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Fathers' Perspectives and Challenges Regarding Their Child's School Readiness

Ula Pretlow Lyons
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Ula P. Lyons

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Walden University

2023

Abstract

Fathers' Perspectives and Challenges Regarding Their Child's School Readiness

by

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MA, Norfolk State University, 1996

BA, Norfolk State University, 1994

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

August 2023

Abstract

In a large rural region in a southeastern state in the United States, many children are not proficient in one to three areas of school readiness, including self-regulation, social skills, and mathematics. Although evidence exists that parents' perspectives about school readiness influence kindergarten preparedness, the problem that was the focus of this study was the gap in literature regarding fathers' perspectives in preparing their children for kindergarten and the challenges fathers face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fathers' perspectives regarding children's school readiness, and the challenges that fathers encounter when engaging in children's kindergarten preparedness. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which indicates that environmental and societal influences impact a child's development, was the conceptual framework. Twelve fathers were purposefully sampled from a group of community-based prekindergarten schools. Semi structured interviews were conducted, and data analyzed using thematic coding. Findings revealed that fathers perceived their engagement in children's school readiness promoted skills effective for kindergarten and felt that support from schools would help them meet the needs of children for optimal school readiness. This study has the potential to effect positive social change by bringing fathers' perspectives to the forefront, providing them with a voice concerning the challenges they encounter in promoting school readiness, and influencing policies that may lead to additional training and education promoting fathers' influence on their children's school success.

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Dedication

Thank you, God, for leading me to continue my education with Walden University. I have observed the work of God's hand throughout the duration of my PhD journey. To God be all the glory! The fulfillment of this work is dedicated to my family and friends. To my dad, Dr. Harold Pretlow, thank you for fostering a desire for knowledge. Your presence in my life is a gift. To my mom, Florine Pretlow, you are priceless. You taught me to make a difference in life wherever I go. The countless lessons of servitude you both have modeled to me have caused me to love being used by God. To my husband, Samuel Lyons, you have been consistent in walking each phase of life with me. I am grateful that you supported me in finishing what I started. I love you always and forever Sam! Thanks to the best sisters in the world for your support: Lesa, Vera (my 8:00 p.m. prayer partner), Valda, and Annie. To my brother, Ivan, and nephew, Jared, you both showed me how to utilize music to relax when I felt anxious about my school assignments. Thanks to my entire Pretlow family for rooting for me. Your prayers, encouragement, and assistance in easing my journey were genuinely felt. To my Bessie: Yhatta Holloway, 20 years ago when we agreed to be best friends. God certainly knew what a blessing you would be to me. I love you, Bessie Wessie! To my great nephew, Paxsen, thank you for asking me, "Aunt Dennie, are you getting ready to do your homework?" Having you live with Sam, and I added to my life in countless ways. May your mom, Amber Rae Holloway, rest in paradise knowing that I will do my best to be present in your life.

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Thank you to the father participants who provided insight with your contributions. The field of education has more knowledge concerning fathers' perspectives and challenges regarding their child's school readiness. Your contributions are essential to educators in how we can support fathers. Thank you, Drs. Curtis and Anderson, for your guidance. You all are remarkable and knowledgeable about the dissertation process. My heart's desire is to make you proud of me as I live out my purpose as a leader in early childhood education and advocacy. You all guided me in every phases of the dissertation journey. Thank you, Dr. Cale, for solidifying my study to be worthy of Walden's mantra: To make a greater difference in my community.

Dr. Ula Lyons (๕๓)

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Early childhood research has shown a correlation between children's school readiness and their future success in kindergarten (Conger et al., 2019; Ramsook et al., 2020; Valentino, 2018). School readiness helps to eliminate disparities for children due to the issue of the achievement gap that divides children's academic or educational attainment (Burchinal et al., 2018). A key influence of children's kindergarten school readiness is parental involvement (Barnett et al., 2020); however, parents who participate in studies are often mothers, not fathers (Volling et al., 2019). Therefore, fathers' school readiness perspectives have received little empirical attention, this gap in literature necessitated that fathers' perspectives and challenges they encounter when engaging in children's school readiness be articulated and understood.

A growing interest in parental engagement in children's school readiness recognizes the positive impact fathers have on children's development (Chacko et al., 2018; Henry et al., 2020; Volling et al., 2019). According to Baker et al. (2018), fathers who engage in children's lives impact their social, emotional, and academic growth necessary for school success. If school success matters for children, the engagement of fathers in children's school readiness must be understood (Volling et al., 2019); however, Henry et al. (2020) and Volling et al. (2019) reported that studies about parental engagement in school readiness often exclude father participation.

Chapter 1 provides the foundation for the current study by outlining each component of the research beginning with the background pertaining to parental engagement in children's school readiness. The problem of the lack of fathers'

involvement in children's school readiness is shared, along with the purpose and research questions. In this paper, I use a constructivist lens to explore fathers' perspectives in preparing their children for kindergarten and the challenges they face as they prepare children for school. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory of human development situated the father as the closet part of the critical circles of influence that foster learning necessary for children's school readiness. In this chapter, I also review assumptions, scope and delimitations, the nature of the study, and definitions. Finally, I describe the implications for potential social change in policies about parental engagement in early childhood education.

Background

Eighty-six percent of children attend community-based programs in a large rural region in a southeastern state in the United States, where school readiness is taught and where the current study took place. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2020), many children under 6 years of age are deficient in one to three indicators of school readiness, including self-regulation, social skills, and mathematics. Delays in school readiness indicators are predictors of an achievement gap in children, and indicate they are not prepared for kindergarten success (Kim, 2018). Parental engagement that supports child development for school readiness aids in narrowing the achievement gap (Puccioni, 2018). Baker et al. (2018) found that fathers' participation in school readiness activities can boost learning in children's foundational years. Meuwissen and Carlson (2018) noted that fathers' guidance that supports child development is associated with increased learning, demonstration of executive function skills, and academic achievement at school.

According to Henry et al. (2020), fathers focus on how children are prepared for the future through support for problem solving, development of discipline, and encouragement of responsibility. The role of father engagement in children's lives is central to the development of social, emotional, and academic skills necessary for school; however, many studies on parental engagement in children's school readiness focused on mothers' parental participation rather than fathers (Henry et al., 2020; Volling et al., 2019).

Kim (2018) found that in the United States, programs aimed at supporting parent engagement in children's educational involvement often omit fathers because fathers' engagement can be full of challenges for teachers and administrators. In addition, barriers to fathers' participation in children's early years of learning limit the benefits that fathers' participation can provide for children (Poissant et al., 2023). Barriers such as long work hours, stress of balancing work and life, parent demographics, parent values, divorce, poor parent-teacher relationships, and incarceration can affect how fathers are engaged in children's overall school development (Henry et al., 2020; Volling et al., 2019). Despite barriers, father participation in children's school readiness bolsters school readiness for children (Henry et al., 2020).

Research confirmed that when fathers play a role in preschool-age children's school readiness, children become more developmentally ready (Chacko et al., 2018; Józsa & Barrett, 2018). Additionally, fathers who displayed sensitivity and emotional support for their children had children who were better adjusted psychologically (Kim, 2018). Scholars have expressed the necessity to include fathers in literature concerning

their participation in children's school readiness due to the impact that fathers can have on children's school readiness (Kim, 2018; Volling et al., 2019). Although research has confirmed the correlation between children's school readiness and parental support, it has also indicated the need for more research exploring the engagement of fathers (Volling et al., 2019). The current study has implications for positive social change by bringing fathers' perspectives to the forefront, providing them a voice concerning the challenges they face in promoting children's school readiness, and influencing policy changes that might support fathers' engagement and the need for training and education promoting fathers' influence on their children's school success.

Problem Statement

The problem that was the focus of this study was the lack of information regarding fathers' perspectives in preparing their children for kindergarten and the challenges they face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation. When fathers participate in children's school readiness, their engagement enhances key child outcomes (Henry et al., 2020). Meuwissen and Carlson (2018) found that fathers' participation in children's play improved their executive function. Henry et al. (2020) highlighted that positive parenting, coparenting, and father-child relationships enhanced children's cognition and social-emotional development. Volling et al. (2019) noted that fathers can inhabit a wide variety of spaces in their child's life. Despite the effectiveness of fathers' engagement in children's school readiness, over 40% of children in the United States grow up without consistent and affirmative involvement of a father (Henry et al., 2020). Although studies have focused on parental engagement in a child's school readiness

(Barnett et al., 2020; Gennetian et al., 2019; Marti et al., 2018), there have been few studies that have addressed fathers' perspectives. The current study was needed to increase understanding of fathers' perspectives and challenges encountered when engaging in children's school readiness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fathers' perspectives regarding their prekindergarten children's school readiness, and the challenges fathers face as they engage in their children's kindergarten preparation. Puccioni (2018) believed that children's preparedness must be navigated with parental involvement. Research on school readiness and parental perspectives and engagement addressed mothers' decisions and actions, but less was known about fathers' perspectives on their children's school readiness (Kim, 2018; Volling et al., 2019). A deficit in fathers' perspectives on children's school readiness indicated a gap in the exploration of parental support in children's school readiness (Henry et al., 2020). There was a need for greater understanding of fathers' perspectives regarding children's school readiness and challenges fathers encounter as they prepare children for kindergarten. The current study was conducted in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States. I used a constructivist paradigm to explore participants' verbalized accounts of their perspectives.

Research Questions

The following research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: What are fathers' perspectives regarding school readiness for their prekindergarten children?

RQ2: What are fathers' perspectives about the challenges they face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. This conceptual theory provided a framework for understanding that individuals differ in their early developmental milestones due to their environments. Bronfenbrenner asserted that children's interactions with adults within their immediate environment influence their development. Parents' perspectives can be influenced by their personal interactions and relationships within the context of their environment (O'Donnell, 2018). This theory related to the problem of my study addressing children's school readiness influenced by fathers. According to Bronfenbrenner, a developing child is surrounded by systems known as the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

This study focused on the microsystem of the bidirectional relationship between father and child. O'Donnell (2018) recognized that parents' beliefs about education for children are modeled by the ways they foster the educational foundation for children. What fathers perceive children need for kindergarten school readiness and the challenges they encounter in preparing children for kindergarten were of interest in the current study. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory was used as the conceptual framework that informed how I gathered information from fathers regarding their beliefs and actions taken to support their children's kindergarten readiness.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory supported the current study's purpose, problem, and research questions in gaining an understanding of how fathers' contextual influences shaped their beliefs and guided their actions. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory considers interactions that occur within a child's immediate environment in which a supportive model of parental involvement exists. In the current study, I sought a common language that aligned with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to explore fathers' perspectives about preparing children for school and the challenges fathers face. I also used Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a guide to analyze the data. Participants were purposefully sampled from a group of fathers who had a child currently enrolled in a community-based prekindergarten program in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States. From the purposefully selected group, I recruited 12 fathers who fit my selection criteria. In Chapter 2, I further describe Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and explain how it framed the current study.

Nature of the Study

I used a basic qualitative design to explore fathers' perspectives regarding their prekindergarten children's school readiness, and the challenges fathers face as they engage in their child's kindergarten preparation. A total of 12 fathers from a group of community-based prekindergarten schools located in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States were recruited and interviewed for this study. According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), a basic qualitative study is used by researchers to apply theory to practice, use decision-making skills, incorporate

viewpoints that differ, analyze data, and synthesize content, which were critical components of my study. Those who conduct qualitative research focus on understanding the world as another experiences it (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Castleberry and Nolen (2018) stated that in social science research, qualitative approaches lead to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

In the current basic qualitative study, semistructured interviews were used to explore fathers' perspectives regarding their prekindergarten children's school readiness, and the challenges fathers face as they engage in their child's kindergarten preparation. Twelve fathers were recruited from a group of community-based prekindergarten schools in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States. Ravitch and Carl (2019) asserted that semistructured interviews create two-way communication between the researcher and the interviewee in which questions are focused and conversational. By focusing on the participants' perspectives and challenges of preparing children for school readiness, I gained an in-depth understanding of how the fathers viewed their children's school readiness.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were completed virtually using Zoom or by telephone if the participants did not have access to Zoom. If the participants felt comfortable meeting face-to-face and COVID-19 protocols were followed, I interviewed the fathers in a private place where our conversations were not overheard. Interviews were digitally recorded using a Sony digital voice recorder. If the interview was conducted by Zoom, the interview was audio recorded only; also, a Sony digital voice recorder was used as a backup in case the Zoom recorder malfunctioned during the

interview. Additionally, I kept a journal to record incidents that occurred that the digital recording device could not capture. Because I am an experienced early childhood educator, biases could have influenced data collection. To minimize my biases during the interview, I kept a reflective journal before and during the interviews to record my thoughts and ideas. Before I interviewed the participants, I piloted the questions (see Appendix) with two colleagues considered subject matter experts. By piloting the interview questions and adjusting them as needed, I made certain the interview protocol was appropriate for answering the research questions.

I used thematic coding to analyze the data. Anderson (2019) identified thematic coding as analyzing and interpreting data sets and sorting them into broad themes. The themes come from the detailed descriptions produced from interviews with the participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). To increase the credibility of my study, I used member checking by providing each participant with a draft summary of the data analysis to review for accuracy. In addition, I asked an expert reviewer to examine the data and verify that the analysis was completed accurately to minimize any discrepancies in the data analysis process.

Definitions

Community based: The affiliation with a community group (Hunter & Bierman, 2020).

Domains: Children's skill levels in language, mathematics, literacy, self-regulation, and social-emotional adjustment that play a role in determining school success (Pace et al., 2019).

Early childhood: The period in life between birth and 8 years (Al Rub et al., 2022).

Engagement: The decisions and behaviors that parents conduct to enhance children's development inside and outside of educational settings (Gennetian et al., 2019).

Fathers: A primary male caregiver who is functionally and socially in a child's life (Ansell & Chitiyo, 2018).

School readiness: The preparation of academic and nonacademic skills and behaviors needed for children's school success (Williams & Lerner, 2019).

Assumptions

Hennink and Kaiser (2022) pointed out that assumptions are components, elements, and circumstances that are acknowledged as truth. According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), assumptions are necessary in the context of a study. For the current study, I assumed that fathers would meet the criteria of having a child currently enrolled at a preschool within the group of community-based prekindergarten schools selected. I assumed that fathers would provide accurate responses that depicted their perspectives regarding their prekindergarten children's school readiness, and the challenges fathers face as they engage in their children's kindergarten preparation. I also assumed that the sample represented the target population. Finally, I assumed that participant confidentiality and participants' voluntary right to participate or withdraw from the study were accurately expressed throughout the research process (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Scope and Delimitations

I explored fathers' perspectives regarding their preschool children's school readiness, and the challenges fathers face as they engage in their child's kindergarten preparation. Volling et al. (2019) reported that fathers' engagement in a child's kindergarten school readiness is underutilized as part of parental agreement. The current study included fathers whose child was attending a prekindergarten program in a large rural region in a southeastern state in the United States. The objective of this study is to increase knowledge of fathers' perspectives regarding their prekindergarten children's school readiness, and the challenges fathers encounter when engaging in their children's kindergarten preparation. This understanding may lead to additional training and education promoting fathers' influence in their children's school readiness.

This study was delimited to fathers in a community-based prekindergarten program who had a child currently in prekindergarten. Fathers of children who attended the community-based pre-kindergarten program were the focus of this study because father engagement was an underexplored factor in children's school readiness for kindergarten in community-based schools (see Volling et al., 2019), which increased the need for further action in support of children's school readiness. In addition, participants in this study resided in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States, which limited extraneous factors pertaining to education governance and social and political climate that differentiated from state to state and area to area in the United States. Excluded from this study were fathers of children who were not attending prekindergarten, fathers of children who were not enrolled in prekindergarten, and fathers

who lived in other regions.

I addressed the microsystem included in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory related to the child and adult in their immediate environment.

Microsystem factors include influences from the father. These microsystem factors informed the current study. The microsystem factor of fathers' perspectives of children's school readiness and the factors that influence fathers' engagement pertaining to their influence in children's lives formed the main application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The interview questions were purposefully open-ended so fathers could describe factors from a child's immediate setting that related to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

Transferability refers to how results can be transferred to other settings or contexts (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Results of the current study may be transferred to contexts in which fathers' engagement in their children's school readiness is the focus. Transferability may be less likely for studies of fathers who have children older than preschool age. The transferability of this study may also be limited in geographic regions outside of the American southeastern due to regional and cultural aspects. Additionally, the population size of the current study was small. Qualitative studies tend to be small and are not always transferable to larger populations (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Transferability of the current study was enhanced with descriptions and direct quotes from the interviews; however, the individual reader must determine whether the findings from this study are applicable to their specifications and location (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses in research identified by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2021). By addressing the limitations of the current study, the reader can determine the transferability of findings. There were several limitations to this study. I had a basic understanding of research and no experience in performing qualitative research. Because I was a novice researcher, I relied on my chair's and committee member's expertise to guide me as needed. Also, I piloted my interview questions to make sure the questions would elicit responses that would answer the research questions.

Another limitation was my biases about fathers' knowledge of school readiness. Since 2004, I have owned and operated a home-based school readiness prekindergarten program. Although this prekindergarten program was not selected for my study, I have often conversed with fathers about strategies and best practices to overcome challenges that may impede their children's school readiness. Therefore, I had preconceived notions about the knowledge fathers in my study might possess concerning their children's school readiness. To address this limitation, I kept a journal to help me keep track of the thoughts and ideas I had during the interview process to minimize the influence of my biases before, during, or after the interviews.

As a novice researcher, I had not analyzed data before this study, so I added two steps to support this process. First, I validated my data with member checking. I provided a draft summary of findings to each participant so they could provide feedback. Second, I recruited an expert reviewer to examine my findings. Adding these two steps after data analysis helped minimize any biases or discrepancies in the findings. Merriam and

Grenier (2019) asserted that having another person who is more experienced review the data analysis can increase the validity and credibility of a study.

Another limitation was that due to data collection occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools were closed, and classes were held remotely via online instruction. As a result, most of the interviews were completed virtually using Zoom or by telephone; however, if the participants felt comfortable meeting face-to-face, COVID-19 protocols were followed. The interviews that were conducted on Zoom or by telephone impeded my ability to capture nuances of facial expression and body language. These limitations supported public health. According to Ravitch and Carl (2019), uncontrollable factors that dispute plans for data collection are enmeshed in everyday challenges.

Significance

The findings from this study may provide an understanding of fathers' perspectives about their engagement and challenges they face in children's school readiness. Improved engagement of fathers in children's school readiness may be beneficial to children and their fathers (Henry et al., 2020). Kim (2018) reported that when fathers are supportive of their children's school readiness, they have positive experiences and feel a connection with their children. Father engagement benefits children's school readiness because fathers influence higher levels of social-emotional skills and greater cognitive skills among children, and children have fewer behavioral concerns compared to children whose fathers are not engaged in their school readiness (Volling et al., 2019). The current study may contribute to positive social change by

presenting fathers' perspectives concerning their children's school readiness, including the challenges fathers face in promoting their children's school readiness. Findings could inform policies about engagement of fathers in children's school readiness and may lead to additional training and education promoting fathers' influence on their children's school readiness.

Summary

Research in the early childhood field related to parental perspectives about school readiness highlighted the significant role parents play in children's school success (Kim, 2018; Volling et al., 2020). In this chapter, I addressed the gap in literature regarding the lack of perspectives of fathers concerning their children's school readiness. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore fathers' perspectives regarding their prekindergarten children's school readiness, and the challenges that fathers encounter when engaging in their children's kindergarten preparation. The research questions and definitions of key terms in the study were given. I also described the qualitative exploratory nature of the study, including the assumptions, limitations, scope and delimitations, and significance of the study.

Chapter 1 concluded with a summary and conclusion, along with a transition to Chapter 2. Chapter 2 provides the literature review. The literature review includes extant literature related to parental perspectives about children's school readiness. I also provide the strategies for the literature search, an explanation of the conceptual framework, and a review of the literature related to key variables and concepts of school readiness.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Parents play a vital role in influencing children's school preparedness (Barnett et al., 2020). The problem was a lack of information regarding fathers' perspectives in engaging in how children are prepared for kindergarten. The purpose of the current study was to explore fathers' perspectives regarding school readiness for their prekindergarten children, and the challenges fathers face as they engage in their child's kindergarten preparedness. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009), readiness of school is demonstrated through mastery of specific domains of thinking and learning. Children who are adept in these domains are readier for the challenges of kindergarten than are children who are not (Williams & Lerner, 2019). Key domains often cited as fundamental to kindergarten readiness include areas of cognition, learning, physical development, social-emotional development, and language and literacy. The need for the current study was justified because children who enter kindergarten in a large rural region in a southeastern state in the United States were unprepared in at least one dimension of school readiness (see Weisenfeld et al., 2020). In this chapter, I provide an overview of the literature search strategy, a description of the conceptual framework, and a review of current literature. I conclude with a summary and transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

A literature search for this study consisted of words and phrases aligned with the purpose, problem statement, and research questions. The literature and research were selected from scholarly materials published between 2018 and 2023. I used Research

Complete, ProQuest, Goggle Scholar, and EBSCO for research engines. The keywords were *school readiness, preschool, community-based preschools, home engagement, parent engagement, father's engagement in school readiness, parental school readiness perspectives, father's school readiness perspectives, prekindergarten, learning domains, kindergarten readiness, and early childhood education.*

Literature was exhausted using the following method. Within the 2018–2022 period, I used the EBSCO search engine for *preschool school readiness*, and 1,923 articles were found. ProQuest was employed for the term *school readiness*, and I found 1,549 articles or dissertations. Using EBSCO, I used the keywords *parent and perspectives* and retrieved 330 articles. While reviewing ESBCO, I used the keywords *school readiness and community-based*, and 125 articles were found.

Then I changed my search with the keywords' *preschool and parents' perspectives*; 39 articles were found. I completed the search with keywords *preschool and fathers' perspectives*; three articles were found. When I used the terms *preschool readiness perspectives* and *father's engagement*, one article was found. In each search, some of the same articles and dissertations were listed, and the range of articles was exhausted. The strategic search method I used guided me to find a gap in literature. I also framed my study using the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) to explore fathers' perspectives and the challenges they face when engaging in children's school readiness.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided my study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory served as a

framework for understanding human development. Bronfenbrenner coined the term “ecology of human development” to identify the movement individuals make throughout their developmental lifespan. Bronfenbrenner further described the ecological environment as the interrelatedness of how children develop in various settings.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) theory asserts that human development happens within a system of interconnected environmental systems. Bronfenbrenner outlined human development as a concentric circle of four relational systems including the microsystem (individuals in the child’s closest environment), mesosystem (the child’s interaction between two or more environments in the microsystem), ecosystem (two or more external environments that do not involve the child), and macrosystem (cultural environment of the child). Later, Bronfenbrenner developed a fifth system, chronosystem, which involves change or consistency over time. Each of Bronfenbrenner’s systems is defined as proximal processes within the context of how an individual, in this case a child, engages in different environments.

The microsystem is the system closest to children where they have the nearest contact with adults (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The microsystem is the smallest and most immediate environment in which a pattern of activities and interpersonal relations by the developing person occurs in their immediate environment with family, school, or peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), the family system is a proximal influencer for children. Parents’ involvement in children’s school readiness happens within the context of home and school.

Two other conceptual frameworks with similarities to Bronfenbrenner’s are

parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997) and the source of father engagement (Lamb et al., 1985). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) parent involvement model includes three components of why parents get involved in children's education: (a) parents' construction of the parental role, (b) parents' self-efficacy to help children succeed in school, and (c) general invitations and demand for involvement from the child and school. Lamb et al. (1985) discerned four components of father engagement as being (a) motivational, (b) skills and self-confidence, (c) social support, and (d) the absence of institutional barriers. These models, which represent fathers' involvement based on what fathers do with and for children, point to the necessity of providing a unifying framework of exploring fathers' school perspectives of what they perceive children need for school readiness within the context of being a primary caregiver.

What fathers do in the microsystem of the father-child dyad is linked to what fathers believe to be what a child needs for school readiness. Hugo et al. (2018) used Bronfenbrenner's theory to frame a study on the interactions and activities at home used to prepare children for kindergarten, and O'Donnell (2018) used Bronfenbrenner's theory to frame a study on the home environment's contribution to a child's school readiness. The current study benefited from the framework of previous research, which prompted me to answer questions regarding fathers' perspectives of a child's school readiness within the environment of home and school.

Literature Review

In the literature review, I synthesize research that supports the need to explore fathers' perspectives and challenges regarding their children's school readiness. I provide

a review of literature on parents' school readiness engagement in early childhood education and note the gap in the literature on father engagement. In addition, I provide an overview of the scope and manner of parental engagement and list father engagement. I outline the benefits of family engagement in children's school readiness in the United States and abroad and include barriers. Next, I describe the school readiness perspectives between the home and school environments. I conclude the literature review by reiterating the need to explore fathers' school readiness perspectives and the challenges fathers face regarding their children's school readiness.

Father Engagement in School Readiness

To trace the origin of father engagement that is underrepresented in children's school readiness, one must recap the traditional family in the 1960s that consisted of two parents and children (Polivanova, 2018). Marriages were created for procreation and economic security (Guzzo & Hayford, 2020). During the 1960s, some women worked outside the home despite being viewed negatively (Polivanova, 2018). In traditional homes, individuals believed that the woman's job was to tend to the home and children, while the fathers worked outside of the home (Volling et al., 2019). The trend of parental care and engagement of children was the job of the mother in the 1960s; however, the pattern and trend of traditional marriages with children changed (Volling et al., 2019).

This shift led to the roles of mothers and fathers being altered as parents cared for children based on their work hours (Volling et al., 2019). Additionally, children's school readiness engagement with mothers and fathers within the home was reflected in the roles that parents assumed due to their work schedule (Volling et al., 2019). According to the

U.S. Department of Labor (2020), due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of mothers working dropped. This decline reflected job loss, distance learning, and childcare facilities closing (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020). Despite the decline, mothers tended to be a central component in children's preparedness for school (Volling et al., 2019). Henry et al. (2020), however, noted that the role of fathers has evolved from the traditional role of breadwinner to that of a necessary contributor in a child's school readiness.

Components of School Readiness

School readiness comprises the individual, home, school, family, and community that supports optimal early child development (Williams & Lerner, 2019). Although there are aspects that impact how well a child does in school, school readiness is an essential part in children's school success and extends in life (Reynolds et al., 2018; Watts et al., 2018). According to McFarland et al. (2018), many 4-year-olds attend some form of school readiness preschool. Ghandour et al. (2019) called school readiness a national priority, noting that communities will see returns in children, the economy, and society in years to come following children's successful prekindergarten experiences. Such returns are strengthened for children, the economy, and society when parents, teachers, and community members support children's early school readiness (Watts et al., 2018). Moreover, there is a wide span of life outcomes for children who participate in school readiness, thereby making school readiness an important long-term investment since its origin to address the effects of poverty (Reynolds et al., 2018).

Child Development Guidelines

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson called the nation to a war on poverty and initiated the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2004). The Elementary and Secondary Act gave additional funding for schools and funded the initial Head Start Program (USDOE, 2004). This war on poverty focused on the early intervention of preschool programs for students who were economically disadvantaged (USDOE, 2004). President Johnson wanted school readiness to benefit tens of thousands of young children with early skills before they were in first grade (USDOE, 2004).

Historically, school readiness has been assessed to determine whether there is a need for special education provisions that could not be met in school (Hughes et al., 2018). Today, more inclusive educational policies mean that school readiness is assessed to establish what adjustments a school might make to meet a child's developmental needs (Hughes et al., 2018). In 1995, The National Education Goals Panel (1995, as cited in Kokkalia et al., 2019) designed a broad definition to conceptualize school readiness. This definition focused on the interconnections between essential components of children's overall development (Kokkalia et al., 2019).

Although school readiness is essential for children's development for school, there is not a consensus about what the term means because strategies may differ for children (Kokkalia et al., 2019). The traditional view of identifying whether children were ready for school emphasized measuring children's academic skills (Altun, 2018). Another view, called the maturational view, includes children's social-emotional levels as

school readiness indicators (Altun, 2018). A different approach is readiness of age, which specifies that children are ready for school when they are 5 years old by September 1 of the year they enter school (Altun, 2018).

School readiness involves the children, families, children's environments, schools, and the community where children reside (NAEYC, 2009). The NAEYC (2009) outlined that: (a) school readiness is broad in its scope because children develop differently, (b) everything about children is inclusive in children's school readiness, and (c) school readiness consists of more than the child (NAEYC, 2009). An added conceptualization of school readiness by The National Education Goals Panel (2009, as cited in Kokkalia et al., 2019) set a marker that by the year 2000 all children will begin school ready. In 2002, the goals were updated, and as a continuation, the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative was formed (NAEYC, 2009). This multistate initiative tracks student progress in the comprehensive domains of the following: (a) cognition and general knowledge development; (b) approaches toward learning, physical well-being, and motor development; (c) social and emotional development; and (d) language and literacy (NAEYC, 2009). Today, this initiative involves 17 states that use these domains as guidelines to define children's school readiness development (NAEYC, 2009). For parents and families, these guidelines can serve as indicators of school readiness (NAEYC, 2009).

School Readiness Domains

School readiness is foundational to children's overall academic growth, and each domain serves as a guideline to determine whether children are ready for kindergarten

and beyond (NAEYC, 2009). The cognitive and general knowledge domain is the domain in which children process information, create knowledge, and think (NAEYC, 2009). An approach to learning is the domain that focuses on how children learn by using skills and behaviors to engage in learning (NAEYC, 2009). Children's physical domain of school readiness consists of developing children's bodies, which promotes gross and fine motor skills (NAEYC, 2009). A child's social-emotional domain includes the development of the child's understanding and control of feelings about self to maintain relationships and function in society (NAEYC, 2009). When children communicate with others, they are developing their language domain (NAEYC, 2009). These domains are the foundation to help parents understand what it means for children to be ready for school (NAEYC, 2009).

Ghandour et al. (2019) researched school readiness among children in the United States using content related to multiple domains of school readiness included in the National Survey of Children's Health that provided young children's mastery skills. Four distinct domains were identified to determine whether children were healthy and ready to learn. The domains of early learning skills, self-regulation, social-emotional development, and physical health/motor development were used. Ghandour et al. (2019) concluded that over 4 in 10 children were on track across all four domains, while another 3 in 10 were on track in three of the four domains. The results indicated that children benefit in developing school readiness domains with opportunities to engage in activities that allow them to build skills in learning domains.

Many day-to-day routines and activities that children engage with parents in the

home are learning opportunities embedded in the domains of learning (Kwong et al., 2018). Kartal and Guner (2018) found that in their study of children in Turkey, it appeared that only one domain was being developed at a time for a child, but other domains were occurring; although, they are gradual and less prominent. Therefore, the domains of learning are in tandem, and one domain does not stand alone (Kartal & Guner, 2018). For example, getting dressed and talking about colors and the sequence of getting dressed are attributes of both cognitive and language domain as children process information, think, and communicate (Kartal & Guner, 2018).

When parents read to a child, language increases and their cognitive domain develops more (Kartal & Guner, 2018). Several physical domain attributes of going to the restroom, buttoning buttons, jumping, pedaling a tricycle, leaping, and hopping can be interconnected with the language domain and cognitive domain when thinking and talking occur (Golinkoff et al., 2019). Other child and parent activities such as ball games, role playing, reading a story with emotional content, playing sports, playing with puppets, and listening games aid in supporting the development of physical skills and social emotional skills as children develop boundaries and manage feelings (Rademacher & Koglin, 2019). Studies on parental engagement and children's school readiness indicated that parents' involvement with children has a positive effect on the academic achievement of children (Volling et al., 2019). Additionally, the relationship between parents' involvement in children's school readiness domains impact the development of children (Kwong et al., 2018).

Father Representation in School Readiness

Father participation has gained attention because the concept can increase a child's early trajectory in school (Volling, 2019). Despite the prominent role of father participation in children's school readiness, five studies on the effects of parental engagement in various contexts within the home learning environment that prepared children during early childhood for school readiness did not report accounts of father interactions (Lehrl et al., 2020; Mindell & Williamson, 2018; Peterson, 2018; Rose et al., 2018; Vandermass-Peeler et al., 2019). Six studies on how parental participation at home or school influenced how children are more poised for kindergarten reported on mothers, but minimally reported or omitted fathers (Barnett et al., 2020; Hinkley et al., 2018; Leech et al., 2018; Marti et al., 2018; Puccioni, 2018; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). Anderson (2018) demonstrated the impact on children's school readiness influenced by family engagement facilitated by parents and excluded father participation. The studies of Boyle and Benner (2020) and Elliott and Bachman (2018) revealed the impact parents' lived experiences in school readiness influenced how they prepared their children, also lacked father's participation. In my findings, only two studies about children's school readiness were entirely about father representation (Chacko et al., 2018; Meuwissen & Carlson, 2018). In all accounts, most of the research within the last five years on parental engagement in children's school readiness occurred across the contexts of home and school.

Home Engagement

One element of children's school readiness occurs within the home environment.

Peterson (2018) surveyed parents' attitudes and behaviors, barriers concerning school readiness, and awareness of the use of local resources within a Northern California community. Most parents thought that teaching children to take turns and share, use a pencil and count, and recognize letters, colors, and shapes were important skills necessary for school readiness. Over 80% of parents believed that education was essential and engaged in singing, practicing letter recognition, or reading with children at home (Peterson, 2018, p. 3). Parents reported that lack of knowledge for kindergarten readiness, access to books at home, language barriers, constraints on nightly reading with children, difficulty completing school forms, and limited free time with children were barriers they had with children's school readiness (Peterson, 2018). Peterson also found that parents were very much aware of the local preschool programs within the community but did not utilize them.

In another study, Prendergast and MacPhee (2018) conducted a study in the United States and found that parental motivation and cognitive stimulation for children predicted children's school readiness. In the study on Head Start families, results concluded that parental coercion, encouragement of learning, and parental-rated mastery motivation for children helped children feel confident in school for up to a year prior to kindergarten (Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018). Prendergast and MacPhee (2018) revealed that children's home learning experiences supported by parents can guide children to gain new knowledge. When parents fostered confidence in children, the children gained a belief in their own ability of school readiness mastery (MacPhee et al., 2018).

Yu et al. (2019) studied how parents in the United States and United Kingdom

employed pedagogical questions to prepare children for school readiness. Pedagogical questions are questions that the answers are already known by the questioner but used with the intent to help the questionee learn (Yu et al., 2019). Drawing on day-to-day conversations at home of parent-child participants, the authors collected data from the CHILES data base and analyzed questions from mother-child dyads and father-child dyads of children (Yu et al., 2019). The results showed that the proportion of mothers' pedagogical questions decreased with age, but not with fathers and mothers tend to ask more questions of children when fathers were around (Yu et al., 2019). Furthermore, conversations that incorporated questions were found to be related to the family environment (Yu et al., 2019). Yu et al. (2019) reiterated that children are cognitively and linguistically strengthened when they are asked questions.

Findings from each study were similar and showed that parents believed their engagement with children helped to prepare them for school (Peterson, 2018; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018; Yu et al., 2019). Several differences to the studies were that the parents in Peterson (2018) indicated that language and obligations at home were barriers, which created a lack of confidence in their abilities to work with their children. On the other hand, parents in Prendergast and MacPhee (2018) supported children in ways that promoted children's school readiness, while parents in the Yu et al. (2019) study asked questions of children to improve their knowledge, which made the children feel confident in their own abilities. Additionally, parents affected children's confidence level because they were confident in their own abilities to work with their children unlike the parents in Peterson (2018) study. Consistent with previous research, the findings in these studies

suggest that parents do feel confident in their ability to foster school readiness with their child (O'Donnell, 2018).

The strengths of each study highlighted how parental involvement within the home can bolster school readiness in children (Peterson, 2018; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018; Yu et al., 2019). In similar fashion, the studies reiterated that the benefits of parental engagement at home strengthen children's school readiness through either hands-on participation or household routines (Peterson, 2018; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018; Yu et al., 2019). Both Peterson (2018) and Yu et al. (2018) revealed that domains of learning for children were stimulated cognitively and linguistically and showed that conversations in day-to-day activities promoted the thoughts and conversations of young children. Yet, what was particularly striking in Yu et al. (2018) study was that mothers asked children more questions when fathers were present. These findings demonstrated similar results that mothers perceive themselves as being knowledgeable about skills in promoting children's school readiness (O'Donnell, 2018).

In each study, children's engagement with parents aided school readiness skills in various domains. Both Prendergast and MacPhee (2018) and Peterson (2018) had a similar weakness that *parents* were studied, but sole participants were mothers in each study. In Yu et al. (2019) study, fathers were included but at a lower rate than mothers. Although these studies provided valuable insight into the essential role that parents have in children's school readiness, they are insufficient in explaining fathers' parental contribution to children's school readiness outcomes.

School Engagement

Another element of children's school readiness occurs within the school environment (Barnett et al., 2020). Many educational settings in the United States and abroad emphasized that parent buy-in and sustainability in schools is a central ingredient to school connectivity (Barnett et al., 2020). Forms of parental involvement at home differ from forms of involvement at school (Boonk et al., 2018). The distinctions of parental school readiness at school are the activities and behaviors parents engage in such as volunteering in the classroom, going on class trips, and participation in school functions (Boonk et al., 2018). Meeting the challenge of enhancing children's developmental outcomes hinges on parent's decisions both inside and outside of educational settings (Boonk et al., 2018). Several studies reported on the associations between parental school engagement and the school readiness achievement of young children (Barnett et al., 2020; Gennetian et al., 2019; Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021).

Barnett et al. (2020) conducted a study in the United States guided by the bioecological model of development. This model views that parent engagement in school creates a mesosystem between two microsystems that impacts child development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Barnett et al. (2020) used data from parents of four-year-old children enrolled in center-based ECE setting in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort. Results showed that volunteering in the classroom, and interacting with teachers and children, influenced parents to do more activities in the home, and in turn, children's learning and reading assessments were higher (Barnett et al., 2020). According to Barnett et al. (2020), a healthy relationship between the home

and school forms parental engagement.

Gennetian et al. (2019) conducted a study using an indiscriminate design to measure parents' engagement in an intervention program that linked the home to school connection. The Getting Ready for School (GRS) program was administered at several Head Start sites in the United States (Gennetian et al., 2019). Parents in eight classrooms enrolled in the program, and six classrooms received typical Head Start services (Gennetian et al., 2019). Each week one parent of each child in the GRS program received five texts with play-based early learning tips to engage children in learning activities in the domains of math, literacy, and self-regulation (Gennetian et al., 2019). Results showed that parents (often mothers) who attended GRS workshops, communicated with teachers, and spent time on GRS and other education activities enhanced program effects on child outcomes at school (Gennetian et al., 2019).

Marti et al. (2018) studied the use of Getting Ready for School using preschool Head Start students and their parents in the United States. Internet-based program materials were given to the participants (Marti et al., 2018). Participants were mothers, fathers, and grandmothers (Marti et al., 2018). Most parents attended one GRS event, showed ease of activity, and used videos (Marti et al., 2018). Findings of the study resulted in gains for children in literacy, math, and self-regulatory skills because parents had videos depicting real parents modeling how to do school readiness activities at home (Marti et al., 2018). Results were that children's literacy, math, and self-regulatory skills were improved due to parent participation at school which led to greater parent involvement at home (Marti et al., 2018).

In each study, the common emphasis was parent engagement at school enhances a child's development domains (Barnett et al., 2020; Gennetian et al., 2019; Marti et al., 2018). Additionally, each study indicated how the collaboration of the first and second level of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory can enhance a child's school readiness (Barnett et al., 2020; Gennetian et al., 2019; Marti et al., 2018). Similarly, the results of Barnett et al. (2020) and Gennetian et al. (2019) showed that having parents in the classroom promotes the ways that parents influence school readiness at home. On the other hand, Marti et al. (2018) extended school engagement with increased parents' participation at home, thereby closing a potential barrier of parents' lack of knowledge for school readiness as reported by Peterson (2018). Each of the studies established that academic and socio-emotional improvements in children's school readiness were related to parental involvement (Barnett et al., 2020; Gennetian et al., 2019; Marti et al., 2018).

Both Gennetian et al. (2019) and Marti et al. (2018) used programs as engagement tools to foster parental engagement at school. In contrast, Barnett et al. (2020) and Marti et al. (2018) provided that hands-on learning occurs when parents volunteer in the classroom or use videos at home. Effective strategies that encourage parental involvement build partnership in school readiness (Chacko et al., 2018). Furthermore, Barnett et al. (2020) and Marti et al. (2018) raised an awareness that although barriers to parental engagement do exist, volunteering and videos are methods to mitigate barriers.

There were limits presented in each study. For example, Barnett et al. (2020) mentioned fathers once in the study but did not separate the involvement of mothers' and fathers' engagement at school. Gennetian et al. (2019) focused specifically on mothers

even though the study was conducted on parents' participation. Marti et al. (2018) included fathers, but with a lesser account than mothers. Additionally, these studies used regression analysis to gather data and denote the relationship between school readiness and parental engagement (Barnett et al., 2020; Gennetian et al., 2019; Marti et al., 2018). This study used interviews to gather data and report fathers' school readiness perspectives and the barriers they encounter.

Barriers to Father Engagement

Studies on father's engagement in school readiness stated that fathers were often not included as school readiness participants due to their lack of interest, lack of connectedness, partnerships in schools (Chacko et al., 2018), and teachers felt more comfortable interacting with mothers than fathers (Meuwissen & Carlson, 2018). Altun (2018) argued that fathers are equally influential in children's school readiness despite less inclusivity in studies on parental engagement; however, a current study by Volling et al. (2019) cited that advancing research of father's involvement in children's development has not been completed on fathers as much as mothers because of underlying challenges. Fathers are often not in research studies about children's school readiness because it is difficult to define the roles fathers play, hard to recruit fathers, and their work schedules must be accommodated for (Volling et al., 2019). Another factor is the little emphasis placed on the value of a father in a child's life, making it hard to give fathers a voice when it comes to parental engagement (Volling et al., 2019).

Unfortunately, studies on parental engagement in a child's school readiness for kindergarten are aggregated and parent involvement is mostly represented by mothers

(Barnett et al., 2020; Gennetian, 2019; Prendergast & MacPhee, 2018; Peterson, 2018). Chacko et al. (2018) suggested that greater attention be given to maximizing father engagement. These aforementioned factors indicated the need to provide a voice for fathers about their perspectives and challenges regarding their child's school readiness (Chacko et al., 2018). Current research found when fathers are engaged, there is an improvement in outcomes on children's school preparedness (Henry et al., 2020; Kim 2018; Oke et al., 2021). Without understanding father's school readiness perspectives and engagement, the scope of children's parental engagement for school preparedness is one-sided (Volling et al., 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

A major component to children's school readiness is parent engagement. More research has been conducted on mothers' engagement in school readiness than on fathers' engagement; however, father engagement is essential in influencing a child's school readiness (Henry, 2020). The benefits of father engagement have been exhibited in literature (Chacko et al., 2018; Meuwissen & Carlson, 2018). Although, fathers' participation in children's school readiness at home and school impacts children's school readiness domains that are precursors for kindergarten entry, fathers are often confronted with challenges that impact their school readiness involvement (Volling et al., 2019). In this research I sought to explore fathers' perspectives and challenges regarding their children's school readiness. In Chapter 3, I provide a complete description of the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, data analysis plan, and trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fathers' perspectives regarding school readiness for their prekindergarten children, and the challenges fathers face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation in a group of community-based prekindergarten schools in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States. In Chapter 3, I outline the methodology of this study including the RQs, research design, role of the researcher, and rationale for why I used a qualitative approach. Then I describe the research methodology including participant selection and recruitment procedures, instrumentation, and plans for data collection and analysis. This chapter closes with a review of trustworthiness and ethical guidelines significant to my study.

Research Questions

The RQs for this study were as follows:

RQ1: What are fathers' perspectives regarding school readiness for their prekindergarten children?

RQ2: What are fathers' perspectives about the challenges they face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation?

I used two RQs to explore the phenomenon being studied (see Agazu et al., 2022). These questions were grounded in the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of learning, which posits that the environment that a child engages in has a direct influence on shaping the child. Based on the literature I reviewed, this proposition had not been addressed in the context of fathers' school readiness perspectives influencing a child's readiness for school. To answer the RQs, I used a basic

qualitative approach.

Research Design and Rationale

A basic qualitative design was used for this study. Qualitative research addresses individuals who do not have a voice and can provide information for individuals to learn about a phenomenon (Nomazulu, 2018). This research method allows for the exploration of how people interpret their personal experiences (Haven et al., 2020). A quantitative design was rejected because it would have required that I use objective measures, but objective measures would not have aligned with the purpose of my study since all data were gathered through interviews that could not be converted into numbers. In qualitative studies, 50 or more participants can be used (Haven et al., 2020); however, I wanted to delve more in-depth with the fathers during the interview process and interviewed 12 participants. Therefore, a qualitative approach was used to explore fathers' perspectives regarding what school readiness skills they believe a child should have for kindergarten.

A qualitative approach enabled me to better understand the phenomenon (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I obtained detailed information regarding the participants' everyday life experiences, which they shared (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I identified emerging themes from the responses to open-ended questions (see Aspers & Corte, 2019). The interview process allowed me to learn about each participant's lived experiences. A questionnaire could have been administered to more people than I could interview, but the questionnaire would not have yielded the rich, in-depth exploration of the problem that this study provided (see Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Qualitative research methods are used to develop an understanding of attitudes,

perceptions, opinions, motivations, and underlying reasons for different actions or phenomena (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). This research method is appropriate in studying people's behaviors and attitudes, making qualitative research descriptive in its nature (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). A qualitative method including open-ended interview questions was deemed suitable to investigate the ecological system between the child and father in the current study. Additionally, my rationale for using a qualitative approach to explore fathers' perspectives for this study emerged from the nature of the research questions and the conceptual framework of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory.

The various ways that fathers perceived and acted out school readiness views were personal and specific to their beliefs. How fathers carried out their opinions about school readiness were associated with the tradition of social constructivism, which assumes that individuals construct their interpretation of the same lived experience from their individual sociocultural upbringing and cultural context (see Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Qualitative research enabled me to investigate their perspectives, conceptions, and feelings regarding school readiness and the challenges they face when engaging in their child's need for school readiness.

I considered three qualitative approaches for this study: ethnography, case study, and basic qualitative study. Ethnographic research consists of an in-depth exploration of a culture. Such an approach requires the researcher to enter the participants' cultural and social contexts and interact with them there (Aspers & Corte, 2019). I elected not to use this design because my intent was to explore the perspectives of groups with varying backgrounds and not to gather collective experiences of a community. A case study

approach was considered, but I rejected this design because I did not intend to develop an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases. The basic qualitative design was the most appropriate because this approach permitted me to elicit people's understanding and experiences (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative studies, the researcher's role is the primary instrument in the data collection and data analysis process (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). The researcher's role is to safeguard the data collected throughout the process (Bansal et al., 2018). For the current study, my role as an observer was to understand fathers' perspectives regarding their children's school readiness and the challenges fathers encounter when engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation. My role consisted of interviewing the participants: fostering positive interactions with a respectful, professional, and nonjudgmental demeanor; and collecting, recording, transcribing, analyzing, and storing all data that were collected from the participants (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

I have owned and operated a home-based school readiness prekindergarten program since 2004. The group of participants came from community-based prekindergarten schools that I was not associated with, had not worked with, or had not taught in. Therefore, no power relationships existed. I had not interacted with or been affiliated with any parents at the preschool sites. Additionally, no alliances had been created, which might have introduced biases during the data collection and analysis process (see Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I did not recruit fathers with whom I had worked in the past or knew on a personal level. I refrained from a possible power dynamic that

could have interfered with my study's validity, and there were no incentives for participating in this study.

In this study there was potential for bias because of my experience in the field. Morrell-Scott (2018) recognized that bias occurs when one outcome is favored over another, causing inaccuracies within the study. To mitigate biases, I reflected on the experiences of my current position to identify any attitudes or beliefs that may have contributed to biases within the study. I kept a reflective journal as a mechanism to manage my bias during the interviews, transcription, and data analysis processes, and kept the journal separate from the data (see Morrell-Scott, 2018). Additionally, to reduce bias in data analysis, I provided each participant a draft summary of the analysis. This member checking process ensured clarity and accuracy of the content (see Summers, 2020).

Methodology

Qualitative studies have the following central parts: research relationship established with the selected participants, the chosen setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In the current study, I explored fathers' perspectives regarding their children's school readiness, and the challenges fathers encounter when engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation in a group of community-based prekindergarten schools located in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States. This was done by conducting interviews with 12 participants.

Participant Selection

I chose purposeful sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling allowed me to select participants who would provide data to answer the research questions (see Agazu et al., 2022). Using purposeful sampling, the researcher collects and examines the data from the selected participants whose knowledge and experience are parallel (Agazu et al., 2022). Campbell et al. (2020) expanded on the use of purposive sampling by adding that this sampling strategy allows for in-depth insight into a phenomenon. The justification for purposive sampling is the researcher can choose participants through a connection of experiences that they reflect on when responding to interview questions, and limited conclusions can be drawn about the population from their experiences (Campbell et al., 2020).

Participant selection in the current study was based on the following criteria: fathers who had a child currently enrolled in a community-based prekindergarten program in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States. Fathers of preschool children who attend community-based schools were the focus of the study because community-based enrollment has a general population of fathers. Fathers of students who were in grades other than prekindergarten were not recruited because it may have been difficult for them to remember detailed experiences of their prekindergarten school readiness engagement due to the lapse in time. Parent engagement is a key component in children's school readiness, and father participation enhances parental support in children's school readiness (Volling et al., 2019).

The sample size for this study was 12 participants. To reach data saturation, I

anticipated that 12 to 15 participants would be needed. If new concepts had emerged during the later interviews, I would have interviewed more participants beyond the initial sample size of 12 participants; however, no new information emerged, and data saturation was achieved with 12 participants. Merriam and Grenier (2019) confirmed that saturation occurs when data collection yields no new data. I achieved data saturation as I collected and analyzed the data using open coding to answer the research questions (see Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Blaikie and Priest (2019) noted that research that provides data from enough participants adequately addresses the research questions. According to Agazu et al. (2022), themes occur in analysis of interview data from 12 to 33 interviews.

After Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my study (06-29-22-0675437), I contacted the directors from the group of community-based prekindergarten schools to ask permission to conduct my study at their site. Once they provided me permission, I sent them an email asking if they would post my recruitment flyer in their school's newsletter and forward it to fathers who currently had a child in prekindergarten. As prospective participants reached out to me by email or phone calls, I ensured they met the selection criteria. I discussed the study and answered their questions. After they were clear about the research and interview process, I sent them a consent form. The directors of the schools were not privy to who contacted me, who was selected to participate, or who was not selected to participate.

If more than 12 participants had agreed to participate in the study, I would have chosen the first 12 who gave their consent via email with the response "I consent." For the fathers whose consent was received after the initial 12 participants, I thanked them

and put their names on reserve in my waiting pool in case any of the 12 withdrew from the study. If I was unsuccessful in achieving the maximum intended sample of 12, I would have asked the school directors to resend the flier to the entire list previously emailed.

Instrumentation

According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), qualitative data collection consists of asking questions, observing, and analyzing. For the current study, the data instrument used contained open-ended questions to guide the semistructured interviews.

Semistructured interviews include questions that are closely related to the area that is explored (Summers, 2020). The use of semistructured interviews with participants elicited the information necessary to answer the research questions and added to the body of research regarding fathers' perspectives about school readiness. Semistructured interviews allowed me to probe deeper into conversation with fathers about their experiences.

To establish content validity when using semistructured interviews, the researcher must ask questions to cover the range of features connected with a given phenomenon (Summers, 2020). I established content validity by developing eight interview questions that were grounded in the research questions (see Appendix). The open-ended interview questions addressed participants' perspectives about school readiness, their engagement in children's school readiness, examples of what participants did to prepare their children for school readiness, how participants' rearing impacted how they prepared their child for school readiness, challenges participants faced when engaging in school readiness, what

participants thought teachers and administrator should do to help fathers engage in school readiness, and information participants thought should be shared with fathers in the community regarding how to prepare children for kindergarten. To establish validity, I asked two doctoral students who were subject matter experts to review the interview questions to ensure they addressed the research questions. Based on their suggestions, I added an addendum to two questions asking participants to give one or two examples.

I was also the instrument for data collection. The interview questions, the conduct of the interviews, and how data were selected and analyzed related to my personal interpretation of the study problem and purpose (see Ravitch & Carl, 2019). To manage my biases and personal beliefs throughout the study, I monitored my influential perspectives with a reflective journal and recorded my thoughts and feelings (see Alt & Raichel, 2020). Meyer and Willis (2019) recognized that the use of a reflective journal can expose how a researcher thinks and help the researcher manage their thoughts.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol included a list of open-ended questions that I asked each participant that sent me an email with the words, "I consent." For their convenience, I asked the participants to give me their preference for an interview either on Zoom, the telephone, or in-person. They were also asked to provide me with a convenient day and time to interview them. I assigned participants pseudonyms before the interviews and used the list of pseudonyms in my data collection as I conducted interviews with participants. When interviewing the participants, I used the interview questions (see Appendix) to make certain that I asked all questions to each participant. The participants

who received their interview questions via email, responded within one day of receiving the interview questions.

I precisely followed the interview protocol. I made certain to use the same wording and sequence of the questions to eliminate varying responses because of inconsistent wording (Summers, 2020). Member checking was used in the moment to avoid discrepancies during the interview process. I asked follow-up questions and probed for understanding and clarification when responses were given that seemed confusing or contradictory to questions asked previously. Throughout the interview process, I provided participants with my interpretations of their responses and statements (Summers, 2020). Two participants emailed their responses. For the emailed responses, I did not need the participants to clarify their responses, so I sent them a reply email thanking them for their participation. At the conclusion of the Zoom and in-person interviews, I provided participants with an opportunity to ask questions or state their concerns. They were informed that I would email them a transcript of their interview, so they could review for accuracy. Afterwards, I thanked them and informed them that they could contact me with any questions.

Sufficiency

I interviewed 12 participants for this study. I selected a sample size of 12 because my research was limited to a group of community-based pre-kindergarten program schools located in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States, and I was able to hear the fathers' perspectives more with a smaller sample size. For qualitative studies, a manageable size of rich detailed data from small sample sizes emerges from

rapport and trust (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Although qualitative studies do not require a specific number of participants, the selected number that is chosen leads to data saturation. Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledged that data saturation could happen with as few as 12 interviews. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), data saturation occurs when a researcher is reasonably assured that further data collections would yield similar results and serve to confirm emerging themes and conclusions. Additionally, Merriam and Grenier (2019) explained that common themes are in data saturation with 16 interviews. Therefore, I would have included four more invitees who stated that they will participate in the study and meet the criteria, should data saturation not be found after interviewing 12 participants; however, I reached data saturation with 12 participants.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

When Walden's Instructional Review Board (IRB) approved my proposal (06-29-22-0675437), I reached out to directors to obtain permission to conduct my study at their sites. After permission was granted from the directors, I sent them an email with the participant recruitment flyer asking them to forward it to fathers who had a child in pre-kindergarten and post it in their schools' newsletter. The flyer included my email and phone number. When potential participants reached out to me via email and phone, I reviewed the study's purpose and the criteria for the study, then sent a consent form to those interested.

Those who wished to participate, responded with the words, "I consent." Once they replied via email or phone, I selected the first 12 participants and assigned them pseudonyms beginning with P1, P2, and so forth. These codes were recorded on their

consent forms and logged on to a spreadsheet. I thanked the remaining fathers who had reached out to me and informed them I reached my selected number of participants.

The remaining participants were kept in a waiting pool in case any of the 12 dropped out of the study. If I had not reached the desired minimum of 12 volunteers, I would have contacted the school directors and requested additional assistance in forwarding the recruitment flyer and posting it in their school's newsletter to fathers of children currently in prekindergarten. To keep the participants confidential, the directors did not know who responded to the recruitment flyer, who qualified, or who participated in the study.

Participants were sent an interview reminder via email or text 24 hours prior to their scheduled interview. I collected data using semi-structured interviews with participants in-person, Zoom, via phone, and email. The interviews took about 45-60 minutes. First, I made sure the participants were comfortable and built a rapport prior to beginning the interviews. Participants were informed of the interview process that included the purpose, and they understood their option to withdraw at any time during the interview.

Prior to the start of each interview, the first step was informing the participants of being audio recorded to make it easier to focus on the interview and generate their responses verbatim. Second, I addressed any questions or concerns and reminded them that only I knew they were participating in the study. Third, after the participants were ready, I turned on the recording devices. I used a Sony device to record telephone interviews. For the interviews on Zoom, I used the video conference to record along with

a Sony device as a backup in case there was technology failure.

I recorded my thoughts during the interviews (see DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Fourth, I conducted the interviews by asking all the questions (see Appendix). After each interview was completed, I thanked each participant for their time and turned off the recording devices. I also reminded them that I would contact them if I had any questions within 48 hours after the interview. To increase the validity of my study, I sent them a transcript to review for accuracy. The duration of data collection was nine days.

Data Analysis Plan

At the conclusion of the interviews, I transcribed them. Transcriptions were emailed to participants within 48 hours after the interviews while the content was fresh in their memory. I reviewed them for accuracy and then emailed them to participants. When I saw a discrepancy in the data, I asked the participant to clarify for me via email. There were two participants who were asked to clarify their responses, which I describe in Chapter 4. I made changes to the participants' transcripts per their reply email. Afterwards, I began to analyze the data and included the revised data.

According to Castleberry and Nolen (2018), data analysis includes organizing and preparing data, reading, and reflecting on overall meaning; conducting analysis based on method, generating a description of the people, and identifying themes, representing data, and interpreting the larger meaning of data. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. I familiarized myself with the data and read the transcripts repeatedly. Using a Table designed in Microsoft Excel, I included each transcript in it. Transcriptions were labeled with the participant's code that I had given each participant before the interviews. There

were three columns in the table. The column on the far left represented the transcriptions. The center column was for codes. A far-right column was where I entered my field notes that I had written down during the interview. This method of data organization helped me to become familiar with organizing what the participants said and recognizing common patterns and differences in the participants' perspectives.

First, I began to generate initial codes using open coding. Open coding involves pairing the data with codes as the data is being analyzed (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). This process allows researchers to segment large sections of data into smaller sequences of words (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I read the transcripts and highlighted the key words and phrases that were in each interview. These key words and phrases were copied and pasted into the center column. I read through the transcripts three times because new codes could have appeared in the latter transcripts. I did not want to omit anything that was significant and needed to be included.

Next, I began to generate categories from the codes. Codes provided words or phrases that represent data (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I did this by identifying and analyzing the relationship of similar things (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I created a new table with two columns. The first one was for all the codes and the second for the categories. Then the codes that were similar were used to form categories of codes that were alike. From these categories of codes, I derived at themes. This is how the key words that participants used generated data. I did not notice any discrepancies while coding.

Then, I began chunking categories to create themes. As I did this step, I reflected over and over if the themes made sense (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). This reflective

questioning helped me to determine if any modifications needed to be made to the themes. I questioned the data themes, the correlation of subthemes and the main theme, and the connectedness of subthemes to each other (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). All themes were relative to the categories and codes that were associated with categories. From the rich data eight themes were created. Once the data analysis was finished, I had an expert reviewer who holds a doctorate degree examine my analysis to increase the validity of my study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

It is advantageous to consider issues of quality and trustworthiness when conducting qualitative research. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are components that address quality and trustworthiness issues in qualitative research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods each have their own drawbacks (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Qualitative research is embedded in subjectivity (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). It can be subject to research bias and misinterpretations emerging from data collection and its method (Rose & Johnson, 2020). Additionally, qualitative research uses small sample sizes and is not generalized across a broader population; therefore, precision must be taken to guarantee internal reliability and validity (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). To ensure quality and trustworthiness for this study, I applied the appropriate safeguard strategies consistently through the data collection process to align my findings and outcomes with qualitative research methods.

Credibility

To establish credibility, I used member checking. Member checking is considered

the gold standard to establish trustworthiness (Castleberry & Rolen, 2018). In qualitative studies, member checking occurs when the researcher shares a summary of the participants' findings (Yadav, 2022). Before completing coding and thematic analysis, I sent each participant a copy of the draft to check the accuracy of my interpretation of the data they provided. Checking in with the participants ensured that I did not cater to personal biases and expectations that I had. I also used an expert reviewer that held a doctorate degree in early childhood to review my data analysis to help increase the credibility and validity of my study.

Transferability

Transferability is the generalization of research findings. Transferability is established with robust descriptions of participants, data collection methods, and time periods (Stenfors et al., 2020). In qualitative studies, transferability allows the findings of the study to be applicable elsewhere (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). In-depth information about the design and method of research is a blueprint for other researchers to conduct the same study (Stenfors et al., 2020). I supported transferability in my research by giving readers detailed and comprehensive outlines that described the participants, method of participation recruitment, and the data collection points. This benefits the reader in determining if connections were applicable to their own lives because I provided thick descriptions inclusive of the experiences, behaviors, and contexts of participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Dependability

Dependability pertains to the consistency and stability of the data collection and

analysis portion of a qualitative study (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I established trustworthiness by being consistent with the methods and procedures for this research study, along with my biases as a researcher. Morrell-Scott (2018) suggested triangulation, member checking, audit trails, researcher reflexivity, and peer review as strategies to strengthen the dependability of qualitative studies. I used an expert reviewer, research reflexivity and member checking to achieve dependability of my research.

First, subject matter experts with doctoral degrees assisted in ensuring that my interview questions were appropriate. They suggested I include asking participants for examples for two of the questions. Next, I achieved reflexivity by recording my personal beliefs regarding school readiness skills. To validate the findings of my study, I conducted member checking after the data was analyzed by having the participants review a draft of the results to confirm that my interpretations of data from their interviews were accurate. Lastly, I had an expert reviewer who held a doctorate degree in early childhood to check the accuracy of the data; thereby, increasing the dependability and validity of my study.

Confirmability

Ravitch and Carl (2019) stated that confirmability is the extent to which a study's findings can be confirmed and corroborated. For research to confirm, the researcher should acknowledge and explore how personal biases relate to data collection and analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Confirmability ensures that the study results are data-based rather than the personal interpretation of the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The confirmability of my study was addressed by purposely giving an account of my

reflexivity, which established why I was conducting the study and the specific gains I anticipated from the results.

I asked each participant to verify that their responses were accurately represented and addressed all areas of concern relevant to my part that stemmed from my ongoing analysis by sending each participant a draft of my findings to ensure my interpretation was accurate. An expert reviewer that held a doctorate degree in early childhood was also asked to review a copy of my draft findings to confirm the accuracy of the data analysis. Additionally, I continuously communicated with my committee chair to stay accountable for my thoughts and biases that could manifest.

Ethical Procedures

My first step towards complying with ethical procedures was to gain IRB approval before collecting data. After obtaining approval from Walden's IRB, I began to recruit participants. Next, I was granted approval from the directors to conduct the study. Outside of the directors forwarding my recruitment flyer to fathers who had a child in prekindergarten and posting it in the school's newsletter, they did not know who was selected or volunteered to participate. When the fathers emailed or called me, they were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. I kept all hard copies of the consent form in a locked file cabinet at my residence. All electronic information gathered during this study was kept on a password protected computer also located at my residence. Information from this study will be kept for five years. Then, all hard copies will be shredded, and any electronic information will be deleted, including the recordings and the information on my computer. I conducted my research study with a commitment to

protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the proposed research methodology. In the initial section of this chapter, I discussed the research question, the research design and rationale, and the role of the researcher. A basic qualitative design was used to explore fathers' perspectives regarding skills they believe a child needs for kindergarten. Next, the methodology was discussed. In the latter sections of Chapter 3, I concluded the chapter by discussing trustworthiness and other ethical procedures I adhered to during this study. In Chapter 4, I provide the findings of this research study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fathers' perspectives regarding their prekindergarten children's school readiness, and the challenges fathers encounter when engaging in their children's kindergarten preparedness. Two RQs guided this study:

RQ1: What are fathers' perspectives regarding school readiness for their prekindergarten children?

RQ2: What are fathers' perspectives about the challenges they face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation?

This chapter includes sections addressing the setting, participant demographics, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and results. The chapter concludes with a summary of answers to the research questions.

Study Setting

This study included participants in a group of community-based prekindergarten schools located in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States. I collected data in the aftermath of a deadly pandemic, which resulted in schools closing or classes being held remotely via online instruction. The pandemic's impact on families and the traditional educational delivery had lasting effects in which children experienced boredom, worry, frustration, loneliness, and irritability, and parents faced challenges including mobility constraints, isolation measures, working from home, and the closure of schools and childcare facilities (Dawes et al., 2021). Parents had to use coping

strategies to promote positive well-being (Dawes et al., 2021). According to P2, who worked from home, “we learned to help him so that he would not get stressed whatever the situation.” Although it was necessary to control the virus, the aftermath that resulted from the disruption of the lives of the participants in the current study presented minimal consequences to the school readiness development of their children. In fact, none of the participants mentioned anything about the pandemic or the aftermath of the pandemic, although many of them were working from home due to the pandemic. P7 specified that he liked the one-on-one time that is necessary to prepare him for the fundamentals.

Demographics

The 12 participants met the selection criteria of the study. Participants were eligible to take part in the study if they were fathers of currently enrolled prekindergarten children within the group of community-based prekindergarten schools located in a large rural region in a southeastern state of the United States. Fathers were assigned alphanumeric characters prior to the study. Alphanumeric characters ranged from P1 to P12.

Data Collection

The data collection process began after I obtained Walden University’s IRB approval. Interviews were undertaken between July 23 and September 1, 2022. All interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Participants who received their interview questions via email responded in 1 day. All interviews were completed within 6 weeks. Interviews were conducted within 5 days following initial contact. Each interview

followed a semistructured format using a topic guide. I ensured that the data collection process aligned with the research questions and data collection plan. Interview questions were informed by existing ecological systems because environmental and societal influences impact a child's development. Participants were interviewed in-person and remotely depending on their preference. Two participants were interviewed in person. One of the in-person interviews was held at the participant's place of business and the other was at a room in a local library. Eight participant interviews were done remotely in their homes using Zoom technology. Participants selected a quiet space on their own to maintain confidentiality. Two participants sent me their responses to the interview questions via email because one had a rich dialect, and I wanted to adequately represent his voice. The other participant was out of the country working in an undisclosed location. I was unaware of any of the participants' identities prior to the interview.

Introductory information about the research project was explained verbally before the interview commenced. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by me. Participants were reminded of the set time and day of the interview 24 hours prior to the scheduled interview via text or email. All participants received a transcript of their interview within 48 hours after the interview, and they confirmed the accuracy of the transcript. A reflexive journal was used to record my thoughts during each interview to monitor my biases. There was one change that a participant made in his transcript to a question that he opted to clarify. Two participants were asked to clarify their responses to one question. These were the only variations in the collection of data from the plan

presented in Chapter 3. I did not encounter any unusual circumstances.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis. I read and coded the transcripts line by line. First, I read the transcripts and listened to the audio recordings several times to become familiar with the data (see Nasheeda et al., 2019). I manually transcribed the transcripts verbatim into a table using Microsoft Word. This table had a column on the left where I inserted the participants' codes, a column in the center for their transcripts, and a column on the right for my field notes during the interview. During the process of organizing the data, I became familiar with the participants' responses and their similar and different perspectives by reading each transcript and listening to the audio recordings multiple times.

Following the first cycle of coding, I created another table using Microsoft Word to organize the data into smaller parts for a second cycle of coding. This table consisted of three columns. The first column was used for codes, the second for categories, and the third for themes. In the first column I assigned participants' pseudonyms and provided initial codes found from excerpts that I copied and pasted from the participants' responses to the questions from the first round of coding. I provided initial codes that represented features or meanings within the text. Coded words were derived from passages of text that I labeled and sorted. Codes were copied and pasted in the center column. I had a long list of codes from my transcripts that related to segments or passages of text within the transcript. The codes were succinct. I compared and contrasted phrases, words, and portions of the text to identify codes. An example of the

participants' responses was:

I see school readiness as no different than life readiness, meaning you are preparing your kid for what real life looks like and to be in an environment where it is just them. I incorporate these types of things into everyday life (e.g., P1).

Additional coded text was:

I had a village behind me. I am making sure that I am here for my sons in the same way, to learn and to do right from wrong, how to do certain things, and they understand early that education takes you to a higher level (e.g., P12).

Another example was:

His attention span tends to go quickly so I try to hone in by reading, working on sight words, writing, and doing things around the house. Outside of the house, if they want a specific type of thing when we get to the store, they have to read to let me know what they want (e.g., P5).

As I coded, I engaged in a tactile experience to get more and more familiar with the data in front of me, which included highlighting key words and phrases. I identified salient features of the data that related to the research questions. Latent level coding was used as I used my judgement and views and read between the lines of what was conveyed in the data. Multiple codes from the same segment of text were created. I read through the material three times to find new codes that I had not noticed earlier but were relevant.

The third step was generating categories. The codes were copied and pasted into the center column. I began identifying and analyzing the relationships among similar codes (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The codes that were similar were used to create

categories of key ideas provided by the participants that emerged from the data. When searching for themes, I sorted the codes by grouping them for an overarching thematic category of simple words. Once I completed the identification of recurring words, patterns, and themes, I connected the accumulated key words and concepts to the research questions.

During the fourth step, I determined and defined the themes. I grouped similar codes and identified the theme to encapsulate the codes. The repeated investigation, consideration, and grouping of similar terms and concepts led to the creation of themes. To guide me in determining whether the themes needed to be modified, I asked myself whether the themes made sense (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I questioned the data that were used to identify the themes, and then I created a new table in Excel. This table had two columns. The first one was for codes and the second for categories.

All codes that were similar in nature were used to form categories. The second column was used to narrow my subthemes and create a main theme. I further questioned the connectedness of the subthemes to one another, and the connectedness of the subthemes to the main theme (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I arrived at eight themes: fathers perceive children's social skills development improves kindergarten school readiness, fathers support children's approaches to learning at home, fathers have boosted children's approaches to learning, fathers' parents' school readiness engagement influences fathers' beliefs and actions about school readiness, fathers have challenges with children's attention span when preparing them for school readiness, fathers have challenges with being supported in a judgment-free environment by teachers and leaders

in community-based preschools, fathers are challenged with creating balance to meet the needs of children's school readiness and feel inadequate, and fathers want more information about supplemental services for preschool children. The themes that emerged from the data were relevant in answering the research questions. The codes, categories, and themes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1*Themes with Associated Research Questions and Categories*

Theme	Research question	Category
1: Fathers perceive children's social skills development improves kindergarten school readiness	RQ1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children need relationships • Children should have different experiences to interact with others • Children's social interactions happen in everyday life experiences
2: Fathers support children's approaches to learning at home	RQ1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children initiate their interest • Children are curious about the world • Focus on how children uniquely learn • Paying attention is associated with children's approaches to learning
3: In the past, fathers perceive bolstering children's approaches to learning enhances school readiness	RQ1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathers utilize random moments to talk with children • Children talk about ideas with fathers • Children are encouraged to take risks
4: Fathers were raised by parents' who were engaged in their school readiness, which influences their beliefs and actions about children's school readiness	RQ1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathers pattern after their mothers • Fathers pattern after their fathers • Grandparents are still engaged
5: Fathers have challenges with children's attention span when preparing them for school readiness	RQ2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are easily distracted
6: Fathers perceive teachers and school leaders at community-based preschools can support them in a judgment-free environment	RQ2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open dialogue between fathers, teachers, and school leaders • Teachers and leaders host community events for fathers • Father liaison needed
7: Fathers are also challenged with work obligations and feelings of inadequately supporting children's school readiness engagement	RQ2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work obligations present challenges for fathers • Fathers are uncertain about what kids need for school readiness • Creating balance
8: In their community, fathers would like to have more information shared about supplemental services for children	RQ2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children show attention span issues • Children show behavioral issues

When the data analysis was complete, I had an expert with a doctorate review my analysis to increase the validity of my study. The expert suggested that I be specific with identifying themes to create a concise understanding for the reader. The expert commented that the codes, categories, and themes were aligned in presenting a clear picture of the participants' response and answering the research questions. J. Rose and Johnson (2020) noted that a discrepant case happens when two or more sets of comparable data are not the same. I found no discrepant data that challenged the overall findings of fathers' perspectives in preparing children for kindergarten and the challenges fathers face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In establishing trustworthiness, I created credibility with member checking through participants' reviews of the transcripts to confirm the accuracy of the data (see J. Rose & Johnson, 2020). I checked the accuracy of information during and after the interview. Each participant reviewed the data to make certain that the information was accurately interpreted. One participant added more information to one of their responses. I asked two participants to clarify their responses to one question. They both responded in the email transcript and sent them back that same day. All of the transcripts were confirmed by the participants, and there were no other participants who wanted to include details or make changes to their interview responses.

I created transferability by providing a thorough description of the study's framework and assumptions. Additionally, I provided a detailed description of the

participants, setting, sample size, demographics, research process, and findings (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). I shared a detailed description of participants to allow the reader to determine whether the study was transferable to their situation. The participants in my study matched the typical population of children in the United States who grew up without consistent and affirmative involvement of a father (see Henry et al., 2020). Using a model sample representing the typical population of fathers in the United States helped me establish transferability in this study (see J. Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Dependability is achieved when researchers focus on the consistency and credibility of the data and findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To ensure dependability, I had the participants evaluate the study's data and findings, I had two peer reviewers critique my findings, and I kept accurate records (see J. Rose & Johnson, 2020). All of the participants confirmed that the raw data and study findings were accurate, consistent, and acceptable. I also created an audit trail of a clear plan of action with detailed descriptions of the methodology I used. The audit trail provided the rationale for why decisions were made during the study and provided a logical path of the analysis. In qualitative studies, dependability involves the reliability and precision of data (J. Rose & Johnson, 2020). Dependability was bolstered when I ensured that the data were credible with careful records of audio recordings, transcripts, notes, and journal entries.

Confirmability helps to establish that findings are based in participants' responses and not the preconception and biases of the researcher (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To increase confirmability, I kept a reflexive journal and recorded how I made decisions

throughout the study for data interpretation, analysis, and the presentation of results, and conclusions. To strengthen confirmability, the raw data which consists of the audio recording and transcripts will be archived and preserved for 5 years as required by Walden University's Institutional Review Board. The reflexive diary helped to provide insight into background knowledge about the study's phenomena, my own thoughts, and highlighted my experience and personal values as an educational researcher.

Results

The research questions of the study were answered through careful examination of the participants' responses and through coding of the data. I analyzed the codes to establish themes for each RQ. This section is organized by the two RQs to present the identified themes. Results follow each research question.

Results for RQ1

RQ 1 was: What are fathers' perspectives regarding school readiness for their pre-kindergarten children? To answer this question, I used participant's responses for questions 1 through 4. Participant's concurring responses were: (a) social development, (b) approaches to learning, (c) bolstering approaches to learning, and (d) fathers' pattern after their parent's school readiness engagement.

Theme 1: Fathers Perceive Children's Social Skills Development Improves

Kindergarten School Readiness

The theme that derived from fathers' responses was that they perceived children's social skills development as a key component to school readiness. This overarching theme emerged from the key words: *friendship*, *getting along*, and *relationships* noted in

participants' responses. P3, stated, "His first friendship is with his little sister. I make sure he does not take things from her. He must ask first. He must ask no matter who it is. We teach them about friendships and caring about others." P10 noted, "When our kid is getting along with his siblings, they can show partnership and friendship."

Four participants reported they felt that getting along with older siblings impacted a child's social skills development. P7 said, "He gets along with his big sister. She knows what to do and will tell him." P8 also agreed with this assumption, "His older brother gets along with him and helps him do things around the house. He will have more kids to get along with in school and for now he is developing and learning what to do." P9 and 11 explained that relationships with siblings were social interactions. P9 stated, "Listening to the bigger sibling is like the relationship with an adult because that's the bigger kid telling the little kid what to do." To add to that, P11 said, "The relationship with his two older siblings is helping him play, share, and solve their kid problems mostly about sharing and taking turns."

Several fathers perceived that children's interactions with others in different experiences related to their social skills needed for school readiness. P1 expressed,

General readiness has to do with how my children interact every day with all of the people in our house from getting dressed with each other, going to school with their big brothers, reading with dad, and being put to bed with a story by mom. They talk, share, cry, bargain, and things like that.

P2 stated, "It's interactions with his brother on the playground and learning to take turns by deciding who goes first, and second when they play." Similarly, P5 said,

“To get our daughter ready, I always play with her, and I teach her the rules of sharing, using her manners, talking and listening, and saying how she feels instead of always crying.” In addition, P6 noted, “Social skills points out good behavior or bad behavior when they are with their friends, mom and dad, and grandparents.” P12 shared, “He is learning about waiting for someone else to talk and taking turns when the family is together and learning to control his impulses when we are doing things round the house.”

Some fathers believed that social skills interactions occur within everyday life experiences for children. Two parents reported that playground interactions are an area of social opportunities for children. According to P1, “In the beginning we went to the neighborhood playground to meet new friends so they could be comfortable with socializing with new people.” P3 said “All our kids are social butterflies. We started when she was little. We would take them to our local church and from there they built friendships at the grocery store, playground, basically everywhere we went.”

Several other parents mentioned how social interactions in preschool jumpstarted their child’s social development. Four parents spoke about of how their child was initially shy. P4 described, “My son was shy. He hid behind me. Once he got a friend, he talked about school all the time.” P7 recalled, “He barely talked to anyone and then we could not stop him for talking all day to everyone.” P10 went on to add,

He was so withdrawn. He would holler, scream, and cry, but the teacher worked with us. She reassured us that he would be fine. It took some time. After a while, he cried when we come to take him home because he liked his friends.

This theme is aligned with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory that the

microsystem is the most influential environment level in a child's life. Fathers in the study support children's social development needed for school readiness within a wide range of occurrences. Broader spectrums of experiences provide more opportunities to develop in various domains. This is important to the field of early childhood education to understand how fathers can support children's communication to enhance social skills.

Theme 2: Fathers Support Children's Approaches to Learning at Home

A theme that developed was fathers support children's approaches to learning in the home to prepare children for kindergarten. This theme developed from the following key words and phrases: *own mind, doing things their way, curious, the way they learn,* and *paying attention*. Some participants prepare children for kindergarten by allowing children to initiate learning. For example, P3 mentioned, "The kids ask me about colors. They are curious about mixing colors to get other colors,"

P4 shared that,

He always wants do things his own way. I encourage him to do what he wants.

For example, I ask him what he wants to eat. He draws something that looks like a cake, and we write about eating a cake.

P6 commented,

He seems to like letters a lot. He loves letters. Once he made up his own mind, he wanted us to teach him about letters around the age of 2. He always was curious about the magnetic letters on the refrigerator. When he first started learning his ABCs, we had to make it into a game where if he got this right, we gave him praise.

Additionally, P7 said, “Basically, to stretch his knowledge we would buy into his way of doing things with books, relevant toys, videos, and outings away from home.”

Also, participants stated that they support children’s unique ways of learning to prepare them for school readiness. P1 said, “My twins have this way of discovering things and wanting to do things their way, so my wife and I never ban them from telling us what they want to talk to us about.” P2 mentioned, “My youngest son is so curious about the word and likes to question his brother and I and then he rephrases the question.” P5 exclaimed, “She learns by being hands-on. That the way she learns. She likes to know what to do first, second, and third.” P11 answered, “Our son is on the move. He is curious the moment he wakes up and wants to do so many things. His way of learning is to think about what’s wrong and fix the problem.”

Five participants specifically mentioned the words *pay attention* when sharing how they prepare children for kindergarten. According to P1, “We teach them that they can learn more when they are focused and pay attention.” P8 said, “It can be difficult dealing with getting him to pay attention because he has his own mind, but I try to hone in on his desire for reading, working on sight words, writing, doing things around the house.”

As explained by P9,

I try to put him in that mode that you must do homework, learn to listen, sit down, and pay attention in school. He has lots of questions all the time... paying attention is what we work with him on to focus on his curious nature.

Additionally, P10 mentioned, “I let him do a lot of things. We do some complex

sorting with letters and numbers, so he sorts them since that's the way he learns. When he doesn't pay attention, I redirect him." P12 added, "Basically I am with him to show him about learning, getting along, paying attention, and working with others is what school is about."

The result of this question correlates with Bronfenbrenner's theory about the impact of the environment that parents create for children to develop and succeed, therefore helping children reach their full potential. Within this environment, children have the materials available to support their development. Children use skills and behaviors to engage in learning with the materials they are provided. This finding is important to the field of early childhood education because children's approach to learning starts when they are engaged in activities that they are interested in the environments created by parents.

Theme 3: Fathers Believe That Bolstering Children's Approaches to Learning Enhances School Readiness

Fathers felt that bolstering children's approaches to learning for school readiness was a theme that emerged. This theme emerged from the following key words and phrases: *out of nowhere*, *ideas*, and *want him or her to know*. Three fathers described how they use random moments to support children's questions and seeking answers. P1 said, "I play with my twins and see something that they need to understand when they initiate games and rules out of nowhere. I use that opportunity as a teaching moment to clarify and teach them."

P2 spoke along those same lines stating,

The reading at night -That's been interesting to see his ideas about reading. He reads and asks questions about a variety of topics - so many questions. Books have influenced his speech and dialogue. We read the same books over and over again. He repeats them out of nowhere and is happy to let us know about what he knows.

P6 gave a detailed explanation reporting,

They are inquisitive and want to know about my job. I tell them, Daddy is a professor which is the same thing as your teacher, but the difference is your teacher teaches little kids and daddy teaches adults. Weeks later, out of nowhere, they are playing school and they use the word professor instead of teacher. I want him to know about using big words to talk.

P9 provided, "I try to get him when he wakes up in the morning before he uses all that mental energy. He wakes up with questions and ideas.

Supporting children's ideas was another method that father's bolster children's approach to learning for school readiness. Five participants gave similar accounts. P4 said, "To get him ready for the big school, it's his idea to talk about how his day will be and how he will be nice to his friends." P5 replied, "My daughter lines her toys up and teaches them. I play along with her and create situations to see what she will do. She wants to know about real and fantasy."

P7 reported,

He likes for me to drive by the big school. We park on the grounds, and he tells me about what he will learn in the big school. It's pretty much what he knows at his preschool, but he wants to know all about it anyhow.

P8 said, "My boys have ideas that they are going to be game designers. They pretend to create secret codes for me to crack. P11 informed,

My son is a dinosaur lover. He knows every dinosaur there is to know. He likes for us to watch movies out of nowhere and he stops the movie to tell me about the dinosaurs. He wants to study about dinosaurs when he grows up.

Fathers further commented how they bolster children's approaches to learning by encouraging children to take risks. P3 spoke of how he supports his child's approaches to learning when the child communicates art without being prompted by adults.

P3 explained,

With my daughter, she loves to write on walls and furniture. It is perfectly ok with us. We saw her do it out of nowhere one day and look at us thinking she was in big trouble. We kind of laughed thinking she was making a mess, but it was ok. Really, I thought that this was a good idea on her part to do some art. We got an actual canvas where she can draw and make it more constructive. We're starting to see more creativity coming from her. She is starting to use her colors more and we frame her pictures.

P10 explained,

I will do different activities even if it's normal things around the house like riding our bikes. I see how they move and interact when they have certain ideas. I get

them to understand that we can do all of the things they want to do, but we have to pick one at a time and focus on that. He tries his hand at fixing things; he wants to know about cooking, and things like that. I don't discourage him. He goes ahead of me, but I am there to help. I let him know that he should do his best.

P12 noted, "My boys will walk up to people out of nowhere and ask them what they are doing. This is followed by more questions. This happens everywhere we go."

These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems concerning the quality and context of the child's environment being complex and strengthening the child's cognitive structures. The fathers used various ways to enhance the quality and context of children's interest by playing, talking, learning together, and encouraging them. In turn, children responded using visual comprehension, memory, attention to detail, language development and math knowledge. Fathers also acknowledged, responded, and supported children's emerging autonomy and resilience. Bolstering children's approaches to learning is important to the field of early childhood education because children acquire knowledge differently and should be encouraged to learn and build upon concepts according to how they think and learn.

Theme 4: Fathers' Parents Influenced Their Beliefs and Actions About School

Readiness

Fathers' parents school readiness engagement influences father's beliefs and actions about children's school readiness was a theme in this study. Fathers' responses included the following key words: *encourage* and *positive influence*. Virtually all the 12 fathers seemed eager to discuss how they recalled the impact of their parents' school

readiness engagement when they were in school.

P2 mentioned,

My Dad was an HVAC mechanic who owned his own business. I work from home and own my business. I remember during the summer when it was hot my dad said, "If you don't want to do this than get you education - start early and finish strong. He encouraged me to go after my dreams. Now, my dad helps me with my son to do the same.

P7 expressed, "Because of my parents, I was encouraged to do good in school, and I am making sure my young child does not repeat in the same footsteps that I failed in. My mom helps as needed with buying him education toys."

Similarly, other fathers detailed how their parents, guardians, and family impacted their school readiness engagement.

P3 said,

My mom was an educator. She still educates my kids and is always talking with them about the value of school. I remember the positive influence she had on certain kids and would bring them home and give them certain opportunities.

When my daughters have friends, I encourage them to come over to our house. I watch them interact and talk to them. We have a lot of children and their grandmothers on both sides, and my wife's grandfather helps with school stuff and house chores.

P4 expressed,

My mom was a stay-at-home mom. She was heavily involved then and now with my kids. We were always involved in activities when I grew up. Mom made sure that we always kept up our studies. I have learned that showing that I care happens whether it is helping him with homework, schoolwork, sport activities. Mom taught me it's about my time and investment that makes a positive influence as a father to my boys.

P5 went on to add, "Although my grandma was my guardian who raised me with a laissez-faire parenting method because my parents had passed. This influenced me to be hands-on early. My wife's mom is always involved to help us out with anything."

Further responses about participants' parents' school readiness engagement helping them to prepare their children for kindergarten were given. P6 commented, "My mother was big on two things: Not letting me play video games and completing my homework before I played. This is something that I am passing down to my children."

P8 mentioned,

I had a village [family and extended family] behind me. My wife's mom is hands-on with the kids. She picks them up from school. As the dad, I am making sure I am here for my sons in the same way to know right from wrong, how to do certain things, and be a positive influence in their lives by teaching them how education takes you to higher levels.

P9 said,

My dad worked away from home. Mom was working as well. I have more flexibility. I learned as a young child to take care of myself. My son doesn't have

to set the example like I did. My experiences shaped me and everything I am doing as an adult and father. My mother-in-law is the best. She was a teacher, so she knows what they need. She gives the kids' books and school items. I am trying to stay involved in his school learning, so that he can see the right path.

P10 mentioned,

A big part of school is expressing yourself and Dad taught me to be bold as a child. I want my children to understand at an early age that you may not agree with how someone is doing things or their perspective, but everyone had their own opinion. In school, he must talk and express himself.

P11 explained, "My mom would always make sure we were reading growing up. She read which influenced us to read all kinds of books. I do the same for my kids."

Participant 12 said, "My mom was actually my preschool teacher. Dad recorded himself counting and played that before we went to sleep. I play videos for them softly while they sleep to support their brains working and minds going."

Bronfenbrenner's microsystem theory is linked to the family and the school. The setting, in which a child lives, includes parents and grandparents in this study. The interactions in the microsystem with such adults impact a child's school readiness. Grandparents' influences on fathers' school readiness engagement is essential to the field of early childhood education because fathers' school readiness engagement beliefs and actions are linked to their parents past involvement in their school readiness.

Summary for RQ1

The purpose of RQ1 was to determine participants' perceptions regarding school

readiness for their prekindergarten children. As a result of the data analysis, I found that participants perceive that children's social skills development is needed for school readiness. Participants vocalized their belief that supporting children's approaches to learning are needed for school readiness. From participants past experiences, bolstering children's approaches to learning were perceived to be necessary for school readiness. Participants concluded that the school readiness engagement of their parents influenced their beliefs and actions about children's school readiness. These finding are aligned with Bronfenbrenner's theory of a child's microsystem consisting of adults who create balance for a child's growth and learning. Fathers engage in children's school readiness development as they perceive what it is that children need to be ready for kindergarten.

Results for RQ2

RQ2 was the following: What are fathers' perspectives about the challenges they face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation? This question was answered using participants' responses 4 through 8. Participant's concurring responses were: (a) challenges with children's attention span, (b) support in a judgement-free environment, (c) additionally challenges of work environment and feelings of inadequately supporting children's school readiness; and (d) more information about supplemental services for children.

Theme 5: Fathers Have Challenges With Children's Attention Span When Preparing Them for School Readiness

A theme that was present in this study was children's attention span being a problem for fathers when preparing children for school readiness. Key words and phrases

that emerged from participants responses were *attention span*, and *focus*. According to P2 said, “His attention span does not last very long so I realize that I am working with a preschooler who is figuring out how the world works, and it requires I am calm when redirecting him.” P3 agreed by adding, “I am helping him get focused in advance and getting a quiet space where he is not distracted by what is else is going on in our home.” P4 mentioned, “He doesn’t really focus. I tell him that he can’t get on his iPad, games, or anything until he pays attention and works on what we are doing.” Also, regarding children’s attention span, two fathers noted a timeframe of how long their children paid attention lasted. P5 and P8 said their child’s attention span was only for a given amount of time. P5 replied, “I am still trying to figure out how to keep him focused. He pays attention for a little while – about 5 minutes or so, and then starts to lose interest.” P8 stated, “Honestly, as a father it’s his attention span. We do work for 5, 10, 15 minutes. I notice he is running around the house going to their mom and getting on the iPad. I think it’s like this for kids.”

P12 included,

The biggest thing would be just grabbing that attention. He’s easily distracted with everything else going on around him. I need to figure out how I can work on increasing his ability to focus so that by the time he gets to school, he will be ready. He wants to know how long and what’s next.

Findings from this question are associated with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory asserting that children’s development is influenced by everything in their environment. Therefore, for children to prepare to learn for school readiness within their

environment, paying attention is necessary. It involves listening, watching, and focusing. This finding is important to the field of early childhood education in supporting children with a base for foundational learning that begins with opportunities which enhance their ability to focus and pay attention.

Theme 6: Fathers Have Challenges With Being Supportive in a Judgment-Free Environment by Teachers and Leaders at Community-Based Preschools

Fathers perceived they were not fairly judged by teachers and leaders at community-based preschools was a theme identified in this study. Words and phrases that were noted in participants responses were *involvement* and *being present*.

P1 mentioned,

I don't know that this is really an issue that fathers are not involved or that school systems think fathers are not involved. I am involved but it is like I am involved on the backdrop because the first parent's face they see is my wife's, but I am a parent like her. If teachers would communicate with fathers and not just assume we are not involved because we aren't seen as much.

P2 offered,

I think the stigma of fathers not being present in their child's life sells for advertisement. In my community that is not so. My friends are both white and black and we are all involved in our kid's life. The stigma that fathers are not present can make men have a hard exterior. Men need to be understood. Men need support. I think open dialogue would help where it is a judgment free zone like having town hall meetings or small groups with us.

P3 expressed, “The message needs to be communicated with fathers about the real impact we have when we are involved. What happens when we are not involved much as we should be? Fathers have to be receptive to being taught.”

P4 mentioned a similar response,

Something else the schools can do is to give a space of vulnerability. Men have this tendency to be egotistical and have a guard up but if we are invited to have a safe space to be vulnerable and open up; we can be more receptive to learning to be involved. Men have to be teachable and willing. They have to provide for someone and trust people showing them what to do. A lot of time with first time parents, they are winging [figuring out as they go along] it. If teachers and schools kind of allow men the space to be present, coachable, and teachable, they can in turn pass their knowledge on to their children which would help for the father-child relationship, too.

Fathers also thought that community-based preschool teachers and leaders could connect with fathers at events held within the community.

P3 said,

A lot of times you have parent-teacher conferences and things of that nature, but the information doesn't get back to the parent because they are not present and going up to the school to see what is going on. The biggest way right off the top of my head that you can reach fathers would be to have Father's Day events.

P4 mentioned,

If fathers want to be engaged having fathers only event or a community event for them. If it is left up to the parent, the woman will take the lead but if you make it a father's only event, the fathers won't take the back seat to women. This way men do not have the choice to not come. It is not that men are being guilt tripped [made to feel guilty] but rather urging them to be involved with an invitation where if there is an event they are invited specifically. Fathers would have a more direct invitation and they know it and can choose to come. For example, parent teacher conference is an invite for parents as opposed to inviting fathers to a father's and teacher's event.

Moreover, having a father liaison to assist fathers in taking an active role in their children's school readiness was eagerly expressed by participations. P5 said, "A liaison to consult with fathers in establishing school readiness goals would coerce father involvement." P6 replied, "Someone can give fathers seminars, news feeds or email blasts with tips and tricks so they won't be trying to think of what to do on their own." P10 had similar views to P5 and 6 regarding a father liaison,

If there is a program or person that before a child goes to school, fathers can call and ask questions, maybe a liaison in the school to work with fathers of incoming kindergartens and they can contact this person with any types of questions either in person or a forum.

P12 echoed the responses of other participants when he said, "Have someone designated to show fathers things they can do with their children at home and exposing fathers who start out on different paths how to be on the same path. Give them somewhere to start

from without opinions for school people.”

The following results from participants are connected to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory that children are impacted by those in their microsystem. Teachers and parents’ relationships benefit a child’s school readiness when parties work in unison. When parents are involved at school, they may build relationships with teachers that help them and children feel connected to school, and help teachers feel connected to parents and children (Barnett et al., 2020). The idea of creating a judgement-free zone between fathers and teachers is important to the field of education to develop relationships that will benefit a child’s school readiness.

Theme 7: Fathers Have Challenges With Their Work Obligations and Feelings of Inadequately Supporting Children’s School Readiness

Fathers’ work obligations and feeling inadequate in supporting children’s school readiness was a theme identified in this study. Similar words and phrases that participants said were *creating balance*, *my job*, and *uncertain about school readiness*. Three fathers mentioned how their jobs impacted their ability to meet children’s school readiness needs. P1 said, “I think that from observing my kids that by me working at my job so much and not being there consistently is that my children seem to know how to act differently around certain people.” P2 expanded with, “A balancing act is needed between my job, children’s education, and my obligation to my family.

P2 explained,

I work long hours and my job is demanding as a business owner. How does it all come together? The challenge is that all these external factors associated with my

job are pressing. Am I giving time to my boys? Am I present enough in their lives? Am I always on the phone working? I must be present and know the world will be ok. That's the challenge. I can burn out if there is no balance. I start my day at 3am every morning and take care of myself before I open to the world. The challenge of creating balance is always going on.

P3 expressed,

I am active and involved, but in a situation involving my job - where there is a lot going on, it can be a challenge. So, with the challenge I have created a schedule where every week – maybe not every day - I am asking my kids about this, this, and this to keep knowing that everything is going smoothly.

Other fathers reported the challenge of uncertainties in preparing children for school readiness. P5 commented, “My challenge is that I do not know what to do to train her to be ready for school, and I have to do it by trial and error.” P8 said, “I need help from my significant other. The difficulties I have is giving him what he needs.” P10 added, “Basically, me not being certain that I am checking off all the boxes. Will this manifest into what I want it to in respect to preparing him for kindergarten?”

These statements shed insight acceptable with Bronfenbrenner's microsystem between the child and the father in the closet environment during school readiness. The effects of father's jobs, the need to create balance between home and work, and fathers' uncertainty about school readiness impacts the interactions children have with fathers. The school readiness opportunities that could occur within the immediate contacts of father and child are eclipsed if challenges that fathers encounter override school readiness

engagement. This is important to the field of early childhood education because although fathers' active involvement in a child's education can have a lasting and positive impact, barriers can pose an issue.

Theme 8: Fathers Perceive That More Information About Supplemental Services for Children Prior to Kindergarten Is Needed

Fathers wanted more information about supplemental services for children doing school readiness was a theme in this study. From this question, the following words emerged: *attention span*, *very active*, and *emotional*. More than half of the 12 participants mentioned children's attention span. P1 commented, "My kids attention span lasts for about 15 minutes and then it's on to something else. With much happening today, parents need to know about issues as soon as possible."

P2 replied,

My son's attention span isn't very long. I hope that it doesn't pose a problem in the big school. Maybe it will be something he can outgrow. We had some problems with his brother and got that resolved as soon as he got to preschool.

P5 echoed a similar comment that, "Her attention span has gotten better once we got some tips on what to do. I know this is a huge concern in school for children."

P6 added,

Basically, I am aware that boys and girls have different attention spans because their interest in things is different. He pays attention to what he wants and can be very active when he is doing what he enjoys. Maybe just knowing what to do beforehand will help dads like me out.

P7 and P9 replied that, “I have a boy and boys will be boys.”

P7 also said,

I was very active as a child and my mom came to school to see about me all the time. I am working early with my son’s teacher to get a handle on his attention span. If tips are given to us at the beginning of school, that’ll help.

P8 stated, “Many times busy child can be labeled so we try to help them focus and develop their attention time to be longer. It is hard to do.” P10 went on to add, “When he first got to preschool, his teacher told us that he was not paying attention, so we met to talk about things to do to help him and he got better.”

Participant’s responses included the need for information concerning children’s behavioral issues. P3 stated, “I think it helps to know about your child before going to school. If there is a problem, knowing firsthand helps.”

P4 replied,

Our daughter did not talk when she first started school. The teacher let us know and we got her checked out. She is fine today and got the help she needed. Our son would have gotten the same help had he needed it when he first started.

P8 said,

I have yet to meet a child who doesn’t have something going on whether good or bad. If a child is acting up, I think parents need to get things handled early and right away so in the long wrong the child will be better.

These responses provide evidence connected to Bronfenbrenner’s microsystem about the consistent basis of interactions occurring over an extended period between

father and child. In this case, as fathers interact with children over a timespan, some fathers perceive children need supplemental services necessary for school readiness. By getting children necessary services before kindergarten, children's school readiness will be enhanced. According to Kokkalia et al. (2019), school readiness should incorporate physical well-being, motor development, social and emotional development, language and speech development, general development, general knowledge and cognition, and other related subdomains. The findings are imperative to the field of early childhood education because addressing the specific needs of children could increase children's overall development necessary for school readiness.

Summary for RQ2

The results for RQ2 indicated that participants felt challenged with children's attention span, their work obligations, and feelings of inadequacy about not knowing if they were omitting key components to their children's school readiness. Additionally, participants offered their perspectives that teachers and leaders in community-based preschools should support their school readiness engagement in a judgment-free zone, where insightful school readiness tips are provided before children attend school. Participants thought a liaison specifically curtailed for fathers' engagement in children's school readiness would help fathers navigate the complexities of preparing children for kindergarten. Fathers also thought that access to resources for children who had special needs might resolve problems before kindergarten.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I shared my findings related to fathers' perspectives and challenges

regarding their children's school readiness. I found that fathers indicated that supporting children with developing strong social skills was most essential for school readiness. Fathers also shared that within the home, they supported the ways that children approached learning by supporting children's responses to learning situations, creativity, persistence, and attention span. Fathers shared positive perspectives of their parent's school readiness engagement having an influence on their beliefs and actions in preparing children for school readiness and some shared that the grandparents were currently supporting them in their efforts to prepare their children for kindergarten.

I found that fathers had negative perspectives pertaining to barriers to children's school readiness. Fathers expressed constraints with children's limited attention span, creating balance in their lives, and long work hours presented a challenge to preparing children for kindergarten. I also found that fathers perceived that having input about children's school readiness from teachers and school leaders at community-based preschools in a judgement-free environment was an important factor in children's school readiness success, as was the importance of having information shared about supplemental services for children prior to kindergarten entry. In Chapter 5, I discuss the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, and implications of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore fathers' perspectives regarding their prekindergarten children's school readiness, and the challenges that fathers encounter when engaging in their children's kindergarten preparedness. Participants included fathers who had a child currently enrolled in a community-based prekindergarten program. Themes that emerged for the first RQ were (a) social skills development improves school readiness, (b) fathers support children's approaches for learning at home, (c) bolstering children's approaches to learning enhances school readiness, and (d) fathers' parents' school readiness engagement impacted their engagement. The themes for the second RQ were (a) fathers have challenges with children's attention span, (b) fathers believe a judgment-free environment with teachers and school leaders would best support them, (c) fathers have work-related challenges and feelings of inadequacy concerning supporting children's school readiness, and (d) fathers would like more information in their community about supplemental services for children.

Interpretation of Findings

In the early years of life, children's interactions within their social environment have long-term implications for their school readiness (Alwaely et al., 2021; Józsa & Barrett, 2018; Pace et al., 2019). Fathers' play and children's outcomes stemming from early years can positively contribute not only to children's social outcomes but also to their emotional and cognitive outcomes (Amodia-Bidaowska et al., 2020). Practical strategies occurring in children's everyday lives help to mitigate social concerns such as

having few or no friends, shyness, anxiety, dealing with bullying, difficulty with peer or teacher relationships, and various issues of simply not fitting in (Alwaely et al., 2019). Moreover, the parent–child relationship is critical to the development of secure well-behaved children (Amodia-Bidakowska et al., 2020). My findings revealed that fathers thought their relationship with children was effective in directing them toward subsequent relations they would need for kindergarten success. These findings indicated that different experiences occurring at home with adults and family members were similar to the blend of relationships that children experience in the classroom environment. My findings corroborate findings by Amodia-Bidakowska et al. (2020) regarding father engagement correlated with children’s social and cognitive competence.

Akhtar and Bilal (2018) attached a high degree of importance to school readiness and children being sent to school with an adequate level of communication skills as the key to socializing and making friends in school. Findings from the current study also revealed that the participants thought that varying social experiences during the preschool phase would affect children’s social development for future communication. This confirms Akhtar and Bilal’s (2018) findings that fathers’ engagement and child outcomes can positively contribute to children’s social outcomes. My findings also align with the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) conceptual framework regarding the impact of the child’s immediate environment on how the child will develop.

According to Gozum and Kandir (2019), children’s attitude toward learning can be fostered when children are active participants in their learning. Sairanen et al. (2020) demonstrated how the interplay of children’s initiatives was found to manifest in several

modes, namely asking a question, suggesting, challenging, refusing, and ideating as children interacted with adults. In some cases, children took approaches not aligned with how the activity proceeded, yet the initiative could still be expected, and the activity continued toward the goal intended (Sairanen et al., 2020). Gozum and Kandir found that it is natural for parents to observe carelessness, impulsivity, and mobility during early childhood. Only indications of developmental problems beyond expectations and occurrences are indicative of developmental problems (Gozum & Kandir, 2019).

The findings from the current study indicated that although fathers acknowledged children's approaches to learning as being necessary for their school readiness, participants stated their concerns with children's attention span needed for related skills in kindergarten. Accounts of children veering off when engaging with fathers were reasons to believe that children's approaches to learning were impeded. According to Gozum and Kandir (2019), preschoolers' inattention is common, and selecting, shifting, and sustaining attention are skills that children commonly build over time because their inattention represents a norm variation in preschool children's development. Risley et al. (2020) reported that it is natural for parents to observe carelessness, impulsivity, and mobility during early childhood and offered behavioral parent training. Behavioral parent training serves as the first line of treatment for preschool-age children who show attention issues (Risley et al., 2020).

Furthermore, only indications of development problems beyond the expectations and the occurrences are indicative of development problems (Gozum & Kandir, 2019). My findings coincided with research by Sairanen et al. (2020) that fostering children's

approaches to learning benefits their school readiness development. Additionally, my findings confirmed research by Risley et al. (2020) that it is natural for parents to observe children's inattentiveness. However, despite approaches to learning being necessary for school readiness success and denoting children's lack of attention in activities, fathers did not report that they were aware children's attention spans grows and develops with age.

Zippert and Johnson (2019) found that parents can advance early number concepts beyond number recognition in random ways. Parents bolstered children's understanding of numbers and enhanced language development with informal number activities, which predicted how frequently they explored an advanced number concept with children (Zippert & Johnson, 2019). Another study on parent and preschool children's numeracy activities indicated that children gained greater knowledge for math numeracy when playing board games with parents as opposed to computer-generated games because parents did math using math terminology that bolsters conversations and enhances children's language development (Schnieders & Schuh, 2022). Yu et al. (2019) found that parents bolstered children's approaches to learning with poised questions about children's interests that enhanced children's understanding. According to Kwong et al. (2019), activities led by parents in the home are learning opportunities for children embedded in the domains of learning. My findings corroborate the findings of Zippert and Johnson (2019) and Yu et al. (2019) regarding parents cultivating opportunities to bolster children's learning in various domain within the day-to-day routines and activities.

Additionally, the results of the current study indicated that fathers bolster

approaches to learning by encouraging children to be brave and take risks. Huang et al. (2021) examined Chinese children along with their mothers and fathers to determine the characteristics of mothers' and fathers' scaffolding that facilitate children's initiative taking in different types of problem-solving activities in terms of cognitive, emotional, and autonomy support. The findings indicated that fathers' cognitive and autonomy support for children was greater than mothers. My findings confirm that fathers' school readiness engagement is correlated with children's confidence, self-control, and sociability as described by Huang et al. My findings also align with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) framework regarding the fundamental activities and engagement of parents in children's school readiness experiences on a day-to-day basis being essential to kindergarten entry.

Children's school readiness for kindergarten entry is affected by grandparents either directly or indirectly (Marti et al., 2018). Results from the current study revealed that fathers perceived that their parents' school readiness engagement in their lives influenced their beliefs and actions about school readiness for their children. Results also indicated that some grandparents are currently involved with grandchildren's school readiness. According to Harman et al. (2022), the intensification of parenting, which is focused on the academic outcomes of children, also affects grandparenting engagement.

Marti et al. (2018) found that grandparents' input in children's school readiness is beneficial for children. Grandparents are connected to their children emotionally, spanning their past with their present leading to cultivating a landscape different from their own in terms of education (Harman et al., 2022). My findings align with previous

research in that fathers' school readiness perspectives and engagement stem from their parents who were presently engaged in their grandchildren's school readiness (see Harman et al., 2022). The grandparent–grandchild relationship is a part of the microsystem that contributes to children's environment as described by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Findings from the current study indicated that fathers have challenges with children's attention span when engaging in their school readiness. According to McCoy (2019), children learn to pay attention, avoid impulse reactions, regulate emotions, and plan and monitor their behaviors in everyday environments when ecological validity is used. Ecological validity refers to the real-world behaviors and outcomes used to identify whether a child needs intervention or needs further support in certain contexts but not others (McCoy, 2019). Children's attention span is based on their interest, but often adult reports, direct assessments, and observational tools are used to determine whether children have attention span issues (McCoy, 2019).

Findings of McCoy (2019) reinforced the importance of assessing attention skills in an exact context rather than assuming the skill deployment is consistent across all situations. In another study, Korucu et al. (2019) demonstrated the degree to which general parenting factors (stimulation, sensitivity-responsibility, control-discipline, and warmth) are associated with children's ability to maintain attention while using three concentration games direct assessments. Korucu et al. (2019) used self-reported questionnaires given to parents to determine children's cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibitory control during the games. The results were parents saw how their

engagement impacted children's attention. Findings in my study do not align with previous research on children's attention span, detailing the normalcy of preschool children struggling at some point or another to pay attention, follow directions, sit still, wait patiently, and receive support to develop their attention span.

In my study, fathers wanted information about supplemental services for children's attention span. McCoy (2019) found children's attention span in the home executive function environment significantly and positively related to a global assessment of children's executive function. Assessments from parents, teachers, and doctors are the collaborated effort of identifying children with attention span deficits. Broad interpretations based on group results should be tentative given the interrelated nature of children's attention span (McCoy, 2019).

It is important to recognize specific activities, times, and surroundings when drawing conclusions about children's attention span (McCoy, 2019). Fathers in the current study requested information about supplemental services regarding children's behavioral issues based on their experiences at home. Parents can benefit from home visiting which serves as a threefold method to improve academic outcomes, school behavior, and parenting skills (Lahti et al., 2019). The findings of the current study do not align with Lahti et al.'s (2019) findings regarding early programs having a threefold method to improve academic outcomes for children's behavioral issues and McCoy's (2019) professional help for children with attention span issues.

Henry et al. (2020) found that school personnel may not be accustomed to fathers in the educational setting on a regular basis due to work obligations, stress of work-life

balance, and a societal view that men are the breadwinners in the home. Similarly, Volling et al. (2019) wrote that fathers' work schedules impacted their engagement in their children's school readiness (Volling et al., 2019). Other influences were divorce, incarceration, race, marital status, residency status, coparenting, and relationships between fathers and their children across generations (Henry et al., 2020; Volling et al., 2019). Barnett et al. (2020) stated that practices can be provided by community centers to promote engagement of fathers by sending home information, promoting parent volunteering, attending meetings, and bolstering parent engagement in home learning activities.

Lee and Rispoli (2019) indicated the impact of fathers' school-based involvement in Head Start was measured by attendance at meetings, teacher–parent conferences, school events, and volunteering at school events. However, Boonk et al. (2018) found that volunteering in classrooms, going on class trips, and participating in school functions were common activities that fathers could not always participate in because of outside influences. To support fathers' school readiness engagement, early childhood programs can create fully designed programs focusing on promoting the engagement of fathers, teacher training, and teaching training plus parent awareness meetings (Joo et al., 2020). It is important that teachers and staff encourage more fathers in parent–teacher conferences, school projects, and celebrations (Baker, 2018).

My findings indicated that participants wanted more connectivity with teachers and school staff to align their school readiness engagement with teachers and school leaders' expectations. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) conceptual framework describes how

children acquire such skills depending on what occurs at home and school and the communication between the two settings. One way to connect fathers for children's school readiness benefit is by engaging fathers in school activities. Joo et al. (2020) mentioned adding enhancement program components to existing programs. According to Barnett et al. (2020), parent buy-in is the central ingredient to school connectivity. The findings of the current study align with previous findings that fathers' school readiness engagement is not seen because it is underutilized at school.

Additionally, Peterson (2018) found that although fathers engaged in activities with children to promote school readiness, their time was limited with children, and it impacted children in various school readiness domains. Kaiser et al. (2019) noted that fathers' long evenings and night schedules at work impacted children's social and emotional well-being. The less fathers are engaged, the more likely feelings of inadequacy will occur (Henry et al., 2020). My findings were that fathers' employment obligations posed a concern, and their feelings of inadequacy were present when covering essential school readiness skills for their children. According to Henry et al. (2020), when fathers feel inadequate about their school readiness involvement, they refer to mothers, teachers, and others school officials. In my findings, fathers perceived teachers, school leaders, and liaisons would be useful to support their feelings of inadequately knowing what children needed for kindergarten.

Despite fathers feeling inadequate in engaging in school readiness, nurturing and provision of academic support bolsters children's academic achievement (Baker, 2018). It is essential that fathers are supported by teachers and staff to get connected and stay

involved in the school readiness process (Henry et al., 2020). Barnett et al. (2020) examined the impact of early childhood centers providing support that engaged parents with letters, information, parent–school involvement, and parent home learning activities for children. Additionally, TeachKloud and Getting Ready for School offer family involvement practices at home (Gennetian et al., 2019; Oke et al., 2021).

Results from the current study showed that parents who had services provided to promote and encourage their engagement were stronger than parents who did not receive supportive services. Gennetian et al. (2019) found that parent buy-in enhances program effect. The effectiveness of a program is contingent upon parents' engagement in children's school readiness (Gennetian et al., 2019). Findings from the current study are congruent to previous research indicating that fathers perceived their work schedules as a barrier and they were not certain that they were covering all components for children's school readiness (see Gennetian et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2020; Kaiser et al., 2019).

Limitations of the Study

Braun and Clark (2021) discussed how limitations can be out of the researchers' control. This study was limited to fathers' perspectives regarding children's school readiness, and the challenges that fathers encounter when engaging in children's kindergarten preparedness. Although I was able to recruit enough fathers for the study, all interviews were conducted via Zoom or by the phone. One father was overseas, and I was limited to interacting with him, so he agreed to send his answers to the questions via email. This father was in the military and really wanted to have his voice heard, so I allowed this to happen. Since COVID-19 still existed in 2022 when the interviews took

place, virtual interviews on Zoom and telephone interviews limited me from seeing facial expressions or body language.

Another limitation was my own bias towards early childhood, and what I felt the father's role was in school readiness. As Ravitch and Carl (2019) suggested, I did keep a journal to reduce my bias. I followed the member checking process and had a person with a doctorate degree review my findings, along with many calls and emails to my chair and committee member if I had any issues. It took me longer to analyze my data as I wanted to ensure my biases were not reflected in the data, and I am a novice researcher. I not only used my chair for advice if I needed help, but also set up appointments with Walden to assist me when I was analyzing the data, as I wanted to examine the data appropriately, which took even more time. Since my analysis took so long, an unexpected limitation that occurred was ensuring that my research was current. I had to go back and add more current literature to my study, as I thought I would be done with my study in 2022, versus 2023. Adding current literature was a limitation out of my control, along with unrealistic expectations in analyzing the data.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based upon the limitations of this study, I recommend that future research is replicated in Head Start programs to better understand fathers' perspectives and engagement in children's school readiness. I recommend a focus group of fathers be used when replicating this study to help fathers provide details they might not have described during this interview. In addition, this study could be conducted in other locations in the United States. By expanding into other geographic locations, additional knowledge can

be gained about father's school readiness perspectives and the barriers they face that are pertinent throughout the country.

Implications

This study contributes to the field of early childhood education by illuminating the voices of fathers. Fathers, that wanted support from school leaders and teachers about children's school readiness and help in acquiring services for children prior to kindergarten. According to Kim (2018), parent engagement at schools often omits fathers because father engagement is challenge-laden for school leaders and teachers. Barriers to fathers' participation in children's school readiness hinders the benefit that fathers' participation can be for children (Poissant et al., 2023). According to Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1979), ecological system's theory, the microsystem looks closely at how families and school interact. Positive social change will result if school leaders and teachers would become more aware of the range of fathers' challenges, think "outside the box" to create innovative ways for fathers to be engaged, maintain father involvement and retention of fathers throughout the school term, and debunk barriers as they occur to sustain school readiness engagement.

The findings of this study may be used to effectively train administrators and teachers on being aware of personal biases related to "overlooking" fathers due to challenges they may have encountered in getting fathers to be involved in children's school readiness. I was the owner of my own school readiness center and had biases about fathers' engagement in school readiness. Henry et al. (2020) believed schools may not be used to dealing with fathers regarding school readiness. Findings from this study

showed, school leaders can create environments that are inclusive and supportive of father engagement in school readiness; thereby, making fathers' engagement a norm. Teachers can support their colleagues with recommendations for fostering father engagement despite challenges that fathers encounter. On a broader level, this study can create positive change by helping to reform local and state agencies in the southeastern part of the United States to create a more inclusive father and teacher partnership that encourages strategies to foster fathers' school readiness engagement.

Conclusion

Research has shown that parental engagement in children's school readiness is lacking in father representation (Henry et al., 2020; Volling, 2019). This gap in literature showed that fathers' perspectives and challenges regarding their child's school readiness had not been included in parental engagement. Research on father engagement detailed that children benefit from father engagement in their social confidence, self-control, and sociability (Henry et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2021; Meuwissen & Carlson, 2018). During fathers' engagement in children's school readiness, they encounter barriers. My research adds to leveraging the gap in literature regarding fathers' perspectives about school readiness and the barriers they encounter, and it provides insight into policies about father engagement in children's school readiness that may lead to additional training and education promoting fathers' influence in children's school readiness.

Based on this study, fathers are aware of the impact of their engagement in enhancing children's school readiness trajectories. Participants also placed emphasis on skills which they believed were critical to children's school readiness success.

Additionally, fathers were cognizant of their limitations in supporting children's school readiness and desire the assistance from teachers and administrators to strengthen their efforts. It is clear reviewing the findings of this study, fathers can create an environment to support children's school readiness despite common barriers they encounter.

This study plays an important role in forming a foundation for future research. It provides insight on fathers' perspectives and challenges in relation to their children's school readiness. The study informs administrators and teachers about the importance of understanding the perspective of fathers. This study is valuable in informing policy and the development of programs aimed to improve the education of children by factoring in the perspectives and challenges of fathers. Therefore, this will contribute to positive social change by improving the education of children and the experiences of administrators, teachers, and fathers in the education of children.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

RQ1: What are fathers' perspectives regarding school readiness for their pre-kindergarten children?

1. What are your perspectives regarding school readiness for your pre-kindergarten children in Hampton Roads?
2. What sorts of things do you do as a father to prepare your child for kindergarten in the home?
3. What are some examples of what you have done in the past? Tell me about them.
4. Is there anything from the way you were raised that has helped you in preparing your child for kindergarten? Tell me about some examples.

RQ2: What are fathers' perspectives about the challenges they face engaging in their child's kindergarten preparation?

1. What challenges do you face in preparing your child for kindergarten?
2. What do you feel teachers and school administrators in community-based programs, should do to help fathers feel more of a part of their child's preparation in school?
3. What else can you tell me about challenges you have faced in preparing your pre-kindergarten child for kindergarten?
4. What, if any, information would you like to see shared more with fathers in the community on how to better prepare their children for kindergarten?