Summer 8-2016

The Impact of Access to School-Based Parent Resource Centers on Parents' Perceptions of School Climate and Students' Academic Achievement

Cherisse Le'Fay Chisolm

THE IMPACT OF ACCESS TO SCHOOL-BASED PARENT RESOURCE CENTERS ON PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Cherisse Le'Fay Chisolm

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

August 2016

Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Educational and School Psychology

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Cherisse Le'Fay Chisolm

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

_____ _____
Lynanne Black, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Educational and School Psychology, Advisor

_____ _____
Joseph F. Kovaleski, D.Ed.
Professor of Educational and School Psychology

_____ _____
Mark J. Staszkiewicz, Ed.D.
Professor of Educational and School Psychology

_____ _____
Roger L. Briscoe, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Educational and School Psychology

ACCEPTED

_____ _____
Randy Martin, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: The Impact of Access to School-Based Parent Resource Centers on Parents' Perceptions of School Climate and Students' Academic Achievement

Author: Cherisse Le'Fay Chisolm

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Lynanne Black

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Joseph F. Kovaleski
Dr. Mark J. Staszkiewicz
Dr. Roger L. Briscoe

The present study investigated the impact of having access to a school-based Parent Resource Center (PRC) on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement at two Title I elementary schools in a suburban school district in Georgia. Parents completed Yale University Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent-Version Revised and provided input concerning their awareness of the PRCs and usage of the centers. Students' English/Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics achievement data from the Georgia Milestones Assessment System were also ascertained.

The sample included 52 parents of fourth and fifth grade students. Archival achievement data were obtained for the students. Participants' data were used to determine if there were differences in school climate perceptions based on parents' use or nonuse of the PRC, differences in students' achievement based on their parents' PRC use or nonuse; and any relationships among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions of school climate as measured by eight school climate domains, and parents' use or nonuse of the PRC. An Independent Samples t-test found that PRC activity did not significantly impact parents' perceptions of school climate. A Chi-Square analysis found that there was no difference in students' academic achievement based on their parents' PRC use or nonuse. A Spearman's Rho analysis revealed weak, positive

correlations between PRC use and parental perceptions of students' achievement motivation, principal's caring and sensitivity and students' ELA performance, and school building characteristics and students' mathematics performance. A moderate, positive correlation was found between students' ELA performance and mathematics performance. A weak, negative correlation was found between parents' involvement in collaborative decision making at their child's school and PRC use. A weak, negative correlation was also found between collaborative decision-making and students' ELA performance.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank God for giving me the character and ability to complete this process. I would like to thank my mother, Hilda Walker, for always supporting my dreams, praying for me, and assisting Chad and I with Carrington when I needed to write or travel. I would like to thank my husband, Chad, for giving me the time and space I needed to complete this task. I especially want to thank you for being an excellent father to Carrington and for taking on most of the childcare duties, when needed, without complaint. I would like to thank my daughter, Carrington, for being "my reason." Your presence encouraged me to finish strong! I wanted to be your example of what hard work and perseverance can accomplish. Whatever you aspire to do Baby, you can and will do it! To all my beloved family and friends, I am blessed beyond measure to have you and I look forward to writing the rest of my story as Dr. Chisolm with you. Special recognition to Dr. Heather Bravener, who was in my doctoral cohort and is now a lifelong friend. I especially want to thank you for driving to Indiana, PA on my defense date to support me and celebrate my accomplishment. And to Dr. Bonita Sims-Gude, I did it! I know that you, my grandmother, and my dad are smiling down from Heaven.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee. You all were the "Dream Team." Dr. Lynanne Black, thank you for your time, patience, expertise, and positive affirmations along my journey. Dr. Joseph Kovaleski, thank you for your thoughtful feedback and for being an excellent information source during my time at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Mark Staszkiewicz, thank you for making statistics manageable for a novice like me. Dr. Roger Briscoe, thank you for speaking life into me before I began my dissertation and for your enthusiasm about my topic throughout.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
ONE	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of the Problem	7
	Research Questions	8
	Research Hypotheses	8
	Assumptions	9
	Limitations/Delimitations	9
	Definitions	12
	Summary	15
TWO	LITERATURE REVIEW	16
	School Climate	16
	Parental Involvement	25
	Link Between School Climate and Parental Involvement	34
	School Climate, Parental Involvement, and Academic Achievement	41
	Summary	43
THREE	METHODOLOGY	45
	Research Questions	45
	Hypotheses	46
	Sample	46
	Procedures	47
	Measures	49
	Statistical Analyses	51
	Summary	54
FOUR	RESULTS	55
	Introduction	55
	Statistical Analyses of Research Questions	58
	Summary of Findings	66
FIVE	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	67
	Conclusions	72
	Limitations	72
	Suggestions for Future Research	73
	Recommendations for Parent Resource Centers (PRCs)	74
	Recommendations for School Psychologists	75
	Summary	77

Chapter Page

REFERENCES 79

APPENDICES 88

Appendix A - District Approval Letter 88
Appendix B - Informed Consent Form 89
Appendix C - Parent Resource Center Questions 92
Appendix D - Parent Resource Center Sign-In Log 93
Appendix E - Letter of Permission to Use Survey Instrument 94
Appendix F - School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised 95

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Statistical Analysis of Study	52
2	Parents' Demographic Summary	56
3	Summary for Parents' Responses to PRC Questions	57
4	Independent Samples t-test for the Eight School Climate Domains for the PRC Use and Nonuse Groups	60
5	Independent Samples t-test Group Statistics for the PRC Use and Nonuse Parents	60
6	Chi-Square Analysis for ELA Achievement by PRC Use and Nonuse	62
7	Chi-Square Analysis for Math Achievement by PRC Use and Nonuse	62
8	Statistical Significance Between School Climate, PRC Use, and Students' Academic Achievement	65

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Schools are being held increasingly accountable for student achievement. Therefore, determining school-level factors that can lead to greater outcomes for students is paramount. Legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), as well as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative have been influential in defining proficiency standards that students should meet. NCLB has helped to elevate accountability beyond the scope of examining individual student performance to evaluating how well schools are holistically meeting certain standards concerning students and within state performance is generally the standard against which proficiency is measured (US Department of Education, 2015). Like NCLB, the Common Core initiative echoes the importance of proficiency. However, it goes a step further to look at how well schools are preparing students to meet specific, nationwide competency standards and preparing them for college and careers (National Education Association, 2015).

Many states are adopting Common Core practices in lieu of NCLB through a waiver process (US Department of Education, 2015). However, some aspects of NCLB may continue to exist in their schools. One is the parental involvement component. NCLB specifies ways that key stakeholders in children's lives should collaborate in an effort to improve student outcomes. NCLB indicates that parental involvement should be a priority in educational institutions, particularly in Title I schools, which serve a significant number of children who may be at-risk educationally (US Department of Education, 2004). The emergence of Common Core has created an additional need for

collaboration among stakeholders in order to cultivate an understanding of the new performance standards across the home and school environments and to effectively implement the necessary changes in teaching and learning practices (National Education Association, 2015). Thus, it is important to create an atmosphere in schools that may enhance family-school relations and propel student learning. Consistent with this ideology, an investigation of how the presence and use of a parent resource center in schools may impact perceptions of school climate and student achievement is timely.

School psychologists have been charged with the task of being systems-level change agents who promote positive school climates (Ysseldyke et al., 2006). A system may be defined as any setting where an individual lives and learns and its component parts act on one another to affect the individual's functioning and/or behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ysseldyke et al., 2006). Cohen, Mccabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) define school climate as "the quality and character of school life" (p. 182). "School climate is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" of a school (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 182). The quality of a school's climate affects children's cognitive, social, and psychological development and is a determining factor of their educational outcomes (Haynes, Emmons, & Ben-Avie, 1997; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). An open, positive climate; one that is open to change and outside influence and welcomes family, school, and community relations is most conducive to promoting successful student outcomes (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). This type of climate increases the likelihood that students will perform well academically, view themselves positively, behave appropriately,

exhibit ambition, and feel a sense of safety and comfort at school (Haynes et al., 1997; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). Thus, it is vital that appropriate emphasis is placed on developing open, positive climates in schools.

The climate of a school can be either open or closed (Bell, 1985 as cited in Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Open climates are characterized by respect for individuality; they are open to change and outside influence; and they welcome and encourage interaction among students, parents, school personnel, and community agencies (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008). Closed climates are less welcoming systems with rigid boundaries, lacking interaction and collaboration among stakeholders, and are often opposed to change, which may lead to dysfunction and/or limited progression (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

Ecological Systems Theory specifies four types of systems that influence an individual's functioning and are useful in framing the importance of creating a climate that is conducive to collaborative relationships among families, schools, and other relevant stakeholders in children's education (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005; Sheridan et al., 2008). The four ecological systems are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem refers to a single-setting environment (e.g., home or school) and its influences on an individual (Patrikakou et al., 2005). The influence of people such as a parent or teacher in a child's microsystem and the activities that take place in a single setting can have significant bearing on a child's thoughts and behaviors as they relate to school (Sheridan et al., 2008).

The mesosystem encompasses the influence of relationships and interactions between microsystems (e.g., family-school relations) on an individual (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Patrikakou et al., 2005). The mesosystemic influence that takes place when parents and school personnel work collaboratively can provide students with an observable support system of adults who care about their success in school and in life, reinforce desired thoughts and behaviors across environments by sending generalized messages about the importance of school, and can be facilitative in finding the right methods and tools to help students succeed (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Smith, 2005).

The exosystem refers to the influence of environments and social systems of which an individual may not be directly a part, but events occurring within them affect the individual (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Patrikakou et al., 2005; Sheridan et al., 2008). For example, the leave policy at a parent's place of employment can dictate their availability to attend meetings or volunteer at their child's school (Sheridan et al., 2008). Lastly, the macrosystem is the broadest of the ecological systems and refers to the social and cultural influences that govern and provide structure for the aforementioned systems (Patrikakou et al., 2005). For example, NCLB/ Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a macrosystemic influence that has led to legislative requirements for schools to provide meaningful opportunities for parents to be actively involved in their children's learning (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001, Sheridan et al., 2008).

School climate research has shown a connection with the educational performance of school-age students, which has been a topic of interest for many years. During the 1960s, James P. Comer, a child psychiatrist at Yale University, had a particular interest in the school performance of poor and minority children (Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-

Avie, 1996). Many thought that disadvantaged children were destined to underperform academically due to lacking fundamental social experiences and connections needed for school success. In 1968, however, Comer and colleagues at Yale University began working on a process to address the needs of these disadvantaged children (Comer et al., 1996); thus, the Comer Process of educating students was developed. This process for educating students continues to be implemented in many schools nationwide and is also referred to as the Comer Model or the Comer School Development Program (SDP) (Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004).

A major focus of the Comer Process is child development (Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004). Comer and his team believe that disadvantaged children often experience significant developmental gaps that impact their ability to learn and perform commensurate with their conventional peers. Therefore, they can benefit from enhanced skill acquisition across six developmental pathways including physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, ethical, and psychological development to improve their school outcomes. Comer and colleagues have theorized that the necessary development can occur in children as a result of collaborative relationships between the adult stakeholders in children's lives. The Comer Process allows for students to be collaborators in their education as well. Through these collaborative relationships, students' needs can be identified and addressed in meaningful ways (Comer, 1995).

Comer and colleagues specify three guiding principles that are essential to the success of the Comer Process (Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004). It is plausible that these principles can be related to all collaborative efforts between school personnel and parents/families. The first of the principles is *commitment*. That is, adult stakeholders

must be committed to working together collaboratively. Next, there should be a *no-fault* philosophy. Essentially, there should be a focus on problem-solving rather than placing blame. Finally, *consensus decision-making* should be the aim of the process, with the main focus being what is good for children. Consensus in this sense does not mean that decisions must be unanimous. Instead, it emphasizes the need for all perspectives to be heard and then to determine the best possible solution based on all information presented. Through continued work in this fashion, adult stakeholders should be able to see how their efforts are directly related to improvements in students' school performance. According to Comer (1995), when parents can see how their efforts yield positive results for their children, they are more likely to continue to be involved in their children's education.

Comer and colleagues believe that when positive and productive family-school partnerships are created, one of the most immediate changes that will occur at a school is an improvement in school climate (Comer et al., 1996; Comer, 2005). This is evident through improved relationships between adults and students in the school, thus creating an environment that is more conducive to supporting the development of children (Comer, 2005). Furthermore, adults become models for healthy working relationships, problem-solving, and a commitment to student learning that results in more positive attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors in young people concerning their schooling. Students begin to feel more cared for and have a greater sense of belonging at school. According to Comer (2005), children are born learners, but not academic learners. Therefore, the relationships and related climatic variables that are present in a positive school climate help to develop young people who are motivated to learn and achieve well in school.

Due to the importance of school climate, Comer and colleagues have created a set of school climate surveys that provide the perspectives of parents, students, and school staff (Comer et al., 1996). These surveys can be useful in monitoring school climate and its effects in schools with mechanisms for family-school partnerships in place.

Statement of the Problem

Consistent with knowledge that school climate and family-school relations are important contributors to the academic success of school age students, this study sought to investigate the impact of parents having access to a school-based Parent Resource Center (PRC) on their perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement at two Title I elementary schools. This study sought to identify any differences in school climate perspectives between parents who have used the school-based PRCs versus parents who have not. Furthermore, the study sought to examine the academic performance of children whose parents have taken advantage of the centers in comparison to those whose parents have not.

The results of this study should have great importance to educators because a key responsibility of educators is to work toward ensuring the academic success of all students. Parents are children's first teachers, but once a child begins formal schooling, it is vital that parents and educators become co-teachers/collaborators in children's lives in order to improve their chances for the greatest educational outcomes (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Comer, 1995). Providing a school-based PRC could facilitate this type of relationship.

The quality of a school's climate can affect students' academic achievement, social-emotional-behavioral functioning, and their overall sense of safety and well-being

at school (Haynes et al., 1997; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). Additionally, a school's climate has the potential to be an invitation or a deterrent for parental involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Therefore, by investigating the impact of school-based PRCs on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement, information can be gained about any benefits of having a school-based center. Furthermore, efforts can be taken to improve the climate within school environments, as necessary, to enhance family-school relations and combat factors that could hinder students' optimal educational performance. Finally, recommendations could be made regarding the usefulness of implementing PRCs in schools whether they are designated as Title I or not.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Are there differences in parents' perceptions of school climate based on use or nonuse of the PRC?
2. What is the difference between English/Language Arts (ELA) and math achievement of students whose parents use and do not use the PRC?
3. What is the relationship among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions of school climate, and parents' use of the PRC?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were examined:

1. It is hypothesized that parents who use the PRC will have more positive perceptions of the individual school climate variables than parents who do not use the center.
2. It is hypothesized that students whose parents use the PRC will perform better in ELA

and mathematics on the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS) than students whose parents do not use the center.

3. It is hypothesized that higher achieving students' parents will have more positive perceptions of school climate and will have used the PRC.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are being made to support this research. The first assumption is that the PRC at each school is operated as intended to address parents' needs. Second, it is assumed that all parents will respond truthfully to the school climate survey items and other questions pertaining to the study without any agenda other than providing the researcher with the requested information. Third, it is assumed that the GMAS was administered according to standardized procedure. Fourth, it is assumed that when parents complete the PRC log, they are representing their participation accurately.

Limitations/Delimitations

Relative to internal validity, one limitation to this study is participants will be chosen through a convenience sampling method rather than random sampling. This limits the ability to attribute results of the study to the impact of the PRCs rather than possible differences in the study's participants. A second limitation to internal validity concerns the potential for experimental mortality or attrition. This could be problematic if only a small number of parents consent to participate in the study (e.g., return their completed surveys), resulting in a sample that is too small to obtain statistically significant results about the impact of school-based PRCs on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' achievement. Furthermore, this study will rely on students' achievement data from the previous school year and their parents' perceptions of school

climate concerning the previous school year. Therefore, if a significant number of students no longer attend the two Title I elementary schools, then the number of participants for the study will be affected as well. A third threat to internal validity is history. In Title I schools there are a variety of programs and resources available to students and families to enhance their educational experiences; therefore, other events and experiences besides the influence of the PRC may have occurred in the participants' lives which could affect parents' perceptions of school climate or students' academic achievement. Individuals' interactions with school personnel could affect perceptions as well, especially if those interactions, or at least one of them, was negative. Lastly, the Hawthorne Effect could be a limitation to this study because some parents could show a tendency to respond to the climate survey items in a more socially desirable manner rather than expressing their honest opinions because of concern about how their responses could impact them or their child in the school setting.

With respect to external validity, the first limitation also concerns participant selection. For this study, only the school climate perceptions of fourth and fifth grade students' parents will be considered and achievement data will be obtained for fourth and fifth grade students as well. During the 2014-15 school year, the GMAS, the assessment from which achievement data will be obtained for this study, was in its initial year of implementation and was only administered to third through fifth grade students in elementary schools (i.e., rising $4^{th,}$ 5^{th}, and 6^{th} graders) across the state of Georgia. During the 2015-16 school year, at the time of data collection for this study, the researcher will have access to 4^{th} and 5^{th} grade examinees who continue to attend the Title I elementary schools of interest and their parents. Therefore, the fourth and fifth

grade students and their parents will be selected for this study to enable the researcher to pair students' GMAS achievement data with parents' school climate perception data for analysis purposes. This limits the study's results because parents and students from the lower grades in each school will not be represented. Furthermore, the previous year's 5th grade students and their parents will not be represented either because these students were promoted to middle school. In addition to the aforementioned, the chosen sample will be from only two Title I schools. This is a limitation because their data may not be representative of all Title I parents' perceptions of school climate and students' achievement elsewhere. Also, other stakeholders such as students' and teachers' perceptions of school climate will not be included in the study, thus limiting the ability to generalize the perception data to other stakeholder groups. Another limitation is that the data for this study will be obtained during a single school year. This prevents the possibility of obtaining longitudinal data, limiting the researcher's ability to generalize the results beyond the time period that the study will be done. Measurement of the dependent variables is also a limitation to this study. Since a survey will be used to obtain data on parents' perceptions of school climate and written questions will be asked about the PRC, issues such as a parent's inability to read and comprehend the instructions or items/questions could affect the external validity of results. Also, parents will be asked to reflect on their perceptions of the previous year's school climate and the accuracy of their ratings could be affected due to the passage of time. Relative to the dependent variable, achievement, the GMAS' initial year of implementation was the 2014-15 school year. Due to the infancy of the assessment, information about its reliability and validity is not available, which, therefore, limits the generalizability of the

study's results. However the assumption is that GMAS data are an accurate reflection of students' achievement.

Definitions

Title I School – a school in which at least 35 percent of the student population is from low-income families as measured by the percent of students receiving free and reduced lunch and the students may be at-risk educationally (Georgia Department of Education, 2012).

School Climate –The "general tone" or atmosphere of a school and "the quality of relationships that exist among students and adults" in the school community (Comer School Development Program, 2015b). For this study, school climate will be determined by the cumulative score from ratings across the eight variables on Yale University Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

Academic achievement – "Academic achievement represents performance outcomes that indicate the extent to which a person has accomplished specific goals that were the focus of activities in instructional environments" (Steinmayr, Meibner, Weidinger, & Wirthwein, 2014). For this study, students' academic achievement will be determined by their English/Language Arts and mathematics scores from the GMAS.

Perceptions – Parents' opinions or beliefs about their child's school and the school's effects. For this study, perceptions will be determined by parents' ratings on Yale University Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

Parent Resource Center (PRC) – The PRC is a designated setting inside the school building for parents to be connected with resources, assistance, or opportunities to help

their child and/or their family. The PRC is operated by a full-time Parent Involvement Paraprofessional (PIP) employed by the school district. Parents can check out resource from the center to use at home with their child such as math games, sight word practice books, bullying resources, books on tape/CD, and DVDs. Parents can also find information on furthering their own education (e.g., obtaining their General Education Diploma), enhancing their parenting skills, and other personal skills that can benefit their child. There are computers in the resource center for parents to use to look up resources or complete other tasks. Within the center, parents can also find descriptive information about the school and important dates to remember for the school year. The PIP in the center is available to talk with parents; helping them to problem-solve and may refer parents to other school-level, district, and community resources as needed. The center's PIP also hosts parent workshops throughout the school year to address the needs of parents in the school community (R. Dean, personal communication, April 16, 2014; R. Dean, personal communication, April 19, 2014). Additionally, parents can be connected with volunteer opportunities in the school through the PRC.

Academic focus - "the emphasis that teachers place on student learning and achievement in an atmosphere of respect and trust" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) as measured by Yale University's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

Achievement motivation - "the extent to which students at the school believe that they can learn and are willing to learn" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) as measured by Yale University's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

Principal caring and sensitivity - "the extent to which the principal shows consideration for the students, parents, and school staff, and cares about their needs" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) as measured by Yale University's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

Collaborative decision-making - "the involvement of parents, staff, and students in the decisions affecting the school" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) as measured by Yale University's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

Parent involvement – "the frequency of parent participation in school activities" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) as measured by Yale University's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

School building - "the appearance of the school building" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) as measured by Yale University's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

School-community relations - "the support and involvement of the community in the life of the school" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) as measured by Yale University's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

Student-teacher relations - "the level of caring, respect, and trust that exists between students and teachers in the school" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) as measured by Yale University's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised.

Summary

In this new age of educational accountability, it is important to closely examine variables that may enhance the educational success of students and school psychologists have the skill set to be leaders in this area. Parental involvement and school climate are amongst variables that have been linked to improvement in students' educational outcomes (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; Emmons et al., 1998; Epstein et al., 2002; Haynes et al., 1997; Lehr & Christenson, 2002; Patrikakou et al., 2005; Smith, 2005). Furthermore, open and positive school climates reportedly promote greater parental involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). A particular subpopulation of students who have been shown to benefit from greater parental involvement and positive school climates are students who are educationally at-risk (e.g., Title I students) (Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; US Department of Education, 2004). This study examined the effects of having a school based Parent Resource Center in two Title I elementary schools to determine the impact that it may have on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The educational environment should be one inclusive of dynamics that support optimal student learning. Within this chapter, literature will be discussed that concerns the creation of such an environment. This chapter begins with a discussion on school climate. The discussion continues with a review of parental involvement literature, followed by a discussion of how parental involvement and school climate are linked. The chapter ends with a discussion on how school climate and parental involvement are both related to academic achievement.

School Climate

School climate is a construct with historical roots in the 1950s when business researchers first began to systematically focus on the climate of organizations (Cohen et al., 2009; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). During the 1950s, there was an emphasis in the business realm on characteristics that led to improved employee morale, productivity, and retention (Lehr & Christenson, 2002). Soon after, the process of investigating the effects of environmental characteristics on individuals crossed over into academia. While business researchers were studying organizational climate, a focus on studying the climate of educational institutions also emerged (Cohen et al., 2009; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). Formal instruments were developed to measure climatic variables in businesses and in academia (Lehr & Christenson, 2002). By the 1960s, there was a focus on the climate of classrooms. Researchers began to investigate teacher-student relationships, types of instruction in the classroom, opportunities for student participation, and the degree of shared control in the classroom environment. Since the 50s and 60s, climate

research has significantly expanded, and a much broader, in depth investigation of the school environment has ensued, which has led to the conceptualization of *school climate* research (Lehr & Christenson, 2002).

School climate is a construct that has both concrete and abstract qualities (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001) and numerous definitions for school climate exist in literature (Cohen et al., 2009; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). According to Cohen et al. (2009), school climate "refers to the quality and character of school life" (p. 182). It is "based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" of a school (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 182). Comer and colleagues with the Comer School Development Program at Yale University support the belief that school climate concerns the atmosphere of a school and the quality of relationships fostered within the school (Comer et al., 1996). Some even describe school climate as a "school's personality" (Bell, 1985 as cited in Christenson & Sheridan, 2001. p. 102) and one can sense a school's climate the moment the building is entered (Lehr & Christenson, 2002).

Although varying language is used to define school climate, there is agreement amongst most researchers concerning four key dimensions of school climate (Cohen et al., 2009; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). The first of these dimensions is safety (Cohen et al., 2009). This dimension involves aspects such as how clearly rules, expectations, and consequences are stated and adhered to in a school; promoting respect for individual differences; crisis management; bullying prevention; violence prevention, and how well the school serves as a comfortable and physically safe environment for those who enter it. The next dimension is teaching and learning. This dimension concerns variables such as

instructional practices employed by teachers to include a focus on academics, social-emotional-behavioral functioning, and character development; professional development efforts; and the style and effectiveness of the school's administrative personnel. The third school climate dimension is relationships. Consistent with the aforementioned definitions of school climate, this dimension focuses on the quality of relationships fostered within a school community, the degree of connectedness children and stakeholders feel, the extent of collaboration amongst stakeholders, and morale. The final school climate dimension is environmental-structural, which concerns variables such as how inviting, clean, and aesthetically pleasing the school is and how adequate the physical conditions, space, and materials are for learning and meeting other needs of its occupants (Cohen et al., 2009; Lehr & Christenson, 2002). This categorization of school climate dimensions is reminiscent of Carolyn Anderson's comprehensive review of literature in which she concluded that school climate is a combination of ecology, milieu, social system, and cultural variables (Anderson, 1982).

School provides a significant context for students to learn foundational skills necessary to achieve at school and in life and school climate can have a significant bearing on students' outcomes. By studying school climate, the primary focus is taken off of intraindividual factors and is instead placed on how system level factors and the school community influence students (Cohen, Pikeral, & McCloskey, 2009). According to Haynes et al. (1997), children perform well in school communities where interpersonal relations are positive and promote the implementation of programs and policies that focus on students' academic growth and social-emotional development. This type of school community is consistent with an open, positive, or healthful school climate, one in which

collaboration and input from various stakeholders is valued and doing what is best for students remains the focus (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Cohen et al., 2009; Comer et al., 1996; Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2008).

Haynes et al. (1997) have identified several variables that contribute to a healthful and supportive school climate, eight of which are measured on the School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised (Comer School Development Program, 2016). The first of these variables is *academic focus*, which concerns the value that educators give to student learning and achievement in an atmosphere that is characterized by respect and trust (Comer School Development Program, 2016). Within a school characterized as having a strong academic focus, educators should "model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits of, and satisfaction from, learning" (Cohen et al, 2009, p. 182). Teachers should work towards ensuring that students gain the skills necessary to be competent in their academic areas. A school's academic focus may be conveyed through means such as the school's mission statement, available programs in the school, and direct communication and interaction with school personnel.

The second variable is *achievement motivation*, which concerns the level of belief that students have in themselves and their willingness to put forth the effort needed to learn (Comer School Development Program, 2016). In a climate conducive to enhancing achievement motivation, school personnel should work towards strengthening students' self-efficacy; emphasizing the importance of effort on tasks and students doing their personal best toward achieving mastery (Doll, 2010; Klose, 2008). Students' personal effort, growth, and competence on tasks should be rewarded or reinforced in meaningful ways by school personnel (Klose, 2008). This may predict the degree to which students

actively engage in learning, including how frequently they attend school, how focused they are in class, their classwork habits, and how committed they are to remaining in school (Doll, 2010). Among a group of 1157 adolescents in the Washington, D.C. area, Wang and Eccles (2013) found that clearly defined teacher expectations and "consistent and contingent responses" led to better student engagement and more positive connections with their school. Environments marked by caring interactions and social support also resulted in better engagement by students. According to Wang and Eccles (2013), "student academic self-concept and subjective task valuing of learning is enhanced when the school environment provides clarity of expectation, consistency and predictability of response, emotional support, opportunity to learn and master meaningful material, and sufficient or appropriate support of students' personal goals and interests" (p. 20).

Principal caring and sensitivity, "the extent to which the principal shows consideration for the students, parents, and school staff, and cares about their needs" (Comer School Development Program, 2016), is another variable that reportedly contributes to a positive or healthful school climate. The principal sets the tone and norms of behavior for a school (Cohen et al., 2009). Literature states that after the classroom teacher, the next most important school personnel member in shaping student learning is the principal (Wallace Foundation, 2006). An Atlanta Metropolitan area study of principals' leadership skills indicated that when teachers' perceptions of school climate were high, more students exceeded passing expectations in reading on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) and there was a reduction in the number of students who failed. Furthermore, perceptions of the principals'

interpersonal skills (e.g., sensitivity, courtesy, impartiality) were positively and significantly correlated to students' performance on the assessment (Williams, Persuad, & Turner, 2008). In another study, Gregory, Henry, and Schoeny (2007) found that school climate as it relates to the school principal can also affect the degree of program implementation in a school. Specifically, teachers in this study demonstrated greater implementation of a violence prevention intervention for students across three school years when they perceived the school principal as forward-thinking, open to feedback, and collaborative.

Collaborative decision-making, "the involvement of parents, staff, and students in the decisions affecting the school" (Comer School Development Program, 2016), is another variable that should be considered with respect to school climate, according to Haynes et al. (1997). Shared decision-making in schools provides a unique perspective about the experiences and needs of children, allowing for enhanced communication amongst stakeholders and the planning of age- and culturally appropriate programs and activities in the educational environment (Comer & Haynes, 1991). This type of collaboration gives each participant a significant voice, particularly parents and students that might not otherwise be heard without this type of interaction.

Parent involvement, the "frequency of parent participation in school activities," (Comer School Development Program, 2016) is the fifth variable that is noteworthy to mention here. Parental involvement is amongst the most important school climate variables that contribute to positive educational outcomes for students (Christensen & Sheridan, 2001; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; Emmons et al., 1998; Epstein et al., 2002; Patrikakou et al., 2005). Parental

involvement may sometimes be lacking in schools due to certain barriers that can make it difficult to achieve (Christensen & Sheridan, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Patrikakou, 2008; Vazquez-Nutall, Li, & Kaplan, 2006). However, it is important for school personnel to work toward creating involvement activities and opportunities for parents on a continual basis because of the far reaching benefits of parental involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; Haynes et al., 1997; Emmons et al., 1998; Epstein et al., 2002; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Jackson et al., 2004; Lehr & Christenson, 2002; Patrikakou et al., 2005; Patrikakou, 2008; Smith, 2005; United States Department of Education, 2004). A detailed discussion of parental involvement will be presented in a later section of this chapter.

The appearance of the *school building* is a sixth variable that should be considered regarding the quality of a school's climate (Haynes et al., 1997). School facilities can have a significant effect on academic outcomes (Buckley, Schneider, & Yi Shang, 2004; Schneider, 2002). Conditions such as lighting, noise level, temperature, air quality, ventilation, class size, and building quality and aesthetics can have a significant bearing on students' ability to learn and function optimally in the educational environment (Schneider, 2002). Additionally, teachers have reported that the physical condition of schools affects their ability to deliver instruction effectively (Buckley, Schneider, & Yi Shang, 2004).

School-community relations, "the support and involvement of the community in the life of the school" (Comer School Development Program, 2016) is a seventh variable that is pertinent to a healthful school climate, according to Haynes et al. (1997). State

and Federal guidelines across the country delineate specific academic proficiency requirements for students, and schools are charged with the task of ensuring that students reach these standards. Due to factors such as schools' budgetary restraints and lack of personnel, schools are often restricted in their ability to produce such outcomes for students by their own devices alone (Eagle, Dowd-Eagle, & Sheridan, 2008). When schools collaborate with the community, more resources and opportunities are available for the school community, to include parents and families (Epstein et al., 2002). Schools may receive services such as health screenings, tutoring, and enrichment activities for youth and their families through community agencies (Eagle et al., 2008). Lombard Middle School, located in Baltimore Maryland, partnered with a community agency called the Living Classroom (Epstein et al, 2002). This partnership afforded students hands-on opportunities to apply their academic skills in real-world settings and to make connections between academics and future careers. Selection criteria for students' participation in the program included regular school attendance, average and above academic standing, positive attitude, and a teacher's recommendation. Additionally, a parent involvement requirement was incorporated into the partnership. This school-community relationship reportedly resulted in improved school attendance for the students at Lombard Middle School, increased motivation to learn, more positive attitudes about school, and enhanced family involvement.

The eighth and final variable that will be discussed in relation to Haynes et al.'s 1997 conception of a healthy and supportive school climate is *student teacher-relations*, which is defined as "the level of caring, respect, and trust that exists between students and teachers in the school." (Comer School Development Program, 2016). Relationship

building with children is at the core of what motivates them to become academic learners (Hendrick, 2005). The extent to which a child feels connected to at least one caring and responsible adult at school is a significant predictor of their academic outcomes (Cohen et al., 2009). According to Comer (2001), "positive and powerful social and academic interactions between students and staff" are conditions that make learning and development possible (p. 171).

Students thrive from teachers showing care and concern for them, high expectations, and confidence in their abilities (Doll, 2010). Students who feel cared for, safe, and believed in are more likely to be transparent with their teachers, admit their strengths and weaknesses, be open to receiving needed assistance, and do their best to achieve at a higher level in school. Students who feel cared for and a sense of connectedness at school are less likely to drop out of school as well (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). In a qualitative case study involving 18 eleven through fourteen-year-old students, Ellerbrock, Kiefer, and Alley (2014) found that caring connections between teachers and students and teachers' responsiveness to their needs helped foster the students' sense of belonging in middle school.

In addition to the aforementioned variables detailed above, Haynes et al. (1997) also believe that equity and fairness, order and discipline, staff dedication to student learning, staff expectations, leadership, sharing of resources, and student interpersonal relations are important components of a healthful and supportive school climate. This conceptualization of a positive school climate is at the height of much school climate literature (Lehr & Christenson, 2002; Lehr, 2004; National School Climate Center, 2015). It is supported by the National Association of School Psychologists (Lehr, 2004). The

National School Climate Center's (NSCC) vision of a positive school climate corresponds with this one as well (National School Climate Center, 2015).

There are many variables that influence the lives of students (e.g., family's socioeconomic status) that educators do not have the ability to alter. Fortunately, school climate is changeable and can yield very positive results for students. NASP's position is that school climate should be the focus of prevention and school improvement efforts in the schools. Educators are encouraged to be proactive instead of reactive in our approach. According to the National School Climate Center, a school's climate should be characterized by:

> Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe; people are engaged and respected; students, families, and educators work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared vision; educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment. (NSCC, 2015)

One aspect of creating a school climate that is most conducive to students' optimal development is involving parents in their educational experience. Therefore, in the next section of this chapter, the importance of parental involvement in children's education will be discussed in more detail.

Parental Involvement

Like school climate, parental involvement is a key determinant of students' learning and school success (Christensen & Sheridan, 2001; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Emmons et al., 1998; Epstein et al., 2002; Hoover-Dempsey &

Sandler, 1995; Miller & Kraft, 2008; Patrikakou et al., 2005; Patrikakou; 2008) and is related to school climate. However, prior to the 1920s, parental involvement was generally not a concern in the American educational system (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). During the 1920s a shift occurred and schools began to provide opportunities for parental involvement primarily in helping and supporting roles that would benefit the schools (Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Although parents' involvement was invited, at that time it was more in terms of how involvement could satisfy the agenda of schools, instead of trying to establish reciprocal relationships. Another paradigm shift occurred in the 1960s, during a time when civil rights were becoming more of a priority nationally (Aud, 2007; Mapp, 2012). Those involved with educational legislation began to focus more on how to better meet the needs of school-age children, particularly underprivileged or disadvantaged populations.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law (Aud, 2007; Mapp, 2012; USDOE, 2015). The ESEA allowed for better educational opportunities for all children, and a special section of the law was coined Title I, which focused specifically on providing provisions for at-risk populations (Aud, 2007; Mapp, 2012; USDOE, 2004). A significant amount of funding was allocated to Title I's mission as well. By 1966, legislators began to fully realize the need for parent involvement in the schools and their involvement in decision-making concerning Title I. By 1967, local school officials were required by the Office of Education to provide "appropriate activities and services" for parent involvement (Mizell, 1980). The government further encouraged parent involvement by stating the need to strengthen parents' abilities to work collaboratively with schools in ways that support

healthy child development and growth. For more than three decades after the initial inception of the ESEA and Title I, language concerning parental involvement and the roles and responsibilities of parents in schools and legislation continued to expand. The ESEA was reauthorized and renamed in 2001 during George W. Bush's presidency and is now referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). A large portion of NCLB is now dedicated to parental involvement, to include an explicit definition of the term, specifics about its benefits, and how parental involvement should look in schools (Aud, 2007; Mapp, 2012; USDOE, 2004).

Generally speaking, parental involvement is a multifaceted construct that involves parents' and families' participation in school or home-based activities that support the learning and development of children (Jackson, Martin, & Stocklinski, 2004; Wandersman, Motes, Lindsey, Snell-Johns, Ford & Amaral, 2002). A parent may include a child's biological mother and/or father, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare (US Department of Education, 2004; Jackson et al., 2004). Parental involvement, as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, is:

> the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring: that parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school; that parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and that other activities are carried out, such as those

described in section 1118 of the ESEA (Parental Involvement). *[Section 9101 (32), ESEA.]*. (US Department of Education, 2004, p. 3)

Activities such as attending school meetings; volunteering at school; helping with homework; reading to a child at home; encouraging and motivating a child; instilling a value for education in a child; and ensuring that a child has proper rest, adequate nutrition, and materials needed for school are all examples of parental involvement. These examples includes a mix of school and home-based activities; however, it is important to note that NCLB's definition of parental involvement focuses more on a school-based partnership model between school personnel, parents, and other adults stakeholders in children's lives. A partnership model is among the most effective modalities for parental involvement (United States Department of Education, 2007). The current study will adhere more closely to NCLB's conceptualization of parental involvement. Parental involvement concerning children's learning at home has been shown to have a profound impact on student achievement (Baker Piotrkowski, & Brooks-Gunn, 1998; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000). Therefore, schools should provide opportunities for parents to be involved within the school setting in ways that can enhance their ability to assist their children with learning outside of school (Miller & Kraft, 2008).

Parental involvement is positively associated with students' academic performance, social-emotional functioning, and behavior (Haynes, Emmons, & Ben-Avie, 1997; Lehr & Christenson, 2002; Patrikakou, 2008). Regardless of socioeconomic status or background, students with involved parents are reportedly able to achieve higher and have greater academic aspirations. (United States Department of Education, 2004).

Students whose parents are involved in their education feel more positively about school, exhibit fewer behavior problems, are more prepared for class, exhibit better academic performance, have a greater sense of self-efficacy, and have increased chances for high school completion (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Patrikakou, 2008). Based on a review of several studies concerning parental involvement and motivation, Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, and Holbein (2005) concluded that students whose parents are involved in their education are more engaged learners; exhibit more effort, better concentration, and attention; and are more intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to do well in school. Furthermore, parental involvement helps to instill a culture of the importance of school in children (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005; Jackson et al., 2004; Smith, 2005).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) have created an explanatory model to illustrate the parental involvement process. The first level of the model concerns what prompts parents to become involved to include intrinsic factors (e.g., parental role construction, self-efficacy), perceptions of invitations for involvement, and the responsiveness of the school to their personal/family's needs and life circumstances. Level two includes forms of parental involvement and the processes at work that can influence students educationally. Levels three through five of the model concern how student's perceive their parents' involvement mechanisms or activities and the resulting effects on their development of self-efficacy, motivation to learn, academic skills, and their ability to relate well to others in an educational/learning capacity.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) specify three mechanisms by which parental involvement influences students educationally. These mechanisms are

modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction. Relative to modeling, the attitudes and behaviors that parents present concerning their children's schooling convey distinct messages, which can shape their children's conceptions about school-related things (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jackson et al., 2004). Relative to reinforcement, when parents "give their children interest, attention, praise, and rewards related to behaviors fundamental to varied aspects of school success" (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 320), they are helping to increase the likelihood that success related behaviors will continue. With respect to direct instruction, parents can promote learning by actively engaging in tasks with their children such as helping with homework, engaging in drill and practice activities, and asking their children to provide explanations for outcomes.

Although parental involvement can influence children and yield positive results for them educationally, parental involvement is reportedly lacking in many schools across the nation; therefore, it is important to address why this may be the case (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011Patrikakou, 2008). One barrier to parental involvement may be parental role construction. That is, how a parent views their roles and responsibilities concerning their child's schooling can affect their level of involvement (Deslandes & Betrand, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). If a parent does not inherently believe that it is a part of their role as a parent to be involved in their child's education, then they are less likely to do so. Fortunately, parental role construction is not a fixed condition and can be altered by the positive influence of others. Another potential barrier to parental involvement concerns self-efficacy. Whether a parent feels capable or

efficacious enough to help their child succeed in school can significantly affect their decision to become an involved parent (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parental involvement is reportedly highest during children's elementary school years and declines by middle school (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Horny & Lafaele, 2011). This phenomenon has been attributed partly to an increase in children's academic demands and a decrease in parents perceived ability to help their children with tasks (Horny & Lafaele, 2011). Parents of students in middle grades are reportedly more often involved in their children's education as audience members (e.g., attending school performances and productions involving their children) versus serving as problem solvers, for example (Miller & Kraft, 2008).

Parents' perceptions of the educational environment may also have significant bearing on their level of involvement in their child's education. For example, if parents believe they are not welcomed or wanted in the educational environment, they may be less likely to be involved in their child's education. Therefore, the attitude of teachers and other school personnel towards parents and invitations for involvement by those in the school environment, can encourage parental involvement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Patrikakou, 2008; Simon, 2000).

Based on information from 201 parents gathered through a home-based interview, Smith et al. (1997) found that a positive school climate was associated with less barriers to school and home-based parental involvement activities. Teachers' efforts to promote home-school collaboration was especially associated with parents' involvement at their children's school. Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) surveyed 770 parents of 6^{th}, 7^{th}, and 8^{th}

grade students in five Quebec schools and found that parents' perceptions of teachers' invitations for involvement was a significant predictor of their degree of parent involvement, at home or at school, across all three grade levels.

Another set of potential barriers to parental involvement may be family structure and life circumstances (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Patrikakou, 2008). Factors such as single parenthood, work schedules and/or demands, and lack of transportation all can make it difficult for parents to become involved. Some parents may also be less involved in their children's education due to personal negative experiences with the educational system, feelings of mistrust and/or discomfort in the school environment, and poor achievement and/or behavior of their children (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Patrikakou, 2008). Relative to student achievement, giftedness or the high achieving status of students can also be a barrier to parental involvement because parents of these students may believe that their children have an innate ability to do well and therefore, their involvement in their child's education is not needed with regard to improving their school performance (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Lastly, parents who are not from the dominant-white middle class culture also reportedly experience more barriers to parental involvement for reasons such as a lack of commonality and connectedness with teachers, language and other communication differences, and a lack of resources. Subpopulations who have been shown to have lower than average levels of parent involvement include low-income parents, less educated parents, single parents, language minority parents, and parents with personal and/or adjustment problems (Griffith, 1998).

What can be concluded from the latter discussion is when parents feels efficacious and empowered, welcomed and wanted at a school, and knowledgeable about their expected role, the better able they will be to participate meaningfully and actively in the education of their children (Christenson, 2001; Comer, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005; Patrikakou & Weissberg 2000; Patrikakou, 2008). Thus, school outreach for involvement opportunities is very important (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Comer, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Simon, 2000). Parents also need to see how their efforts are related directly to improvement, or the possibility of improvement, in their children's education. Comer (1995) considers this vital for continued parental involvement.

Christenson and Sheridan (2001) believe that *approach*, *attitude*, *atmosphere*, and *actions* all contribute to the success of parental involvement in schools. Relative to approach, schools must recognize that educating children is a shared responsibility between significant persons in children's lives and then convey this message in meaningful ways to relevant stakeholders along with structuring opportunities for involvement. With respect to attitude, biases, misconceptions, and other thoughts that could be barriers to parental involvement should be addressed. This includes attitudes held by school personnel or parents. Relative to atmosphere, emphasis should be placed on creating a school climate that is conducive to enhancing family-school relations. Relative to actions, schools should actively create processes, opportunities, supports for parental involvement and allocate resources for enhanced partnerships with parents and families.

Link Between School Climate and Parental Involvement

Comer and colleagues believe that when positive and productive family-school partnerships are created, one of the most immediate changes that will occur at a school is an improvement in school climate (Comer et al., 1996; Comer, 2005). Literature also states that a positive and sustained school climate, one that is "open, trusting, and inviting" (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001, p. 101), is an impetus for parental involvement. Parents who perceive schools as having positive inviting climates report less barriers to involvement (Smith et al., 1997). With this being the case, an ecological systems approach to educating children seems to be ideal (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Smith et al., 1997). This type of approach takes into account the different environments that students are a part of and the influence of the environments and persons within those environments on children. It lends itself to supporting the needs of significant persons in children's lives along with preparing them with knowledge and skills needed to impact children positively. Furthermore, an ecological approach underscores the importance of parents and schools working together collaboratively, sharing their perspectives and expertise concerning what is best for children. This type of approach is particularly effective with addressing the needs of culturally diverse and educationally at-risk populations (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; Lunenburg, 2011; Vazquez-Nutall, et al., 2006). Examples of using an ecological approach with culturally diverse populations include providing English classes for parents who are not fluent in the language and providing foreign language classes for staff to facilitate better communication; providing opportunities for staff to expand their multicultural awareness; and providing parent workshops on topics of interest to parents (Vazquez-Nuttall et al., 2006). Relative to at-

risk populations, a review of literature concerning parental involvement and the parents of inner-city African American children indicates that parents respond best to involvement opportunities that empower parents, have school and home-based components, and utilize resources within their families and communities (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006).

In 1968, Comer spearheaded the development of an ecological approach to educating at-risk children, which is sometimes called the Comer Model, the Comer/Yale School Development Program, or the Comer Process (Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004). The model will be referred to as the Comer Process here. The Comer Process is reportedly the "first school intervention program in which test scores, behavior, and attendance of poor and/or socially marginalized students improved dramatically" (Comer School Development Program, 2015a). Since 1968, the Comer Process continues to be implemented in over 1150 schools, 35 school districts, and 25 states nationwide (Lunenburg, 2011). The basis of the Comer Process is to create a culture in schools that allows adults to better support child development and learning. The model relies heavily on school personnel, parents, and families working together, sharing knowledge, forming positive relationships, and gaining an understanding of one another's needs (Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; Lunenburg, 2011; Smith, 2005; Squires & Kranyik, 1996).

Schools that have adopted the Comer Process are organized into three teams that help guide the operations of the school (Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; Lunenburg, 2011; Smith, 2005). The teams are the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT), the Parent Team, and the Student and Staff Support Team.

The SPMT's members are representative of all adults in a school, including parents. Its leader is usually the school principal. The team is responsible for creating and monitoring a comprehensive school plan to include addressing the academic, social, staff development, and community relations needs/goals of students and adults in the school community.

The Parent Team (PT) involves parents in various aspects of school life through activities such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), volunteer opportunities, and paid assistant positions that support the school's academic and social programs. Members of the PT elect fellow parents to serve on the school's SPMT as well. The parent representatives on the SPMT further convey the expertise, perspective, and needs of parents within the school community. The existence of the Parent Team reportedly strengthens home and school connections. "It reduces the dissonance that disadvantaged students experience as they attempt to adjust from one environment to the other. By empowering parents, schools provide continuity in the socioeducational lives of children" (Comer et al., 1996, p. 12).

The Student and Staff Support Team consists of school personnel that have knowledge and experience in child development and mental health (e.g., school psychologist, counselor, social worker, school nurse, special education teacher). The team addresses school climate, psychological, and social issues that could impact students' school functioning and long-term life adjustment (Comer et al., 1996). The team works in a proactive, preventative manner using its expertise to inform others, problem-solve, and facilitate healthy interpersonal relations, and so on.

The Comer Process teams function according to three guiding principles which are collaboration, no-fault, and consensus. These principles are thought to promote respect among stakeholders and a positive climate (Comer et al., 1996). The guiding principle collaboration encourages everyone to commit to working together. The no-fault principle is intended to eliminate the tendency toward placing blame on others and encourages stakeholders to make problem-solving the priority instead. The principle consensus encourages stakeholders to engage in dialogue that will lead to making the best possible decisions for children, given all the information presented.

Collectively, the Comer Process for educating children creates a nurturing and supportive atmosphere for children where their learning and development is central (Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; Lunenburg, 2011; Smith, 2005; Squires & Kranyik, 1996). Some manifestations of an improved school climate through the process include higher expectations for students, improved relations between adults and students in the school building; more positive family-school interactions; and improved student achievement, behavior, and school satisfaction (Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; Emmons et al., 1998; Lunenburg, 2011; Smith, 2005; Squires & Kranyik, 1996). In a meta-analysis of over 29 school reform models, Borman, Hewes, Overman, and Brown (2002) found that the Comer Process was one of three models that were most effective at improving family-school relations and student achievement.

Another ecological model that encourages a positive school climate and facilitates parental involvement in schools is Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programs and Partnerships (Epstein et al., 2002). The first type of

involvement is parenting. Under this subheading, schools are encouraged to provide intervention to parents that will enable them to create a home environment that is conducive to their children's lives as students. The second type of involvement is communicating. Here schools are encouraged to be proactive in creating ways to enhance two-way communication with parents concerning their children and the school. The third type of involvement is volunteering, which emphasizes the need for schools to provide opportunities for parents to volunteer their time to engage in activities, as appropriate, that support the daily operations, goals, and functions of the school. Depending on the task, some parent training may be necessary here. The fourth type of involvement is learning at home, which focuses on helping parents become better able to engage in skill building activities with their children at home. Fifth, Epstein highlighted the importance of involving parents in decision-making at school. The latter gives parents a voice and allows for their unique perspectives and expertise to be considered when making decisions that will affect individuals and the school community. Lastly, Epstein emphasizes the importance of collaborating with the community. This tier of the parental involvement framework instructs schools to work in cohesion with community agencies to enhance the school experience and provide increased options and opportunities for students and their families. Epstein's Framework is useful in structuring parent involvement efforts in schools.

Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, and De Pedro (2011) used Epstein's framework as a model for examining parental involvement programs at twelve urban charter schools across six states in the United States. The study's respondents were principals from each of the charter schools. Principals reported the types of activities and methods they were

employing to enhance parental involvement and the researchers categorized the activities according to Epstein's framework. For example, to address Type I activities, *parenting*, select schools offered housing and grocery assistance to families, job seeking assistance (e.g., employment office in the school building) and parenting classes. Relative to Type 2 activities, communicating, some principals reported that they went beyond the traditional school-home notes and school-based conference methods as a means of communicating with parents. Instead they began to engage in more home visits to enhance communication with families. Under the umbrella of Type 5 activities, decision-making, some schools did things such as hold regular parent focus groups to gain parents' input about school matters and parents also held positions on school governance boards. Overall, Smith et al. (2011) found that through the use of wrap-around services, involving parents in decision-making, and other innovative strategies, the principals reported that parents' self-efficacy seemed to increase and their degree of comfort in being involved in their children's education was improved.

Acknowledging the importance of parental involvement in schools, in 1995, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) began to introduce Parent Information Resource Centers (PIRCs) (United State Department of Education, 2007). PIRCs have historically been funded by a grant program through the USDOE's Office of Innovation and Improvement. A PIRC may be a standalone facility within a state or school district or a special program within an organization. One of the goals of PIRCs is to provide adult stakeholders within school communities as well as family-centered organizations with information and support needed to understand child development and what children need to succeed in school. PIRCs help disseminate information and resources needed to

strengthen family-school partnerships, inform stakeholders about the importance of these partnerships, and make roles and responsibilities and opportunities for involvement clear. PIRCs also help provide resources to parents and families to improve their functioning and ability to support children educationally.

Since PRCs are generally not located within school buildings, to support the work of the PIRCs and make parental involvement opportunities and resources more accessible to parents in particular, some schools across the nation have adopted school-based PRCs (United State Department of Education, 2007). PRCs serve as a hub for parental involvement activities within schools. They provide physical resources that parents can immediately access and the centers' facilitators assist parents with becoming more informed, more visible in the schools, and stronger advocates and supporters of their children's education. PRCs are most often seen in Title I schools and the centers help facilitate ESEA/NCLB parental involvement requirements within a school building (United States Department of Education, 2007). The concept and design of PRCs is in line with effective parental involvement and school climate practices in terms of creating a welcoming environment and giving parents access to involvement opportunities.

School-based PRCs may provide a foundation for the mechanisms by which parental involvement influences students educationally, as outlined by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995). For example, parents taking advantage of volunteer opportunities available through the PRC may be seen by students as manifestations of the importance their parents place on being a part of their educational experience and working collaboratively with school personnel. Furthermore, PRCs are stocked with academic resources that can be checked out by parents. Also, PRC personnel along with certified

teachers often host curriculum nights (e.g., math night) in which parents are offered guidance and given hands on instruction on methods that could assist their children with learning (R. Dean, personal communication, April 16, 2014; R. Dean, personal communication, April 19, 2014). The latter could lend itself to parents' improved ability to provide direct instruction to their children.

School Climate, Parental Involvement, and Academic Achievement

There is a great deal of overlap between school climate and parental involvement literature. One conclusion that can be drawn from the literature is the creation of a school climate that welcomes, engages, informs, and empowers parents is key to the academic success of students. As stated previously, parental involvement is amongst the most important school climate variables that contribute to students' achievement in school (Christensen & Sheridan, 2001; Comer & Haynes, 1991; Comer, 1995; Comer et al., 1996; Comer et al., 2004; Emmons et al., 1998; Epstein et al., 2002; Patrikakou et al., 2005). A welcoming and encouraging climate for involvement allows parents access to more experiences, resources, and opportunities for enhancing their children's educational functioning. The influence that takes place when parents and school personnel work collaboratively can provide students with an observable support system of adults who care about their success in school and in life, reinforce desired thoughts and behaviors across environments by sending generalized messages about the importance of school, and can be facilitative in finding the right methods and tools to help students succeed (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Smith, 2005).

Marcon (1999) conducted a three-year longitudinal study of 708 preschoolers in the Washington, D.C. area to determine the relationships between parental involvement

and the preschoolers' adaptive development and academic achievement. The study relied on input from the students' teachers to include their responses to yes or no questions about the students' parents' involvement practices, Vineland Adaptive Behavior Rating Scale data, and academic data from the students' report cards. The type of parent involvement activities that were investigated in particular were attendance at parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, visiting the classroom and assisting with activities, and allowing home visits by their child's teacher. Marcon found that the preschool children whose parents engaged in a higher frequency of the involvement activities, particularly volunteering and spending time in their classroom, performed better adaptively and academically.

Jordan, Snow, & Porche (2000) conducted a yearlong literacy project with 248 kindergarten students and their families in the Minnesota area. The students and their families were separated into two groups, one of which was the control group. The study involved a school-based parent training on specific literacy skills called Early Access to Success in Education (EASE) that was led by a parent educator and took place over the course of five months. Each month a different literacy theme/skill (e.g., vocabulary) was covered. There was also a home-based parent involvement component to the study. Parents were required to complete specific literacy tasks at home with their children following the difference segments of the parent training. Pre and posttest language and literacy assessments were administered to the EASE students and to the control group. Also information about the literacy activities their parents engaged in with them was obtained. Overall results showed that children whose parents participated in the school-based literacy training made greater gains in literacy skills than the control group.

Simon (2000) investigated predictors of high school students' family involvement and the influence of the family's involvement on their school success. The participant group was approximately 11,000 students, their families, and school administrators. Family involvement data was gathered through a series of questions and the respondents' answers were categorized according to Joyce Epstein's parental involvement framework. Data about the school's methods of outreach for family involvement and academic achievement data on students was gathered as well. Collectively, Simon found that invitations and support for involvement from school personnel increased parental involvement. Outreach from the school reportedly positively influenced parents' attendance at workshops, volunteer opportunities, their homework help practices with their children, and the feedback they gave their children about school. Overall, students with more involved parents with respect to parenting, volunteering, learning at home, and involvement with decision-making activities at the school tended to have better grades in English and math, have more credit hours, attend school more often, behave well, and were more prepared for class.

These and other studies demonstrate the effectiveness of parental involvement from preschool and beyond. They support the need for schools to continue efforts to create open, positive school climates where whole child development is central, parental involvement is a priority, and opportunities for involvement are continual.

Summary

This chapter discussed school climate and parental involvement and the links between the two. Literature was reviewed concerning and how impactful school climate and parental involvement can be on the lives of those within the school community.

There was an emphasis on creating a positive school culture and forming home-school connections that are essential to developing children who can thrive in the educational environment and beyond.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of having a school-based Parent Resource Center (PRC) on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement in two Title I elementary schools. The PRC is a designated setting inside the school building for parents to be connected with resources, assistance, or opportunities to help their child and/or their family. The PRC is operated by a full-time Parent Involvement Paraprofessional (PIP) employed by the school district. For this study, information was gathered about parents' awareness of the on-site PRC at each school and their usage of the center. Parents were also asked to complete Yale University Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised (Comer School Development Program, 2016). The researcher requested that parents reflect on their experience during the previous school year while completing the School Climate Survey. Students' academic achievement was measured using their English/Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics scores from the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS).

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Are there differences in parents' perceptions of school climate based on use or nonuse of the PRC?
2. What is the difference between ELA and math achievement of students whose parents use and do not use the PRC?
3. What is the relationship among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions

of school climate, and parents' use of the PRC?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were examined:

1. Parents who use the PRC will have more positive perceptions of the individual school climate variables than parents who do not use the center.
2. Students whose parents use the PRC will perform better in ELA and mathematics on the GMAS than students whose parents do not use the center.
3. Higher achieving students' parents will have more positive perceptions of school climate and will have used the PRC.

Sample

This study utilized a convenience sampling method. Participants targeted for this study included parents of fourth and fifth grade students and their children at two kindergarten through fifth grade, Title I elementary schools in a suburban school district in the southern Atlanta metropolitan area. The school district's total student enrollment is 41,000 and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the district is 51.4. The school district's student population is 46.9% African American, 38.2% Caucasian, 7.9% Hispanic, 3.8% Interracial, and 2.7% Asian. The demographics for the Title I schools that were included in this study are as follows. School A has a total student enrollment of approximately 844 which includes 6% percent Caucasian, 70% African American, 8% Hispanic, 12% Asian, and 5% Multiracial students. School B has a total student enrollment of approximately 697 which includes 46% Caucasian, 42% African American, 9% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 3% Multiracial students.

Both study sites have a school-based PRC. All parents of fourth and fifth grade students at the schools were sent an informed consent form and other materials for this study. All parents who gave their consent for participation were selected along with their children for this study. The fourth and fifth grades were the grade levels of interest because students' achievement data were paired with parents' perception data for analysis purposes, and the achievement test from which the achievement scores were derived was only administered to the current year's fourth and fifth grade students at the elementary schools during the previous school year. Data from parents and their children in grades other than the fourth and fifth grades were not considered for this study. Data from males and females were included in this study. Parents of all ages were invited to participate. The expected age range of students whose data were included in this study was 9 to 12 years of age, or the approximate age range of students in the fourth and fifth grades. All data collected on the student participants were archival.

Procedures

The 2014-15 school year began for students in the Title I schools of interest on August 4, 2014 and ended on May 29, 2015. A parent sign-in log was available in the PRC at both study sites during the second week of October of the 2014-15 school year. The sign-in log was used by the PRC's coordinator at each study site thereafter. The sign-in log requested that parents provide their names, the date, and their child's grade level, as well as check the types of activities they were involved in at the time of their visits. The possible activities were checking out resources, consulting with school personnel, obtaining information about the school or important dates to remember, volunteering, using a computer in the center, obtaining a referral for outside services, and

attending a workshop. These data were gathered by the researcher in order to gauge parent participants' use or nonuse of the PRCs.

The 2015-16 school year began for students on August 3, 2015. Fourth and fifth grade student enrollment rosters for each school were obtained by the researcher from an administrative assistant by the third week of August. Each student on the rosters was given an anonymous identifying code. Then the researcher used *Infinite Campus*, the school district's data tracking system, to locate the names of each student's parents. The parents' names were paired with the students' names and assigned the same anonymous code.

During the month of August, the researcher compiled a packet containing the parent version of the school climate survey, the PRC questions, and an informed consent form for each of the students' parents. The researcher sent the packets home with fourth and fifth grade students by the end of September. All packets that were distributed to parents were labeled with a code that matched their children's code. The school climate survey and PRC questions had the code written on them as well. On the informed consent form, the researcher asked each parent to complete the school climate survey and questions about the school's parent resource center; for permission to obtain their child's 2014-15 GMAS language arts and math scores; and for permission to access the PRC's sign-in log from the previous school year. For every parent packet that was completed and returned with parental consent, the researcher made a note of their consent and the hard copy of the parent's consent form was placed in a confidential, locked location in an administrator's office.

During the months of October and November, the researcher collaborated with the PRC coordinator at each of the Title I schools to obtain data from the parent sign-in logs. The researcher granted the PRC coordinators temporary access to the master list of students' and parents' assigned anonymous codes in order to review the sign-in log to remove any identifying information and replace their names with the anonymous codes for those parents who gave permission only. The researcher was then given a copy of the sign-in log with the parents' names removed and only their code appearing in the "name" column. The data from the logs was used primarily to categorize parents according to their use or nonuse of the parent resource centers and to provide descriptive data about the activities parents generally engage in at the centers.

During the month of November, the researcher obtained students' achievement scores by providing the assistant principal at the study sites the names of the students whose parents agreed to participate in the study so that each student's archival achievement scores could be retrieved and then given to the researcher. Once the scores were provided, the researcher assigned each score the students' previously determined codes and their names were removed from the original score sheets with a permanent marker. As stated previously, the achievement data for this study consisted of students' English/Language Arts and mathematics scores from the GMAS.

Measures

The Yale Child Study Center's Comer School Development Program's School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised (Comer School Development Program, 2016) was used to measure school climate for this study. The School Climate Survey was initially developed to be used by schools that adhere to the Comer Model of educating

students. The Comer Model focuses on facilitating collaborative relationships between school personnel, parents, students, and the community in children's education and is most often implemented in inner-city schools (Emmons, Efimba, & Hagopian, 1998; Hendrick, 2005; Lehr & Christenson, 2002; Ramirez-Smith, 1995). Comer stated in an interview that a primary focus of the model is for adult stakeholders to work together successfully, following practices that are in the best interest of children and their development (Smith, 2005).

The climate survey measures parents' perceptions of eight school climate variables including academic focus, achievement motivation, principal caring and sensitivity, collaborative decision-making, parent involvement, school building, school-community relations, and student teacher-relations. The reliability coefficients for the variables are as follows: academic focus = 0.80; achievement motivation = 0.79; principal caring and sensitivity = 0.94; collaborative decision-making = 0.75; parent involvement = 0.68; school building = 0.84; school-community relations = 0.86; and student-teacher relations = 0.94. The survey consists of 41 items in which parents respond on a 5-point Likert Scale in the following manner: Strongly Agree = 5; Agree = 4; Not Sure = 3; Disagree = 2; Strongly Disagree = 1. The higher the score on a variable, the more positive a parent's perception of it is. The highest achievable mean score for any variable is 5.0 while the lowest is 1.0. In this case, 3.0 would be an average score.

Students' academic achievement was determined by their ELA and mathematics scores from the GMAS. This assessment replaced the previous statewide standardized assessment, the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) (Georgia Department of Education, 2014b). The GMAS is aligned with the Common Core

Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) and its initial implementation occurred during the 2014-15 school year (Georgia Department of Education, 2014b). The GMAS was administered to third through fifth grade students at the elementary level and the content areas assessed included ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies. The GMAS reportedly provides criterion-referenced performance indicators that signify how well students are meeting state standards as well as norm-referenced data in the form of national percentiles, comparing students' achievement to their peers nationally. For this study, achievement level data were used. The achievement levels for the GMAS are Level 1 (i.e., Beginning Learner), Level 2 (i.e., Developing Learner), Level 3 (i.e., Proficient Learner) and Level 4 (i.e, Distinguished Learner). Due to the infancy of GMAS in the state of Georgia, information about its reliability and validity is not currently available.

The final measures for this study were created by the researcher. These items consisted of a parent sign-in log to be used in the PRC at each school and a set of three questions for parents concerning the centers. Relative to the parent sign-in log, parents were asked to sign-in on the log each time they visited the centers, provide the grade level of their child, and indicate the types of activities in which they were involved on the day of their visit to the center. The PRC questions that were distributed to parents asked them to indicate their awareness of the on-site resource center at each school and their usage of the center.

Statistical Analyses

Statistical analysis procedures involved scores from the School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised and students' ELA and mathematics data from the GMAS.

Parental and student data were grouped according to parents' use or nonuse of the PRC's services. Group one consisted of parents who use the PRC and their children. Group two consisted of parents who do not use the PRC and their children. The first statistical procedure conducted as part of this study was an Independent Samples t-test to determine if there were differences in parents' perceptions of school climate based on use or nonuse of the PRC. A Chi-square analysis was the second statistical procedure completed to determine if there were differences in the ELA and math achievement of students whose parents used the PRC and students whose parents did not. Last, the Spearman's Rho statistic was used to determine any relationships among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions of school climate, and parents' use of the PRC. Assumptions for each statistical procedure were tested first to ascertain the appropriateness of use of each procedure with the collected data.

Table 1

Statistical Analysis of Study

Research Questions	Hypotheses	IV	DV	Reliability	Validity	Statistic
1. Are there differences in parents' perceptions of school climate based on use or nonuse of the PRC?	Parents who use the PRC will have more positive perceptions of the individual school climate variables than parents who do not use the	PRC use or nonuse		Unknown	Unknown	Independent Samples t-test
			Academic Focus	.80	Unknown	
			Achievement Motivation	.79	Unknown	
			Principal Caring and Sensitivity	.94	Unknown	
			Collaborative Decision-Making	.75	Unknown	

Research Questions	Hypotheses	IV	DV	Reliability	Validity	Statistic
	center.		Parent Involvement	.68	Unknown	
			School Building	.84	Unknown	
			School-Community Relations	.86	Unknown	
			Student-Teacher Relations	.94	Unknown	
2. What is the difference between ELA and math achievement of students whose parents use and do not use the PRC?	Students whose parents use the PRC will perform better in ELA and mathematics on the GMAS than students whose parents do not use the center.	PRC use or nonuse		Unknown	Unknown	Chi-Square
			GMAS ELA achievement level	Unknown	Unknown	
			GMAS math achievement level	Unknown	Unknown	
3. What is the relationship among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions of school climate, and parents' use of the PRC?	Higher achieving students' parents will have more positive perceptions of school climate and will have used the PRC.	PRC use or nonuse		Unknown	Unknown	
			GMAS ELA achievement level	Unknown	Unknown	
			GMAS math achievement level	Unknown	Unknown	
			Academic Focus	.80	Unknown	
			Achievement Motivation	.79	Unknown	

Research Question	Hypotheses	IV	DV	Reliability	Validity	Statistic
			Principal Caring and Sensitivity	.94	Unknown	Spearman's Rho
			Collaborative Decision-Making	.75	Unknown	
			Parent Involvement	.68	Unknown	
			School Building	.84	Unknown	
			School-Community Relations	.86	Unknown	
			Student-Teacher Relations	.94	Unknown	

Note. IV = independent variable; DV = dependent variable.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methods used to investigate the impact of a school-based Parent Resource Center (PRC) on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement. The research questions were presented. The researcher discussed procedures for gathering school climate perception data from fourth and fifth grade students' parents, awareness of and usage data concerning the PRC from parents, and achievement data for the students. The researcher discussed the primary measures for this study, which were a survey, researcher created questions and a tracking log, along with standardized achievement data. The chapter concluded with a synopsis of the statistical procedures used to determine the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This study investigated the impact of having a school-based PRC on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement in the areas of ELA and math in two Title I elementary schools. The following research questions were the focus of the study:

1. Are there differences in parents' perceptions of school climate based on use or nonuse of the PRC?
2. What is the difference between ELA and math achievement of students whose parents use and do not use the PRC?
3. What is the relationship among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions of school climate, and parents' use of the PRC?

The study's sample included 52 parents of 32 (61.5%) fourth grade students and 20 (38.5%) fifth grade students. Forty-two (80.8%) of the parents were females, 9 (17.3%) were male, and sex data were missing for 1 (1.9%) of the participants. Twenty-four (46.2%) of the parents were African American, 19 (36.5%) were Caucasian, 4 (7.7%) were Asian, 4 (7.7%) were Latino/Hispanic, and 1(1.9%) was Indian. Eleven (21.2%) of the participants graduated from high school, 1 (1.9%) completed vocational/technical training, 9 (17.3%) completed some college, 16 (30.8%) graduated from college, and 13 (25.0%) completed graduate school. There were missing education level data for 2 (3.8%) of the participants.

Table 2

Parents' Demographic Summary

Demographic Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Female	42	80.8%
	Male	9	17.3%
	Missing Data	1	1.9%
Ethnicity	African American	24	46.2%
	Caucasian	19	36.5%
	Asian	4	7.7%
	Latino/Hispanic	4	7.7%
	Indian	1	1.9%
Education Level	High School	11	21.2%
	Vocational/Technical Training	1	1.9%
	Some College	9	17.3%
	College Graduate	16	30.8%
	Graduate School	13	25%
	Missing Data	2	3.8%

Parents were asked to complete a 41-item school climate survey, which included eight dimensions of school climate, to ascertain parents' perspectives about their child's school. Parents were also asked to complete a set of questions concerning their awareness, usage, and feelings about the PRC at each school. Additionally, parents were asked to log their PRC activities in a sign-in log located in the PRCs each time they visited the centers. Lastly, English/Language Arts (ELA) and math standardized test achievement data were obtained for the parents' 3rd and 4th grade children.

Data gathered from the PRC questions that were created by the researcher indicated that 44 (84.6%) of the parent participants were aware of a PRC at their child's school. Seven (13.5%) parents indicated that they were not aware of its existence. Awareness data were missing for 1 (1.9%) of the participants. Thirty (57.7%) parents indicated that they had taken advantage of the PRC's services previously and 21 (40.4%) reported that they had not. Usage data were missing for 1 (1.9%) of the participants.

Furthermore, 26 (86.7%) parents reported that use of the PRC made them feel better about their child's school. Four (13.3%) parents said it did not.

Table 3

Summary for Parents' Responses to PRC Questions

Question		Response
Did you know that there is a PRC at your child's school?	Yes	84.6% (44)
	No	13.5% (7)
	Missing	1.9% (1)
Did you check out resources or receive assistance from the PRC to help your child or family last school year. - OR - Did you attend a parent workshop conducted by the PRC last school year?	Yes	57.7% (30)
	No	40.4% (21)
	Missing	1.9% (1)
Has use of the PRC made you feel better about the school?	Yes	86.7% (26)
	No	13.3% (4)

Note. The number of respondents for each category are in parentheses.

Concerning the types of activities in which parents were involved at the PRCs, 17.3% of parents' time was spent volunteering at their child's school through the PRC, 9.6% of their time was spent attending a training/information session about a topic concerning their child and/or family (i.e., workshop), 7.7% of their time was spent receiving instructions about how to use a resource or talk with a teacher or other person in the school building about a school-related issue affecting their child and/or family (i.e., consultation), 3.8% of their time was spent checking out resources from the PRC, and 1.9% of time was spent learning information about the school or important dates to remember for the school year from the PRC. None of the parents reported going to the

PRC to use a computer or to be connected with a person or service outside of the school building in the school district or community (i.e., referral). It is important to note that there were missing data in the PRC activity logs for a number of parents who visited the PRCs, so the aforementioned may be an underestimation of their actual PRC activities. However, it does provide a sense of the types of information and services parents may seek at the PRC.

Statistical Analyses of Research Questions

The PRC is a designated setting inside the school building for parents to be connected with resources, assistance, or opportunities to help their child and/or their family. For this study, data were used to answer the following research questions concerning parents' PRC usage, school climate perceptions, and students' academic achievement in the areas of ELA and math:

Research Question 1: Are there differences in parents' perceptions of school climate based on use or nonuse of the PRC?

Research Question 2: What is the difference between ELA and math achievement of students whose parents use and do not use the PRC?

Research Question 3: What is the relationship among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions of school climate, and parents' use of the PRC?

In order to empirically investigate each research question, research hypotheses were developed for each question and statistical analysis procedures were completed to test each hypothesis. The research questions, accompanying hypotheses, and findings from analysis procedures are discussed below.

Research Question 1: Are there differences in parents' perceptions of school climate based on use or nonuse of the PRC? Relative to this research question, it was hypothesized that parents who used the PRC would have more positive perceptions of the individual school climate variables than parents who did not use the center. An Independent Samples t-test was used to test this hypothesis. This statistic was appropriate because the dependent variables are continuous in nature and the independent variable is representative of two categorical, mutually exclusive groups. The assumption of equal variances was met based on the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. Inspection of the histograms does not support the normality assumption for the dependent variables. Concerning the assumption of independence of observations, there is no guarantee of independence of observations between the PRC use and nonuse groups because the parent participants might have been acquainted with each other and their interactions and communication could have affected their responses on the school climate survey. Although the assumptions of normality and independence of observations cannot be confirmed, the Independent Samples t-test was utilized as it is relatively robust with respect to the normality assumption.

For this statistical calculation, PRC use was the independent variable and the eight domains on the school climate survey were the dependent variables. Since the t-test was repeated for each of the eight dependent variables, the Bonferroni adjustment was used to minimize Type I Error. Therefore, the alpha level was set to .006 (.05/8). Based on the Independent Samples t-test, there were no significant differences between the PRC use group and the PRC nonuse group regarding any of the eight dependent variables (see Table 4 and Table 5).

Table 4

Independent Samples t-test for the Eight School Climate Domains for the PRC Use and Nonuse Groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means		
Domain	*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*
AF	*.88*	*.35*	*.18*	*49*	*.86*
AM	*2.77*	*.10*	*-2.59*	*49*	*.01*
PCS	*.50*	*.48*	*.41*	*49*	*.68*
CDM	*.94*	*.34*	*2.22*	*49*	*.03*
PI	*2.29*	*.14*	*-1.16*	*49*	*.25*
SB	*.27*	*.61*	*-.49*	*49*	*.63*
SCR	*2.44*	*.13*	*-.19*	*49*	*.85*
STR	*.04*	*.85*	*-.20*	*49*	*.84*

Note. AF = Academic Focus; AM = Achievement Motivation; PCS = Principal Caring and Sensitivity; CDM = Collaborative Decision-Making; PI = Parent Involvement; SB = School Building; SCR = School-Community Relations; STR = Student-Teacher Relations; ELA = English/Language Arts.

Table 5

Independent Samples t-test Group Statistics for PRC Use and Nonuse Parents

Domain	PRC Use	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*SE*
	No	21	4.15	.64	.14
AF	Yes	30	4.13	.56	.10
	No	21	3.89	.33	.07
AM	Yes	30	4.10	.25	.05
	No	21	4.48	.62	.14
PCS	Yes	30	4.42	.56	.10
	No	21	3.24	.46	.10
CDM	Yes	30	2.97	.41	.07
	No	21	3.10	.70	.15
PI	Yes	30	3.29	.51	.09
	No	21	4.01	.33	.07
SB	Yes	30	4.06	.39	.07
	No	21	4.11	.76	.17
SCR	Yes	30	4.14	.57	.10
	No	21	4.36	.58	.13
STR	Yes	30	4.39	.58	.11

Note. AF = Academic Focus; AM = Achievement Motivation; PCS = Principal Caring and Sensitivity; CDM = Collaborative Decision-Making; PI = Parent Involvement; SB = School Building; SCR = School-Community Relations; STR = Student-Teacher Relations.

Research Question 2: What is the difference between ELA and math achievement of students based on parents' use or nonuse of the PRC? Relative to this question, it was hypothesized that students whose parents used the PRC would perform better in ELA and mathematics on the GMAS than students whose parents did not use the center. Chi-Square tests were used to test this hypothesis. For this statistical calculation, PRC use was the independent variable and ELA and math achievement data were used as the dependent variables. This statistical procedure was fitting because the independent variable is a dichotomous, nominal–level variable and the dependent variables are multi-categorical, ordinal-level variables. The possible achievement levels for students are Level 1 (i.e., Beginning Learner), Level 2 (i.e., Developing Learner), Level 3 (i.e., Proficient Learner) and Level 4 (i.e., Distinguished Learner). Furthermore, there is independence of observations and mutually exclusive categories are present. The Chi-square analysis indicated that there was not a statistically significant difference between the ELA achievement of students whose parents used the PRC and students whose parents did not, χ^2 (3, N = 51) = 1.50, p = .68. Also, analysis did not indicate a statistically significant difference between the math achievement of students' whose parents used the PRC and students whose parents did not, χ^2 (3, N = 51) = 7.01, p = .07. Data indicate that 57.7% of the students achieved a Level 3 score or higher in ELA and mathematics.

Table 6

Chi-Square Analysis for ELA Achievement by PRC Use and Nonuse

		PRC Use	
		No	Yes
Achievement Level	1	9.5% (2)	16.7% (5)
	2	38.1% (8)	23.3% (7)
	3	38.1% (8)	43.3% (13)
	4	14.3% (3)	16.7% (5)
Model Chi-Square		1.50	
Model *df*		3	

Note. N = 51. The number of respondents for each category are in parentheses.

Table 7

Chi-Square Analysis for Math Achievement by PRC Use and Nonuse

		PRC Use	
		No	Yes
Achievement Level	1	4.8% (1)	13.3% (4)
	2	52.4% (11)	20% (6)
	3	23.8% (5)	50 (15)
	4	19% (4)	16.7% (5)
Model Chi-Square		7.01	
Model *df*		3	

Note. N = 51. The number of respondents for each category are in parentheses.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions of school climate, and parents' use of the PRC? The relevant hypothesis for this question was that higher achieving students' parents would have more positive perceptions of school climate and would have used the PRC. To test this hypothesis, the Spearman's Rho statistic was used. This statistical procedure was

appropriate because with the exception of the independent variable, PRC use, the data used are rank ordered or ordinal in nature. The Spearman's Rho statistic was chosen rather than the Pearson's method due to the rank ordered nature of the achievement data. Analysis found that there was no statistically significant relationship across PRC use, the school climate variables, and achievement collectively; however, significant correlations did exist between select variables.

The first relationship that was statistically significant was between PRC use and *achievement motivation* (r_s (51) = .335, p = .016). A low, positive correlation was shown between these variables, suggesting that as PRC use increased so did students' achievement motivation as perceived by their parents. The second relationship that was statistically significant was between PRC use and *collaborative decision making* (r_s (51) = - .326, p = .019). A low, negative correlation was present between these two variables suggesting that as collaborative decision making increased, PRC use decreased. Third, students' ELA scores and *principal caring and sensitivity* were positively correlated (r_s (52) = .294, p =.035). This was also a low correlation. This finding suggests that when principal caring and sensitivity was strong, students' ELA performance on the Georgia Milestones Assessment System improved. Fourth, students' ELA scores and *collaborative decision making* were negatively correlated (r_s (52) = -.272, p = .051). The strength of the correlation was low here as well. Although low, the correlation suggested that as collaborative decision making increased, students' ELA scores decreased. The fifth statistically significant relationship was found between students' math achievement and the *school building* variable on the school climate survey (r_s (52) = .306, p= .027), which denoted a weak, positive relationship between the two variables. This finding

suggested that there were school building characteristics that were related to improvements in students' math performance. The sixth and final relationship of statistical significance was found between students' ELA and mathematics performance, which was a moderate, positive relationship (r_s (52) = .668, p = .000), suggesting that students who performed well in one academic area generally performed well in the other academic area.

Table 8

Statistical Significance Between School Climate, PRC Use, and Students' Academic Achievement

		PRC Use	ELA ACH	Math ACH
AF	r_s	-.04	.23	.11
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.79	.09	.43
	N	51	52	52
AM	r_s	.34*	.07	.08
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	.64	.56
	N	51	52	52
PCS	r_s	-.08	.29*	.12
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.59	.04	.42
	N	51	52	52
CDM	r_s	-.33	-.27*	-.18
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.02	.05	.21
	N	51	52	52
PI	r_s	.16	.03	-.12
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.25	.86	.39
	N	51	52	52
SB	r_s	.09	.13	.31*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.54	.38	.03
	N	51	52	52
SCR	r_s	-.02	.18	.10
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.87	.20	.48
	N	51	52	52
STR	r_s	.04	.25	.16
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.80	.07	.27
	N	51	52	52
PRC Use	r_s	1.00	.00	.11
	Sig. (2-tailed)	---	.99	.44
	N	51	51	51
ELA Ach.	r_s	.00	1.00	.67**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.99	---	.00
	N	51	52	52
Math Ach.	r_s	.11	.67**	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.44	.00	---
	N	51	52	52

Note. AF = Academic Focus; AM = Achievement Motivation; PCS = Principal Caring and Sensitivity; CDM = Collaborative Decision-Making; PI = Parent Involvement; SB = School Building; SCR = School-Community Relations; STR = Student-Teacher Relations; ACH = achievement.

Summary of Findings

Chapter 4 of this dissertation presented three research questions, their relevant hypotheses, and the findings from data collection. Relative to research question 1 and its relevant hypothesis, the Independent Samples t-test statistical procedure was used. Data analysis revealed that there was no difference between the PRC use and nonuse groups regarding perceptions of school climate. Concerning research question 2 and its relevant hypothesis, the Chi-Square statistical procedure was used. Data analysis revealed that students whose parents took advantage of the PRC's services did not perform better in ELA and mathematics than students whose parents did not use the PRC. Concerning the final research question and its relevant hypothesis, the Spearman's Rho statistical analysis procedure was used. There was a statistically significant, positive relationship between PRC use and parental perceptions of students' achievement motivation. There were also statistically significant, positive relationships between principal's caring and sensitivity and students' ELA performance, school building characteristics and students' mathematics performance, and students' ELA performance and mathematics performance. A statistically significant, negative relationship was shown between parents' involvement in collaborative decision making at their child's school and PRC use. A statistically significant, negative relationship was shown between collaborative decision-making and students' ELA performance as well. With the exception of the correlation between students' ELA and math achievement, which was a moderate correlation, all of the other correlations for the Spearman's Rho analyses were in the low range.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of having access to school-based parent resource centers on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement. Conducting such a study was intended to call attention to school climate, parental involvement, and opportunities for enhancing students' success. Since educators have a responsibility to create dynamics in the educational setting conducive to greater educational outcomes for students, this study was timely.

Parent Resource Centers (PRCs) in Title I schools were the focus of this study. This study provided data to add to the research base concerning the usefulness of PRCs (i.e., family-centered interventions) with at-risk populations and how they might benefit the more mainstream population of students and their families as well. In order to examine the effects of school-based PRCs in the chosen Title I school settings, the following research questions were explored:

Research Question 1: Are there difference in parents' perceptions of school climate based on use or nonuse of the PRC?

Research Question 2: What is the difference between ELA and math achievement of students whose parents use and do not use the PRC?

Research Question 3: What is the relationship among students' academic achievement, parents' perceptions of school climate, and parents' use of the PRC?

A summary and explanation of findings associated with each research question is presented below.

Concerning Research Question 1, it was hypothesized that parents who used the PRC would have more positive perceptions of the individual school climate variables. Statistical analysis results did not support this hypothesis. The general purpose of the PRC is to enhance family-school relations through providing a welcoming environment in the school setting for parents to become more involved in their children's education. Parental involvement literature suggests that when dynamics such as this are created, one of the first changes that is usually evident is an improvement in school climate (Comer et al., 1996; Comer, 2005). The fact that no significant differences were found between the school climate perceptions of the PRC use and nonuse groups indicates that the schools have adequately created open and positive overall climates, leaving little room for parents to differ in their school climate perspectives. However, this finding also provides grounds for questioning the depth of services that are being provided through PRC. Is the PRC truly functioning as a center that provides parents with resources, materials, and opportunities that are different from those that parents can receive without utilizing the center? Does the PRC provide parents with opportunities and services that would provide them with further insight and enhanced perspective concerning climatic variables of a school?

Relative to Research Question 2, it was hypothesized that students whose parents used the PRC would perform better in ELA and mathematics on the Georgia Milestones Assessment System than students whose parents did not use the center. This hypothesis was not supported by data. Based on this finding, it is reasonable to question if the PRC is effectively serving one of its main purposes which is to help parents assist their children with learning and school performance. Are the resources adequate? Are parents

receiving effective research-based or evidence-based intervention materials to use at home? Are parents receiving effective direct instruction from school personnel on a consultative basis or through workshops? Are fidelity checks being completed to ensure that the PRC is being operated in the fashion it was intended? Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) concluded that parental involvement influences students educationally through the mechanisms of modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction; therefore, PRCs should function in a way that can improve parents' ability to support their children's education in these capacities.

Data from the PRC sign-in logs for this study indicate that parents mostly visited the centers for school-based volunteer opportunities and workshops. The next most commonly reported PRC activity was seeking consultation concerning a resource parents planned to use or to speak with school personnel about a school-related issue. The least reported PRC activities were checking out resources and seeking information about the school or important dates to remember for the school year. Collectively, these findings imply that educators need to take a closer look at how well PRCs are promoting and gaining parents' participation in a variety of involvement activities that could enable them to better function in the capacities of modeling achievement oriented attitudes and behaviors for their children, providing positive reinforcement to their children, and delivering direct instruction to enhance their children's learning.

Although findings for Research Question 2 do not support its stated hypothesis, it is noteworthy to mention that 58% of the students at the schools achieved proficiency or higher in ELA and mathematics on the GMAS. Therefore, another facet to consider is this study's sample. For example, if there was more heterogeneity in the sample, would

statistical analysis results concerning PRC use and student achievement have been more significant.

With respect to Research Question 3, it was hypothesized that higher achieving students' parents would have more positive perceptions of school climate and would have used the PRC. Data analysis did not fully support this hypothesis; however, significant correlations were found between PRC use, some of the variables on the school climate scale, and achievement. The first relationship of statistical significant was between PRC use and *achievement motivation.* A positive correlation was shown between these two variables suggesting that as PRC use increased so did parents' perceptions of achievement motivation of students. This was an expected relationship. Research supports that this type of relationship should be an outcome of increased parental involvement in children's education (Wang & Eccles, 2013). The second relationship of statistical significance was shown between PRC use and parents' perceptions of *collaborative decision making*. In this case, a negative correlation was found. That is, as collaborative decision making increases, PRC use decreases. This implies that parents generally are not using the PRC as a means for becoming involved in collaborative decision making in the schools or if collaborative decision-making is high in the school, maybe there is less of a need for the PRC for this purpose. This finding could lend itself to an opportunity for schools to highlight how the PRC could function in this manner.

The third relationship of statistical significance was shown between students' ELA achievement and parents' perceptions of *principal caring and sensitivity*. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that the principal has a primary influence in schools and his or her influence is only second to that of the classroom

teacher on student learning (Wallace Foundation, 2006). The relationship shown between ELA performance and principals' interpersonal traits are reminiscent of findings from an Atlanta Metropolitan Area study indicating that principals' interpersonal skills were positively and significantly correlated to students' reading performance on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (Williams, Persuad, & Turner, 2008). Ultimately, principals' leadership styles are said to be the catalyst for many programs and teaching practices in schools that lend themselves to greater student achievement (Cohen et al., 2009; Gregory et al., 2007).

The fourth relationship of statistical significance is one between students' ELA achievement and parents' perceptions of *collaborative decision making*. A negative relationship was shown here, suggesting that an increase in collaborative-decision making leads to a decrease in students' ELA achievement. This finding could suggest a need to delve into the decisions being made concerning curriculum and instruction with respect to ELA. The fifth relationship of statistical significance was shown between students' math achievement and parents' perceptions of *school building* characteristics. A positive correlation was shown here suggesting that school buildings, which provide a comfortable learning environment and resources, are amenable to enhancing students' mathematics performance. The sixth and final relationship of statistical significance was shown between students' ELA achievement and math achievement, suggesting that the students who performed well in one academic area generally performed well in the other academic area.

It is noteworthy to mention that the strength of the correlations found for this research question were generally low, with the exception of the correlation between

students' ELA and mathematics achievement. The latter was a moderate correlation. Due to this occurrence, further exploration of the aforementioned relationships is warranted, and having a larger sample more heterogeneous sample would also be helpful.

Conclusions

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that need to be stated. The first limitations concern the sample. This study relied on a convenience sample rather than a random sample; the sample was limited to the achievement data of 4th and 5th grade students and input from their parents; the number of participants for the study was small; and the participants were from only two Title I schools in a limited geographic area. Additionally, the school climate perspectives of stakeholders other than parents were not included in the study. All of these factors limit the researcher's ability to generalize the results beyond the study's sample and limits the potential to obtain statistically significant results.

Another limitation to this study is it relied on students' achievement data from the previous school year and asked parents to reflect on experiences from the previous school year as well. This is a limitation because the accuracy of parents' reflections could have been negatively impacted due to the passage of time, decreasing the validity of any conclusions drawn concerning the relationship between parents' perspectives of school climate and students' academic achievement in the schools. Furthermore, school climate perspectives were obtained thorough a survey and parents were asked to provide other input through answering questions. These methods of data collection could be limitations because there is potential that parents did not fully comprehend the tasks' instructions or

content of the items. Also, there is potential that parents answered in a socially desirable manner rather than answering honestly.

Concerning students' achievement, data were obtained from the GMAS, which was in its first year of implementation. Therefore, validity and reliability data concerning how representative the GMAS is of achievement is not known. However, the assumption is that the GMAS is an accurate assessment of students' achievement. Lastly, all data for this study were obtained during a single school year, which limits the ability to generalize results beyond a single time period.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study was intended to provide insight into the impact of school-based PRCs on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic performance. There are shortcomings to this study. Although there are shortcomings, a study such as this is worthwhile because it provides information about systems level variables that could be affecting educational outcomes for children. Future studies could address the limitations mentioned in order to make findings more meaningful and generalizable.

First, this study relied on a very small sample size; therefore, a key suggestion for further research is to include more participants and a more representative sample in future studies. Only two Title I schools with school-based PRCs were used for this study; data from only two grade levels were considered; and only the parental perspective of school climate was obtained. With this being the case, increasing the sample size should include gathering information from more schools with school-based PRCs, obtaining school climate perception data from various stakeholders in school buildings (e.g., parents, students, teachers), and obtaining achievement and perception data from stakeholders for

more grade levels to include middle school and high school students. Obtaining data from a larger geographic area (e.g., more school districts) would be beneficial as well.

To address concerns about measurement of the dependent variables, further research should include the use of different outcome variables. For examples, to measure students' academic achievement, more statistically sound measures like the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement or the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement could be used. Also, students' grades could be considered as well. Relative to school climate, variables such as students' grades, school discipline records, and attendance records could also be considered as indicators of the quality of a school's climate. Furthermore, all data for this study were obtained from a single school year. Therefore, another suggestion for further research would be to obtain data from multiple school years in order to strengthen the generalizability of findings beyond a single time period. Lastly, in order to strengthen the accuracy of any perception data, it will be beneficial to ask participants to reflect on their more immediate experiences (i.e., current school year) instead of thinking in retrospect.

Recommendations for Parent Resource Centers (PRCs)

PRCs have the potential to empower parents and build their capacity for contributing meaningfully in their children's schooling. Parental involvement reportedly influences students educationally through the mechanisms of modeling, reinforcement, and direct instruction (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995); therefore, school-based PRCs should offer resources, opportunities, and services that will prepare parents to act in ways that facilitate these mechanisms. Relative to the mechanism of modeling, PRCs should provide opportunities for parents to invest their time in the school setting and emphasize

the importance of parents showing interest in their children's education. This could include providing volunteer opportunities in the school setting, gaining parents' involvement on school committees and in collaborative decision-making, encouraging parents' attendance at school functions, facilitating two-way communication between the school and home, and encouraging parents to engage in dialogue about school-related things with their children. Relative to reinforcement, the interest parents show and the attention, praise, and rewards given to children for achievement oriented behaviors may increase the likelihood that the desired behaviors will continue (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Some parents may benefit from being educated about the principals of reinforcement and how they can apply them toward shaping success related behaviors in their children. PRCs can assist with developing parents' understanding of reinforcement through methods such as workshops and one-on-one consultations led by professionals with expertise in teaching, learning, and behavior modification. Relative to parental involvement and direct instruction, PRCs should have instructionally sound resources available for parents to use with their children and family, provide explicit instruction about how to use resources and strategies, host skill building workshops, and in some cases, connect parents with community resources such as General Education Diploma (GED) courses for themselves or tutorial services for their children.

Recommendations for School Psychologists

School psychologists have a wealth of knowledge and skills that make them ideal candidates to help facilitate systems level change in schools concerning school climate, family-school relations, and student achievement. Results of this study suggest a need for stakeholders in schools to continue to be informed about the key factors that lend

themselves to enhanced and effective parental involvement and increased student performance. Since the school principal has such an impact on what the goals of a school are and the occurrences within a school building, it will be important for school psychologists to work collaboratively with school principals. Through working with principals as well as PRC facilitators, school psychologists can help encourage more use of the centers and highlight the potential benefits of PRCs to include accomplishing student-centered and family-centered goals. School psychologists can also assist relevant school personnel with creating more opportunities for parental involvement on advisory committees and in decision-making at the school through the PRC, along with equipping the PRCs with research-based or evidenced-based materials that have been shown to be effective with improving student learning. Furthermore, school psychologists can assist with creating opportunities for parents to receive the direct instruction they need to effectively deliver strategies and instruction to their children at home. School psychologists can also assist with the development of a protocol for fidelity checks so there can be more assurance that PRCs are being operated in a consistent fashion at each school and that comparable information, resources, and opportunities are available to parents and families.

Data concerning parents' PRC activities indicate that parents mostly accessed the PRCs for volunteer opportunities and to attend workshops. With this being the case, school psychologists can collaborate with relevant stakeholders to increase opportunities for volunteerism in the schools. Furthermore, school psychologists can collaborate with others to devise workshops and parent trainings led by qualified personnel that will be more meaningful to parents. This could include helping to develop needs assessments,

hosting parent focus groups, and other methods for seeking input from parents and families.

Summary

This study sought to investigate the impact of access to school-based PRCs on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement. Data indicated that parents most often accessed the PRCs for volunteer opportunities and to attend workshops. There were no statistically significant differences between the PRC use and nonuse groups in terms of school climate perceptions. Furthermore, there were no statically significant differences between the academic achievement of students whose parents used the PRC and those whose parents did not. However, parental perceptions of students' achievement motivation was positively associated with PRC use. Additionally, perceptions of the degree of caring and sensitivity demonstrated by school principals was positively associated with students' achievement in ELA. Perceptions of school building characteristics were positively associated with students' math achievement. Data indicate a negative relationship between collaborative decision-making and PRC use. This could suggest collaboration with parents is generally accepted and welcomed in the school building, creating less of a need for parents to seek this through the PRCs. However, this finding needs to be further investigated. Perception data concerning collaborative decision-making also indicated a negative relationship between collaborative decision-making and students' achievement in ELA, suggesting a need to examine decision-making concerning ELA curriculum and instruction for students. Concerning students overall academic performance, students who did well in one academic area tended perform well in the other as well.

Although some of the findings from this study were unexpected, results provide more insight into the utility of school-based PRCs and changes to consider. Furthermore, results add to the limited PRC literature base. School psychologists are key stakeholders within school settings who can make these findings and other information about family-school relations and student achievement more relevant to other stakeholders. School psychologists can also assist with increasing awareness about PRCs, evaluating the needs of parents and families, and strengthening the service provision and fidelity of implementation of PRC services.

References

Aud, S. L. (2007). *A closer look at Title I: Making education for the disadvantaged more student-centered* (SR-15). Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation.

Abdul-Adil, J. K., & Farmer, A. D., Jr. (2006). Inner-city African American parental involvement in elementary schools: Getting beyond urban legends of apathy. *School Psychology Quarterly, 21*, 1-12.

Anderson, C. S. (1982). The search for school climate: A review of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 52*, 368-420.

Baker, A. J. L., Piotrkowski, C. S., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (1998). The effects of the home instruction program for preschool youngsters (HIPPY) on children's school performance at the end of the program and one year later. *Early Childhood Quarterly, 13*, 571-588.

Borman, G. D., Hewes, G. M., Overman, L. T., & Brown, S. (2002). *Comprehensive school reform and student achievement: A meta-analysis* (CRESPAR Publication N. R-117- D40005). Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Buckley, J., Schneider, M., & Shang, Y. (2004). *LAUSD school facilities and academic performance*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities. Retrieved from http://www.ncef.org/pubs/LAUSD%20Report.pdf

Christenson, S. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2001). *Schools and families: Creating essential connections for learning.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Christle, C. A., Jolivette, K., & Nelson, M. (2007). School characteristics related to high school dropout rates. *Remedial and Special Education, 28*, 325-339.

Cohen, J., Pickeral, T., & McCloskey, M. (2009). Assessing school climate. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed For Quick Review*, *74*(8), 45-48.

Cohen, J., Mccabe, E. M., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record, 111*(1), 180-213.

Comer, J. P. (1995). *School Power: Implications of an intervention project*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Comer, J. P. (2001). Schools that develop children. *The American Prospect, 12*(7), 30-35.

Comer, J. P., & Haynes, N. M. (1991). Parent involvement in schools: An ecological approach. *The Elementary School Journal, 91*, 271-277.

Comer, .J. P., Haynes, N. M., Joyner, E. T., & Ben-Avie, M. (1996). *Rallying the whole village: The Comer process for reforming education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Comer, J. P., Joyner, E. T., & Ben-Avie, M. (2004). *Six pathways to healthy child development and academic success: The field guide to Comer schools in action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Comer School Development Program (2015a). *School development program*. Retrieved from http://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/comer/index.aspx

Comer School Development Program (2015b). *School climate survey*. Retrieved from http://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/comer/evaluation/surveys/scs/

Comer School Development Program (2016). *School climate survey: Parent version revised*. Retrieved from https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/comer/evaluation/surveys/scs/parent.aspx

Deslandes, R., & Bertrand, R. (2005). Motivation of parent involvement in secondary-level schooling. *Journal of Educational Research, 98,* 164-175.

Doll, B. (2010). Positive school climate. *Educational Leadership, 11*(4), 12-16.

Eagle, J. W., Dowd-Eagle, S. E., & Sheridan, S. M. (2008). Best practices in school-community partnerships. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp. 953-968). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Eccles, J. S., & Harold, R. D. (1996). Family involvement in children's and adolescents' schooling. In A. Booth, J. F. Dunn, A. Booth, & J. F. Dunn (Eds.), *Family–school links: How do they affect educational outcomes?* (pp. 3-34). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ellerbrock, C, Kiefer, S. M., & Alley, K. M. (2014). School-based interpersonal relationships: Setting the foundation for young adolescents' belonging in middle school. *Middle Grades Research Journal, 9*(2), 1-17.

Emmons, C. L., Efimba, M. O., & Hagopian, G. (1998). A school transformed: The case of Norman S. Weir. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 3*, 39-51.

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2002). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Goldenberg, H., & Goldenberg, I. (2008). *Family therapy: An overview.* Belmont, CA: Thompson Brooks/Cole.

Gonzalez-DeHass, A. R., Willems, P. P., & Doan Holbein, M. F. (2005). Examining the relationship between parental involvement and student motivation. *Educational Psychology Review, 17,* 99-123.

Gregory, A., Henry, D. B., & Schoeny, M. E. (2007). School climate and implementation of a preventive intervention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 40,* 250-260.

Haynes, N. M., Emmons, C., & Ben-Avie, M. (1997). School climate as a factor in student adjustment and achievement. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 8*(3), 321-329.

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, parent, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record*, *97*(2), 311-331.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (2005). *Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler model of parental involvement*. Retrieved from http://www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/model.html

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T, Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *The Elementary School Journal, 106*, 105-130.

Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An explanatory model. *Educational Review, 63*(1), 37-52.

Jackson, S., Martin, N., & Stocklinski, J. (2004). Families as partners: Parent teams and parent/family involvement. In E. T. Joyner, M. Ben-Avie, & J. P. Comer (Eds.), *Transforming school leadership and management to support student learning and development: The field guide to Comer schools in action* (pp. 105-126). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Jordan, G. E., Snow, C. E., & Porche, M. V. (2000). Project ease: The effect of a family literacy project on kindergarten students' early literacy skills. *Reading Research Quarterly, 35*, 524-546.

Klose, L. M. (2008). Understanding and fostering achievement motivation. *Principal Leadership: High School Edition, 9*(4), 12-16.

Lehr, C. A., & Christenson, S. L. (2002). Best practices in promoting positive school climate. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology IV* (pp. 929-947). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Lehr, C. A. (2004). *Positive school climate: Information for educators*. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org/communications/spawareness/schclimate_ho.pdf

Lunenburg, F.C. (2011). The Comer school development program: Improving education for low-income students. *National Forum of Multicultural Issues Journal, 8*(1),

1-14.

Mapp, K. L. (2012). *Tightening up Title I: Title I and parental involvement lessons from the past, recommendations for the future*. Retrieved from http://edsource.org/wp-content/uploads/-title-i-and-parental-involvement_091556561921.pdf

Marcon, R. A. (1999). Positive relationships between parent school involvement and public school inner-city preschoolers' development and academic performance. *School Psychology Review, 28*, 395-412.

Mizell, M. H. (April, 1980). *Implementation of Title I parent advisory councils in the rural south*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Columbia, S.C.

National School Climate Center (2015). *School climate*. Retrieved from http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/

National Education Association (2015). *Common core standards*. Retrieved from http://www.nea.org/home/56617.htm

Patrikakou, E. N., & Weissberg, R. P. (2000). Parents' perceptions of teacher outreach and parent involvement in children's education. In J. F. Gillespie & J. Primavera (Eds.), *Diverse families, competent families: Innovations in research and preventive intervention practice* (pp. 103-119). Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press.

Patrikakou, E. N., Weissberg, R. P., Redding, S., & Walberg, H. J. (2005). School-family Partnerships: Enhancing the academic, social, and emotional learning of children. In *School-Family Partnerships for Children's Success* (pp. 1-17). New

York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Patrikakou, E. N. (2008). *The power of parent involvement: Evidence, ideas, and tools for student success*. Retrieved from http://education.praguesummerschools.org/images/education/readings/2014/Patrikakou_Power_of_parent_involvement.pdf

Ramirez-Smith, C. (1995). Stopping the cycle of school failure: The Comer model. *Educational Leadership, 52*(5), 14-19.

Ross, S. M., McDonald, A. J., Alberg, M., & McSparrin-Gallagher, B. (2007). Achievement and climate outcomes for the knowledge is power program in an inner-city middle school. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk, 12*, 137-165.

Schneider, M. (2002). *Do school facilities affect academic outcomes?* Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities. Retrieved from http://www.ncef.org/pubs/outcomes.pdf.

Sheridan, S. M., Taylor, A. M., & Woods, K. E. (2008). Best practices for working with families: Instilling a family-centered approach. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology V* (pp. 995-1008). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Simon, B. S. (2000). *Predictors of high school and family partnerships and the influence of partnerships on student success* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest.

Smith, H. (2005). *Comer school development program: James Comer interview*. Retrieved from http://www.pbs.org/makingschoolswork/sbs/csp/jamescomer.html

Smith, E. P., Connell, C. M., Wright, G., Sizer, M., Norman, J. M., Hurley, A., & Walker, S. N. (1997). An ecological model of home, school, and community partnerships: Implications for research and practice. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultations, 8*(4), 339-360.

Smith, J., Wohlstetter, P., Kuzin, C. A., & DePedro, K. (2011). Parent involvement in urban charter schools: New strategies for increasing participation. *School Community Journal, 21*(1), 71-94.

Squires, D. A., & Kranyik, R. D. (1996). The Comer program: changing school culture. *Educational Leadership, 53*(4), 29-32.

Steinmayr, R., Meibner, A., Weidinger, A., & Wirthwein, L. (2014). *Academic achievement*. Retrieved from http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756810/obo-9780199756810-0108.xml

United States Department of Education (2004). *Parental involvement: Title I, part a. nonregulatory guidance*. Retrieved from www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/parentinvguid.doc

United States Department of Education (2007). *Engaging parents in education: Lessons from five parental information and resource centers. Innovations in education*. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/parents/parentinvolve/engagingparents.pdf

United States Department of Education (2015). *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/esea

Vazquez-Nuttall, E., Li, C., & Kaplan, J. P. (2006). Home-school partnerships with culturally diverse families: Challenges and solutions for school personnel. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 22*, 81-102.

Wallace Foundation (2006). *Leadership for learning: Making the connections among state, district, and school policies and practices*. New York, NY: Wallace Foundation.

Wandersman, A., Motes, P. S., Lindsey, R. G., Snell-Johns, J., Ford, L., & Amaral, D. (2002). *South Carolina Parent Involvement Instrument Project, final report*. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Education Oversight Committee.

Wang, M., & Eccles, J. S. (2013). School context, achievement motivation, and academic engagement: A longitudinal study of school engagement using a multidimensional perspective. *Learning and Instruction, 28*, 12-23.

Williams, E., Persuad,G., & Turner, T. (2008). Planning or principal evaluation: Effects on school climate and achievement. *Educational Planning*, 17(3), 1-11.

Ysseldyke, J., Burns, M., Dawson, P., Kelley, B., Morrison, D., Ortiz, S., Rosenfield, S., & Telzrow, C. (2006). *School psychology: A blueprint for training and practice III*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Zellman, G. L., & Waterman, J. M. (1998). Understanding the impact of parent school Involvement on children's educational outcomes. *Journal of Educational Research, 91*, 370-380.

Appendix A

District Approval Letter

HENRY
COUNTY
SCHOOLS

September 15, 2014

Cherisse L. Chisolm
1274 Winwood Drive
McDonough, Georgia 30253

Dear Ms. Chisolm:

Your request to conduct research in our school system as part of a requirement to obtain your doctoral degree from the **Indiana University of Pennsylvania** has been reviewed. Specifically, consideration was given to the description of your research project, proposed data collection procedures, instruments and research timeline.

It is my understanding that you plan to **examine the impact of access to school-based parent resource centers on parent's perceptions of school climate and student's academic achievement.** Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that all information obtained for this study must be completely confidential. To preserve the privacy of student and staff information, pseudonyms for teachers, students, schools, and this system must be used in all written reports. This data must be used solely for the purpose articulated in the research application.

After considering all of the information submitted, it appears that your research request meets the requirements of Henry County Board of Education policy KEBA, Solicitation of Information. I am, therefore, approving your request to conduct the research in our school system as described in your proposal. I hope that your research project goes well and that the information you obtain will be beneficial to you and the students of Henry County Schools.

Sincerely,

Rodney Bowler,
Superintendent

Copy: Jodye R. Callaway

33 N. Zack Hinton Pkwy
McDonough, Georgia 30253
Phone: 770-957-6547
Fax: 770 -957-4367

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

(IUP Letterhead)
Informed Consent Form

Dear Parent,

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Cherisse L. Chisolm in partial fulfillment for the Doctor of Education degree in School Psychology, through Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether to participate. The purpose of this study is to learn about the impact access to a school-based parent resource center has on parents' perceptions of school climate and students' academic achievement. You are eligible to participate because you are the parent of a student who was enrolled in the third or fourth grade last school year and attended a Title I school with a school-based parent resource center.

Your Involvement In This Study:

1) I am requesting that you reflect on the previous school year and complete a School Climate Survey that allows you to express how you feel about your child's school. I would also like for you to answer some questions about the school's Parent Resource Center. These tasks should take you no more than 20 minutes to complete.

2) Second, I am requesting your permission to obtain your child's 2014-15 Georgia Milestones Assessment System reading, English/language arts, and math scores.

3) Third, I am requesting your permission to access your information from the 2014-15 school year's Parent Resource Center's sign-in log at your child's school.

Confidentiality:
If you choose to participate in this study, all information will be handled in a confidential manner. No names of parents, students, schools, or the school district will be reported in this study. Yours and your child's data will be given an anonymous code for identification purposes. You have received the school climate survey and the parent resource center questions with your anonymous code already written on them. If you choose to participate in this study; upon receipt of your signed informed consent form, completed survey, and parent resource center questions, the researcher will make note of your consent and the hard copy of your consent form will be placed in a confidential, locked location in an administrator's office. Your child's achievement scores will be provided to the researcher by leadership personnel. The researcher will then remove his/her name from the score report and replace it with their assigned anonymous code. Relative to the parent resource center's sign-in log, the center's coordinator will be given temporary access to your assigned anonymous code in order to go through the sign-in log to mark through your name, if it appears, and write your anonymous code beside it. The

researcher will be given a copy of the sign-in log with your name blacked out and only your code will appear near the "name" column.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and there is no penalty for failure to participate. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the researcher, Cherisse L. Chisolm at (770) 852-0777 or jmdp@iup.edu. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you and your child will be destroyed (i.e., shredded). If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence.

Risks:
You may be concerned about who will view your answers and your child's achievement scores and how this information will affect your relationship with the school and your child's school experience. Your participation will not reflect negatively on you or your child. None of your individual responses will be shared with anyone other than the researcher. Your child's scores will only be seen by leadership personnel (i.e., those who already have access to your child's scores) and the researcher. All results of this study will be reported as group data.

Possible Benefits of Participation:
Your participation in this study could provide information about some benefits of having a school-based parent resource center. The information gained could inform school personnel about what to consider to make the school better for you and your child.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement on the next page and return the informed consent form to your child's teacher in the envelope provided. Keep the extra unsigned copy for yourself. Also, please include in the envelope your completed school climate survey and parent resource center questions.

Thank you for your help and consideration with this project. For more information, please contact the project director, Cherisse L. Chisolm.

Project Director:	Mrs. Cherisse L. Chisolm
Rank/Position:	Doctoral Candidate/GA Certified School Psychologist
Department Affiliation:	Educational and School Psychology
Campus Address:	Stouffer Hall, Room 246C, 1175 Maple Street, Indiana, PA 15705
Phone:	(770) 857-0777

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Lynanne Black
Rank/Position: Associate Professor
Department Affiliation: Educational and School Psychology
Campus Address: Stouffer Hall, Room 246C, 1175 Maple Street, Indiana, PA 15705
Phone: (724) 357-4757

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential, my child's information will be held in strict confidence, and I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed consent form to keep in my possession.

Name *(please print):*
_____

Signature:_____

Date: _____ **Phone where you can be reached:**_____

Best days and times to reach you:
_____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, and have made myself available to answer any questions that may be raised.

Date: _____ Project Director's signature:_____

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (phone: 724-357-7730)

Appendix C

Parent Resource Center Questions

Please check yes or no to the following questions about the Parent Resource Center:

Did you know that there is a Parent Resource Center at your child's school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Did you check out resources or receive assistance from the Parent Resource Center to help your child or your family last school year?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Did you attend a parent workshop conducted by the Parent Resource Center last school year?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Has use of the Parent Resource Center made you feel better about the school?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Parent Resource Center Sign-In Log

Reasons for visit? (Please check all that apply)

Name (please print)	Date	Child's Grade Level	Check Out Resources	Consult	Obtain Info About the School or Important Dates	Volunteer	Use Computers	Referral	Workshop
Jane Doe	8/1/14	3rd	✔	✔			✔		

Reasons for visit key

Check Out Resources - To sign out materials to use with your child and/or family

Consult - To receive instructions about how to use a resource or talk with a teacher or other person in the school building about a school-related issue affecting your child and/or family

Obtain Info About the School or Important Dates - To learn information about the school or important dates to remember for the school year

Volunteer - To help with a task at the school

Use Computers - To look up information or complete a task on a computer in the resource center

Referral - To be connected with a person or service outside of the school building in the school district or community

Workshop - To attend a training/information session about a topic concerning your child and/or family

Appendix E

Letter of Permission to Use Survey Instrument

Yale University

Child Study Center
School Development Program
100 York Street, Suite 1A
New Haven, Connecticut 06511-5664

Telephone: 203-737-4000
Fax: 203-737-1023

May 21, 2014

Cherisse L. Chisolm

1274 Winwood Drive
McDonough, GA 30253

Dear Ms. Chisolm:

This letter grants you permission from the Comer School Development Program, Yale University Child Study Center, to use its School Climate Surveys for your research towards the degree of Doctor of Psychology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

We wish you best of luck with your project.

Sincerely,

Christine L. Emmons, Ph.D.
Assistant Clinical Professor
Yale University Child Study Center

Email: Christine.Emmons@yale.edu

Appendix F

School Climate Survey, Parent Version-Revised

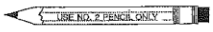
School Name: _____

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEY

Revised Edition
(Parent Version)

This survey is designed to get the opinions of parents concerning the general climate of your child's school. Your input is very important in helping to better understand the issues related to the school climate. Your responses are strictly confidential and you will not be identified in any way. Thank you for taking the time to respond.

DIRECTIONS



- Make your marks dark.
- Erase changes completely
- Correct Marks: ● ●
- Incorrect: ⊗ ◕ ✓ ⓦ

PARENT I.D.#

⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪
①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①
②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②
③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③
④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④
⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤
⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥
⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦
⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧
⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨

SCHOOL I.D.#

⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪	⓪
①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①	①
②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②	②
③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③	③
④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④	④
⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤	⑤
⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥	⑥
⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦	⑦
⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧	⑧
⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨	⑨

For the next five questions, please fill in the oval next to the appropriate answer.

1. **Gender**
   - ① Female
   - ② Male

2. **Ethnic Background**
   - ① Black/African-American
   - ② Latino/Hispanic
   - ③ White/European-American
   - ④ Native American
   - ⑤ Asian/Pacific Islander
   - ⑥ Other _____

3. **How many of your children attend this school?**
   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

4. **What grades are they in at this school?**
   Ⓚ ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫

5. **What level of education did you complete?**
   - ① Finished elementary school
   - ② Some high school
   - ③ Graduated from high school
   - ④ Vocational/Technical Training
   - ⑤ Some college
   - ⑥ Graduated from college
   - ⑦ Graduate School

 Yale Child Study Center • School Development Program • School Climate Survey • PV • 1

We want to know how you feel about your child's school. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by filling in <u>one</u> of the five responses.

SCALE: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree NS = Not Sure D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1. My child believes that he/she can do well in school	○	○	○	○	○
2. There are often broken windows or doors in my child's school	○	○	○	○	○
3. My child trusts the teachers	○	○	○	○	○
4. The teachers make sure that my child can do his/her work well	○	○	○	○	○
5. My child feels that he/she can learn at this school	○	○	○	○	○
6. The principal of my child's school respects the teachers	○	○	○	○	○
7. My child is willing to learn at school	○	○	○	○	○
8. Community members work with staff at my child's school to help improve the school	○	○	○	○	○
9. We parents believe that the principal will do the best for our children	○	○	○	○	○
10. Most staff at my child's school are aware of our concerns in the community	○	○	○	○	○
11. At my child's school, the principal cares about the needs of parents	○	○	○	○	○
12. At my child's school, there is little chance for teachers to share their views on school matters	○	○	○	○	○
13. There is good community involvement in my child's school	○	○	○	○	○
14. I often visit my child's school	○	○	○	○	○
15. At my child's school, the principal cares about the needs of the children	○	○	○	○	○
16. I usually attend Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings at my child's school	○	○	○	○	○
17. At this school, teachers help my child feel good about himself/herself	○	○	○	○	○
18. Most students at my child's school enjoy reading	○	○	○	○	○
19. I do not often attend school activities	○	○	○	○	○
20. Teachers at my child's school are respected by the principal	○	○	○	○	○

SCALE: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree NS = Not Sure D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	NS	D	SD
21. My child is respected by the teachers	○	○	○	○	○
22. At my child's school, the principal respects the non-teaching staff	○	○	○	○	○
23. My child's school has a high standard of work	○	○	○	○	○
24. At my child's school, all staff members help to make decisions about school matters	○	○	○	○	○
25. I often help with special school projects (for example: bus trips, fund-raising)	○	○	○	○	○
26. My child's school is kept in good physical condition	○	○	○	○	○
27. At my child's school, the principal shows consideration for teachers	○	○	○	○	○
28. At my child's school, teachers make sure that the children can write well	○	○	○	○	○
29. My child does not care about learning	○	○	○	○	○
30. My child's school reaches out to the community	○	○	○	○	○
31. My child's school has a bright and pleasant appearance	○	○	○	○	○
32. The relationship between my child's school and the community is good	○	○	○	○	○
33. The walls of my child's school are usually in good condition	○	○	○	○	○
34. Teachers at my child's school help my child with school problems	○	○	○	○	○
35. This school is helping my child to develop into a well-adjusted person	○	○	○	○	○
36. At my child's school, teachers help to make decisions about the school	○	○	○	○	○
37. At my child's school, teachers make sure that the children can read well	○	○	○	○	○
38. My child's school is usually clean and tidy	○	○	○	○	○
39. At my child's school, the principal alone usually makes decisions concerning the school	○	○	○	○	○

SCALE: SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree NS = Not Sure D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	NS	D	SD
40. At this school, teachers pay attention to my child's feelings ...	○	○	○	○	○
41. My child likes to go to school	○	○	○	○	○

COMMENTS:

We appreciate your taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Thank you.

T 7120

