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*17*
Podvey et al (2010)	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	*83*
Podvey et al (2013)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*100*
Siddiqua & Janus	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	*67*
Starr et al	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*92*
Walker et al	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	*33*
Waters & Friesen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	*75*
Welchons & McIntyre	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	*42*
Zaidman-Zait et al	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓		✓	X	X	✓	*67*
Moderate													
Dockett et al	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*100*
McIntyre et al	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	*17*
Villenueve et al	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	*92*
Vinila et al		✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	*17*
Warren & Harden-Thew	✓	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	*33*
Lesser													
Larson	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	*33*
Schischka et al	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	*33*
Column %	*80*	*50*	*60*	*35*	*70*	*60*	*95*	*45*	*75*	*45*	*30*	*45*	

Note. "X" denotes the presence of the subtheme in the article. Row % refers to the percentage of themes present in the individual article. Column % refers to the percentage of themes present across all included articles.
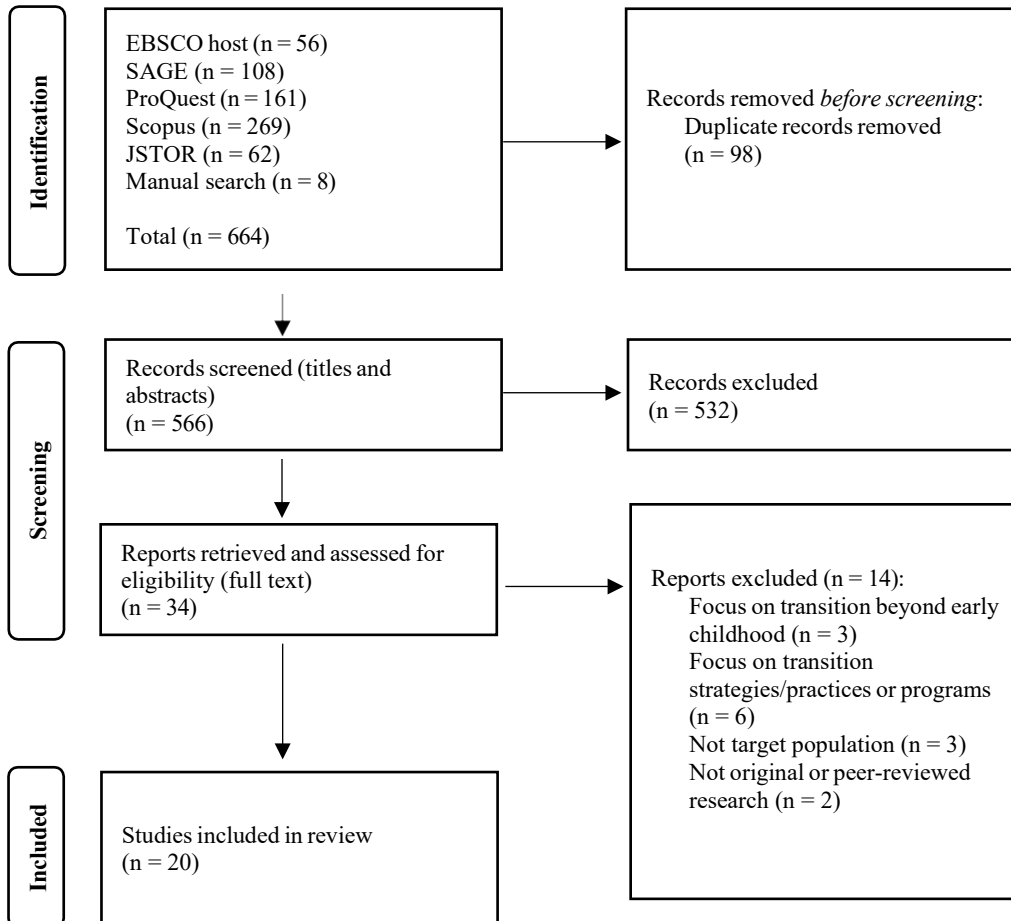
Figure 1

PRISMA Search Procedures

Chapter 3: Remote Learning and Adjustment to Kindergarten during COVID-19: A Longitudinal Investigation of the Experiences of Parents of Children with Disabilities in New York City

The transition to kindergarten is a critical time for children and their families, as experiences in this time may have lasting impact on children's educational trajectories (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). The transition is a significant adjustment period for children with disabilities (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000) and their parents (Starr et al., 2016), as services and service structures and procedures drastically shift. Parents often describe challenges with communication, services, and personal factors during the transition to school (Dockett et al., 2011; Waters & Friesan, 2019; Podvey et al., 2013), especially families of color who often face unique obstacles as they navigate language and cultural barriers (Fontil & Petrakos, 2016; Starr et al., 2016). Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) Ecological and Dynamic Model on school transition emphasizes the roles of children's individual development, their environments (e.g., home and school), and the connections between these environments as crucial for successful school transitions.

The Transition to Kindergarten During Covid-19

COVID-19 has added additional complexities for school processes, including kindergarten transition. Families transitioning to kindergarten during COVID-19 were required to juggle pandemic-related stressors and demands on top of previous transition expectations. However, little is known about the unique experiences of families whose children transitioned to kindergarten during the pandemic, especially the school experiences of culturally and

linguistically diverse, historically underserved families during this time. To fill this gap, the present study focuses on families in New York City (NYC), the largest public school district in the United States, with over 85% of students from culturally diverse backgrounds, 73% identified as economically disadvantaged, and 21% classified with disabilities (NYC Department of Education, 2022). As such, the present study qualitatively examined key elements of virtual learning and related school experiences of parents of children of color with disabilities in NYC as they adjusted to kindergarten during the COVID-19 pandemic.

School Processes and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global phenomenon which has shifted school processes across the globe, including the introduction of new procedures such as social distancing measures and remote learning (USDE, 2021a). Many schools moved to online or hybrid formats (Marshall & Bradley-Dorsey, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020a) in response to COVID-19, with the majority of U.S. students receiving instruction fully through virtual formats during May and June 2020 (Henderson et al., 2021; U.S. Census, 2021). All but two states ordered or recommended school closures during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic (Education Week, 2021). School systems responded differently to school shutdowns and the nature of remote learning varied from district to district. In a 2020 poll from Ipsos and USA Today, the majority of parent respondents indicated that their schools provided learning through virtual formats, such as online assignments, video recordings, or synchronous, interactive video classes, while 37% reported distance learning occurred through school-provided paper packets or worksheets (Ipsos, 2020). Similarly, in a 2020 survey conducted by the U.S. Census, 80% of families using distance learning reported their schools provided online resources while 20% said they used paper materials sent home by school (U.S. Census, 2020). The extent and quality of

online learning varies, as 78% of parents say their children's school has provided a lot or some online instruction, while 28% report receiving little to none (Pew Research Center, 2020a). As schools began to reopen or partially reopen throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, many increasingly adopted hybrid learning models (i.e., a combination of distance and in-person learning) (NCES, 2021; UNESCO, 2020), with almost a quarter of U.S. schools teaching via hybrid methods in February 2021 (Duffin, 2021).

In the early stages of the pandemic, NYC public schools closed and moved to fully remote learning. At the start of the 2020-2021 academic year, public schools partially reopened after a delayed start, with virtual, hybrid, and in-person instruction options. As COVID-19 cases surged in the fall of 2020, schools closed eight weeks later and reopened throughout the spring of 2021 (New York City Government, 2020a; 2020b). Elementary and early education programs, as well as schools and programs serving students with disabilities were prioritized in reopening plans and offered in-person options before middle or high school program (New York City Government, 2020b). A visual timeline of COVID-19 in NYC is included in Figure 1.

Preschool programs providing special education services in NYC typically follow the "Turning Five Process", procedures which determine special education supports and services for children entering kindergarten (NYCDOE, 2021). Typically, this process begins the year before kindergarten, and includes development of the kindergarten IEP, transition meetings, and kindergarten placement based on children's zoning and individual needs (Levine, 2016). However, during the early stages of the pandemic, this process was modified due to school closures and safety precautions. For example, meetings, assessments/evaluations, and kindergarten placements were delayed and were required to occur virtually rather than in-person.

School closures and distance learning applied to students with disabilities as well as

general education students. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education (FAPE; IDEA, 2004). School systems were required to offer FAPE programs to students with disabilities even in the recent educational shifts to online learning due to COVID-19 (USDE, 2020). The U.S. Department of Education has repeatedly reaffirmed these FAPE mandates regardless of the mode of instruction or circumstances relating to the COVID-19 pandemic (USDE, 2021d).

Virtual Learning during COVID-19

In a nationally representative online survey of 2,155 K-12 parents, both online and hybrid formats received low satisfaction ratings across racial groups (Henderson et al., 2021). Although limited COVID-19 research has focused on preschool populations, discontentment with distance learning can also be found in early childhood and disability contexts. For example, in a study of 88 families (61% Caucasian) with preschoolers with moderate to severe developmental disabilities, parents reported a pause in service delivery, lack of information, and regression of children's skills during online learning periods (Paulauskaite et al., 2021). Teachers, too, have struggled with the shift. In a sample of 547 K-12 teachers, the majority expressed no prior online teaching experience before COVID-19, and little support from their schools in the shift to online (Henderson et al., 2021).

The dissatisfaction with virtual learning should not come as a surprise. The U.S. has wide gaps in unequal technology access for families, with approximately 30% of students lacking access to the internet or devices necessary for learning (Chandra et al., 2020). Lower income households are disproportionately affected by this gap, as higher income households have greater ability to supplement school materials and access online learning resources (Bacher-Hicks, 2021), while lower income households are more likely to learn with paper materials versus

technology during COVID-19-related school closures (U.S. Census, 2020). Researchers have characterized the problem as twofold: even if families have access to devices, inequities remain prevalent as many may not possess the skills and training required to properly use the technological resources (Hall et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2021). Teachers and parents confirmed these technological barriers, describing time limitations, lack of personalization, low levels of participation, and poor technological literacy (Ford et al., 2021; Provenzi et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2016; Steed et al., 2021) as obstacles to their online learning experiences, especially in families from culturally diverse backgrounds (Alba et al., 2022; Valicenti-McDermott et al., 2022) where students have more limited access to technology and poorer engagement with virtual educational content (USDE, 2021b). Sayer and Braun (2020) described these inequalities to be rooted in 1) families' and schools' unpreparedness to provide remote learning to diverse families, 2) communication and language barriers that arise when using virtual resources, and 3) inadequate support of users' language through virtual resources (Sayer & Braun, 2020).

The Positives of Virtual Learning

While barriers have been reported with respect to virtual learning formats, recent work also suggests that, for some families, the move to virtual learning could help facilitate critical home-school partnerships, relationships that are critical for optimal student outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Evidence suggests that virtual intervention programs focused on child strengths and everyday functioning may promote collaborative and family-centered care for children with disabilities and their families across ages and levels (Schiariti & McWilliam, 2021). A study by Steed and colleagues (2021) examined the virtual learning experiences of early childhood educators and found that teachers' reliance on parents to implement services at home encouraged closer home-school partnerships. Teachers in this sample reported using

greater numbers of family-centered strategies with virtual methods than during in-person instruction (Steed et al., 2021). In other work, families of school-aged children with disabilities who participated in personalized, family-centered virtual programs enjoyed the flexible nature of online programs as they didn't require travel and extended scheduling options (Wolstencroft et al., 2021). In early childhood settings with virtual components, parents of both typically developed children and children with disabilities reported feelings of engagement and support (Dore et al., 2021; Provenzi et al., 2020), as well as benefits for their children's development (Provenzi et al., 2020), including academic readiness and emotional skills (Dore et al., 2021).

Culturally and linguistically diverse families may have additional reasons to prefer virtual learning formats. During COVID-related school closures, Black and Latinx parents felt most hesitant to send their students back to in-person learning (Haderlein et al., 2021; Saavedra et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2021). Some studies have found that lower-income families were also more likely to prefer remote learning formats opposed to higher-income families (Saavedra et al., 2021). Remote learning formats may be more flexible and personalized for families and students from these backgrounds and provide a more accessible option for these families' educational engagement (Young & Donovan, 2022). However, these virtual preferences may also be rooted in systemic inequities, for example the disproportionally negative impact (e.g., greater rates of hospitalization and fatalities) of COVID-19 for Black and Latinx communities (Barranco et al., 2020). Black and Latinx families reported that remote options were perceived to be safer or a better fit for their child (Haderlein et al., 2021; Saavedra et al., 2021) and according to a poll by Ipsos and the Washington Post (2020), the majority of these families felt in-person learning was not safe for their children and worried for their child's, families', and community's health if they were to return to in-person settings. Further, in another survey from 2020, almost half of Black

parents reported keeping their child at home to limit racism, bullying, and bias that may occur in the school context (Speak Up, 2020), suggesting that parents view the home context as a safer, less marginalized setting for their children to learn. In follow-up focus groups, parents reported that they felt their schools were indifferent and hostile to their children and were reluctant to send their children back to an unwelcoming school culture (Speak Up, 2020). These findings support reports on the systemic hardships families of color faced during COVID-19, including increased health concerns (Yancy, 2020), food insecurity, discrimination, and resources losses (Clawson et al., 2021), all which contribute to their overall institutional distrust (Best et al., 2021).

Parents' Wellbeing during COVID-19

Aside from shifts in educational formats, COVID-19 has significantly impacted the functioning of families (Feinberg et al., 2021). From a cultural lens, parents of color may have had unique experiences during COVID-19. Culturally and linguistically diverse families faced an increased risk for infection (Moore et al., 2020), hospitalization (Karaca-Mandic, 2021), and death from COVID-19 (Cheng et al., 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020b; Yancy, 2020). These families reported greater medical and institutional mistrust (Bogart et al., 2021) rooted in historical mistreatment from the medical system (Augsberger et al., 2022). This mistrust led to hesitancies in COVID-19 vaccination and treatment (Willis et al., 2021).

Further, parents of color, notably Black Americans, were simultaneously experiencing events related to racial injustice during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The concurrent occurrence of COVID-19 and racial injustice has been referred to as a "syndemic" (i.e., co-occurring, interrelated conditions that are maintained and shaped by the broader political, economic, and social circumstances; Singer, 1996) (Gravlee, 2020; Shim & Starks,

2021) which compounded the mental health effects of Black families (Czeisler et al., 2020).

Relatedly, parents of color had higher likelihood of perceiving discrimination such (e.g., unfair treatment or harassment) during COVID-19 which further increased their mental load (Liu et al., 2020). Many families were simultaneously faced with worries such as police brutality, threat of illness, and financial hardships during this period (Boyer et al., 2022; Cokley et al., 2021; Tai et al., 2021).

Families of color were also overrepresented in high-risk, front-line occupations which had a higher risk of COVID-19 complications including health and mortality concerns (Bui et al., 2020) and limited workplace safety measures (Goldman et al., 2021). Parents of color, especially Latinx individuals or low-income, were more likely to experience economic hardships due to COVID-19 (Kantamneni, 2020) such as unemployment (Mongey et al., 2020; Vargas & Sanchez, 2020). Altogether, these families faced distinct pandemic experiences which undoubtedly influenced their wellbeing and functioning.

Parents of children with disabilities also experienced the pandemic differently than other groups. In addition to challenges experienced by the general parent population, these parents navigated unique factors related to their child's needs. Recent work from Scotland suggests that parents of students with disabilities suffered a disproportionate increase in burden during COVID-19 as parents scrambled to replicate personalized school settings at home, set up structures to fit their children's needs, and navigated the shortcomings of virtual learning and remote special education (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2020). Despite parents of children with disabilities facing unique and significant hardships, relatively little research has documented their wellbeing during COVID-19. U.S.-based research reported that Caucasian parents of school-aged children with disabilities report more stress and increased concerns than parents of

neurotypical children (Corbett et al., 2021). Parents of school-aged children with disabilities from Latinx backgrounds additionally reported greater financial strain, increased isolation, and disrupted services due to the pandemic (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2021). In a preschool-aged sample consisting of majority Latinx-background families, parents echoed concerns of disrupted services, and worried about the long-term developmental effects of their children being raised in a pandemic (Neece et al., 2020).

Worldwide, research shows that parents experienced remarkably similar stressors from COVID-19. Psychologically, parents of school-aged children with disabilities experienced heightened distress, stress, depression and anxiety during COVID-19 (Corbett et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2021; Masi et al., 2020; Mbazi et al., 2020) and felt overwhelmed and weighted (Asbury et al., 2021; Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2020; Gillespie-Smith et al., 2021; Montirosso et al., 2020; Zahaika et al., 2021) as they experienced a loss of structure, support, and increased isolation (Gillespie-Smith et al., 2021; Embregts et al., 2021; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2021). Parents' burdens further increased with the pandemic-induced uncertainty of various family factors, including unemployment and restricted resources such as food or medication (Mbazzi et al., 2020; Spinelli et al., 2021; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2021).

The pandemic also increased worries for these families. Parents described fear about their children's health and an increased urge to protect their children (Embregts et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2021). They also worried about secondary factors stemming from COVID-19, such as their children's increased dependence on screens, less exposure to physical activity, and poorer diets (Lim et al., 2021; Masi et al., 2020). Their child's disability, understanding of the pandemic, and ability to adhere to COVID-19 guidelines, such as mask-wearing or social distancing, added to parents' concerns (Asbury et al., 2021; Montirosso et al., 2020).

Parent wellbeing has been further stretched during the pandemic due to children's educational needs (Lim et al., 2021; Paulauskaite et al., 2021). Parents of children with disabilities already faced these burdens, as specialized child needs, behaviors, and services have been shown to increase parents' risk for stress (Plant & Sanders, 2007; Rivard et al., 2014), but COVID-19 intensified service difficulties. Parents of K-12 students described a lack of adherence to disability rights by schools during COVID-19 and reported that schools did not meet mandated standards for special education services (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2020; Garbe et al., 2020). Schools struggled to provide special education services during the pandemic (USGAO, 2020), such that students with disabilities received incomplete, inadequate, or inconsistent services (USDE, 2021b) and parents worried for the long-term impacts of these disruptions (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2021). Online formats required that parents take on the role of teachers (Formosinho, 2021; Smith et al., 2016), a task they felt unprepared and unsupported to perform (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2020; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas et al., 2020). This implementation of learning at home negatively impacted parent wellbeing (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas et al., 2020; Neece et al., 2021) and perceptions of school (Cheng et al., 2021).

The Current Study

COVID-19 is a novel, dynamic phenomenon however, much of the current work is cross-sectional and/or retrospective, with less emphasis on the ever-changing circumstances and unstable school and home contexts during this time. More understanding is needed on the long-term experiences of families during the pandemic. Additionally, much of early work on parents, children with disabilities, and COVID-19 focused on perspectives from largely homogenous samples outside of the U.S. Thus, more knowledge is needed to investigate how the educational and psychological shifts from COVID-19 influenced the experiences of families of preschool

students of color with disabilities. Current research in this area emphasizes school-aged parents and children; however, early childhood is a similarly important period for families of children with disabilities. Additional work is needed on the experiences of families with young children *during* COVID-19, especially those experiencing a major life change such as the transition to kindergarten. To this end, the present study was a longitudinal, prospective, qualitative examination of the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse families of children with disabilities as they transitioned to kindergarten during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in NYC.

Method

Participants

Parent participants included 15 parents of children identified as preschoolers with disabilities. All participants (parent and stakeholder) were recruited from a network of early childhood centers in New York City. All parent participants were parents or primary caregivers (12 mothers, two fathers, and one grandmother) of children who received special education services in preschool and kindergarten. Three of the 15 families did not complete demographic information. Of the 12 families who completed demographic information, the average parent age was 29.5 years ($SD = 18.19$ years). Almost three quarters of participants had total annual household income below $50,000 (69%). With respect to racial/ethnic identification, participants identified as Black or African American (42%), Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin (42%), or mixed racial/ethnic background (17%). The majority spoke a language other than English (58%), and approximately one third were born outside of the U.S. (33%). Half of participants were employed (50%) and half unemployed (50%), with almost half completing some college or a two-year degree (42%) or GED or alternative level of education (33%). Three quarters (75%)

lived in stable housing, and the majority lived in households with two or more adults (67%) and multiple children (67%).

Stakeholder participants included ten educational professionals serving children in the early childhood period, including two administrators, one school psychologist, one family worker, and six teachers. Half of the stakeholders identified as White/Caucasian ethnic/racial background, and the other half identified as Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin (30%), Black or African American background (10%), or Asian origin (10%). Some (30%) spoke a language other than English, while the majority (70%) did not speak another language. The majority had a master's degree in their field (90%), and one (10%) had a bachelor's degree. See Table 1 for full demographic information.

Procedure

The present study uses data that was collected as part of a broader study on the experiences of parents and stakeholders during the kindergarten special education transition. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Teachers College, Columbia University. The study utilized a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach (Israel, 1998) in partnership with an early childhood network in NYC. The early childhood network partnered with Teachers College, Columbia University for this CBPR project. The network utilizes a holistic approach when working with children and families and offers a range of programs, including early childhood education, mental health services, youth development, and other resources connected to the surrounding community. The network emphasizes trusting relationships with families and uses these positive connections to provide optimal support.

Parents participated in two virtual focus groups and three virtual interviews over the course of a year (i.e., August 2020 through August 2021). The same parent from each family

participated in each wave. The three interviews were the focus of the broader study. Focus groups were optional for parents and designated as introductory (FG1) and debriefing (FG2) sessions for parents who wished to opt into these groups. A combination of focus groups and interviews were selected for data collection as these methods provide diverse but complementary insights (Baillie, 2019). Focus groups are social spaces where data is formulated through group discussion (Kitzinger, 1994). Participants are selected as they share similar characteristics, which establishes rapport and allows for depth in conversations (Lehoux et al., 2006). Discussions are flexible, collaborative, and reflexive (Gilflores & Alonso, 1995), where participants examine a topic and influence one another's ideas through the social context (Hollander, 2004). The groups provide an important setting for data collection where participants can freely explore ideas and expand the conversation with peers with similar backgrounds and experiences (Gilflores & Alonso, 1995; Lehoux et al., 2006).

However, while focus groups allow for a wider breadth of discussion, the group nature dissuades from probing too deep into individual experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Participants may also be hesitant to share highly personal disclosures (Sagoe, 2012). For richer data on individual participant experiences, individual interviews are valuable research methods (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). These one-on-one interviews enhance focus group findings (Kidd & Parshall, 2000) and the two methods have been suggested as complementary pairings for qualitative data collection (Baillie, 2019). As such, the current study employed both methods to achieve robust, balanced data collection.

The first parent focus group occurred the summer prior to their kindergarten year, then three individual interviews were administered throughout their kindergarten year (fall, winter, and spring, respectively), followed by a final focus group during the summer after they

completed kindergarten. Focus groups were conducted in English with a Spanish translator and interviews were conducted in the parents' preferred language (English or Spanish). Stakeholder participants participated in one individual interview in the Spring of 2021. All focus groups and interviews followed a semi-structured format with questions designed by the CBPR advisory committee. Focus groups were facilitated by an administrator from the partner early childhood center and interviews were conducted by trained members of the CBPR advisory committee. All focus groups and interviews were approximately one hour in length. They were video and audio recorded then transcribed verbatim by multiple, trained members of the research team.

Analysis

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis guidelines (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and NVivo 12 software. Four team members worked on the coding and analysis of transcripts. First, the coders reviewed all transcripts for familiarization. Second, the coders manually open coded, where each individual independently created a set of codes and subcodes. Third, the coders met to discuss the codes and create a uniform set of codes. After these meetings, the primary author recoded using the updated set of codes. Using the primary author's NVivo file as a master copy, codes were then stratified into themes by the coders at the coding meetings. In this step, codes were grouped based on relevance (i.e., similar patterns and topics they covered). These steps were repeated for each wave of data collection (e.g., focus group 1, interview 1, interview 2, etc.). The coders individually coded approximately three transcripts per week and met weekly after each set to discuss agreement and questions. After these meetings, the primary author recoded using the updated set of codes. Additional meetings occurred between each wave of data collection to further align and solidify codes and prepare for the next wave. Lastly, once all themes were collaboratively reviewed and finalized by the analysis team for each wave, they

were verbally discussed with other members of the CBPR advisory committee.

Positionality Statements

The first author is a doctoral candidate in special education who identifies as a Caucasian female. She has a master's degree in special education and a bachelor's degree in early childhood special education and early childhood education. She has worked as a general and special educator with early childhood students and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The second researcher is a Professor of Psychology and Education who identifies as a Middle Eastern female. She earned a PhD in human development and family studies and brings over 20 years of research on social-emotional development in children with and without developmental disabilities, parents with complex support needs, and culturally diverse families. Additionally, two research assistants worked on this study. Both identify as Latinx, native Spanish-speaking females. They both hold master's degrees in special education and have background working with early childhood students with and without disabilities.

Parent Results

Much of parents' experiences with their children during COVID-19 revolved around school and evolved as pandemic-related circumstances shifted. Throughout the year, parents discussed school challenges, learning formats, and their own roles in schooling, as well as school supports and silver linings to the pandemic. See Figure 2 for summary of parent themes.

Focus Group 1: Summer 2020

In Summer 2020, families were preparing for the start of the kindergarten year. They were leaving their early childhood center where they had received holistic, family-centered services and established trusting, close relationships. Depending on kindergarten placement decisions, children were entering public, charter, or private schools for kindergarten, however

these placements were not yet finalized.

School Challenges

As parents readied for kindergarten, they described the uncertainty of preparing to enter an unfamiliar new school. Due to school closures, they were unable to visit these new schools and experienced disrupted, inconsistent communication. Several parents described their own methods of preparing their children, such as visiting the exterior of the schools or researching online:

> *Unfortunately, I couldn't visit the school…but whenever we go out for walks, I show [child] this is where you will be when you go to kindergarten, so she's comfortable and she knows where she's going so she doesn't have that shock* [P4, FG1].

Learning Formats

Parents expressed their concerns at the prospect of another year of online learning. They had finished their preschool year virtually (i.e., spring of 2020), and were not looking forward to repeating the experience, especially with the uncertainty surrounding schools reopening. However, some worried about COVID and sending their children in-person:

> *I'm scared to send my kids to school because of what's going on. I'm scared…I don't know if [the district] will give two options: if we can send them to school, or if we can do school by computer in the house. I want to know if that's gonna happen* [P8, FG1].

Technology

As parents anticipated a year of online learning, they expressed frustration and confusion with the inconsistent functioning of devices provided by the school system. Two parents explained that the district-provided devices from spring of 2020 had stopped working. Another parent reported that she had never received the device she had requested from the district.

School Supports

Parents expressed appreciation at the supports provided to them by their early childhood

center. The center had offered a variety of family resources over the summer, including Zoom calls and tutorials, supplies and materials for families, and personalized phone calls, texts, and constant communication, all which supported parents as they prepared their children for kindergarten, as recounted by Parent 1:

> *Zoom meetings, personal conversations with [child's] teachers…the supplies they gave out helped a lot. The personal information about what to do with the child to keep them up because there's a lot of things I didn't know what he was doing in school and it just helped me reinforce it at home* [P1, FG1].

Interview 1: Fall 2020

In the fall of 2020, schools were supposed to begin, however the original start dates were delayed and there was much uncertainty about the format of learning. Some schools opted for fully virtual while others chose to utilize a hybrid format. Further, not all parents had solidified the school their child would attend, which created additional confusion.

School Challenges

All parents expressed frustration with the inconsistent, ever-changing school schedules. They were unsure what the school schedule and hours would look like, and this uncertainty continued into the fall as the school year began. One parent described her frustration:

> *I don't know what's asynchronous versus synchronous. I have no details whatsoever. [the teacher] said, most likely he'll start remote learning on Tuesday. That was not concrete…next week is the last week of September and he still hasn't started* [P7, I1].

As they were transitioning and this was their child's first year at the school, many parents did not know what kindergarten their child would attend and described the difficulty of securing their child's enrollment due to school closures and limited communication from the new schools, such as the difficulties with school selection encountered by Parent 6:

> *[Child] didn't get to go to the school that I wanted him to go to. This school has been closed because of COVID. It was a new school that was supposed to open in September, but they didn't open, so I had to take my third choice of schools* [P6, I1].

Some parents struggled with new enrollment procedures implemented due to COVID-19.

Parent 3 was concerned that her kindergarten was requiring her son to take a COVID test before

starting. Another parent grappled with altered intake procedures that required interaction with

unfamiliar environments and staff:

> *Last week [child] had a reading assessment…they took my son in the school, took his temperature, washed his hands, just whisked him in the school, took him for…15, 20 minutes, brought him back…I get they're trying to do social distancing rules and stuff like that, but that's still someone's kid that never met this person before* [P6, I1].

Parents also described staffing issues that schools were having due to the pandemic.

Parent 12 described how there was no one at the school building when he went to pick up

learning materials. Some schools combined classes due to short staffing, and one parent

expressed her concerns about this setup:

> *I found out [the teacher]'s doing kindergarten/first grade and she's doing second/third grade. So, to say she's more than likely inundated is probably the biggest understatement of the year…it sure seems like she's got to be totally and completely overwhelmed, which makes me wonder how the hell is this going to work* [P7, I1].

Learning Formats

As the school year began and it became clear that online learning would be the primary

format, parents braced themselves for what was to come, but also felt comforted by their spring

preschool experiences (i.e., the onset of COVID-19) to become familiar with remote formats,

"[Preschool] helped me a lot…our remote time prepared [child] for doing work online" [P8,

I1]. However, several parents worried about their child's attention for online school and

explained the difficulty for their children to sit all day at the computer.

Technology

Technology continued to be a challenge for several parents. Parent 2 struggled with Wi-

Fi access, which resulted in lags that scared her son and disrupted his learning because it

sounded like a robot. One father described a long waiting list for iPads from the school system.
While they waited, his two children were forced to share one device, which did not work with
two student accounts and led to arguments between the children:

> *Every time I put [child]'s email after maybe a day, it locks him out of the iPad. I guess there's only one per child, so it doesn't allow two kids' emails on there… [the children] keep fighting too…but they have to do their work separate, each of them has their own account where we have to do their work* [P12, I1].

Parent Roles

Remote learning caused strain on parents. Parents with multiple children juggled multiple
remote school schedules, and described the immense energy required of them for their children
to do school from home, including Parent 14 who disclosed she'd been doing Zoom classes with
her four children on two or three hours of sleep, or Parent 10 who had difficulty balancing
participating in Zoom classes with her kindergartener while also caring for her infant.

External Challenges

In the fall of 2020, parents described the ongoing closures of structures essential for daily
life, including work, stores, and other institutions. These closures made navigating daily routines
difficult. Parent 4 hoped to find stable housing but was unable to move forward with the process
due to COVID closures. Another parent was in the process of legally adopting her son, but the
process stalled due to COVID-related closures. Parent 13 felt these disruptions impacted his
ability to maintain a routine and affected his personal wellbeing. Overall, many felt exhausted
and disheartened, including Parent 5 who described her weariness:

> *Life is taking its toll. These past few months, we were struggling. Everybody else, got lucky and had a plan, but not this girl…I don't want to let life take a toll where I give up, but part of me sometimes wants to. But you can't give up when you have a kid* [P5, I1].

Some families had jobs that shut down during COVID, which allowed them to stay at
home but made them uncertain for the future. Parents that worked from home struggled to juggle

their children's needs along with their own work demands. A couple of parents faced

unemployment due to the pandemic, which created immense stress:

> *I lost my job due to the COVID thing…if COVID didn't close the schools…my job didn't want to work with me with the hours my son had to be in remote learning. And then other people didn't want to help me…I don't have family to help me. So, it was hard. It was hard. Thinking about it makes me want to cry…it was hard*[P3, I1].

School Supports

As fall began, the early childhood center stayed in contact with many of the families and

continued to provide support. Both parents and their children appreciated the consistency of

these familiar relationships. For example, Parent 7 recounted how her child's preschool

occupational therapist stayed in touch and offered to call the family throughout the fall.

Positives

Despite persistent concerns and difficulties throughout the year, eight parents brought up

silver linings to the pandemic experience. Some expressed appreciation that they spent more time

with their children and family, especially as their children transitioned into their new schools.

Others preferred aspects of virtual learning. They felt their children benefited from smaller class

sizes, and also gave them something to do and allowed for the comforts of home while learning.

Interview 2: Winter 2021

By the winter of 2021, the school year was underway. By this time, all parents had

finalized their children's kindergarten placements in either public ($n = 8$) or charter ($n = 7$)

schools. The period between the fall and winter interviews was turbulent for families, with

schools closing and reopening due to COVID.

School Challenges

Staffing was a recurring issue brought up by four parents. They described instances of

high turnover and constantly shifting staff, which made it difficult to establish relationships or

receive consistent communication. To cope with staffing shortages, parents reported that schools

cut or combined classes, across service needs and grade levels. In two instances, these shortages

impacted special education services. One mother disclosed that instead of formal services, the

school spent 15-20 minutes at the end of the day on students with IEPs. Parent 4 explained how

her school couldn't provide her child's speech services:

> *Staffing was a big problem, even now they have staffing issues. They couldn't get someone on time, parents were complaining. The other IEPs were going on, but speech therapy was on hold. Parents were complaining about that* [P4, I2].

As the school year progressed, some schools began to implement hybrid learning

schedules, but several parents described frequent disruptions to learning and school closures with

this format due to COVID exposures. In one situation, Parent 2's son was exposed to COVID

and was required to isolate for ten days. She was hoping that he would receive instruction for the

in-person time he missed, but the school did not provide services or instruction to the child for

those ten days. Parent 6 explained that her school prepared to shift into hybrid instruction, but at

the last minute, decided to continue fully remote due to COVID positivity rates.

Learning Formats

By winter, parents noticed that their children lost motivation for virtual learning. Two

parents noted they saw shifts in their children's mood, such as Parent 3 who explained:

> *Online…it's important, but it doesn't feel important because it's video and doesn't feel real…[child] told me he feels like a secretary because he's on the computer all day…he normally always looks happy, but [on virtual] he looks like he has a headache* [P3, I2].

They also felt that it was difficult to establish consistent routines with online formats.

Some also grappled with the informal nature of virtual learning and its impact on the

effectiveness of class sessions, such as Parent 8 who described instances of other children

showing up to class not fully clothed, loud noises in the background, and people joining class

late. Others worried about the impact of virtual learning on their children, including concerns over their child's loss of social interactions and the virtual implementation of services that required hands-on elements, such as occupational therapy (OT).

Technology

Technology remained an issue for most parents. Eight discussed technology-related hardships they encountered, such as Wi-Fi access. However, some schools had established technological support for parents, and a couple of parents mentioned soliciting technology support from their older children or family members. However, these parents felt confused by the technology. They described confusing formats, such as juggling multiple Zoom links for different school sessions and services, and a learning curve in navigating instructional platforms.

Parent Roles

By winter, all parents were feeling overwhelmed and exhausted with virtual learning:

Sometimes it's just two children screaming in my ear at one time and I'm just overwhelmed at this point. I can't get things done, 'cause I'm stressed out, I feel like I'm going to faint, I don't eat [P1, I2].

They were frustrated, and at-home learning was pushing the limits of their patience, *"It was to the point where me and [child] both were crying"* [P5, I2]. Some parents had too much to juggle and admitted their child missed class meetings, which added to their stress. Parents felt like full time teachers and recounted the burden of their new role, *"It's horrible, I hate it. I keep on waiting for the [school system] to send me my paycheck because it's a lot"* [P7, I2].

Supporting remote learning at home took great amounts of parents' time and effort. Parents described how they spent entire days by their children's side on Zoom. To support their children's daily functioning, they developed their own daily schedules, reward and discipline systems, and set up the home environment to mimic school settings. Many questioned their

ability to be their children's teachers and expressed exasperation at their lack of knowledge and preparedness for teaching, and described frustrating, teary, bitter class sessions with their children. A couple of parents attempted to supplement their knowledge by exploring outside resources, like books, websites, and additional learning materials to support their teaching role.

External Challenges

As the year progressed and society remained closed, families continued to adjust and navigate a new normal. There continued to be many uncertainties for families. Families who were trying find permanent housing continued to struggle due to closures and disruptions to the housing system, and those who were out of work worried for the future, especially with their children's remote learning schedule on weekdays:

> *Sometimes I'm afraid of what if I don't go back to work, how do I pay my bills…or what if I got back and I don't get a babysitter or daycare center…now due to COVID, business is not as usual anymore. There are few care centers for kids*[P4, I2].

For parents who worked from, home, juggling work, school, and parenting remained a challenge, especially as the school year became more demanding. Parent 6 described her difficulty finding personal space to work:

> *I literally have to lock myself in the bathroom or in another room, I get on the phone like that, that is crazy…and I can't afford a nanny to take him outside while I'm working or do the school part while I'm doing whatever* [P6, I2].

School Supports

Seven parents expressed gratitude for supports provided by their new schools. Some schools had town hall meetings and sent frequent, transparent communications to keep parents updated on the recurring changes, while others provided tutorials for registration and google classroom navigation. As the school year progressed, schools offered additional supports, such as one school, which at the request of a mother, stayed late on Zoom a couple of times each week to

provide additional instruction for the child and answer the mother's questions. As parents began to build relationships with their new school staff, parents reported increased personalized communication through texts and emails, including text or email reminders and check-ins, *"Me and the teacher communicate a lot via Zoom, and when we get a chance we talk really quick and just see what it is that we need"* [P15, I2].

Some parents mentioned how their provided materials to support online learning, such as one mother who explained how the teacher ordered a stylus for her child who required it for work on the iPad, or another mother whose school sent learning materials directly to their home to supplement the online lessons. Several parents mentioned that their schools provided non-educational resources, such as meals, *"[Parent liaison] was the one who set up lunches for [child], when I told him I needed help with food"* [P14, I2].

Positives

As the school year progressed, families felt grateful to see their children's progress firsthand, and felt joy in being part of that progress and helping their children learn. Three parents described being at home with their children as a blessing*:*

> *The pandemic…as rough as it's been, it's been a blessing that I have been able to be so involved and I actually do see how the teachers work versus sitting in a school and seeing the results when he's home. Like actually being part of it, I get to see how they work, and I get to understand the way they do things* [P7, I2].

Interview 3: Spring 2021

By the spring of 2021, schools had reopened, with most operating in hybrid or fully in-person formats. Parents worked on adjusting themselves and their children for in-person learning. This adjustment was especially important as the department of education had announced plans for fully open, in-person learning for the next school year.

School Challenges

Although schools began to fully reopen or adopt hybrid learning models in the spring, many COVID procedures remained in place such as limiting school visitors. Four parents struggled sending their children to an unfamiliar school and not knowing what their children were doing. They were used to a close-up view of their child's instruction via online school, and the last school they had attended in person was their familiar preschool:

> *The fact we are used to [preschool], how like a family, like it's so close to us. Then moving to a bigger school setting is dramatic…Because you're not even allowed to drop the kid, if you take the kids to school, you have to leave them outside the door…you're not even allowed to go near the teachers and speak to them* [P2, I3].

Although the children were in-person, seven parents felt remaining COVID procedures limited their involvement and relationship-building with the school. Parents felt that given the circumstances, schools did not want parents involved:

> *Due to the type of academic year we're having…they're not really having anybody involved. The teachers can be involved, they're just trying to get their stuff together and figure out how they can best deliver, but they have so much on their plate. Everything else is kind of secondary and unnecessary* [P6, I3].

Learning Formats

Even though schools began to reopen, some parents felt reopening procedures were not clearly communicated. One parent missed a deadline to opt for in-person learning and attributed it to poor school communication. Others opted to keep their children remote for the remainder of the school year due to safety and health concerns. However, many parents were happy for their children to finally receive in-person kindergarten experiences and felt their children's focus was better. But some also reported their children's difficulties with re-entering in-person learning, such as academic concerns, adjustments to a more rigid schedule, and increased social interactions, as well as COVID safety procedures such as social distancing and mask-wearing. The adjustment to in-person experiences may have been especially sensitive based on special

education needs. A mother of a son with autism described his experience with a fire drill after

returning to school:

> *[The school] didn't warn [child] that they have fire drills. 'I was like [child], remember,*
> *you have special headphones you can put on your head'. He's like, 'yeah, but I didn't*
> *know, they should have told me they have fire drills, I don't like that. I don't want to go*
> *back to school'. I didn't send him the next day because he kept crying. He even cried*
> *when I got him ready to go to school* [P3, I3].

Technology

For parents who continued in online formats, technology issues persisted. For example,

one parent described her frustration with juggling Zoom links. where parents continued to report

issues with navigating online formats, However, a couple of parents felt impressed with the tech-

savviness their children had acquired throughout the year and felt it supported their own learning

and navigation of platforms.

Parent Roles

In spring, parents tried to catch their children up and prepare them for in-person learning

and first grade. They welcomed the lifted burdens of teaching and described the stress relief that

accompanied their children returning to school:

> *When [child] was at home, I was always in class because I had to sit with her, then after*
> *class we had to do all the homework, all the projects, so that was really stressful. Though*
> *I was helping, I really liked helping, it was stressful. Now I have time for myself and*
> *when she gets back [from school], I have time for her, so it's balanced now* [P4, I3].

Many of them said the best thing about the year was the reopening of schools, but also

wanted to ensure they continued to have an active role in their children's education. Parents

whose children remained online continued their heavily involved roles but continued to

described feelings of burn out and frustration. As the school year ended, parents expressed their

immense relief at the finishing of the year and looked forward to first grade:

> *Emotionally, emotionally I just want to cry because it's done, I'm done. I've been going*

through this pandemic home stuck with these kids. I'm more excited for September even though it's going to hurt me to let them go [P14, I3].

External Challenges

As the world began to reopen, a couple of parents described increasing concerns about childcare, especially as their jobs began to also shift to in-person. Further, families felt restless. Five parents worried that their children were becoming lazy and dependent on technology, and wished for external activities to reopen, such as sports or community events to support socialization. However, one mother worried about the instability in her community, and noted concerns over increased robberies and gun violence as people adjusted to the new COVID world.

Positives

Like at earlier points throughout the year, parents reported these silver linings to the pandemic. Four parents described appreciation for the increased time with their child and the positive influence on their relationship, especially as the child adjusted to kindergarten learning:

> *It's a weird thing to say, because…the hybrid schedule has hurt him in some ways, but I think helped him in that we were able to spend more time together. I think he liked that…to see me more. So, it's helped him to see me and we're able to do learning together* [P13, I3].

Focus Group 2: Summer 2021

By the focus group in the summer of 2021, the kindergarten year had ended. Families were looking toward the new school year and preparing for first grade. They reflected on their kindergarten experience and the influence of COVID-19 on their lives.

School Challenges

After the school year ended, a few parents worried that COVID-related school-level difficulties would continue and expressed a desire for stability, as expressed byParent 7::

> *Sometimes I feel like [schools] are still trying to do normal processes plus…COVID. It becomes overwhelming to teachers and impacts students…everybody's just trying to*

check a box and get through it. So hopefully, as time goes…I don't have to worry because
these things have been established and set in place…and that's how we carry out the
school year. I can live my life without the expectation that the school is not going to do
their part and support my child how they need to [P7, FG2].

Learning Formats

As parents looked toward first grade, a couple expressed frustration with their

kindergarten year. One mother explained how it was obvious that her son's school was

struggling and that they did not make adequate adjustments for her child's IEP services, and

another felt the inconsistencies of the hybrid schedule acted as a barrier to her son's progress.

But several others focused on the progress that their children did make, despite these difficulties.

One mother explained his hopes for an improved learning experience in first grade:

> *I think hopefully, if our children go back [in person], it will be different. I think the*
> *teachers will be a lot more compassionate and more caring, and probably more listening*
> *because they went through some things as much as we did. I'm quite sure that…if the*
> *children come back we're going to have a more pleasant school year* [P1, FG2].

Parent Roles

Several parents recounted the positives that came out of their kindergarten year. They

especially appreciated the hands-on role they had in their child's learning. For example, Parent 4

described her gratitude for so closely experiencing kindergarten with her daughter, and Parent 13

felt he got an up-close view of his son's learning and progress.

School Supports

Parents also reflected on supports they had received throughout the year that helped their

coping. Four parents mentioned consistent, open, personalized communication from both their

preschool and kindergarten acted as a facilitator and lessened their stress. A mother also

mentioned the material resources that her school provided, including learning materials and food,

which supported her family throughout the year:

I was able to pick up supplies and do [services] at home…it saved me time, it saved me money, it saved me running around. Those things, although you know to some people it may seem like they're kind of minute, it was a blessing [P7, FG2].

Stakeholder Results

Throughout the interviews, themes revealed that stakeholders reported various ways that COVID changed school procedures and family relationships. They discussed changes to the overall school experience, including technology shifts and transition processes for the children and families transitioning to kindergarten. They also felt their relationships with families shifted, including parent engagement and communication with families, and they perceived that parents underwent changes as well. See Table 3 for a full summary of stakeholder themes.

Stakeholders' Personal School Experiences in Relation to COVID-19

Stakeholders described the school year as "*busier than ever*" [S17] and felt the pandemic took its toll on their teaching. One teacher reported that she felt more exhausted advocating for her students:

*We made sure that students got what they deserve and that takes fighting for it in a certain way, but sometimes you get bogged down. There's a pandemic…everyone is just dog tire*d [S19].

Others felt that it was hard for both them and their students to adjust to the remote and hybrid learning structures, as well as general school operations. Five stakeholders discussed how they missed in-person events, including supplementary learning experiences and parent events which their schools held frequently prior to the pandemic. They experienced much uncertainty about upcoming school procedures and what school would look like in the future because of COVID. One administrator reported concerns for what the future held for her school's procedures, especially as she had not heard any guidelines from the system and other agencies:

I really don't know how it's going to work in the fall, I'm nervous about it. It's not a good learning curve going on here…it's nerve-wracking. Who's vaccinated, who's not

vaccinated...we are going to have to figure out maybe more outdoor things to do, or more zoom, which everyone is sick of. I don't know...I'm starting to think about what's going to be our policies. We haven't heard from the Department of Health yet and its sort of evolving...I don't even know if we're going to have to wear masks again [S24].

Experiences with Technology

Technology was another change for stakeholders. One described how he viewed technology, such as Class Dojo and Zoom, as critical assets in the pandemic and helped him communicate with students and families remotely, However, not all families were able to access technology equally, and four stakeholders described technology issues difficulties families had:

Some families didn't have Internet...kids, in order for them to do schoolwork they would go to McDonald's for their Wi-Fi. It's a difficult time...when you have multiple children in the household it can also be very challenging because everybody needs to use a device but not everybody has access to one [S20].

Additionally, for teachers, supporting parents in navigating the technology was an added task. One parent was supposed to attend a virtual kindergarten interview but missed it, which was frustrating for the stakeholder. Another teacher explained these difficulties:

You can give [parents] an iPad but on how to navigate the device, they might need some support. How does this tool, this function, work in Zoom. All those types of things. You can send them a message, or so we try to say, do you prefer email, do you prefer text, do you prefer WhatsApp, and then we have Class Dojo, how to download something, how to open something, basic simple things. But it takes a while. And then Zoom is continuously updating so whatever they learn, they're behind [S16].

Changes to Transition Procedures

Transition procedures for students transitioning to kindergarten was also an altered process for stakeholders. Many resources that stakeholders provided for parents related to the transition were now implemented virtually, and transition procedures were also delayed and implemented remotely, including assessments. In one situation, the virtual observation process caused a disagreement with the teacher and the evaluator, where the teacher disagreed with the evaluator's assessment results and felt the evaluator received a limited glimpse of the child

allowed by the virtual format. Two stakeholders also worried about their students entering

kindergarten at an unfamiliar school that they nor that family had never visited.

Parent Relationships

In addition to their personal experiences with school-related changes, seven stakeholders

discussed changes to their perceptions and relationships with parents. Stakeholders described the

nature of the new parent-school dynamics and the new nature of their relationships with parents,

detailing the informal contact and subsequent distant relationships. COVID-related school

procedures, such as social distancing or virtual formats, altered stakeholder processes for

engaging with parents and shifted their perspective of their job:

> *People are tired of being like this. We do our best to keep up. We can only see the parents outside from the sidewalk, or if we're video chatting…it's just really tough. One of the reasons I love early childhood is the parents, just like all hands-on deck because small children need support, and I like being able to support families in that way. But there is a loss of interconnectedness* [S19].

These stakeholders felt their relationships with parents were weakened, and it was harder

to establish these relationships. They felt a disconnect with parents, where both parents and

teachers were uncertain of boundaries and best ways to engage with one another:

> *I'll try an email, which is kind of impersonal, but I feel like it helps for me to reach out and say, 'I'm happy to chat', but then you never hear from parents, I think maybe they feel like they're imposing. I may also try a phone call, but it's tricky when you're calling and they're home with their kids or working from home*[S24].

Some described attempts to maintain their relationships with parents and the emotions

these efforts evoked, *"Me and my co-teacher - she could drive - we went and met everybody in-*

person with a mask and social distancing…we were crying, they were crying" [S16].

Parent Engagement

As relationship dynamics shifted, five stakeholders also described the ways that they felt

parents' engagement with school changed, *"COVID changed a lot, honestly the involvement with*

parents, especially when working remotely, it was hard. It was really hard" [S20]. Stakeholders

mentioned how participation shifted throughout the early stages of the pandemic:

> *In the beginning, morale was high, and we had a lot of participation. I give credit to my families, a lot of them stuck it out. But after a while, they're like 'Oh God", and there was a bit of a curve*[S17].

Stakeholders explained that many parents participated through Zoom and performed at-

home activities suggested by the schools and emphasized that virtual learning offered them new

insights into the home involvement of parents. However, stakeholders worked hard to develop of

new strategies to encourage parents' engagement, including personalized and frequent

communication efforts, check-ins with the families during Zoom sessions, and video calls where

parents provided parents tips for at-home learning. However, this was difficult for stakeholders,

especially when parents were also facing challenges related to the pandemic:

> *I feel like in this cyber sort of reality we live in now, if you don't have access to [resources] it's hard to even engage in these sorts of spaces. I think the parents that really need the most support aren't even the ones coming to our spaces [to get that support]* [S19].

Perceived Parent Barriers

Three stakeholders shared the challenges they observed that parents faced during this

time, which they felt influenced their relationship-building and engagement. They mentioned the

multiple things families had to juggle, such as working from home and managing multiple

children's hybrid and remote schooling. One teacher worried about the impact of COVID on

families' mental health. Resources were also an issue. They described the technology issues

parents experienced, such as limited internet access, poor tech savviness, and difficulty accessing

devices, and one teacher explained that some of the parents in her class had challenges feeding

their families and securing food.

Supports for Parents

With the uncertainties and challenges of COVID, stakeholders described efforts they made to support families and ways they felt they could make families feel supported. One way was frequent communication. With limited in-person interactions, many felt a newfound reliance on virtual strategies, such as via phone or Zoom calls. Class Dojo was another new resource, where stakeholders shared updates, calendars, and other communications to ensure all parents were in the loop and receiving information. Some teachers got creative with support efforts, such as one teacher who mentioned that she held office hours where families could come and ask questions or another who partnered with the schools' family workers to provide extra support and structure. Several stakeholders also mentioned providing families with learning materials for their homes, as well as ensuring families had access to the technology they and the students needed to effectively participate.

Discussion

This longitudinal qualitative study examined the virtual learning and kindergarten transition experiences of parents of young children with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds prospectively at key time points during the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focused on a culturally and linguistically diverse sample (i.e., Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, or bi-/multiracial), a particularly important focus as families of color may have had unique pandemic experiences compared to their White counterparts (Chen et al., 2021). The shift to virtual learning had profound influences on these families, especially during the kindergarten period as children and families missed critical early school experiences (Paredes et al., 2020). Findings revealed that the pandemic resulted in disruptions and adjustments to the learning experience itself, and also shifted core parent responsibilities and family functioning. Parents, and similarly educational stakeholders, reported

major challenges throughout the year related to school and learning contexts, parental role shifts, as well as external, family-level challenges. However, facilitators including school supports and silver linings promoted parents' coping throughout the turbulent year.

Challenges

Parents experienced increased challenges and burnout during the COVID-19 pandemic (Wiemer & Clarkson, 2022). Particularly salient are the burdens experienced by parents of children with disabilities (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2020; Rogers et al., 2021; Werner et al., 2022) as they coped with child needs and service disruptions. The present study captured the dynamic nature challenges for parents as COVID-19-related circumstances morphed across the kindergarten year. In the summer and fall of 2021, parents experienced challenges relating to the start of school, including difficulties identifying and enrolling in prospective schools, as well as complications with school start dates and technology access for virtual learning. As the school year progressed into winter, parents struggled to adjust to their new schools and virtual learning due to their increased role as at-home teachers, service disruptions, and external barriers. At the end of kindergarten, school contexts continued to shift as in-person learning began and parents adjusted their coping and family routines accordingly. The results demonstrate the instability that the early phases of COVID-19 inflicted on parents as they adapted to kindergarten.

COVID-19 greatly altered school processes. Notably, special education experienced considerable disruption in service provision (Garbe et al., 2020) and teacher staffing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Parents in the present study echoed concerns surrounding services and staffing, and highlighted challenges unique to the kindergarten transition including enrollment and school choice barriers (Dockett et al., 2011), suggesting that COVID-19 school challenges added an additional layer of complications to parents' transition experiences. Parents

donned the role of teachers during the virtual learning period, responsible for their children's hands-on learning and service provision inside the home (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2020; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). Consistent with literature, parents in the present study reported significant stress and pressure from their new teaching role (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2020). They struggled to juggle competing demands (Syrek et al., 2021) and worried about their lack of preparation and proficiency to support their children (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). In both the present study and prior literature, parents reported stress and overburden with virtual learning, as well as tiring efforts to ensure their children's participation and engagement (Soltero-González & Gillanders, 2021).

Further exacerbating parents' school-related hardships were external stressors brought about by the pandemic. During this period, families of color faced disproportionate health concerns including higher mortality and risk of infection (Moore et al., 2020; Yancy, 2020), on top of possible institutional mistrust (Bogart et al., 2021). These concerns were similarly experienced in New York State where the present study was conducted, where hospitalization rates for Black and Latinx individuals were more than double than those of White individuals, and these communities also experienced increased COVID-19 cases and exposure (Barranco et al., 2020). At the same time, parents navigated a tumultuous racial landscape with increased injustice, discrimination, and mental health concerns (Gravlee, 2020; Shim & Starks, 2021). Further, parents struggled with challenges to their daily life contexts that were instigated by the pandemic, including as unemployment (Karpman et al., 2020), higher risk working conditions (Goldman et al., 2021), material hardships (Christie et al., 2022), and childcare concerns (Radey et al., 2021), all challenges reported by parents in the current study. A 2020 report found increased prevalence in these external stressors among low-income, Latinx, and Black families

(Karpman et al., 2020) such that these families experienced disproportionate economic and material hardship due to the pandemic (Bauer, 2020; Bovell-Ammon, 2023; Chen et al., 2021), and these hardships are consistent with parents and stakeholder reports from the current study.

In the present study, virtual learning heightened these external stressors, as parents shared a workspace and schedule with their children's school, and increased time in the home caused material strain (e.g., increased at-home food consumption, need for learning materials). Research demonstrated a rise in household chaos (i.e., noise, crowding, routines) during the pandemic, especially in lower-income families of young children like the sample of the present study (Johnson et al., 2022). In pre-pandemic periods, household chaos may have taken heavier tolls on families with fewer resources to overcome these household-related challenges (Evans et al., 2010); thus, it is possible that the combination of material hardship and pandemic-imposed disruption of household stability may have especially heightened the negative experiences of families in the present study.

Supports

Amid the chaos and stress of virtual learning, parents found supports that facilitated their coping. In the present study, parents reported school-centered supports that helped them through the year, including communication from their early childhood settings. Throughout pre-COVID transition literature, parents noted their gratitude for frequent and detailed contact from their preschool settings during the transition (Fontil & Petrakos, 2015; Siddiqua & Janus, 2017; Welchons & McIntyre, 2015). In the present study, at the start of the school year, (e.g., in summer and fall), parents heavily relied on their relationships with early childhood professionals for resources and supports. With the volatility of COVID-19, the constancy of these established relationships may have especially acted as a welcome source of stability for parents shifting to

kindergarten. Parents in the present study described their appreciation for communication from their new schools as the kindergarten year progressed, and throughout the winter and spring into summer, developed new relationships and received subsequent supports from their new schools. Schools, like families, operated in crisis management mode throughout the pandemic (Harris & Jones, 2020), and as evidenced in the present study, parents appreciated transparency and communication as schools navigated this turbulent period.

At an interpersonal level, parents in the present study valued efforts from their kindergarten staff to build new relationships and keep them informed. In pre-COVID times, relationships with new staff supported parent adjustment and comfortability with the early childhood special education transition (Starr et al., 2014; Warren & Harden-Thew, 2019), and findings from the present study affirm the importance of these efforts, especially with added stress of COVID-related factors (Bagnall et al., 2022). In a study on Latinx parents of young children during COVID-19, parents reported building authentic relationships with school professionals where they felt the professionals cared about their child's learning and wellbeing of their family, and also provided resources and learning activities for the home (Soltero-González & Gillanders, 2021). These results align with findings from the current study, especially stakeholder insights, where they discussed the multiple ways they supported parents and encouraged their participation.

Parents in the present study noted another critical support they received from schools were material and food resources. Given the disproportionate material and economic hardships experienced by low-income families and families of color during the pandemic (Bauer, 2020), resource supports from schools may have acted as especially crucial buffers for children and their families (Jowell et al., 2021; Kinsey et al., 2020) and supported their functioning during this

period, as demonstrated in the present study.

Further supporting parents' coping may be the silver linings they found among COVID-19 circumstances. Consistent with other work (Neece et al., 2020), parents reported positives such as increased closeness and time with family plus expanded insights into their children's learning, despite the challenges and stressors experienced in this time. Optimism and reframing strategies have been used by parents of children with disabilities (Lewis et al., 2022), and often these parent resilience strategies can act as protective factors (Montirosso et al., 2020). These strategies offer promising insights into parent coping, as other studies have reported that parents of children with disabilities struggled to adapt to the pandemic (Touloupis, 2021) and utilized less adaptive coping strategies, with mindsets fixated on denial, wishful thinking, and avoidance (Corbett et al., 2021; Gillespie-Smith et al., 2021) than families of children without disabilities.

Interestingly, these silver linings (i.e., family closeness) have not been documented in all families. While higher-income families reported gratitude and closeness to their family during COVID-19, lower-income families were less likely to reap these emotional benefits (Kerr et al., 2021). Yet, these silver linings were reported in the present study despite the lower income sample and similar positives were reported by parent samples of comparably diverse ethnic/racial and disability composition (Neece et al., 2020). Familism and collectivism are core cultural values for these diverse families (Suizzo et al., 2012). Thus, it may be that these positives can be attributed to these cultural values which have been reported as important buffers for diverse families (e.g., Latinx) during the pandemic (Cortés-García et al., 2022).

Implications

COVID-19 has been a time of chaos, unpredictability, and constant change. Families have been forced to adjust as pandemic, societal, and school circumstances transformed across

this phenomenon. As such, the field of education cannot simply switch back to normalcy and revert to business as usual. Learning gaps are prominent (Kuhfeld et al., 2022) and effects on schooling have been suggested as irreversible (Harris & Jones, 2020). Children and families have undergone experiences unique to pre-COVID times (Masi et al., 2021), and schools and school systems must adjust based on the circumstances and present levels of families and children

Schools must be responsive (Harris, 2020) and attend to the wide variety of needs and diverse situations in the families they serve (Garbe et al., 2020). The education field must acknowledge the formative years spent in virtual learning, lockdown, and high-stress situations, and restructure their expectations based on this. COVID presents a unique opportunity to restructure future educational processes (Lipkin & Creapau-Hobson, 2022), and schools may consider applying research findings from pandemic-related work into practice (Nature, 2022).

Specific to the kindergarten transition, the changes evoked by COVID-19 may spur changes in kindergarten transition plans and guidelines promoted by educational decision-makers (Bornfreund & Ewen, 2021). Schools should consider increasing their flexibility of transition procedures and parent supports as families adjust to school, including increased information-sharing and personalized relationship building (Amirazizi et al., 2022). As many families' underwent unique circumstances in the pandemic, it may be imperative for schools to expand transition practices beyond standardized procedures and emphasize a personalized experience that can be adapted based on specific family needs (Bakopoulou, 2022) and advance equity, especially for those (e.g., families of color, families with disabilities, or families with low-incomes) who may not have been able to as effectively participate in transition activities due to the pandemic (Bornfreund & Ewen, 2021).

As parents took on a significant role in their children's education, now more than ever

educators must partner and collaborate with them. Despite the alignment of themes between parents and educational stakeholders in the present study, families offer crucial insights and expertise (Harris & Jones, 2020) that external professionals typically did not have access to during virtual learning. Work on school leadership during the pandemic suggested that horizontal collaboration supported school communities during rapid, COVID-related changes (Fotheringham et al., 2021), and parents should be part of these teams as integrated support systems and viewpoints from various stakeholders may be crucial to holistic child support (Berry, 2020; Lipkin & Creapau-Hobson, 2022; Logan et al., 2021).

In the present study, parents conveyed a desire for stability. To do so, educators can support their experiences and act as partners. Parents of children with disabilities in particular require support and have expressed a need for external support in navigating COVID effects (Lipkin & Creapau-Hobson, 2022). In a study examining parents' requests of professionals in a post-COVID world, parents asked that their teams improve communication and demonstrate flexibility and understanding for families (Logan et al., 2021) as they adjusted to the new learning landscape. Professionals can take this support further and actively develop solutions for parent needs and hardships through multidisciplinary teams and collaboration with families and the surrounding community. This approach has been demonstrated to be especially meaningful for under resourced, immigrant families during COVID-19 (Failcov et al., 2020). Educators may also consider taking steps to increase their awareness of families' home circumstances and practices, such as a model proposed by Cioè-Peña (2022) for educators to gather data on students' home language practices. In this model, educators should 1) gather data on their students' home language through surveys that help them get to know their students and families, 2) identify home language practices through learning about the languages themselves as well as

students' levels of proficiency, and 3) modify the curriculum based on student and family needs, including supports that can be offered in representative languages (Cioè-Peña, 2022).

As shown in the present study, steps toward normalcy (e.g., returning to in-person school formats) can be a source of relief for parents. However, uncertainties may persist, such as parents' trepidation about the unfamiliarity of new school contexts. It is important for educators to support parent comfort through forging positive relationships, creating welcoming environments (LaQuita & Singer, 2017), and fostering parent engagement (Ishimaru, 2017). Accessible resources, such as online (Lasecke et al., 2022) or meaningful, culturally and linguistically relevant materials (Parra Cardona et al., 2012) may further support adjustment. In one example during the pandemic, Latinx parents of children with developmental delay received a telehealth parent training intervention that was modified to be meaningful for developmental disabilities and delivered to be culturally accessible. Participants reported positive experiences with this intervention, and as such, this model provides foundation for further virtual support for diverse parents of children with disabilities (McIntyre et al., 2022).

Limitations and Conclusion

A primary limitation of the present study is the small sample. The qualitative methods allowed for an in-depth understanding of parents' and other stakeholders' lived experiences and perceptions, and the diversity of the sample is a particular strength, especially given the limited research on families from these cultural and ethnic backgrounds during COVID-19. That said, these methods preclude us from generalizing the findings to other populations as the overall number of participants is small, and sampling of the group occurred within a specific geographic area and school district. Caution should be used when interpreting results and applying to other parent populations. Future work should explore parent experiences using a larger set of parents

from a wider, more diverse geographic range. Further, while the longitudinal nature of the study offers a valuable, unique prospective family perspective (i.e., in contrast to many retrospective studies that have been conducted) that is enriched from the 51 total hours of focus group and interview data, the study only captured experiences in the early stages of COVID. The pandemic is a complex, dynamic phenomenon, thus additional work is needed to explore family experiences in the years of COVID-19 beyond the period covered in the present study.

The present study longitudinally examined the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse parents of children with disabilities transitioning into kindergarten in the context of COVID-19. Parent data was captured at multiple timepoints from August 2020 through August 2021 as their children transitioned and adjusted to kindergarten, with additional insights from educational stakeholders in the spring of 2021. Findings show that families experienced a turbulent year full of ever-changing challenges, including school and learning changes, technology barriers, and altered parent roles. Despite hardships, parents also discussed supports from their schools and perceived positives that supported their coping throughout the year.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Parents		Stakeholders	
	n = 12	%	*n* = 10	%
Relationship to child				
Biological parent	10	83		
Adoptive parent	1	8		
Grandparent	1	8		
Race/ethnicity				
Black/AA	5	42	10	1
His/Lat	5	42	30	3
Bi-/multiracial	2	17		
Asian			10	1
White/Caucasian			50	5
Speak language other than English				
Yes	7	58	30	3
No	5	42	70	7
Born in the U.S.				
Yes	8	67		
No	4	33		
Highest Level of Schooling				
Less than high school	1	8		
GED or high school diploma	4	33		
Some college/2-year degree	5	42		
Bachelor's degree	1	8	10	1
Master's degree	1	8	90	9
Marital Status				
Never married/partnered	6	50		
Currently married/partnered	6	50		
Total household income				
Less than $10,000	1	8		
$10,000 to $49,999	7	58		
$50,000 to $74,999	1	8		
$75,000 to $99,999	1	8		
$100,000 to $149,000	2	17		
Employment				
Employed	6	50		
Unemployed	6	50		
Stable Housing				
Yes	9	75		
No	3	25		
Adults in Household				
1	4	33		
2	6	50		
3	2	17		
Children in Household				
1	4	33		
2	3	25		
3	2	17		
4 or more	3	25		

Table 2

Parent Retention Information

	Summer 2020	*Fall 2020*	*Winter 2021*	*Spring 2021*	*Summer 2021*
Family	**FG1** *(optional)*	**I1**	**I2**	**I3**	**FG2** *(optional)*
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	X	✓	✓	✓	X
10	✓	✓	X	X	X
11	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
12	✓	✓	X	X	X
13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
15	X	X	✓	X	X
Total parent respondents (n = 15):	12	14	13	12	7

Note. The three interviews (i.e., I1, I2, I3) were the focus of the broader study. Focus groups (i.e., FG1, FG2) were an additional activity that parents could choose to opt into. The same parent from each family participated at each wave.
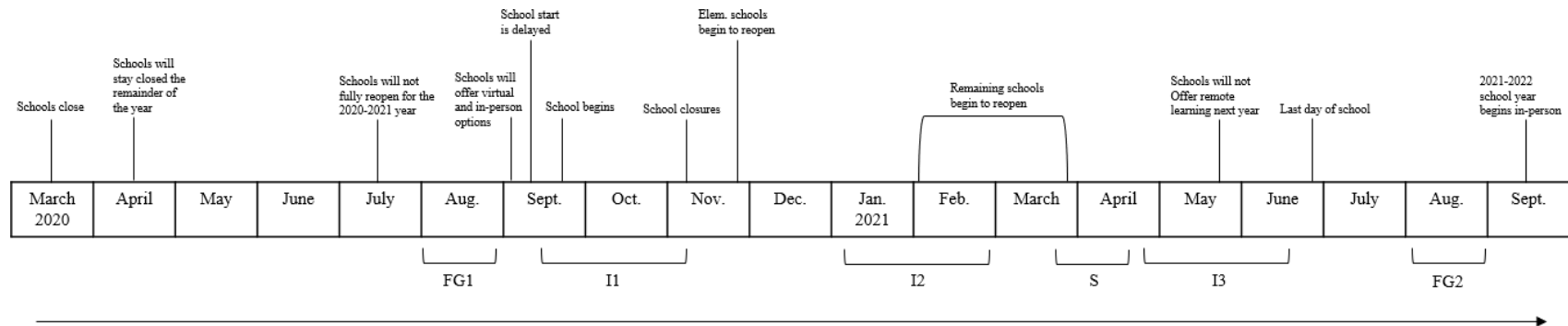
Table 3

Summary of Stakeholder Themes

Theme		Subtheme	
Personal Experiences with the School in Relation to COVID-19	- Busy, tired - Difficult adjustment to new school procedures - Uncertainty about the future	*Experiences with Technology*	- Felt technology was an important resource for them during COVID - Burden of supporting parent technology use - Not all parents had adequate access to technology
		Changes to Transition procedures	- Transition procedures occurred virtually - Some processes delayed or lacked quality - Concerned for their students entering new, unfamiliar schools
Parent Relationships	- COVID caused new relationship dynamics with parents - More difficult to build relationships, felt disconnected - Made efforts to foster parent relationships	*Parent Engagement*	- Parent participation looked different due to COVID - Worked hard to encourage parent involvement
		Perceived Parent Barriers	- Felt parents experienced barriers that influenced their priorities - Resources, family commitments

Supports for Parents	• Frequent communication • Providing structure for parents • Providing resources for families

Figure 1

COVID Timeline for New York City Public Schools

School start is delayed

Elem. schools begin to reopen

Schools will stay closed the remainder of the year

Schools will not fully reopen for the 2020-2021 year

Schools will offer virtual and in-person options

Remaining schools begin to reopen

Schools will not Offer remote learning next year

2021-2022 school year begins in-person

Schools close

School begins

School closures

Last day of school

March 2020	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan. 2021	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.

FG1   I1   I2   S   I3   FG2

Note. FG1 = Focus Group 1; I1 = Interview 1; I2 = Interview 2; S = Stakeholder Interview; I3 = Interview 3; FG2 = Focus Group 2

Figure 2

Summary of Parent Themes

	Kindergarten prep →	Kindergarten begins →		Kindergarten ends →	
	Summer 2020	*Fall 2020*	*Winter 2021*	*Spring 2021*	*Summer 2021*
	Focus Group 1	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Focus Group 2
School Challenges	• Searched for kindergartens, navigated enrollment procedures in the context of COVID • Lack of communication from possible schools due to closures, disorganization • Unable to visit potential schools • Navigated a different transition process than expected	• Uncertain, constantly changing start dates • Inconsistent, confusing, or unavailable information from schools • New entrance procedures such as COVID tests, masks, and social distancing for students • Staffing issues	• COVID cases and unpredictable school closures for hybrid learners • Disruption in services, lack of learning • High staff turnover and inconsistent staffing • Lack of communication	• Parents restricted from entering schools • Lack of parent programming and school involvement activities • Lack of relationship-building and personalized communication	• Hoped first grade would be a more consistent, stable year
Learning formats	• Unsure if schools will open or opt for remote learning	• Enrolled in fully remote or hybrid learning • Virtual learning attention difficulties, children disappointed no in-person	• Fully remote or hybrid, some initially enrolled in full remote have shifted to hybrid • COVID outbreaks and school closures • Children unmotivated to learn, missed socializing • Worried about impact of virtual learning on children	• Many schools fully back in-person, some still full remote or hybrid • Happy to begin in-person learning • Children also excited for school but struggled adjusting to in-person routines and COVID safety procedures	• Struggled with teacher unpreparedness, inconsistency from schools during remote learning • Looking toward first grade, parents anticipated a more organized and stable school year
Technology	• Struggles accessing technology	• Wi-Fi access • Waiting list for devices • Hoped to become more tech-savvy	• Wi-Fi access • Schools offer tech support	• Juggling Zoom links • Children became familiar with technology	
School Supports	• Early childhood programs provided helpful material and transition-related supports	• Early childhood programs stayed in contact • New schools offered supports like informational meetings and personalized contact	• Parents began to build relationships with new school which boosted provision of supports • Frequent, personalized contact • Material resources		• Recalled the supports provided to them by the schools such as materials and food
Parent role		• Struggled with remote learning demands • Especially difficult for parents with multiple children	• Felt like full time teachers • Tense, overwhelmed, and unprepared • Organized and facilitated remote activities, sat 1-1 during sessions	• Tried to catch their children up, prepared them for in-person, concerned about future progress • Relief of schools reopening, stresses of remote teaching lifted	• Appreciated the hands-on involvement they had in their child's education during remote learning
External Challenges		• Juggled work from home, remote school, family life, routines • Unemployment, inflexible work schedule • Limited family and social support; isolation	• Juggled work from home, remote school, family life • Unemployment • Unstable housing situations • Lack of childcare • Limited personal time	• Lack of childcare • Unavailable community activities and entertainment	
Positives		• Increased home and family time • More able to support their child's transition • Smaller class sizes remotely	• Increased input, views, and support in their child's learning • More time at home • Improved at-home independence and focus for children	• Inside, hands-on view to their child's learning • More time with their child and family	

Chapter 4: Factors Contributing to the Educational Involvement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents of Preschool Children With and Without Disabilities

With changing U.S. cultural demographics in the last decade, American schools are serving growing numbers of students of color from culturally diverse backgrounds. For example, as of 2018, the U.S. K-12 student population was composed of 25% Latinx students and 14% Black students (Bauman & Cranney, 2020). New York City (NYC) has an especially diverse student population, with over 85% of students from culturally diverse backgrounds (e.g., 41% Latinx; 25% Black) and 21% identified as students with disabilities (NYC Department of Education, 2022) enrolled in public district schools. Similarly, 96% of students enrolled in NYC's public charter schools are from culturally diverse backgrounds (39% Latinx, 52% Black; Domanico, 2020). Schools are often underprepared to engage with and support these children and families in culturally-informed ways (Gonzalez & Gable, 2017), sometimes leaving gaps between schools and parents (Banks & Banks, 2013), relationships that are made especially complex when considering the needs of students with disabilities and their families (Irvine, 2012) who report distinct experiences compared to families of typically developing children (Lučić et al., 2017; Samadi et al., 2018).

Parent involvement (PI) is a key factor in home-school relationships and is often conceptualized as practices that promote home-school relationships. At a broad level, PI can be viewed as caregivers' commitment to parenting and fostering optimal child development (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Although much of the field's knowledge of PI comes from studies that use White, homogeneous samples, work has demonstrated that PI positively impacts

children's development across racial and socioeconomic groups (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Hayakawa et al., 2013; Jeon et al., 2020). Yet even PI studies with diverse samples have been conducted using a traditional, school-based notion of PI which has little recognition of the nuances of culture. Culture is a major factor in how parents engage with their child as parents participate in ways that align with their specific cultural values (Carreón et al., 2005; Tam, 2015). For families of children with disabilities, culture can influence their parenting process, such as their perceptions of disabilities, expectations for the child, and support mechanisms (Acar et al., 2021; Blacher et al., 2013). There is a need to broaden knowledge on the influence of culture on how parents participate with their children and expand the definition of PI to reflect the cultural strengths and backgrounds of the current U.S. student population. Such work will allow educators to better understand and support parents and discern meaningful links between culturally valid notions of involvement and children's outcomes.

The present study uses a mixed-method approach to bring together complementary sources of information on the topic of parents' educational involvement and cultural values. This approach will strengthen our understanding of the abovementioned processes associated with parent involvement allowing for between-method triangulation of quantitative questionnaires and in-depth interviews (Williamson, 2005). Specifically, using a quantitative methodological approach with a sample of culturally diverse parents of preschool children with and without disabilities, the present study examines the link between parents' reports of multiple indices of home- and school-based educational activities, cultural values, and cultural socialization behaviors. The study also uses a qualitative methodological approach to capture parents' perspectives and lived experiences regarding their involvement in their children's education and, in particular, *how* they engage with their children at home and school.

The Culture Context of Parenting

Cultural identity is an important factor that shapes family behaviors and practices (APA, 2020; Hurwich-Reiss et al., 2015). Culture is the unique customs, values, beliefs, and knowledge in a community that underlie everyday behaviors and practices (APA, 2020). Sociological theorists suggest that culture makes up distinct personal assets (i.e., cultural capital) that guide thinking and acting (Bourdieu, 1986). As young as infancy, parents engage with their child and promote their developmental goals in ways that sync with their cultural background (Cycyk & Scheffner-Hammer, 2020; Kärtner & von Suchodoletz, 2021) and these cultural values play a salient role in families' lives (Hurwich-Reiss et al., 2015). Different cultural groups engage in varied patterns of caregiving, and Bornstein (2012) suggests that these differences exist due to societal demands. Some demands for parents are universal, such as acting as protectors for their young, while others vary based on cultural group, such as attitudes about the function of playing with their children. Bornstein (2012) characterizes these demands as necessary versus desirable, for example, communication with the child is a necessary demand, but a desirable command is the way that parents communicate with their child which are aligned with their cultural background. Additionally, parents have a strong desire to share their culture with their children and for their heritage to be passed on (Ayón et al., 2018). Parents and extended family members are key socialization agents (Ruck et al., 2021) who play an essential part in transferring cultural knowledge and practices to their children (Hughes et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2020) and engage in various socialization strategies such as introducing ethnic foods, language, community events and celebrations, religious practices, neighborhood choice, and traveling to their country of origin as ways to connect with their children and link their children to their cultural background (Ayón et al., 2018; White et al., 2018).

Culture, Parents, and the Early Childhood Period

In early childhood, children first develop awareness of ethnicity and race (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014) and begin to implicitly pick up cultural knowledge and cues from their surrounding environment (Schlegel, 2011). Agents, such as family members and schools, also begin to explicitly transfer cultural knowledge (Schlegel, 2011) and become involved in the child's development. From a theoretical perspective, Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggests these influences occur through an ecological framework, such that children develop within the interacting social systems. Harkness and Super's (1994) Developmental Niche similarly views the child and environment as interactive processes, but centers on development within the home context, where home factors mediate the child-environment relationship through cultural mechanisms. The Developmental Niche consists of three components, 1) *physical and social settings,* 2) *psychology of caregivers*, and 3) *customs of care*. *Physical and social settings* are who, where, and how children spend their daily lives. These contexts show how households and environments are organized and carried out and provide a foundation for the construction of daily life. *Psychology of caregivers* consists of personal characteristics and cultural beliefs. Here, differences in parent psychologies are expressed through differences in caregiving practices. *Customs of care* includes daily routines as well as broader structures, such as school or religion, that are practices of childcare that reveal caregivers' core beliefs about children, parenting, and functions of being a good parent. While outsiders may view these behaviors as coping or adaptation, cultural members perceive their actions as necessary and natural. Related to customs of care, Harkness and Super (1996) proposed the concept of parent ethnographies, which are the collection of ideas that parents share with their cultural communities. Often these culturally rooted ideas are implicit, with strong motivational tendencies, and can strongly influence the

components of the developmental niche (Harkness & Super, 2021) such that within their environment, parents choose culturally recognizable strategies they feel will best care for their children. Overall, this framework suggests that parenting processes are nested in cultural functions and reflect parenting norms specific to the cultural group.

Research on the cultural socialization practices of parents of young children suggest the benefits of exposing children to their cultural background. Black and Latino preschool children whose parents emphasize culture at home have demonstrated increased school readiness, language, and behavior skills (Caughy et al., 2002; Caughy & Owen, 2015). In a sample of Black elementary-aged children, parents' cultural socialization behaviors were shown to promote children's literacy skills (Banerjee et al., 2011). Research also suggests that cultural socialization can benefit children's self-esteem and self-worth and protect against potential discrimination (Banerjee et al., 2011; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Hughes et al., 2009; Neblett et al., 2008). Further, children's exposure to their own cultural backgrounds has been proposed to promote traits and skills central to the cultural group (Rogoff et al., 2017).

Cultural Socialization in Black and Latinx Background families

In families with Black and Latinx backgrounds, cultural socialization and family behaviors are deeply embedded in their daily lives (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006). These families are more likely than White families to practice cultural socialization with their children (Hughes et al., 2007) and are more likely to send positive messages to their children about their racial background, cultural history, and celebrating people of color (Williams & Banerjee, 2021). These positive messages promote children's later racial/ethnic identity development (Peck et al., 2014), especially in the presence of supportive parent-child relationships (Tsai et al., 2015).

Studies of families of Latinx background support the notion that many parents may promote egalitarian and collectivistic practices with their children (Greenfield & Quiroz, 2013; Williams & Banerjee, 2021), which entails collaboration and community organization (Rogoff, 2014; 2016), as well as emphasizing obedience (i.e., *respeto;* Calzada et al., 2010; Calzada et al., 2012), family-centeredness and support (i.e., *familismo*; Suizzo et al., 2012), and interpersonal relationships (i.e., *simpatía;* Suizzo et al., 2012). In addition, such families may also simultaneously promote acculturation as a way for their child escape discrimination and become successful in both cultures (Perreira et al., 2006; Williams & Banerjee, 2021). For example, families emphasized their children's English-learning and socializing with their American peers to achieve school and social success, but also desired their children be bicultural through preservation of their rich, Latinx identity (Perreira et al., 2006). Parents' own acculturation status and ethnic-racial identity has been linked to their specific cultural socialization behaviors with their children (Calzada et al., 2012; Derlan et al., 2018) as parents select parenting practices aligned with their own cultural expectations as well as mainstream culture to pass to their children (Aldoney & Cabrera, 2016; Calzada et al., 2010).

Research on Black families supports the notion that many parents report their desire to send positive messages to their children about their background and instill racial pride as a mechanism to counteract negative messages that may be coming from the outside environment (Evans et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2017). Studies suggest that Black-identifying parents may emphasize their children's racial knowledge and pride and encourage participation in Black cultural events (Banerjee et al., 2011), but also have been shown to teach more mistrust than other racial groups (Williams & Banerjee, 2021) and preparation for bias (Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Hughes et al., 2007) as strategies to protect their children against future discrimination

(Williams et al., 2017). These strategies expose children to their own backgrounds in relation to diverse surroundings and can be classified as a form of parent involvement with implications for children's educational outcomes (Williams & Banerjee, 2021); therefore, it is imperative for educators to fully understand the connections between parents' cultural socialization and beliefs and practices for educational engagement to inform their partnerships with families.

The Role of Cultural Values for Parents of Children with Disabilities

Culture and ethnic-racial identity play a complex role for parents of children with disabilities, as ethnic and racially diverse children are continuously disproportionately represented in special education. Recent analyses have found that ethnic and racially diverse children are underrepresented in special education (Morgan et al., 2015; 2018) and less likely to receive special education services (Hibel et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2012). Systematic barriers facing diverse families may result in this underrepresentation, as these families may have more difficulty accessing professional support and care crucial to identifying their child's disability (Magaña et al., 2012) or experience cultural-related stigmas that influence families' willingness for assessment and identification (Mitter et al., 2019; Zuckerman et al., 2014). Further, schools may promote disproportionate identification processes, especially under resourced schools that may have increased rates of lower performing students (Hibel et al., 2010).

Family cultural values can influence how parents perceive their child and the impact of the disability (Blacher et al., 2013) and their expectations for child outcomes (Acar et al., 2021; Zhang, 2005). The influence of culture on perceptions of parenting may be different for parents of children with disabilities compared to parents of typically developing children as these parent groups have different child rearing experiences (Lučić, 2019) and parents' notions of disability may influence their experiences. A 2021 systematic review of parents of children with

disabilities from three cultures found that priorities varied by cultural background. For example, studies of families from Asian cultures support the notion that parents prioritized developmental traits relating to collectivism and interdependence, however these priorities varied by distinct culture. Taiwanese families in the reviewed studies perceived their children to be helpless and were less likely to emphasize independent behaviors, instead tolerating behaviors as a way to support their children, while some Chinese families in the systematic review desired their children to be obedient, with the ability to regulate and participate in their education (Acar et al., 2021). In other work, such as a review of families of Latinx background with children with autism, parents were concerned about their children's socialization and independence and hoped their child would receive adequate education (Paula et al., 2020), while Iranian parents of children with ASD prioritized goals related to social communication (Ghanadzade et al., 2018).

For families of children with disabilities, culture may also influence the coping mechanisms they use for support (Jegatheesan et al., 2010). Parents may use varying processes for accepting their child's disability based on their culture (Wiefferink et al., 2012; Zechella & Ravel, 2016), and cultural beliefs may influence subsequent services their child receives (Acar et al., 2021) or interactions with service providers (Cohen, 2013; Jegatheesan et al., 2010). Cultural values such as communication styles or gender roles may also determine parents' school or home-based involvement behaviors (Habayeb et al., 2020; Wiefferink et al., 2012) and culturally diverse parents may attribute disability symptoms to poor parenting practices (Rivera-Figueroa et al., 2022). A systematic review of literature on Black and Latinx caregivers of children with ASD revealed that family culture and values in both cultural groups can act as protective factors when families experience immense barriers and stigma related to their child's disability (Rivera-Figueroa et al., 2022). Still, we have little understanding on the full influence of these cultural

values and possible intersections with parent experiences concerning their child's disability

(Rivera-Figueroa et al., 2022).

Parent Involvement in Education

Parent involvement (PI) in children's education is a multifaceted concept with various

definitions across literature (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Fantuzzo et al., 2000). At a broad level,

PI can be viewed as a caregiver's behaviors that foster child development (Maccoby & Martin,

1983). A wider scope of PI conceptualizes it as parents' beliefs or actions which define

children's experiences (Desimone, 1999).

In more traditional definitions, PI follows a narrower lens connected to schooling. This

school-centered view sees parents' behaviors and attitudes as directly impacting children's

cognitive and educational processes (Fantuzzo et al., 1995; Jeynes, 2005), and is characterized

by parents' engagement in formal activities that encourage their child's education (Goodall &

Montgomery, 2014). Studies on lower-income, early childhood samples suggest that children of

parents who attend school events have increased literacy skills and lower disruptive behaviors

(Jeon et al., 2020) and parents actively involved in their child's preschool programs predict

children's math skills and teacher-reported social skills and disruptive behaviors (Powell et al.,

2010). Traditional activities for parent involvement include a) school volunteering, b) homework

support, c) attending school events like conferences, d) monitoring their child's academics, and

e) teacher communication (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The U.S. education system generally follows

a school-centered definition of PI and encourages parents to engage with their children with such

actions that prioritize education at home and school (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), such

as volunteering in the classroom or reaching out to teachers (U.S. Department of Education,

2021). The U.S. special education system, guided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (IDEA), follows a similar school-centered PI approach, mandating that parents stay involved

through meeting attendance or engagement with services (IDEA, 2004).

Though important, the school-centered PI approach does not account for the full extent of

parents' influence (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). One form of PI that has been gaining interest as a key

form of parent involvement is home-based engagement, where parents support children's

development through non-academic, informal activities (Wallace & Twardosz, 2014). Some

findings have shown that urban parents' informal involvement such as expectations or parenting

style is more effective than formal activities such as attendance at school events (Jeynes, 2005).

Similarly, elementary parents across backgrounds have been shown to be more involved at home

than either everyday school activities or school events (Anderson & Minke, 2007), and these

home-related behaviors in a sample of diverse, Head Start parents had the strongest impact on

child outcomes and achievement, including motivation to learn, attention, persistence,

vocabulary, and behavior (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Examples of home-based engagement include

literacy behaviors, such as reading books and keeping learning materials at home (Puccioni et al.,

2020), exposure to community, including visiting parks, museums, zoos, or attending worship

services or community events (Powell et al., 2012), or social-emotional modeling, including

having in-depth conversations on topics like emotions and morality (Lagattuta et al., 2002; Reese

et al., 2007).

Criticisms of Traditional Conceptualizations of Parent Involvement

There have been criticisms of the traditional concept of PI, especially as much of

involvement literature centers solely on school involvement. A 1999 article by Lareau and

Horvat outlines schools' emphasis on middle-class culture which leads to the fabrication of an

ideal participation standard rooted in White, middle-class values. This ideal standard often

excludes families of color who may have priorities or strategies for engagement that do not conform with the standard (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Similarly, Lightfoot (2004) describes a universal participation structure that is imposed on parents. Culturally diverse families who participate outside of the optimal structure face immense stigma (Lightfoot, 2004). These families are sometimes viewed through a deficit-based lens, which emphasizes what they lack, who is not involved, and how they manifest their involvement in divergent, incorrect ways (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). Further, participation standards are operationalized based on White, middle-class constructs and measurements are based on these homogenous samples, thus may not be applicable or valid for other populations or contextual variation (Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2016; Huguely et al., 2021).

As the U.S. student population is becoming increasingly more diverse (U.S. Census, 2021), the traditional view of PI may not be appropriate. Policymakers and educational agents may assume practices based on their own experiences characterize norms for all children and families, which undermines and misinterprets the practices of those from diverse backgrounds (Rogoff, et al., 2017). Scholars have long warned of the limitations of an educational program that does not understand or respect the ideals of participants (Freire, 1971), and PI is crucial for the empowerment of culturally diverse students and their families (Cummins, 1989). Viewing these parents through the traditional PI lens could view differences as deficits and provide a limited and inaccurate account of parents' involvement, when in actuality, these parents highly value their children's development and education (Ryan et al., 2010; Sime & Sheridan, 2014).

Past research with culturally diverse families supports the notion that many have high expectations for their children (Naumann et al., 2012; Spera et al., 2009; Suizzo et al., 2014), and see education as a means of social mobility for their child to grow beyond their current economic

circumstances (Sime & Sheridan, 2014). Many hope for their children to pursue a higher education degree (Goldenberg et al., 2001), placing higher value on both educational success and social success than White families (Ryan et al., 2010). Discrepancies may emerge due to differences in parent background such that diverse families may exhibit behaviors to support their children's development that differ from Western parenting norms (Keels, 2009), as these families differ in expectations, discipline, nurturing, and overall parenting style (Cardona et al., 2000; Magariño et al., 2021) and the meaning they assign to behaviors (Bornstein, 2012), than mainstream norms. Garcia Coll and colleagues (1996)'s integrative model places systemic issues at the core of its framework and theorizes that these differences in parent behaviors are adaptive responses to environmental demands; a result of the racialized social contexts and subsequent obstacles experienced by families. In a (2019) article on Black parents' school involvement, Marchand and colleagues (2019) suggest an integration of critical race theory (CRT) and critical consciousness (CC), where CRT theory explains the racism and systemic issues that influence Black parents' school experiences, and CC supports a framework where parents can critically reflect on these racial inequities and also connect their perspectives on their own educational involvement. The connection between these two frameworks influences the way these parents participate in their children's education (Marchand et al., 2019).

Prior work has found that diverse parents are astutely aware of the barriers and limited resources at their disposal and these hardships often overpower their desire to engage educationally (Sime & Sheridan, 2014). Numerous studies have documented parents' desire to participate yet encounter barriers which limit their engagement. In one study, parents were interested in attending parent meetings and workshops at school, but obstacles such as transportation issues or work scheduling conflicts prevented most of them from attending

(Murray et al., 2014). Other work has evidenced language barriers, logistical barriers, such as transportation or childcare, and resource barriers, including feelings of inferior knowledge, or hostility and intimidation from schools (Thurston & Navarrete, 2011; Okeke, 2014).

Work with parents of children with disabilities has found similar trends. Parents of students with disabilities across K-12 settings have reported barriers relating to school and system difficulties, limited knowledge, and resources (Cameron, 2018; Kurth et al., 2019). However, these barriers may be especially salient for families of color. In one study comparing the engagement of Latino and White families of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Latino parents demonstrated significantly less special education knowledge and less efficacy navigating the special education system than White families (Burke et al., 2018), as these families faced increased systemic obstacles, especially related to school-related challenges (Hughes et al., 2002).

Despite barriers, parents of children with disabilities have reported remarkable engagement efforts in their child's education and great lengths to remain involved (Stanley, 2015; Trainor, 2010). In some cases, such as aspects of the kindergarten transition, these families report more involvement than families of typically developing children (Welchons & McIntyre et al., 2015). To actively participate and advocate for their children, parents acquired necessary knowledge support groups, joined committees, used social media, and conducted personal research (Burke et al., 2017), or built relationship with educators, other parents, or outside advocates (Burke et al., 2016; 2019; Rehm et al., 2013).

A Framework for Conceptualizing Parent Involvement

Mechanisms for parents' involvement can be conceptualized through Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parent involvement (1995, 1997). The tiered framework posits that

parents can be explicitly involved; active and aware of their role, but are also implicitly involved, where their participation responses may be unevaluated or in response to external demands (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Involvement, explicit or implicit, may take place in the school setting or home environment.

The first level of the model focuses on parents' motivations for involvement. Two of the theorized factors that influence parents' motivations are *parents' role construction* (i.e., parents' outlook on their responsibility for the child's development) and *life contexts* (i.e., resources that a parent contributes through their involvement) (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Parents' role construction is rooted in their personal views of what a parent is supposed to do for their child. Parents form these beliefs based on their perspectives of themselves as a parent, including their own *personal backgrounds* (i.e., their own history and upbringing) and their views of supporting their child, including their *involvement beliefs* (i.e., their perception of how much they should be involved with their child) (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Overall, parents' activity in their role depends on the extent of how much they 1) see it as their responsibility, and 2) feel they have capacity to make a difference (Reed et al., 2000).

Parents' life contexts may be connected to their own *knowledge and skills* (i.e., the information and related abilities they need to be involved with their child) as well as their *time and energy* (i.e., the amount of time and effort they can devote to being involved with their child) (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parent *knowledge and skills* may be related to their readiness to navigate their child's development and education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Bornstein and colleagues (2010) identified three key areas of parent knowledge: knowledge of child development, knowledge of health, and knowledge of strategies to meet their child's needs. Studies have suggested that parents with greater knowledge are more likely to

engage in behaviors thought to support children's development (Diehl et al., 2011; Huang et al., 2005), as they have improved ability to advocate for their child and secure appropriate services (Kruithof et al., 2020).

Families also must manage their *time and energy*, which often consists of competing demands such as work schedules, family commitments, or transportation needs (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Career, work, schedule demands relate to parent overload of time and energy (Pearson, 2008; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2007) and family adjustments (Crouter et al., 2001). Overload may be particularly salient for parents of children with disabilities, who have been found to have significant risks for stress and lower wellbeing compared to parents of typically developed children (Hayes & Watson, 2013; Olsson & Hwang, 2008; Padden & James, 2017) due to juggling specialized child needs, behaviors, and services (Hodgetts et al., 2017; Plant & Sanders, 2007; Rivard et al., 2014).

Experiences of Culturally Diverse Families and Schools

The U.S. education system encourages schools to facilitate parents' involvement. Invitations for involvement from educational structures, such as the school or teachers, signals a desire for collaboration and a level of respect for the parents (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). These invitations have been associated with higher completion of literacy activities and homework (Colgate et al. 2017; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001), and have been evidenced as having the greatest impact on overall parent involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Green et al., 2007). However, a different story emerges for diverse families. While some work shows Latino parents' school-based involvement is predicted by teacher invitations (Reynolds et al., 2015; Walker et al., 2011), increasing literature suggests a disconnect between educational structures and the family context for ethnic-racially diverse parents. Past work suggests that

teachers perceive parents of color as less involved than White families and may deny these families certain resources or opportunities as they do not meet their definition of involvement (Ho & Cherng, 2018). In turn, culturally diverse families have reported negative school climates and feel their input is taken less seriously by educators (Leenders et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2014). An investigation by Lawson (2003) found that although both parents and educators felt collaborative home-school relationships were crucial for children's success, each side described different perceptions and expectations of involvement and what it entailed.

Schools' expectations for parents cater to the culture of White, middle-class families (Gonzalez & Gabel, 2017), yet parents from diverse backgrounds may have different priorities and ideas on how to engage with their children. Both Latinx and Black families have reported concerns for their children's educational success given societal barriers, but discuss determination to support their children and describe frequent home-based interactions with their children focused on academics and the practice of school-related skills (Suizzo et al., 2014)

Some research suggests that families of Latinx background can be viewed as more passive when it comes to education (Valdés, 1996) as they may place high trust in teachers and schools and perceive school-based involvement as doubting teachers' authority and competence (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) and believe that they complement their children's' formal schooling through participation in their children's daily lives and provision of at-home guidance (Zarate, 2007). At home, these families are frequently described as warm, with active parents who engage in teaching interactions with their children (Vargas & Busch-Rossnage, 2003), practices which align with the notion of family support (i.e., *familismo*; Suizzo et al., 2012). Similarly, past work on Black families supports the fact that such parents often use direct parenting styles and have high home-based involvement (Barbarin et al., 2008; Jeyes 2003) that

emphasizes persistence, family ties, and resisting injustice (Barbarin et al., 2008; Cooper, 2009; Suizzo et al., 2008) in addition to academic activities (Huguely et al., 2021). These families hold academics in high regard; studies suggest that parents' activities and motivations for involvement are rooted in structural constraints (Huguely et al., 2021) and although they desire to actively participate in school-based formats (Suizzo et al., 2014), this engagement often turns to advocacy to address educational inequities (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Murray et al., 2014).

Differences in expectations around parents' educational engagement, relative to the majority US culture, have also been reported in other ethnic groups. In a study of Chinese American family practices, Chinese American parents reported greater involvement at home while White families reported more participation at school (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). Similar to Latinx families, Samoan parents traditionally viewed their responsibilities to their children at home, and perceived academic matters to be the responsibility of teachers and schools and felt confusion when U.S. schools expected school-based engagement (Valdez et al., 2007). These unfamiliar expectations are often stressful for families and have long-term implications for parents and children (Figge et al., 2020).

Bower and Griffin (2011) characterized the gap in expectations as a misunderstanding, where teachers in highly diverse schools try to reach parents but sometimes struggle due to employment of traditional engagement methods, which are often not meaningful or culturally appropriate for their parent populations. Schools may narrowly perceive only one correct way for parents to behave, while alternative strategies are viewed as incorrect and in need of fixing (Rogoff et al., 2017). Similarly, other researchers ascribe much of the disconnect to the limited, outdated understandings of schools and their inadequate practices with diverse families. Valenzuela (1999) described the term "subtractive schooling" where well-meaning schools

remove resources from diverse families through homogenized practices including the dismissal of families' personal views of education which are often rooted in their native culture, and the promotion of assimilationist practices designed to strip families' of their native culture and language. As such, these structures undermine learning by subtracting families' cultural expertise (Valenzuela, 1999). Love and colleagues (2021) suggest that paternalism is at play, that is schools set the norms for involvement, then when an individual does not meet these norms, that deviation is used as justification for their inadequacy and cause for intervention without regard for their values or priorities (Love et al., 2021). When teachers and schools emphasize these practices, it diverts attention and blame from systematic shortcomings (Love et al., 2021) and relegates blame to families and insinuates they neglect their educational duties (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Lawson, 2003; Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006). Such a mindset subsequently detaches parents from schools and creates a barrier to involvement (Kozleski et al., 2008).

In special education, IDEA (2004) has established involvement specifications for culturally diverse families who have children with disabilities. Although the law emphasizes parent partnerships, methods for involvement are rooted in traditional expectations and give disproportionate power to schools (Beratan, 2006; Goss, 2019) and White or higher income families, who are more likely to have extensive resources required for advocacy and IDEA-mandated participation (Ong-Dean, 2009; Trainor, 2010). This makes advocating for their child's needs, acquiring up-to-date information on their child and services, and participating in their child's education an especially difficult task for parents of color (Love et al., 2021).

The Current Study

Cultural identity is an important factor that shapes family behaviors and practices; however, little is known about the mechanisms which influence the involvement of culturally

diverse families during the early childhood period, especially diverse families of children with disabilities. Current education structures and systemic processes, especially in special education, often focus on subtractive, deficit-oriented definitions of parent involvement (Rogoff et al., 2017) which lack consideration of cultural backgrounds, priorities, and strengths. There is a need to extend current definitions of involvement and view involvement as a multidimensional construct (LeFevre & Shaw, 2012). The current study examines the relationships between families' culture and involvement and explores the strengths of culturally diverse families, including the various ways parents (i.e., primary caregivers) of children with and without disabilities are involved in promoting their children's early development. Quantitative data will be used to address the first three research questions, which will examine links between parents' cultural values and aspects of their involvement and education behaviors. Qualitative data will be used to triangulate abovementioned findings through in-depth interviews that capture parents' perceptions and lived experiences relating to their educational involvement.

Research Question 1: What are the relations between aspects of parent involvement (i.e., personal experiences, involvement beliefs, time and energy, and knowledge and skills), parents' cultural values (i.e., cultural socialization behaviors and attitudes, ethnic centrality, and educational values), and their home and school-based educational activities? What is the role of special education status for the abovementioned processes? Specifically, are there group differences in the abovementioned variables based on special educational status? Are there differences in the abovementioned relations based on special education status?

Research Question 2: Do aspects of parent involvement (i.e., personal experiences, involvement beliefs, time and energy, and knowledge and skills) explain significant variance in home-based-

educational activities? Do cultural values (i.e., ethnic centrality and educational values) moderate links between aspects of parent involvement and home-based educational activities?

Research Question 3: Do parents' cultural socialization behaviors and attitudes contribute to their home-based educational activities? Do cultural values moderate the association between cultural socialization and home-based educational activities?

Research Question 4: What are parents' perceptions about their roles and their lived experiences and behaviors relating to home- and school-based educational activities? What are parents' perceptions about the ways in which their cultural values inform their notions of home- and school-based educational activities?

Method

Recruitment and Study Design

The project received approval from the Teachers College Institutional Review Board. Participants for this study included 53 parent or primary caregiver participants recruited through a network of early childhood centers (ECC) that support historically underserved families in an urban city of the northeast. Participants had a child under the age of 5 enrolled in a preschool program with the partner ECC. Participants were recruited if they had a child currently enrolled in preschool or had recently completed preschool during the summer before kindergarten. Recruitment included both families of children enrolled in preschool special education and related services and children who did not receive these services. Participants were sent an online survey using Qualtrics software (See Appendix A) and completed the survey at their convenience. The measures included in the questionnaire were chosen with input from the ECC. All parents who completed a survey received a gift card ($25) for their participation.

At the completion of the questionnaire, parents were asked to indicate interest in participating in an individual, virtual, semi-structured interview to further elaborate on perspectives shared in the questionnaire. Parents who indicated "yes" ($n = 34$) were grouped by demographic characteristics (e.g., ethnic/racial identity, special education status) to ensure appropriate reflection of the early childhood center's ethnic-cultural population (60% Black, 40% Latinx), then were randomly selected ($n = 8$) for interview participation. Interviews occurred via Zoom and lasted approximately one hour. Five parents completed their interviews in English, and three parents completed the interview in Spanish with a Spanish-speaking member of the research team. Interviews were then translated and transcribed verbatim. Parents received an additional gift card ($50) for completing the interview.

The study utilized a mixed methods approach as a strategy to converge insights gleaned from quantitative and qualitative data sources (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), also known as triangulation. Triangulation is best achieved when combining results from different data sources to compare findings from different perspectives, thus ensuring a further level of rigor and deeper understanding of findings (Williamson, 2005). Specifically, this study uses between method triangulation, which allows for a more complete picture of results (Denzin, 1989). As in the present study, between method triangulation is especially complementary for quantitative and qualitative data as findings can be corroborated, but also, patterns may emerge through one method that do not emerge with the other, demonstrating a new layer of understanding (Williamson, 2005). As such, mixed method research has been suggested as the approach that best and most fully answers research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Participants

A total of 53 parents participated in this study. For the total sample (n = 53), parents were an average of 34.3 years of age (SD = 6.9) and the average child age was 3.4 years old (SD = 1.1). Approximately 40% of children in the sample received special education services (n = 21) and had been enrolled in the ECC for an average of 2.1 years (SD = 1.7). The average household consisted of about four people (adults, M = 2.16, SD = 1.2; children, M = 2.21, SD = 1.1), with the majority of total household incomes falling below \$50,000 (90.5%). The sample was culturally and ethnically diverse, with the majority of participants identifying as Black or African American (22.6%) or Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish origin (58.5%). The majority of participants spoke a language other than English (67.9%) and approximately half of participants had been born outside of the United States (50.9%). There were no significant differences in demographic profiles based on special education status.

Interview participants (n = 8) closely reflected the demographics of the broader sample. Parents were all mothers and were an average of 33.1 years of age (SD = 7.0). The average age of their child enrolled in preschool was 2.9 years (SD = 1.4). Half of the children received special education services and had been enrolled in the early childhood center for 1.4 years (SD = 0.5). The average household of interview participants consisted of approximately four people (adults, M = 1.5, SD = 0.5; children, M = 1.9, SD = 1.3) with all total household incomes falling below \$50,000. The sample was culturally and ethnically diverse, with the majority of participants identifying as Black or African American (25%) or Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish origin (75%). The majority of participants spoke a language other than English (75%) and half of participants had been born outside of the United States (50%). A full summary of demographic information can be found in Table 1.

Measures

Cultural Socialization Behaviors Measure (CSBM)

Parents' cultural socialization behaviors were measured using the CSBM (Derlan et al., 2016) which assessed parents' engagement in cultural socialization behaviors with their children (e.g., "I involve my child in activities that are specific to our ethnic/cultural group"). The measure consists of 13 items scored on a five-point rating scale ranging from *(1) not at all* to *(5) very much*. Higher scores indicate higher use of cultural socialization behaviors with their children. Cronbach's alpha was .91.

Cultural Socialization Attitudes Measure (CSAM)

Parents' cultural socialization attitudes were measured using the CSAM (Derlan et al., 2016) which assessed parents' attitudes about engaging their children in cultural socialization about their culture (e.g., "It is important to me that my child learns about our ethnic/cultural background"). The measure consists of six items scored on a Likert-scale ranging from *(1) strongly disagree* to *(5) strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate higher support regarding the importance of cultural socialization for their children. Cronbach's alpha was .93.

Parent Choice of Involvement Activities Measure

The Parent Choice of Involvement Activities Measure (Walker et al., 2005) was used to assess parents' engagement in home- and school-based educational activities (dependent variable) and aspects of parent involvement (i.e., personal experiences, involvement beliefs, time and energy, knowledge and skills) (Independent variables).

Parents' Engagement in Home-Based Educational Activities. Parents' home-based educational activities was measured using the *Home-Based Involvement* subscale which assessed parents' engagement in educational behaviors at home. It consisted of five items related to home

involvement that were scored on a Likert-scale *(1) never* and *(6) daily* (e.g., "Someone in this family reads with this child"). Cronbach's alpha was.74.

Parents' Engagement in School-Based Educational Activities. Parents' school-based educational activities was measured using the *School-Based Involvement* subscale which assessed parents' engagement in behaviors at school. It consisted of five items related to school involvement that were scored on a Likert-scale *(1) never* and *(6) daily* (e.g., e.g., "Someone in this family helps out at this child's school"). Cronbach's alpha was .84.

Parents' Personal Experiences. Parents' experiences were measured using the *Personal Experiences* subscale, where parents rated from one to six the extent of their feelings about their own schooling experience (e.g., My teachers ignored me…cared about me"). Cronbach's alpha was .97.

Parents' Involvement Beliefs. Parents' involvement beliefs were measured by the *Involvement Beliefs* subscale, where parents responded to 10 items about their beliefs about their involvement responsibilities (e.g., I believe it is my responsibility to stay on top of things at school"). This area was scored on a Likert-scale from *(1) disagree very strongly* to *(6) agree very strongly*. Cronbach's alpha was .85.

Parents' Time and Energy. The time and energy that parents had available for involvement was measured using the *Time and Energy* subscale which consisted of six items scored on a Likert-scale from *(1) disagree very strongly* to *(6) agree very strongly* (e.g., I have enough time and energy to communicate effectively with my child about their school day"). Cronbach's alpha was .91.

Parents' Knowledge and Skills. The knowledge and skills that parents had related to engaging in educational involvement was measured by the *Knowledge and Skills* subscale which

consisted of nine total items scored on a Likert-scale from *(1) disagree very strongly* to *(6) agree very strongly* (e.g., I know effective ways to contact my child's teacher"). Cronbach's alpha was .89.

Ethnic Centrality Measure (EC)

Parents' *ethnic centrality* was measured using a five-item scale (Fuligni et al., 2005) that assessed the extent to which ethnicity is central to parents' self-perceptions (e.g., "Being part of my ethnic group is an important reflection of who I am"). It is scored on a Likert-scale of *(1) strongly disagree* to *(5) strongly agree*. Higher values represent higher ethnic centrality. Cronbach's alpha was .69. Given that internal consistency for this measure fell short of the "acceptable" range for Cronbach's alpha (i.e., .70 or higher), this measure will be interpreted with caution in subsequent analyses.

Beliefs in the Utility of Education Scale (BUE)

Parents' *educational values* were measured using the BUE (Fuligni et al., 2005) which assessed the degree to which participants value and endorse education (e.g., "Doing well in school is the best way to get ahead in life"). The BUE is a 5-item measure which uses a 5-point rating scale ranging from *(1) not at all true for me* to *(5) very true for me*. Higher scores indicate stronger value placed in education. Cronbach's alpha was .81.

Demographics

Participants were asked a variety of demographic-related questions including family income, parents' educational attainment, English proficiency, parents' nativity, generational status, and years living in the U.S. (for foreign-born families), child special education status, and years enrolled at the participating early childhood center.

Analysis

All quantitative analyses were performed using IBM SPSS v.28 (IBM Corp, 2021). Descriptive statistics were performed (Table 2), then normality was checked through examination of the skewness statistic for each variable. Skew was found for several variables (i.e., *Home-Based Educational Activities, Time and Energy, Involvement Beliefs, Knowledge and Skills, Personal Experiences, Educational Values*, and *Cultural Socialization Attitudes*) and transformations were implemented according to the procedures in Tabachnick and Fidell (2019). Transformations that resulted in the lowest amount of skew for each variable were used for analyses, specifically because variables indicated negative skew, the moderate substantial, or severe transformation was used depending on level of skew.

The distribution of scores on the *CSAM* were significantly negatively skewed (i.e., skew = -1.13). As such, a LG10(K-X) transformation was conducted on reflected scores. The skew of the resulting variable was much improved (skew = .07). Due to reflecting of scores, higher scores represent lower cultural socialization attitudes. For parents *home-based educational activities*, the distribution of scores were also significantly negatively skewed (i.e., raw skew =-1.57). As such, a NEWX=1/(K-X) transformation was conducted on reflected scores, which improved the skew of the resulting variable (skew = -.12). Due to reflecting of scores, higher scores represent lower cultural socialization attitudes. Scores from the measure of *parents' involvement beliefs* were also significantly negatively skewed (i.e., raw skew = -2.43). As such, a NEWX=1/(K-X) transformation was conducted on reflected scores. The skew of the resulting variable was much improved (skew = .08). Due to reflecting of scores, higher scores represent lower involvement beliefs. Scores from the measure on *parents' time and energy* were significantly negatively skewed (i.e., raw skew = -2.12) and a NEWX=1/(K-X) transformation was conducted on reflected scores. This transformation improved the skew of the resulting variable (skew = .15).

Due to reflecting of scores, higher scores represent lower time and energy. The distribution of scores on *parents' knowledge and skills* were also significantly negatively skewed (i.e., raw skew = -2.12). As such, a NEWX=1/(K-X) transformation was conducted on reflected scores. The skew of the resulting variable was much improved (skew = .14). Due to reflecting of scores, higher scores represent lower knowledge and skills. Lastly, the distribution of scores for the *BUE* were significantly negatively skewed (i.e., raw skew = -.97). As such, a NEWX=1/(K-X) transformation was conducted on reflected scores, which improved skew (skew = .16). Due to reflecting of scores, higher scores represent lower cultural educational values.

Research Question 1: To answer Research Question 1, Pearson correlations were performed to find associations between study variables for both the total sample and by special education status. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine group differences between families of children with special education services and families of children without special education services.

Research Question 2: To answer Research Question 2, a hierarchical regression was performed to assess the degree to which aspects of parents' involvement and cultural variables explained significant variance in parents' home-based engagement behaviors. First, given the modest sample size, an effort was made to conduct the most parsimonious analysis and to reduce the number of independent variables. Based on the patterns of correlations that emerged in Research Question 1 among aspects of parents' involvement (i.e., high correlations among *involvement beliefs*, *time and energy*, and *knowledge and skills; rs = .66, .85, and .95*), a composite variable was created from these aspects of PI. The remaining involvement subscale, *personal experiences*, was not included in the composite as it did not follow the same pattern of correlations (*rs = .08, .16, .01*) and was theoretically separable from those variables in the

composite because it captured parents' own history and past experiences rather than their involvement with their child's education. As such, the highly correlated variables were averaged using the Compute Variable command in SPSS to create a composite that reflected, *cognitive and contextual resources*. Next, statistical assumptions were checked, with multicollinearity evaluated through implementation of the multiple regression and requesting the collinearity diagnostics from SPSS. Multicollinearity was evaluated through the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance to see if the number was below the cutoff of 10 and above the cutoff of .10, respectively. After checking statistical assumptions, a hierarchical regression was performed with three blocks of variables to identify salient predictors of parents' home-based engagement. In this model, *home-based educational activities* was the dependent variable. The first block included aspects of PI (i.e., *personal experiences* and *cognitive and contextual resources*) as independent variables. The second block added cultural values as independent variables (i.e., *ethnic centrality* and *educational values*). Finally, an interaction was planned based on significant predictors from the first two blocks to test whether cultural values moderated the link between aspects of parent involvement and home-based engagement. Significant interactions were probed with simple slopes analyses and plotted using a statistical online calculator (Preacher et al., 2003).

Research Question 3: To answer Research Question 3, a hierarchical regression was performed. After checking statistical assumptions (see above notes on skew), a hierarchical regression was performed with two blocks of variables to identify salient predictors of parents' home-based involvement. In this model, *home-based educational activities* was the dependent variable. The first block included the *cultural socialization behaviors* and *cultural socialization attitudes* as independent variables. The second block also included *ethnic centrality* and

educational values as independent variables. Finally, an interaction was planned in the case of a significant cultural values main effect (i.e., ethnic centrality or educational values) to test whether cultural values moderated the link between cultural socialization and home-based engagement.

Research Question 4: To answer Research Question 4, qualitative analyses were performed using NVivo 12 software and followed thematic analysis guidelines (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Three members of the research team worked on this analysis. First, coders reviewed and familiarized themselves with the eight transcripts. Second, coders independently open coded where they were manually created codes and grouped text under each code based on patterns in the data. Two transcripts were coded each week by all coders. Third, codes were reviewed as a group in weekly meetings and a uniform set of codes was created. Once these broader codes were established, transcripts were reviewed once more by the primary author and text was coded under each appropriate code. Lastly, the team met to discuss themes among the codes and codes were grouped into themes based on relevance.

Positionality Statements

The first author is a doctoral candidate in special education who identifies as a Caucasian female. She has a master's degree in special education and a bachelor's degree in early childhood special education and early childhood education. She has worked as a general and special educator with early childhood students and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The second researcher is a Professor of Psychology and Education who identifies as a Middle Eastern female. She earned a PhD in human development and family studies and brings over 20 years of research on social-emotional development in children with and without developmental disabilities, parents with complex support needs, and culturally diverse families.

Additionally, two research assistants worked on this study. One identifies as a Latinx, native Spanish-speaking female with a master's degree in special education and has a background working with early childhood students with and without disabilities. The other research assistant identifies as a South-Asian female. Aside from English, she speaks Hindi and Bengali. She is pursuing a graduate degree in special education and is a parent of a daughter with autism.

Results - Quantitative

Research Question 1: Pearson correlations for the total sample revealed relationships between study variables. Full correlations can be found in Table 3. Of note, home-based educational activities had a stronger association with other study variables. Parents' involvement beliefs ($r(53) = .29$, $p = .04$), time and energy ($r(53) = .37$, $p = .006$), and personal experiences ($r(53) = .278$, $p = .044$) were also significantly and positively correlated with their home-based educational activities. Educational values were significantly and positively correlated with home-based educational activities ($r(53) = .43$, $p = .001$) and school-based educational activities ($r(53) = .44$, $p < .001$).

It should be noted that the ANOVA revealed no significant differences in the study variables based on special education status. To assess whether patterns of correlations differed for families with and without special education, Pearson correlations were conducted based on special education status (Table 4). These findings revealed that for families of children receiving special education services, ethnic centrality was significantly and positively related to their cultural socialization behaviors ($r(21) = .44$, $p = .045$) and cultural socialization attitudes ($r(21) = -.46$, $p = .034$). Their educational values were significantly and positively related to their home-based educational activities ($r(21) = .46$, $p = .036$) and school-based educational activities ($r(21) = .44$, $p = .045$). Similarly, for parents of children who did not receive special education services,

educational values were significantly and positively related to their home-($r(32) = .41$, $p = .020$) and school-based ($r(32) = .47$, $p = .006$) educational activities. For parents of children who did not receive special education services, several significant positive associations emerged between school-based educational activities and involvement beliefs ($r(32) = .63$, $p < .001$), time and energy ($r(32) = .44$, $p = .011$), and knowledge and skills ($r(32) = .59$, $p < .001$). In contrast, no significant relationships emerged between school-based educational activities and aspects of involvement (i.e., involvement beliefs, time and energy, and knowledge and skills) for the participants whose children received special education services.

Research Question 2: The hierarchical regression was performed with three blocks to identify salient predictors of parents' home-based engagement. The first block included aspects of parent involvement (i.e., *parent experiences* and the composite of *cognitive and contextual resources*) as independent variables and this model was significant ($R^2 = .167$, ($F(2,50) = 5.027$, $p = .01$). The independent variable of *cognitive and contextual resources* was significantly associated with *home-based educational activities* ($\beta = .38$, $p = .02$). The second model added cultural values (i.e., *ethnic centrality* and *educational values*) as independent variables and was overall a significant model ($R^2 = .253$, ($F(4,48) = 4.071$, $p = .006$); *educational values* were significantly associated with home-based educational activities ($\beta = .32$, $p = .02$). This model showed a non-significant, albeit marginal, improvement from the first model ($\Delta R^2 = .09$, ($F(2,548 = 2.760$, $p = .07$). Based on significant predictors from the first two blocks, the interaction between *educational values* and *cognitive and contextual resources* was tested in the final model; this interaction was significant ($R^2 = .328$, ($F(5,47) = 4.578$, $p = .002$) and showed significant improvement from the previous model ($\Delta R^2 = .074$, ($F(1,47) = 5.188$, $p = .03$). Full regression results are in Table 5.

Results of simple slopes which probed the significant interaction between *cognitive and contextual resources* and *educational values* on *home-based educational activities* showed that the effect of *cognitive and contextual resources* on *home-based educational activities* depended on the level of *educational values*. The significant slope (p = .006) showed that the effect of *cognitive and contextual resources* on *home-based educational activities* was large and positive for parents with low *educational values*. As such, for parents who reported low *educational values*, when they had high *cognitive and contextual resources*, their *home-based educational activities* were higher. Conversely, when they had low *cognitive and contextual resources*, they had lower *home-based educational activities*. Further, *cognitive and contextual resources* were not related to *home-based educational activities* (p = .52) in the context of high educational values. Parents with high *educational values* show high *home-based educational activities* regardless of their *cognitive and contextual resources*.

Research Question 3: The hierarchical regression was performed with two blocks to identify salient predictors of parents' home-based engagement. The first block included aspects of cultural socialization (i.e., *cultural socialization behaviors* and *cultural socialization attitudes*) as independent variables but this model was not significant. The second block added cultural values (i.e., *ethnic centrality* and *educational values*) as independent variables and was significant (R^2 = .209, (F(4,48) = 3.161, p = .022); *educational values* were significantly associated with *home-based educational activities* (β = .43, p = .002). This model showed significant improvement from the first model (ΔR^2 = .19, (F(2,48) = 5.73, p = .006). Overall, when *cultural socialization behaviors* and *cultural socialization attitudes* were included in the model, the variables explained approximately 2% of the variance. The second model, which

included *ethnic centrality* and *educational values*, explained 21% of the variance. Full regression

results can be found in Table 6.

Finally, a post-hoc sensitivity analysis was conducted using these same independent

variables with school-based educational activities as a dependent variable to understand if

findings differed for school-based involvement. The same pattern of predictors emerged as with

home-based educational activities; however, no significant interactions emerged, suggesting that

educational values is a moderator that informs the home-based involvement context, in

particular, rather than school-based educational activities.

Results – Qualitative

Themes in qualitative data answered **Research Question 4.** An overview of themes can

be found in Table 7 and overlap between qualitative themes and quantitative constructs can be

found in Figure 2. Parents spoke at length about their engagement in their children's lives. They

shared their views on involvement, including their beliefs about involvement, and factors that

influenced their involvement such as personal experiences, social support, and barriers. They

also described the ways they interacted with their children and displayed engagement,

specifically through involvement in educational activities and daily life. Lastly, parents detailed

the ways that their culture and values presented within their interactions with their children.

Parent Involvement Beliefs

Parents took their role as parents seriously and discussed the duty they felt to be involved.

Seven parents mentioned their responsibility to ensure their children attended school and

received an education, as well as continue teaching them in the home:

> *I can teach her as she's home, rather than just not doing anything because she's in
> school. Her brain is like a sponge, so I'd rather have her get all that moisture, all the
> education and instead of you know, just sitting here and not repeating what she has
> learned in school*[P4].

Another parent explained her views on the influence she had on her son's learning:

The way I can teach [child] might to be different because he's my son and I know how to deal with him on a regular day-to-day basis and just to try to interpret things for him to learn while we're home [P7].

Others described responsibility to their children's basic needs, including food, safety, and health. One parent detailed her views on meeting her child's needs:

Keeping [child's] health up to date, her immunizations, making sure that she's well. To shield her, to mold her, make sure that she's financially stable, that she's fed. The basics [P4].

Three parents spoke about a lifelong commitment to their child, where they responsible to be active with their children even once they reached adulthood:

My larger responsibility is to focus on the adults that they will become. They're not going to be children forever. I like to think that when I'm teaching them and raising them, that I'm not raising children, I'm raising full-grown adults eventually [P5].

Parents' Personal Experiences

Five parents spoke about their own experiences, including their backgrounds and histories, which influenced the way they interacted with their culture and raised their children. Some parents discussed the influence of their own cultural heritage, and other beliefs, like religion, *"I feel the religion I am in also influenced me a lot"* [P6], or *"I used to go to church every Sunday, but it hasn't been very consistent, but I do believe in God"* [P4]. All five parents spoke about the influence of their own parents. One mother described the emphasis on family that she was raised with, *"I was brought up that when we sit at the table, we talk about each other's day, nobody's on the phone, no TV, no tablet, we have family time"* [P1]. Some explained the positive relationship they had with their parents, such as one mother who recounted the time her father spent on her education:

My dad always helped us with our homework. He basically taught me to count, to multiply, to add, to subtract, he taught me everything because he spent a lot of time with us. So that's why I do it with my children, too [P6].

Another mother similarly described her own mother's efforts to be present:

I recall [my mother] walking me to school, taking me to daycare, putting me in any programs possible...And I want to reciprocate that to my kid [P7].

However, others felt their own upbringing had negative effects and desired to raise their

own children differently than how they were raised:

I was raised with abuse all my life...my mom raised me different, so I raise [my daughter] differently. I don't believe in hitting my child at all...continuing my childhood as to how my mom raised me, I'm not going to do that, because it messed me up as a child [P4].

Another mother echoed these sentiments and described how her relationship with her own

mother influenced her parenting outlook:

I don't bring how I was raised in my home. I don't want to intimidate my kids. I don't want my kids to close up and feel like, 'I'm not good enough for my mother, I'm not good enough for anything,' So I don't bring that into my house...my mother, I was mentally abuse, physically abused, and I used to see a lot of things in my home. So going to school, I wasn't concentrating on that. I was concentrating on the wrong things. So I keep my kids mentally and physically fine...so they can concentrate and focus [P1].

Social Support

Five parents also mentioned the social support they received from their family, including

their partners, the children's fathers, and grandmothers. They relied on these family members to

provide supplemental interactions in areas they did not always emphasize themselves, such as

Parent 5 who mentioned that her husband focused on formal learning activities, such as math fact

drills, while she preferred social-emotional learning. Similarly, Parent 7 mentioned that her

child's father played with their son and watched sports with him, while her own mother (i.e., the

child's grandmother) focused on reading with the child.

Barriers to Involvement

While parents were heavily involved with their children and valued that involvement, they all mentioned barriers that made it more difficult to be involved, including work and time constraints. One mother spoke about education and language barriers she encountered as her children grew:

> *I can't be as focused on the older [children] because I can no longer teach them, they have an education I no longer have, so it is difficult for me to be involved. English is also very difficult for me, and they find it difficult to speak Spanish* [P6].

However, parents felt the barriers they encountered were minimal compared to the importance of spending time with their children. When parents mentioned barriers, they also mentioned strategies they used to overcome or bypass the challenge. Parent 2 used her days off to spend extra time with her son, and Parent 7 arranged her part-time work schedule to maximize the time she had with her son. Parent 1 described multitasking and finding small moments for engagement:

> *I'm a busy person. I work, I'm a home attendant. And I go to school, I'm trying to get my GED. So while I'm doing all this, even in the morning, I wake up at five in the morning and we multitask. My kids are getting ready…[my daughter] has the door open, I'm speaking to her. Or we could walk to school…I'm talking to them…there's no such thing as not having the time to talk to your kids about their day, about their school. There's always time* [P1].

Engagement Activities

Much of the parents' comments in the interviews centered on the myriad of ways they engaged with their children and strategies they used to ensure they participated effectively. Their comments fell into two categories: educational involvement, where they focused on school and academics, and daily life, where they interacted with their children through a variety of everyday activities, not necessarily focused on school. All parents spoke about participation in both areas.

Parents' Academic Engagement

Two parents mentioned explicit, school-based involvement, such as Parent 5 who regularly joined virtual meetings with the school and was a member of the schools' parent policy council. However, all eight parents discussed engaging in academic activities from home. Parent 3 explained that she felt she was fully engaged in her daughter's school in the home, but not at all within the context of school. Parents ensured they were up to date with school happenings by *"more or less being informed of everything they do at school"* [P2] and *"making sure I know the school and if they're teaching [child] age appropriate things"* [P4]. They communicated with teachers and relied on updates provided by the schools, such as videos from teachers, communications sent home in backpacks, and quick observations during pick-up and drop-off times. Parents tried to continue the learning from school at home and explained:

> *First and foremost, I keep the learning going, because learning doesn't stop at 3pm, and keep building on what they've learned in school. I could teach them a million things at home, but if it's not consistent with what they're learning at school, then it's just all over the place* [P5].

They used home-based academic activities to supplement school learning. They found enjoyable ways to engage their children in academic activities at home, and some used materials provided by the schools to support that learning. Parent 4 used flashcards from her daughter's teacher on weekends and Parent 8 who used supplies sent by the teacher to work on her son's fine motor skills. Several parents also provided homework support, such as Parent 6 who described her families' homework procedures:

> *I review their homework, sit down with them and do homework, then explain what I understand and can do. If we both don't know, [we both] investigate* [P6].

Parents' Engagement in Daily Life

Parents realized that they could teach their children outside of academic activities and explained other ways they engaged with their children through everyday life. They described

active, busy schedules with their children that were full of interactions and learning experiences. They taught their children daily life skills like getting dressed and brushing their teeth and spent time with their children through watching TV together, playing with toys or games, such as drawing or pretend play. Parents fixed meals for their children and ate together, and made efforts to keep a clean, safe house. One mother mentioned how she used cleaning to spend time with her daughter. Parents also spoke about going on outings together outside of the home, including fun activities, such as visiting the park or the public pool, but also daily errands such as grocery shopping, going to the laundromat, or taking their children to school or church. One mother explained how she incorporated learning into walks with her daughter:

> *[In autumn], leaves were falling down, so I allowed [child] to pick up leaves, let her explore her senses. Or I'd take a few leaves home and I'll tell her, 'the leaves are changing because it's seasonal', and I'll just teach her along as to what I know* [P4].

Another area emphasized by parents was teaching their children social-emotional skills. Some did this explicitly, such as Parent 4 who discussed how she taught her daughter empathy when interacting with their pet cat. Additionally, many mentioned that they took time to talk to their children and provided a supportive environment for their children through communicating and speaking with their children about their day, school, and other topics like friends or struggles, *"Lately what I do with the older [child] is go into his room, sit down and talk with him, how he's doing at school, things like that"* [P6]. Others created positive home environments through demonstrating patience and encouragement:

> *I always try to do things that I didn't get as a child, try to encourage him, to be his friend first…always give him that push that I can support him, to always help him out. If something scares him then just try to reinforce that it's not anything to be scared of…just trying to give him that ability to be open* [P7].

Parents also mentioned that they tried to be examples for their children. They used their own life experiences to teach their children lessons and character traits, such as Parent 1:

My kids see that I wake up, I go to work. My kids see that I wake up, go to work, I come home, clean, cook for them. And then I go to my classes in the evening to get my GED. My daughter tells me, mommy, you're too old to go to school. No I'm not! No I'm not. There's no such thing as being too old to do things. So that gives them motivation[P1].

Culture and Values

Parents' involvement beliefs and practices were rooted in their own backgrounds and cultural heritage. All mentioned ways they incorporated culture into their children's lives and how their own cultures manifested in their engagement with their children, from more formal, explicit cultural lessons to less formal, implicit practices which taught their children family values and cultural norms.

Explicit Manifestation of Culture and Values

Four parents spoke about the ways they explicitly, or more formally, tried to incorporate culture into their children's lives. Some emphasized teaching their children their language and others encouraged their children to partake in cultural customs, *"That's the custom…where I'm from, one has to baptize their baby. I want to do the same with [my son] here"* [P8] and learn about their culture, such as Parent 5 who did cultural activities in the home and also took her children to community cultural events:

We've started getting really involved in community things…We've been to a Three Kings Day even and we were at a Hispanic Heritage Month event, so [the children] get to see not only the fun stuff, but also the good stuff that's happening in their community...the culture in the community [P5].

These parents encouraged their children to learn about their culture, but also to learn about other cultures outside of their own heritage, *"I stress and teach a lot of our own culture because we need to know that. But I also want [my children] to know that there are other cultures, learn a bit about them"* [P5]. Some taught their children at home, and others mentioned additional exposure from community resources like museums, or lessons at school:

[My daughter] came home with a puppet and she told me the puppet was Asian. [The school] was showing them different types of cultures, which to me was good. I like my daughter exploring new things out of her culture[P1].

Implicit Manifestation of Culture and Values

All parents described how they implicitly emphasized and taught culture and related values to their children. Many parents valued family, *"To me, family is everything…family is number one"* [P7] and emphasized the importance of family, *"Sticking together [as a family], to be united, to have equal communication with the family. Support each other"* [P8]. A couple of parents identified the root of this value coming from their own background, such as Parent 2 who attributed her emphasis on family-centeredness to her Mexican heritage.

Several parents also discussed the importance of teaching respect to their children. They discussed how they taught their children the importance of respect as part of their culture:

I think that respect, we have in Mexico…a well-known legend, Benito Juarez. Respect for others is peace. So I have always tried to instill that in my children, that they respect. Respect in life is the fundamental basis for you to continue growing[P2].

They led by example and felt it was their duty to teach this value to their children:

Children are a reflection of oneself. So if my son sees that I disrespected the neighbor, that is, it is somewhat contradictory if I say "respect", then I feel that I have to be my children's mirror, do you understand me? So that is my role as a mother and what I have tried to give them every day[P3].

Education and achievement were heavily valued by all parents. With their children, they emphasized hard work as Parent 2 elaborated:

We Mexicans always define ourselves as fighting, hard-working people and in my job they have made me know that. Whenever a Mexican arrives, oh yes, and they know that we Mexicans can do it, and that we don't give up. Whatever the job is, even if we don't know it, we learn it, and we have that determination to go forward [P2].

They wanted their children to achieve great things educationally and professionally, such as Parent 4 who explained, *"I want [child] to be a different person, a better person. Maybe she*

can be a lawyer, do something to educate her further" [P4]. Not all the parents were able to

complete school themselves and hoped their children could achieve more than they were able to,

"I tell [my children] since I didn't study, I want them to study, that they should do something that

I couldn't do" [P2]. They felt it was the parents' job to encourage their children to get an

education and created an environment where children could go to school:

> *I want my kids to go to college and have a career, not only just finish high school…If I had finished school, my parents didn't have the money to pay for my college. So me, as my kids grow up, I save money for them. 'Cause I want my kids to continue their education…I talk to them about it, that I want them to go to college, not only high school. So to me, education is very important*[P1].

Overall, parents emphasized their children's happiness and wellbeing. They encouraged

their children to learn safety and awareness skills:

> *We live in a world where you're criticized, demeaned, and put down for how you look sometimes, and especially, for Black boys, Black men. It's very scary nowadays, there's a lot going on. So, even as I raise my son, I'm always thinking of him as an older man, an older teenager, and just living in a city. Having to be aware, be on point, just being smart in the streets…There's so much going on. It's very much scary for us…Be aware, be smart, don't follow people, be your own person. Just things to make his life easier. I would never want anything to happen to him, the world we live in is very scary* [P7].

They also created open, trusting home environments for their children to grow up in:

> *If [my daughter] was gay or bisexual, that is her choice. I'm not gonna deny her as a child. I'm always gonna have that love for her, I'm always going to support her…I want her to be able to trust me, speak to me, tell me anything*[P4].

Parents emphasized diversity and tolerance in their households and tried to use parenting

practices that would support their children becoming good people:

> *In our household, our skin tones are all different, and now we have a daughter with albinism and a son on the [autism] spectrum, so it's even more obvious. So the questions that [my other child] was asking…I feel like I can answer them in a way where she'll be a productive, open-minded, kind member of society* [P5].

Discussion

This mixed-methods study examined connections among components of parents' involvement, their home engagement, and the influence of cultural factors in these relationships. The collection of quantitative and qualitative data allowed for in-depth, complementary exploration of parents' involvement in relation to cultural factors. When compared to school-based educational activities, home-based educational activities revealed several significant, positive relationships with other aspects of parent involvement, suggesting home-based educational activities may be especially important to families' overall engagement. Parent interviews revealed that parents themselves also perceived their involvement as primarily occurring within the home, with only two parents discussing involvement activities within the school. Results also suggested that home-based educational activities may be especially important for families of children with disabilities. When examined by special education status, several significant positive associations emerged between home-based educational activities and other aspects of involvement for parents of children with special education services, while no significant relationships with home-based educational activities emerged for the parents whose children did not receive special education services. Instead, for the non-special education group, significant relationships emerged between school-based educational activities and other aspects of involvement. These findings align with literature, which indicates school-based involvement is a difficult undertaking for parents of children with disabilities, especially for parents with limited resources (Ong-Dean, 2009). Parents from culturally diverse backgrounds who have children with disabilities may face additional challenges due to biased norms for involvement and misguided intervention practices (Love et al., 2021), as well as cultural values that emphasize supporting their children's education from home to complement school-based instruction (Huguely et al., 2021; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Zarate, 2007). Thus,

these parents may utilize the home environment as their main context for engagement. Taken together, these findings suggest that home-based educational activities are an important part of family engagement overall and supports the need for additional work on the home-based educational activities parents of children with disabilities.

Educational values consistently emerged as a strong influence on parents' involvement. Parents' educational values related to both school-based and home-based educational activities, and when examined further, predicted home-based educational activities in multiple models and moderated the relationship between parents' cognitive and contextual factors and their home-based educational activities, suggesting that parents' educational values influence their home-based educational activities. These quantitative findings were aligned with parent comments from the qualitative interviews, such that parents further detailed the full extent of their educational values; they emphasized their desire for their children to complete school and achieve success, and integrated active promotion of educational values in their interactions with their children. These findings are consistent with literature. Taylor and colleagues (2004) proposed an academic model of academic socialization, where parents' beliefs about school influences their parenting behaviors. Several studies have documented these relationships, where parents' value of school readiness positively relates to their home-learning behaviors (Jung, 2016; Puccioni, 2015; Puccioni et al., 2019), in turn, also linking to their children's kindergarten outcomes.

Academic socialization has been extended to a cultural lens and has been suggested as a form of racial socialization (Hughes et al., 2006), demonstrated in a qualitative study of 41 middle-class African American and Latinx mothers of young children (Suizzo et al., 2014). Similar to qualitative findings in the current study, Suizzo and colleagues (2014) revealed that

these mothers had high expectations for their children's educational success and reported active involvement and personal determination to ensure their children's educational achievement despite the social and racial barriers that their children may face. Other work has shown that while culturally diverse parents strongly value their children's education, they worry about potential societal barriers that their children may encounter (Hernandez et al., 2016). As such, these parents may especially value education as it could serve as a protective factor for their children (Suizzo et al., 2014). Research focused on diverse parent samples has found that these parents placed greater emphasis on school readiness than White parents (Puccioni et al., 2019), and these beliefs positively predicted their home-based involvement (Puccioni et al., 2022), aligning with findings from the current analysis.

While cultural socialization did not predict home-based educational activities in the present study, interview findings demonstrated that cultural socialization behaviors and attitudes may be a strategy for some parents to engage with their children. This difference may have stemmed from the study's quantitative measurement of cultural socialization. While the measures we used to examine cultural socialization attitudes and behaviors (Derlan et al., 2016) focused on more formal approaches to cultural socialization, such as activity in certain cultural celebrations or lessons on culturally relevant history, the majority of parents discussed sharing their culture and values with their children through more informal approaches that were implicitly embedded in their daily lives, such as demonstration or conversation about certain character traits and values. Similarly, literature suggests a multitude of more informal ways parents may engage with their children at home through cultural socialization. In Suizzo and colleagues' (2014) study, mothers reported engaging with their children at home academically, through direct instruction, reading, and educational activities, but also engagement for every day,

functional purposes, such as teaching social-emotional strategies, character traits, and life

lessons. Further, cultural socialization practices in the home may also differ by culture. Families

of Latinx background have been found to promote qualities such as obedience, family

centeredness, and community (Calzada et al., 2010; 2012; Suizzo et al., 2012), while Black

families may emphasize racial pride and awareness (Banerjee et al., 2011; Williams et al., 2017).

Our study examined both groups together but did not look at group differences. As such,

additional work is needed to explore the relationship between home-based educational activities

and cultural practices across cultural groups.

In the present study, both cultural socialization behaviors and attitudes were positively

related to ethnic centrality when examined using the total sample. This link suggests that parents'

cultural identity plays a key role in in their parenting behaviors and beliefs and was supported by

qualitative findings where half of parents discussed explicitly engaging in behaviors to teach

their children about culture, and all parents mentioned implicit ways that they emphasized their

culture and related family values with their children. Quantitatively, when examined by special

education group, this positive relationship between ethnic centrality and cultural socialization

remained for parents whose children received special education services. Past work indicates that

the meaning of disability and its impact on families is culturally relative (Neely-Barnes &

Marcenko, 2004), and culture is known to have mixed influences on the parenting of children

with disabilities, including parent perceptions and expectations (Acar et al., 2021; Blacher et al.,

2013). However, less is known about the cultural socialization efforts and beliefs of parents of

children with disabilities in particular. Work suggests the complexity of the intersection of

culture and disability (Annamma et al., 2013), with parents of color reporting increased

difficulties with the special education system and securing services for their children's needs

(Gillborn, 2015) or inconsistencies in services and mixed messaging for bilingual children and families (Martínez-Álvarez, 2019). Findings from this study indicate there are additional intersections of culture and disability that may warrant additional exploration for parents of children with disabilities.

In the present study, home-based educational activities were also predicted by parents' cognitive and contextual resources, which included their knowledge and beliefs about their involvement (cognitive resources) as well as their time and energy (contextual resources). Research has found parenting knowledge supports child development and functioning (Jahromi et al., 2014). In alignment with the present study, parenting knowledge has been found to be linked to parents' investment in their parenting (Bornstein et al., 2003) and the type of learning environment they provide for their children (Bornstein et al., 2010). Further, past work has shown that parents' activity in their involvement role depends on the extent they 1) see it as their responsibility, and 2) feel they have capacity to make a difference (Reed et al., 2000), and parent cognitions such as identity and personal characteristics act as motivators for changing parenting behaviors (Chaviano et al., 2016). Similarly, parent interviews from the present study aligned with these quantitative findings and revealed that parents felt a strong responsibility to be involved with their children, both educationally and meeting their children's basic needs. In other work, parents' beliefs about their involvement were correlated with other involvement variables like self-efficacy (Anderson & Minke, 2007), but these beliefs have been found to inconsistently affect their direct involvement behaviors based on the child's age (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007). Much of available work on this area has been performed on parents of older children (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007), so less is known on the early childhood period. Findings from the present analysis add to this knowledge and

demonstrate a link between home-based educational activities and their cognitions, though additional work is still needed to explore this relationship more fully.

As part of parents' cognitive and contextual resources in the present study, parents' time and energy (i.e., contextual resources) was also tied to their home-based educational activities. In past literature, family demands, such as work schedules, family commitments, or transportation needs, have been linked to parent involvement and may alter parents' ability and motivation to participate (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Career, work, schedule demands have been connected to parent overload (Pearson, 2008; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2007). As such, it may be difficult for parents to participate in the school setting, thus the home environment may be a more conducive context for parents to engage with their children. While qualitative findings in the present study showed that parents experienced barriers such as limited time or busy work schedules, interviews revealed additional depth to these obstacles; parents' remarkable resilience and determination to overcome these barriers when it came to their involvement with their children. Multiple parents discussed strategies they used to overcome time or work demands and ensure spending time with their children. Surprisingly, the present study did not find any differences in time and energy of parents whose children receive special education services and those who did not. Past work has found significant differences in stress and wellbeing of parents of children with disabilities compared to parents of children without disabilities (Hayes & Watson, 2013; Olsson & Hwang, 2008; Padden & James, 2017), as these parents must juggle additional contextual responsibilities related to caring for a child with a disability that take considerable time and effort (Olsson & Hwang, 2008) and place these parents at an increased risk for stress (Hodgetts et al., 2017; Plant & Sanders, 2007; Rivard et al., 2014).

Lastly, in the present study, correlations for the total sample as well as parent interviews both revealed the importance of parents' own backgrounds and past experiences for their involvement with their children, particularly at home. Parents' personal experience were positively and significantly related to their home-based educational activities, and more than half of parents discussed experiences in their own histories, including their own parents, which influenced their parenting practices. Limited work exists on the influence of parents' own histories specifically related to involvement, but prior work highlights the influence of parents own histories on their overall parenting, including Belsky's (1984) Determinants of Parenting Model, which posits that parents' developmental histories influences their own parenting as they model parenting behaviors they observed from their own parents. Additionally, there may also be an element unique to parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, like the sample studied in the present study. Prior work suggests that cultural behaviors, such as cultural socialization, may also be influenced by parents' own cultural socialization experiences with their parents (Williams et al., 2020). While several parents in the current study aligned with these findings and discussed mimicking the parenting they experienced, others reported actively *avoiding* parenting like their own parents. These findings are supported by other work, where individuals discussed parenting differently in areas where they perceived their parents to have deficits (Chaviano et al., 2016; Juang & Meschke, 2017). An additional factor of parents' personal experiences may be related to nativity status. About half of parents in the present study were born outside of the United States, and these parents may have experienced different education systems and schooling practices (Carreón et al., 2005) which may have subsequently shaped their views. It is clear that parents' personal experiences contribute complexly to their

own parenting, and subsequently their involvement, thus additional work is needed to better understand the full extent of these influences on parents.

Limitations and Conclusion

There are several study limitations to consider in the interpretation of study findings. While providing understudied information on parent involvement with a culturally diverse sample, the small sample size of both quantitative and qualitative samples limits the generalizability of the findings. Analyses by group (e.g., special education status) were especially limited due to sample size and findings should be interpreted with caution. Additional research is needed on the involvement practices of specific groups (e.g., special education status, income, racial/ethnic subgroups) with larger samples to better capture within-group heterogeneity. In addition, findings from this analysis are cross-sectional and do not inform on the directionality of results. Future longitudinal research is needed to capture these processes across development. Further, given the often-one-sided, biased nature of parent involvement standards, the involvement measure used in this study may also be based on homogenous, outdated standards and samples and may not be fully reflective of the sample studied. While efforts have begun to validate measures for families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Bultosky-Shearer et al., 2016; McWayne & Melzi, 2014), there is a need for more inclusive parent involvement measures that are appropriate for diverse samples.

This study demonstrates the various factors that influence parents' home-based educational activities; notably, the role of cultural variables in the engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse families. Findings demonstrate the complex nature of home-based educational activities and contribute to the limited literature on the influence of cultural background on families' engagement with their children. Understanding how parents' cultural

values connect with their parenting can support the development of more inclusive, multidimensional constructs used by schools and other systems and support healthy, positive, collaborative partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse families.

Table 1

Demographic Information

	Total Sample (n = 53)			Special Education (n = 21)			No Special Education (n = 32)			Interviews (n = 8)		
	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD
Parent Age		34.3	6.9		36.4	8.4		33.2	5.7		33.1	7.0
Relationship to Child												
Biological Parent	98				95		100			100		
Grandparent	2				5							
Child Age		3.4	1.1		3.6	1.1		3.3	1.1		2.9	1.4
Child Years in School		2.1	1.7		1.9	1.2		2.2	1.9		1.4	0.5
Special Education Services												
Yes	39.6									50		
No	60.4									50		
Adults in Household		2.2	1.2		2.3	1.3		2.	1.1		1.5	0.5
Children in Household		2.2	1.1		2.2	0.8		2.2	1.2		1.9	1.3
Marital Status												
Married/Partnership	45.3			47.6			43.8			37.5		
Divorced	1.9						3.1					
Separated	15.1			14.3			15.6			25		
Never Married/Partnered	37.7			38.1			37.5			37.5		
Stable Housing												
Yes	83			95.2			25			87.5		
No	17			4.8			75			12.5		
Highest Level of Education												
High School or Less	50.9			52.4			50			87.5		
Some College/4 Year Degree	47.2			42.9			50			12.5		
Graduate Degree	1.9			4.8								
Employment Status												
Yes	60.4			66.7			56.3			75		
No	39.6			33.3			43.8			25		
Total Household Income												
Less than $10,000	35.8			33.3			37.5			50		
$10,000 to $49,999	54.7			61.9			50			50		
$50,000 to $74,999	3.8						6.3					
$100,000 to $149,999	5.7			4.8			6.3					
Cultural/Ethnic Indentif.												
Black/African American	22.6			28.6			18.8			25		
Hispanic/Latinx/Spanish Origin	58.5			66.7			53.1			75		
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.9						3.1					
White/Caucasian	3.8						6.3					
Bi/multi-racial	13.2			4.8			18.8					
Language other than English												
Yes	67.9			81			59.4			75		
No	32.1			19			40.6			25		
Nativity Status												
U.S. Born	49.1			52.4			46.9			50		
Born Outside of U.S.	50.9			47.6			53.1			50		

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	M	SD	Raw skew	Transformation	Transformed Skew
1. Ethnic Centrality	3.41	.69	-.27	None	-
2. Educational Values	4.21	.76	-.97	NEWX=1/(K-X)	.16
3. Cultural Socialization Behaviors	3.52	.89	-.34	None	-
4. Cultural Socialization Attitudes	4.06	.84	-1.13	LG10(K-X)	.07
5. Home-Based Educational Activities	5.44	.74	-1.85	NEWX=1/(K-X)	-.46
6. School-Based Educational Activities	3.50	1.46	.14	None	-
7. Involvement Beliefs	5.27	.66	-2.43	NEWX=1/(K-X)	.08
8. Personal Experiences	4.89	1.26	-1.57	NEWX=1/(K-X)	-.12
9. Time and Energy	5.26	.75	-2.12	NEWX=1/(K-X)	.15
10. Knowledge and Skills	5.28	.66	-2.12	NEWX=1/(K-X)	.14

Table 3

Pearson Correlations for Total Sample

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Ethnic Centrality	3.41	0.69	-									
2. Educational Values	4.21	0.76	.01	-								
3. Cultural Socialization Behaviors	3.52	0.89	.37**	.02	-							
4. Cultural Socialization Attitudes	4.06	0.84	-.29**	-.04	-.64***	-						
5. Home-Based Educational Activities	5.44	0.74	-.03	.43**	.14	-.08	-					
6. School-Based Educational Activities	3.50	1.46	.17	.44***	.05	-.02	.25					
7. Involvement Beliefs	5.27	0.66	.05	.28**	.33	-.20	.29**	.38**	-			
8. Personal Experiences	4.89	1.26	-.13	.28*	.12	-.06	.28*	-.08	.08	-		
9. Time and Energy	5.26	0.75	-.06	.29	.22	-.15	.37**	.25	.85***	.16	-	
10. Knowledge and Skills	5.28	0.66	.01	.24	.35**	-.20	.21	.38**	.95***	.01	.66***	-

Note. The interpretations of all analyses will be impacted by the nature of the transformations performed to correct skew. Because transformed variables (*Educational Values, Cultural Socialization Attitudes, Home-Based Educational Activities, Involvement Beliefs, Personal Experiences, Time and Energy, Knowledge and Skills,* and *Cognitive and Contextual Resources*) were all negatively skewed and scores were reflected as part of the transformation process, on such variables lower values represent more of the variable, whereas higher values represent less of the variable.

p < .05, **p* < .01, ***p* < .001

Table 4

Pearson Correlations by Special Education Status

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Ethnic Centrality	-	-.01	.44*	-.46*	-.16	.17	.03	-.17	-.09	.11
2. Educational Values	.05	-	-.16	.18	.46*	.44*	.10	.31	.15	.04
3. Cultural Socialization Behaviors	.31	.23	-	-.66**	.23	.03	.39	.13	.30	.43
4. Cultural Socialization Attitudes	-.15	-.27	.60***	-	-.14	.00	-.16	.09	-.13	-.17
5. Home-Based Educational Activities	.06	.41*	.06	-.02	-	.10	.46*	.35	.50*	.41
6. School-Based Educational Activities	.16	.47**	.05	-.01	.37		.09	.32	.02	.12
7. Involvement Beliefs	.08	.47**	.29	-.24	.11	.63***	-	.12	.95***	.96***
8. Personal Experiences	-.16	.33	.04	-.09	.23	-.08	.05	-	.22	.00
9. Time and Energy	-.02	.43	.18	-.19	.26	.44*	.76***	.15	-	.84***
10. Knowledge and Skills	.10	.43	.32	-.22	.03	.59***	.93***	.03	.49**	-

Note. The interpretations of all analyses will be impacted by the nature of the transformations performed to correct skew. Because transformed variables (*Educational Values, Cultural Socialization Attitudes, Home-Based Educational Activities, Involvement Beliefs, Personal Experiences, Time and Energy, Knowledge and Skills,* and *Cognitive and Contextual Resources*) were all negatively skewed and scores were reflected as part of the transformation process, on such variables lower values represent more of the variable, whereas higher values represent less of the variable.
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 5

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses on Home-Based Educational Activities (RQ2)

Independent Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p
Aspects of Involvement									
Cognitive and Contextual Resources	.38	2.33	.02*	.28	1.66	.10	.38	2.27	.03*
Personal Experiences	.04	.24	.81	.02	1.00	.92	-.07	-.42	.68
Cultural Values									
Educational Values				.32	2.35	.02*	.31	2.34	.02*
Ethnic Centrality				-.02	-.15	.89	-.03	-.22	.83
Interaction									
Cognitive and Contextual Resources, Educational Values							-.28	-2.28	.03*
F		5.03*			4.07**			4.58**	
R²		.17			.25			.33	
Δ *R²*		.17			.09			.07	

Note. The interpretations of all analyses will be impacted by the nature of the transformations performed to correct skew. Because transformed variables (*Educational Values, Cultural Socialization Attitudes, Home-Based Educational Activities, Involvement Beliefs, Personal Experiences, Time and Energy, Knowledge and Skills,* and *Cognitive and Contextual Resources*) were all negatively skewed and scores were reflected as part of the transformation process, on such variables lower values represent more of the variable, whereas higher values represent less of the variable.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 6

Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses on Home-Based Involvement Activities (RQ3)

Independent Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	β	*t*	*p*	β	*t*	*p*
Cultural Socialization						
Cultural Socialization Behaviors	.15	.82	.42	.18	1.05	.30
Cultural Socialization Attitudes	.01	.08	.94	.02	.14	.89
Cultural Values						
Educational Values				.43	3.31	.002**
Ethnic Centrality				-.10	-.70	.49
F			.50			3.16
R^2			.02			.21
ΔR^2			.02			.19

Note. The interpretations of all analyses will be impacted by the nature of the transformations performed to correct skew. Because transformed variables (*Educational Values, Cultural Socialization Attitudes, Home-Based Educational Activities, Involvement Beliefs, Personal Experiences, Time and Energy, Knowledge and Skills,* and *Cognitive and Contextual Resources*) were all negatively skewed and scores were reflected as part of the transformation process, on such variables lower values represent more of the variable, whereas higher values represent less of the variable.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 7

Qualitative Themes Linked to Parent-Child Involvement

Theme	
Engagement Activities	Daily Life • Everyday routines • Outings • Social-emotional • Setting at example Academic • At school • Staying informed • Homework help • Academic activities at home
Parent Beliefs/Responsibilities	• Academic (e.g., ensuring their child attends school and receives an education) • Basic needs (e.g., health, food) • Lifelong duty to their child to be involved
Personal Experiences	• Religion • Parents (positive) • Parents (negative)
Barriers	• Time, work schedules • Education • Language • Focus on overcoming barriers
Social Support	• Fathers • Grandmothers • Other family members
Culture/Values	Implicit • Family connections • Respect • Education • Open-mindedness • Happiness Explicit • Language • Customs • Diversity, other cultures
Parent Background	• Religion • Parents (positive) • Parents (negative)

Figure 1

Interaction Between Parents' Cognitive and Contextual Resources and Educational Values in Predicting Home-Based Educational Activities

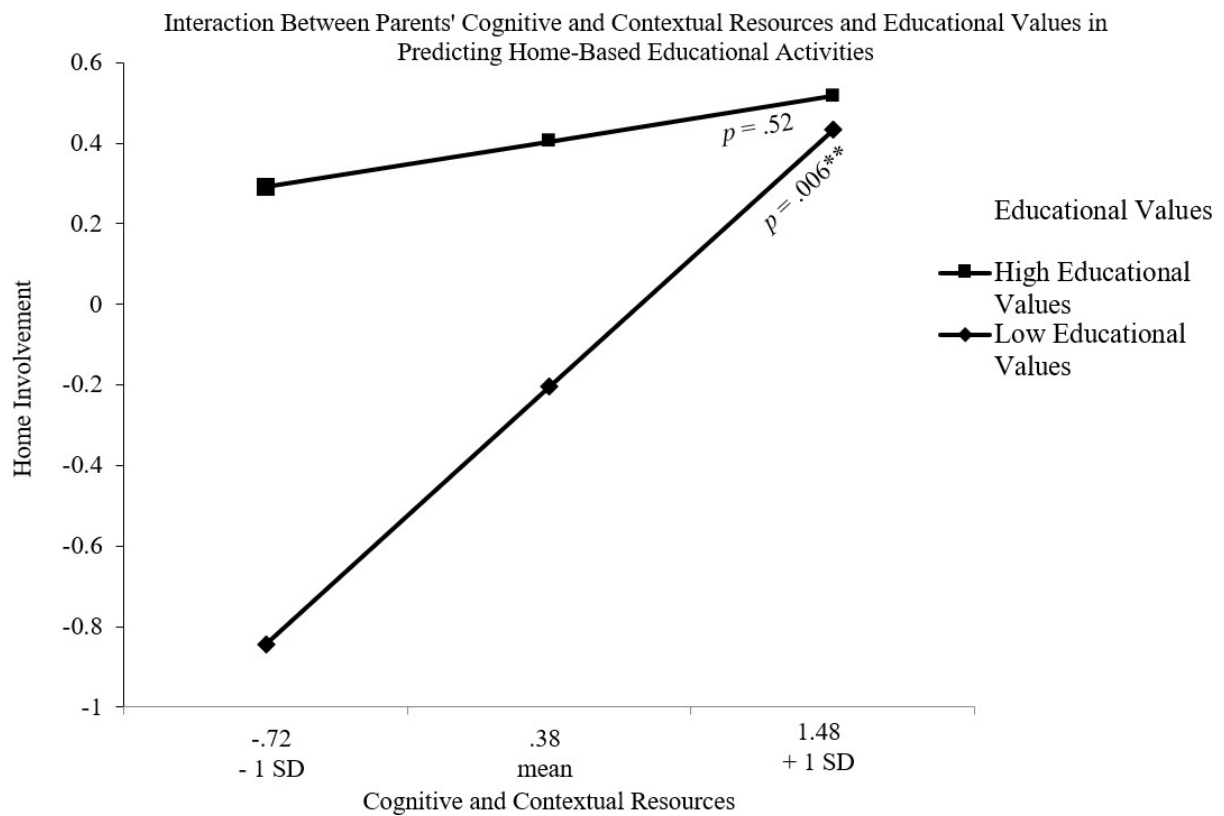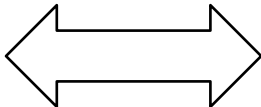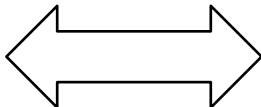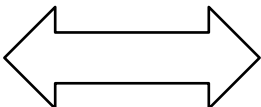
Interaction Between Parents' Cognitive and Contextual Resources and Educational Values in Predicting Home-Based Educational Activities
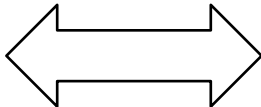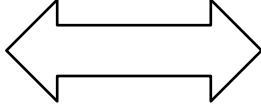
Figure 2

Quantitative Constructs and Related Qualitative Themes

Quantitative Construct		**Related Qualitative Theme**
Home-Based Educational Activities	⟷	Engagement Activities
		Daily Life
		Academic
School-Based Educational Activities		
Personal Experiences	⟷	Personal Experiences
Involvement Beliefs	⟷	Parent Beliefs/Responsibilities
Time and Energy Knowledge and Skills	⟷	Barriers Social Support
Educational Values Ethnic Centrality	⟷	Culture/Values
		Implicit
		Explicit

Chapter 5: Discussion of Studies

This dissertation is comprised of three studies which examined parents' experiences and involvement behaviors during the early childhood period, notably the transition into kindergarten special education. The first study synthesized the perceptions of 467 parents across 20 articles as their children transitioned from early childhood education into school-based special education services. The second study examined factors that influenced the kindergarten transition experience and subsequent adjustment for 15 parents undergoing this process during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The third study examined factors that contribute to the educational engagement of 53 culturally and linguistically diverse families. The findings from these studies highlight the complex nature of parent experiences and their involvement in their children's education.

Parents' Special Education Kindergarten Transition Experiences

Parents are critical to children's development and outcomes (Ma et al., 2015), yet parents of young children with disabilities become part of a world often largely unknown to them prior to their child's diagnosis (Haspel et al., 2020). Prior research shows that parents face immense learning curves and adjustment (Gaspar, 2022), and as a result may require support adjusting to the demands of special education and other disability-related circumstances. The transition from family-centered to school-based services (e.g., the shift into kindergarten) may especially be a time of learning as this may be the first special education transition they experience. As such, it is critical to understand parents' experiences during this period. The systematic review using thematic analysis revealed that parents' transition experiences were rooted in various ecological contexts, including family, school, and system levels. Parents reported challenges to the transition, such as inconsistent communication, but also facilitators, such as support from their

early childhood settings, and these experiences influenced their subsequent role on their children's school teams.

Parents' Adjustment to Kindergarten Special Education during COVID-19

The recent arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused striking changes in school contexts and procedures. One area affected by the pandemic was the kindergarten special education transition. The first study in the dissertation found that this transition is a major adjustment for families, yet little is known on families' experiences transitioning to kindergarten during COVID-19. Research shows that families from low-income, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Chandra et al., 2020; Sayer & Braun, 2020), as well as those with children with disabilities (Couper-Kenney & Riddell, 2020) faced disproportionate challenges during this COVID-19, and parents undertook especially significant burdens which took tolls on their wellbeing (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas et al., 2020; Neece et al., 2021). However, most of current work on these groups during COVID-19 is retrospective, cross-sectional, and relies on homogenous samples of a wide range of ages and school level. In contrast, the longitudinal, qualitative study followed 15 parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds throughout their child's adjustment to kindergarten special education services to give prospective, diverse insight into these families' experiences during this time. Findings from the thematic analysis revealed that parents underwent disruptions and adjustments to their children's learning experiences and felt extreme shifts to their parent responsibilities and family functioning. However, facilitators including school supports and silver linings promoted parents' coping throughout the turbulent year. Interviews from ten educational stakeholders supported parent insights. Stakeholders themselves underwent major changes to educational procedures, and also experienced shifts in their relationships and engagement with parents.

Cultural Factors and Involvement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families

Culture is an important factor which influences parents' involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), behaviors, and perspectives on education (Ryan et al., 2010; Valdez et al., 2007). Parents' cultural backgrounds, including beliefs, norms, and practices may shape their behaviors (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Past work has shown that parents' connections to their native culture are associated with higher involvement (Calzada et al., 2014), but often, education processes, especially in special education, may apply a deficit-lens to these families' behaviors (Rogoff et al., 2017) and lack consideration of cultural backgrounds and strengths. As such, there is a need to expand perceptions of parent involvement and work towards a culturally informed definition of participation. Further, the first study of the dissertation found that parents from diverse backgrounds experienced unique educational factors. The second study focused on parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds but did not dive into the specific role of culture in their experiences. The third study was a mixed methods investigation examined the cultural values and involvement of 53 culturally and linguistically diverse parents of preschool children with and without disabilities. Using Pearson correlations, relationships emerged between parents' home-based educational activities and aspects of parent involvement. Hierarchical regressions revealed that educational values predicted parents' home-based activities, and an interaction suggested the protective nature of educational values on parents' home-based educational activities. Thematic analysis of eight family interviews revealed patterns which supported and added depth to quantitative findings. Parents reported strong educational values and a myriad of ways they engaged with their children, predominantly at home.

Implications and Future Directions

The findings of the current studies align with research on parents of young children with disabilities and extend knowledge in this area. The studies in this dissertation lay the foundation to address gaps in supporting families of young children with disabilities, especially those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Stakeholder Development

Educators are in a unique position to act as partners with families and can work toward meaningful, inclusive educational practices. They should practice "authentic caring" (Valenzuela, 1999), which emphasizes reciprocal relationships between teachers and families. Additionally, educators supporting families of student with disabilities must recognize that disability identity is complex and intersects with other areas of identity (i.e., Discrit; Annamma et al., 2013). Some scholars suggest that current early childhood special education structures are built upon ableist and racist thinking that 1) defines goals for viewing and teaching students and families, including predefining perspectives of development and teachers' practices within these scopes, 2) reduces the complexity of learning, including decreasing the agency of diverse families and limiting teacher practices, and 3) rejects the expertise of diverse families and teachers (Beneke & Love, 2022).

To effectively support students and families, stakeholders must address their own biases as well as flaws in societal and systemic standards (racism, ableism) that may lead to (perhaps unintentional) deficit-based thinking and practices (Beneke et al., 2019). One way to do this is through an inclusive praxis framework proposed by Beneke and colleagues (2019), which emphasizes a continuous, iterative cycle of reflection and action that supports educators' inclusive practices with families and students. Similarly, a Discrit praxis model was proposed by Beneke & Love (2022) focused on disability justice principles. This model emphasizes

collaboration between teachers and families so that teachers can understand and incorporate diverse families' voices through promoting the multidimensionality of families' identities and backgrounds, facilitating the meaningful access and belonging of families within the school, and recognizing collaboration between educators (Beneke & Love, 2022).

Along with the adoption of critical praxis in practice, it may be necessary to rethink teacher education and preparation programs to further work towards dismantling inequitable teaching perspectives. Current preparation content and practices must be evaluated, then new coursework and meaningful field experiences developed to better meet the needs of the current educational landscape (e.g., developing more content on family partnerships and collaboration) (Love et al., 2022). Further, a Discrit Curriculum may be warranted to address gaps that exist in preparing teacher to support diverse families and children, including assessments and licensure requirements with racist and ableist roots, issues in supporting and retaining a workforce of diverse educators, educating future teachers on gaps in current educational structures, and advocacy for systemic change (Love & Hancock, 2022). A Discrit Curriculum can teach the histories of diverse communities and encourage future teachers' rejection of one-sided educational perspectives while exploring current educational narratives and alternative viewpoints and advocating for systemic change (Love & Hancock, 2022).

Family Supports

Findings from this dissertation justify the need for improved parent resources and home-school partnerships, especially during the early childhood special education transition. One way to support families is through fostering home-school connections. Parents in these dissertation studies heavily valued positive relationships with their schools which were cultivated through

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things such as frequent communication and transparency. Educational stakeholders should utilize these practices to build trust and genuine partnerships with families.

Parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may engage with school environment differently than what is emphasized in current school norms, thus, stakeholders need to utilize cultural awareness and learn about their families' values and culture so to incorporate meaningful, culturally informed practices into their interactions with families. Schools may take this awareness a step further and embrace the concept of "additive schooling", the idea that language and cultural background are assets for students and families and fostering a sense of community through strong home-school relationships (Valenzuela, 1999). Additive schooling encourages the maintenance of families' culture and community while also building their engagement and capitol in other cultures and communities (Pedraza & Rivera, 2005). In one example of additive schooling, a New York City high school encouraged their students' cultural resources through emphasis on bilingualism and biliteracy, staff mentorship with students, respect of families' cultural values and resources, and provision of supports to encourage students' growth, both in their own culture and beyond (Bartlett & García, 2011).

Schools can also integrate families' backgrounds, strengths, and expertise into the school culture and curriculum, such as Project *Recuerdo*, a family engagement project that utilizes community cultural wealth and provides a space for culturally and linguistically diverse families to participate and connect their cultural expertise with the curriculum (Lopez et al., 2022). In this program, families use journals and storytelling to share elements of their cultural heritage, which are then incorporated into the curriculum and classroom activities. Programs such as these offer a strengths-based response to the often deficit-oriented views of schools (Yosso, 2005) and

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provides insight into ways schools can establish culturally relevant parent involvement that recognizes families' knowledge and values.

Parents may also benefit from resources such as parent interventions or parent education programming to support their navigation of the transition period (Pianta et al., 2001). Existing transition resources demonstrate positive effects on both children's outcomes and parents' behaviors and engagement (Pears et al., 2015), however, parents from culturally and linguistically diverse groups have a lower likelihood of receiving family-centered intervention supports (Jarquin et al., 2011; Magaña et al., 2012) and current transition-focused family intervention programs often do not incorporate their perspectives and cultural expertise.

Prior work on culturally informed family interventions support the notion that these programs are meaningful for parents such that they improve their engagement and satisfaction with the program (Parra Cardona et al., 2012), and these culturally informed programs may be especially helpful for parents of children with disabilities (Magaña et al., 2017). For example, a parent education program called Parents Taking Action was adapted for Latinx parents of students with autism through incorporation of strategies such as peer educators and materials that were adapted to reflect cultural values, such as *familismo,* as well as personalization based on the individual home setting and child needs (Magaña et al., 2017). Parents demonstrated significant gains in knowledge and support after participating in this program (Lopez et al., 2019; Magaña et al., 2017). Another culturally adapted program, *Juntos en la Transición*, was implemented with Latinx families of youth with autism to support their transition into adulthood (Kuhn et al., 2020). Through an in-depth adaptation process, the program was modified to reflect family and community cultural values, strengths, needs, and concerns. Participants were highly engaged and discussed the utility and relevance of the program (Kuhn et al., 2020). As such, culturally and

linguistically parents may benefit from a similarly culturally informed intervention focused on the kindergarten transition period. Additional work is needed to develop and pilot such an intervention, and later implement these resources on larger samples across broader school settings and various parent communities and backgrounds.

Parent Involvement Guidelines

Beyond parent supports, findings from this dissertation provide broader insights into ways that culturally and linguistically diverse parents view involvement and engage with their children. These findings do not align with much of past research which suggests these parents are *less* involved in their child's schooling and do not value involvement or their children's education (De Gaetano, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Valencia & Black, 2002). This disconnect may stem from the current school involvement guidelines which emphasize formal, in-school involvement rooted in White, middle-class values (Lareau & Horvat, 1999), which, as shown in the present dissertation, may not be as meaningful to families from other backgrounds who might have differing perceptions of involvement and interact differently with school settings. For example, parents in the dissertation studies revealed that they manifest their involvement in the home context rather than in the school, and often center their involvement around cultural and family values in addition to academic activities. Subsequently, scales used to assess parent involvement in past literature may be based on biased, narrow parent involvement perspectives and may not be representative of all parent populations (Bultosky-Shearer et al., 2016; McWayne & Melzi, 2014). Additional work is needed to establish a culturally informed measure of parent involvement that embodies the involvement behaviors and beliefs of *all* parents. More broadly, the present dissertation's findings provide early rationale for the need to change current parent guidelines and procedures promoted by schools and current policies. Additional work is needed

using wider samples and specific racial/ethnic groups to further detail parent experiences and

provide additional, strong evidence to support a change in involvement guidelines to better

represent and include perspectives and practices of culturally and linguistically diverse families.

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