

FOSTERING A CHILD'S FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS LEADING TO SELF-
DETERMINATION: A CASE STUDY OF A REFUGEE FAMILY, A HEAD START
AGENCY, AND THEIR FAMILY-PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIP

By
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study investigated and described the views of both Head Start staff and a refugee family regarding adult fostering of foundational skills leading to self-determination in a young child at risk for disability as well as how these adults worked together in partnership.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of this dissertation. It discusses background information, describes the purpose of the dissertation, and establishes the scope of the study. Chapter 1 explains that chapter 2 presents the part of the study that investigated the adult behaviors (in home and Head Start) that influence a child's foundational skills leading to later self-determination while chapter 3 focuses on the part of the study that investigated the relationship between the adults at home and the adults at Head Start.

Chapter 2 presents research on how the refugee family and Head Start staff influenced the foundational skills leading to later self-determination of a 4-year old boy at risk for disability. This study reports that adult expectations and practices related to protection, intervention, and affective response in his home environment differed greatly from those in his Head Start environment; he had difficulty traversing the parallel worlds; but his foundational skills improved in both settings during the 4-month duration of this study. This chapter situates the study in the literature; outlines the research methods; presents and discusses the findings; and highlights implications for practice, research, and policy.

Chapter 3 presents research on the relationship between the Head Start staff and the family discussed in chapter 2. Children from refugee families' attendance at Head Start agencies provides the opportunity for Head Start staff to foster trusting,

collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnerships characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes. Such partnerships could help launch refugee families as partners in their children's education in the U.S. and ultimately improve family and child outcomes. This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature, describes the methods for the study, presents and discusses the findings, and details numerous implications for practice, policy, and research.

Chapter 4 concludes this dissertation by rejoining the two parts of the study discussed in chapters 2 and 3 and then proposing a future research agenda. After connecting the previous chapters, it presents a framework to illustrate how future research can systematically build upon this exploratory research. Then, it connects this research framework with several future studies and explains how the studies connect to the case study conducted for this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 1

Overview: Background, Purpose, and Scope of Dissertation Research

Self-determined behavior, defined as “volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to maintain or improve one's quality of life” (Wehmeyer, 2005, p. 117), is correlated with quality of life (Wehmeyer, 1999), school completion (Eisenman, 2007), and post-school employment (Walker et al., 2011). Although self-determination develops and emerges in adolescence or the beginning of adulthood (Wehmeyer, Abery, Mithaug, & Stancliffe, 2003), younger children can learn foundational, developmentally appropriate skills leading to future self-determination (Brotherson, Cook, Erwin, & Weigel, 2008; Erwin & Brown, 2003; Erwin et al., 2009; Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003; Wehmeyer et al., 2003; Wehmeyer & Field, 2007).

Self-determination is the result of the dynamic relationship between an individual's characteristics and the opportunities and expectations in his or her environments and, therefore, “does not occur within a vacuum” (Wehmeyer et al., 2003, p. 31). In addition to different perceptions of education (and the roles of families, children, and teachers in it), families who are refugees may have expectations for their children's behavior (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001) and concepts of their role in their children's education (Kalyunpur & Harry, 2012) that vary from their children's teachers' perceptions. Different expectations in each environment can cause maladjustment and inhibit skill development, especially when few linkages exist between environments (Brotherson et al., 2008; Garbarino, 1992). Many of the expectations in school and home environments can be linked to different beliefs about fostering foundational skills leading to self-determination.

Exploring the complexities surrounding these foundational skills may be instrumental in helping educators and families who are refugees build strong collaborative relationships.

Background

This section provides background information on refugee resettlement in the U.S.; the role of education in the resettlement process; and the construct of self-determination in education, across cultures, and in young children.

Refugees

Around the world, at least 43 million people left their homes to flee from oppression and persecution in 2010 alone (UNHCR, 2011). Some were internally displaced; some sought asylum in other countries; and some became refugees. A refugee is someone who

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR, n.d.)

Refugees can become repatriated by their homelands, given citizenship by the country where they live as refugees, or resettled in another country (Singer & Wilson, 2006). Resettlement, an international responsibility, can provide protection to refugees when their lives, liberty, safety, health, or other fundamental human rights are in jeopardy (UNHCR, 2011).

During 2011, 22 resettlement countries admitted a total of 61,649 refugees, 56,424 of whom were resettled in the U.S. (U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). In 2011,

refugee admissions in the U.S. were highest for Burma (16,972; 30%), Bhutan (14,999; 27%), Iraq (9,388; 17%), and Somalia (3,161; 6%) (U.S. Department of State et al., 2012). Thirty-four percent of refugees admitted to the United States in 2011 were under 18 years of age (U.S. Department of State et al., 2012).

Refugees who want to resettle in the United States submit applications to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and then undergo a long process of background checks and interviews (Singer & Wilson, 2006; Ziegler, 2010). Refugees participate in cultural training to help prepare them for their move and sign a promissory note to state their intention to pay back the travel costs of resettlement (Singer & Wilson, 2006; Ziegler, 2010). Once in America, refugees are sent to live in various cities, and local resettlement agencies help their settlement for the first 4 to 8 months by providing transitional housing, social work services, and cash subsidies. Refugees have been resettled in every state except for Wyoming, which opts out of the resettlement program (Singer & Wilson, 2006).

Education

While resettlement agencies play a crucial role in resettling refugee families and can have a large impact on refugees' experiences and successes, the Office of Refugee Resettlement recently called for them to partner with Head Start agencies to provide comprehensive services to refugee families with young children (Head Start Connection, n.d.). The Administration for Children and Families stresses collaboration between its agencies with similar missions (the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the Office of Head Start are both its agencies), though limited funding, varying policy and legislative

mandates, and other barriers often cause them to work in isolation from one another (Head Start Connection, n.d.).

Head Start has always served diverse populations and promoted local adaptation to the communities they serve. Founded in 1965 to provide comprehensive services to low-income children and their families, Head Start services include education, nutrition, healthcare, and mental healthcare. Head Start prioritizes family engagement in all activities. Its mission to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services (About Head Start, n.d.) fits well with the Office of Refugee Resettlement's mission (Head Start Connection, n.d.).

While Head Start is a specific program designed to provide family support in addition to education, the government also implicitly charges the broader education system with the responsibility of helping to provide welfare services for children in addition to educational services: "Schools with refugee populations are responsible for providing greater academic requirements as well as broader psychosocial and basic needs" (Bogner, 2005, p. 40). Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) state: "Schools are one of the first and most influential service systems for young refugees" (p. 29).

Many refugees cite improved education for their children as an important factor in their decision to resettle in the United States (Lænkholm, 2007). In addition to explicit subject matter, schools are systems of transmitting language and culture (Nieto, 1999). Education, while providing the means to increased opportunities for refugee children, is a process of cultural acquisition and transmission through which "culture is modified, changed, and reinterpreted by individuals and collectivities" (Trueba, 1991, p. 280).

Suarez-Orozco (2001) points out that school is sometimes the only “systematic point of meaningful contact” (p. 346) for immigrants with their new society (refugees, as defined previously, are immigrants with a specific status and are therefore under the immigrant umbrella). The relationship between home and school cultures is complex and important.

As children acquire a new awareness of culture through their education experiences, families’ cultures and perceptions change. Children’s acculturation affects the whole family, and incongruence can affect the family’s self-concept. In her ethnographic study, Shrestha (2011) found that Bhutanese refugees in Kentucky looked down upon their own parenting techniques and revered the American techniques. Shrestha’s findings indicated that Bhutanese families wanted their children to integrate with American society but also worried they would lose their Bhutanese cultural identity in the process. Concepts of self-determination are a possible area of difference between school and home cultures (Frankland, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Blackmountain, 2004; Shogren, 2011).

Self-Determination

Outcomes of increased self-determination are important for all students, especially students who are more likely to face discrimination and low expectations (Trainor, Lindstrom, Simon-Burroughs, Martin, & Sorrells, 2008). One such group is children whose parents are refugees and may not be familiar with or comfortable with the education system. Another such group is children with disabilities or at risk for disability, who may need more intentional support to develop skills leading to self-determination (Palmer et al., 2012; Wehmeyer et al., 2003). Without intentional fostering of skills leading to increased self-determination, children with disabilities face the risks

of feeling helpless (Powers, Sowers, & Stevens, 1995; Wehmeyer et al., 2003) and becoming overly-dependent on others (Wehmeyer et al., 2003).

While limited research about self-determination for diverse populations exists (Trainor et al., 2008), a few studies apply the self-determination construct to specific cultures (Shogren, 2011; Wehmeyer et al., 2011). Frankland and colleagues (2004), for example, analyzed the application of the four essential characteristics of self-determination (i.e., behavioral autonomy, self-regulated behavior, psychological empowerment, and self-realization; Wehmeyer, Kelchner, & Richards, 1996) to the Diné (or Navajo). The authors demonstrated that these characteristics were relevant to this culture when operationalized in ways specific to the Diné culture. In other words, a flexible framework of self-determination facilitates cross-cultural discussions of the construct; one operationalization of behaviors to illustrate the characteristics cannot apply to everyone.

Other studies (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995; Ohtake & Wehmeyer, 2004; Zhang, Wehmeyer, & Chen, 2005) address the application of the self-determination construct to various international cultures. These studies demonstrate that the actions used to express self-determination differ, but the underlying value of individuals acting on their volition remains universal across studies (Wehmeyer et al., 2011). While most interventions designed to promote self-determination have been developed and evaluated within cultures that emphasize individualism and autonomy (Wehmeyer et al., 2003; Wehmeyer et al., 2011), some individuals only understand their sense of self in relationship to others. These individuals may have cultures that encourage values and behaviors that differ from those associated with the Western emphasis on individualism (Wehmeyer et al., 2003;

Zhang et al., 2005), but individuals can still be self-determined. Self-determination cannot be defined using a response class (Wehmeyer, 1999): It refers to volitional intention but not specific actions.

Therefore, efforts to promote self-determination should be flexible to allow for individualization and cultural relevance (Wehmeyer et al., 2003; Wehmeyer et al., 2011).

Wehmeyer and colleagues (2011) write:

...it is critical that efforts to promote self-determination take into account and be responsive to the structural and contextual factors that exist within cultures; otherwise such interventions run the risk of being irrelevant. We know far too little about the complex issues pertaining to culture and self-determination, and it will be incumbent upon anyone developing, evaluating, and implementing interventions to be cognizant of the unique strengths and characteristics of cultures... (pp. 25-26)

Cultural responsiveness is especially important considering that fostering the skills leading to increased self-determination occurs both at home and school (Abery & Zajac, 1996; Palmer et al., 2012). However, limited research focuses on the home environment (Abery & Stancliffe, 1996; Brotherson et al., 2008; Shogren & Turnbull, 2006). Limited research on the development of self-determination at home, within families, “may detrimentally limit the field’s ability to support children, and families, in developing the capacity for, or for promoting, self-determination” (Shogren & Turnbull, 2006, p. 341).

Focusing on the connection between home and school, Palmer and colleagues (2012) proposed the Foundations for Self-Determination Framework for fostering in

young children the development of foundational skills leading to self-determination through short-term goals developed in partnership between families and teachers. This framework focuses on three overlapping behaviors for the child: self-regulating emotions, behavior, and attention; making choices, and engaging with the environment. In this framework, families and teachers, in partnership, set short-term goals pertaining to these three foundational skills for young children in both home and school environments.

Self-regulation manifests when children respond to input from their environment through managing their emotions (Kochanska, Philibert, & Barry, 2009), behavior (Ponitz, McClelland, Matthews, & Morrison, 2009), and attention (Palmer et al., 2012; Posner & Rothbart, 2009; Sheese, Rothbart, Posner, White, & Fraundorf, 2008). Self-regulation is necessary for successfully making choices and learning to appropriately engage in activities (Palmer et al., 2012).

Developmentally appropriate choice-making skills start with the capacity to identify and communicate preferences at a young age and develop into making choices and experiencing the outcomes of these choices (Wehmeyer et al., 2003). As children develop, they activate simple choice-making skills to solve increasingly complex problems. Children with disabilities are less likely to be offered choices due to perceptions of limited capacity (Palmer et al., 2012), but learning to make choices is important for young children with disabilities in order to decide their preferences (Liso, 2010), feel invested in their activities (Dunlap & Liso, 2004; McCormick, Jolivette, & Ridgle, 2003), and explore their environments (Erwin et al., 2009).

Engagement is when children are involved with the environment (teachers, peers, or materials) in ways that are appropriate for their age, ability, and context (McWilliam &

Bailey, 1992; McWilliam & Casey, 2008). Children actively engaged have increased interactions with people and materials, which lead to improved learning, problem-solving skills, and peer relationships (McWilliam & Casey, 2008). Levels of child engagement range from non-engaged to the highest order of engagement, persistence (McWilliam & Casey, 2008).

These foundational skills are inextricable: Engagement is made possible by self-regulation; engaged children may tolerate more potential distractions by self-regulating and problem-solving more successfully; and engaged and self-regulated behavior enables children to make better choices and choose activities in which they are interested and therefore more engaged (Palmer et al., 2012).

The family's fostering of young children's foundational skills for self-determination determines their skill level at school or daycare entry. Therefore, young children may encounter difficulties with determining and meeting adults' expectations when moving between home, school, and community environments.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate and describe the views of both Head Start staff and a refugee family regarding adult fostering of foundational skills leading to self-determination in a young child at risk for disability as well as how these adults worked together in partnership.

Scope

Chapter 2 presents research on how the refugee family and Head Start teachers fostered the foundational skills leading to later self-determination of a 4-year old boy at risk for disability. It found that adult expectations and practices related to protection,

intervention, and affective response in his home environment differed greatly from those in his Head Start environment; he had difficulty traversing the parallel worlds; but his foundational skills improved in both settings during the 4-month duration of this study. This chapter situates the study in the literature; outlines the research methods; presents and discusses the findings; and highlights implications for practice, research, and policy.

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Chapter 4 concludes this dissertation by bringing together the two parts of the same study and proposing a future research agenda. After rejoining chapters 2 and 3, this chapter presents a framework to illustrate how future research can systematically build upon this exploratory research. Then, it connects this research framework with several future studies and explains how the studies connect to the case study conducted for this dissertation.

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CHAPTER 2

Adult Fostering of a Child's Foundational Skills for Later Self-Determination:

A Case Study of a Refugee Family and a Head Start Agency

Abstract

Foundational skills leading to later self-determination (i.e., self-regulation, choice-making, and engagement) are embedded in the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. These skills are fostered in both home and Head Start environments and can lead to improved educational outcomes. This qualitative case study investigated how a refugee family and Head Start teachers fostered the skills leading to self-determination of a 4 year-old boy at risk for disability. It found that adult expectations and practices related to protection, intervention, and affective response in his home environment differed greatly from those in his Head Start environment; he had difficulty traversing the parallel worlds; but his foundational skills improved in both settings during the 4-month duration of this study. Implications include using a framework with these domains (i.e., protection, intervention, and affective response) to guide practice and research. Implications for policy are also discussed.

Chapter 2

Adult Fostering of a Child's Foundational Skills for Later Self-Determination:

A Case Study of a Refugee Family and a Head Start Agency

Violence has created over 15 million refugees worldwide. According to the 1951 U.N. Convention on Refugees, a refugee is someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (United Nations High Commission on Refugees, n.d.)

Despite the national and local refugee resettlement infrastructure in the United States, it is widely acknowledged that significant challenges face refugees as they start their lives in the U.S. (U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Since 34% of refugees admitted to the United States in 2011 were under 18 years of age (U.S. Department of State et al., 2012), the role of the U.S. education system in refugee families' successful transition to the U.S. cannot be overstated.

During 2011, 56,424 refugees were resettled in the U.S. (U.S. Department of State et al., 2012). Refugees are sent to live in various cities in the U.S., and local resettlement agencies help their resettlement for the first 4 to 8 months by providing transitional housing, social work services, and housing and cash subsidies.

While resettlement agencies play a crucial role in resettling refugee families and can have a large impact on refugees' experiences and successes, the Office of Refugee Resettlement recently called for them to collaborate with local Head Start agencies to provide comprehensive services to refugee families with young children (Head Start Connection, n.d.). The Administration for Children and Families encourages collaboration between its agencies with similar missions, including the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the Office of Head Start (Head Start Connection, n.d.).

Head Start has always served diverse populations and promoted local adaptation to the communities they serve (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (BRYCS), n.d.; Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Founded in 1965 to provide comprehensive services to low-income children and their families, Head Start services include education, nutrition, healthcare, and mental healthcare. Its mission—namely, to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services (About Head Start, n.d.)—fits well with the Office of Refugee Resettlement's mission (Head Start Connection, n.d.). Furthermore, Head Start's diverse population currently includes children of refugees living in the U.S., most of whom meet the Head Start income eligibility guidelines (BRYCS, n.d.).

A goal for many refugees who resettle in the U.S. is to improve their children's educational opportunities (Schiller, Boggis, Messenger, & Douglas, 2009). In addition to different perceptions of the role of education in general (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Tadesse, Hoot, & Watson-Thompson, 2009), families who are immigrants or refugees in the U.S. may have expectations for their children's social-emotional development (Berry,

Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Day & Parlakian, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001) and concepts of their role in their children's education (Kalyunpur & Harry, 2012) that vary from their children's teachers' perceptions (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Tadesse et al., 2009). Different expectations in each environment can cause maladjustment and inhibit skill development, especially when few linkages exist between environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Day & Parlakian, 2004; Garbarino, 1992) and when students have disabilities or developmental delays (Brotherson, Cook, Erwin, & Weigel, 2008).

Although scant, research on refugee families with young children in preschool in the U.S. consistently draws three conclusions applicable to the present study. First, refugee families are often unaccustomed to the teaching and disciplining techniques in U.S. schools and may disagree with their appropriateness for their children (Birman, Trickett, & Bacchus, 2001; Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2008; Tadesse et al., 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). Second, refugee families often have a genuine interest in their children's education but often do not have the ability to be involved in their children's education in the ways schools expect due to a host of barriers (e.g., lack of communication with the school, economic and family demands, lack of cultural and linguistic knowledge) (McBrien, 2005, 2011; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). Third, expectations for children from refugee families' behavior at home often differs greatly from what is expected of them at school (Hurley, Medici, Stewart, & Cohen, 2011; Tadesse et al., 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009).

Expectations for children's behavior that differ between home and school are often related to children's abilities to self-regulate, make choices, and engage in their

environments. These inextricable skills comprise the foundational skills leading to later self-determination. Self-determined behavior for adults, defined as “volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to maintain or improve one's quality of life” (Wehmeyer, 2005, p. 117), is correlated with quality of life (Wehmeyer, 1999), school completion (Eisenman, 2007), and post-school employment (Walker et al., 2011). Although self-determination develops and emerges in adolescence or the beginning of adulthood (Wehmeyer, Abery, Mithaug, & Stancliffe, 2003), younger children can learn foundational, developmentally appropriate skills leading to future self-determination (Brotherson et al., 2008; Erwin & Brown, 2003; Erwin et al., 2009; Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003; Wehmeyer et al., 2003; Wehmeyer & Field, 2007).

Considering that fostering young children's skills leading to increased self-determination occurs both at home and school (Abery & Zajac, 1996; Palmer et al., 2012), efforts to increase the children's skills must be responsive to their home cultures (Erwin et al., 2009; Frankland, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Blackmountain, 2004; Palmer et al., 2012). Limited research has focused on the home environment (Abery & Stancliffe, 1996; Shogren & Turnbull, 2006), however, a fact that “may detrimentally limit the field's ability to support children, and families, in developing the capacity for, or for promoting, self-determination” (Shogren & Turnbull, 2006, p. 341).

Palmer and colleagues (2012) have proposed the Foundations for Self-Determination Framework for fostering these skills in young children with disabilities through short-term goals developed in partnership between families and teachers. This framework focuses on three overlapping behaviors for the child: self-regulating emotions, behavior, and attention; making choices; and engaging with the environment. Palmer and

colleagues' framework relates specifically to the social-emotional development and approaches to learning domains of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (hereafter referred to as the Head Start Learning Framework) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children's Services, & Office of Head Start, 2010). The Head Start Learning Framework guides Head Start programs' curriculum and assessment decisions (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2010).

Self-regulation manifests when children respond to input from their environment through managing their emotions (Kochanska, Philibert, & Barry, 2009), behavior (Ponitz, McClelland, Matthews, & Morrison, 2009), and attention (Palmer et al., 2012; Posner & Rothbart, 2009; Sheese, Rothbart, Posner, White, & Fraundorf, 2008). Self-regulation is necessary for successfully making choices and learning to engage appropriately in activities (Palmer et al., 2012). Self-regulation is prominent in the Head Start Learning Framework: the self-regulation domain element is defined as "the ability to recognize and regulate emotions, attention, impulses, and behavior" and the emotional and behavioral health domain element is defined as "a healthy range of emotional expression and learning positive alternatives to aggressive or isolating behaviors" (Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2010, p. 10).

Developmentally appropriate choice-making skills start with the capacity to identify and communicate preferences at a young age and develop into making choices and experiencing the outcomes of these choices (Wehmeyer et al., 2003). As children develop, they activate simple choice-making skills to solve increasingly complex problems. Children with disabilities are less likely to be offered choices due to

perceptions of limited capacity (Palmer et al., 2012; Wehmeyer, 1995), but learning to make choices is important for young children with disabilities to be able to decide their preferences (Liso, 2010), be invested in their activities (Dunlap & Liso, 2004; McCormick, Jolivette, & Ridgley, 2003), and explore their environments (Erwin et al., 2009). The Head Start Learning Framework addresses the development of choice-making skills within its self-concept and self-efficacy domain element, which is defined as “the perception that one is capable of successfully making choices, accomplishing tasks, and meeting goals” (Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2010, p. 9).

Engagement is when children are involved with the environment (teachers, peers, or materials) in ways that are appropriate for their age, ability, and context (McWilliam & Bailey, 1992; McWilliam & Casey, 2008). Children actively engaged have increased interactions with people and materials, which lead to improved learning, problem-solving skills, and peer relationships (McWilliam & Casey, 2008). Levels of child engagement range from non-engaged to persistence, the highest order of engagement (McWilliam & Casey, 2008). The Head Start Learning Framework highlights the importance of engagement skills in the approaches to learning domain, which “refers to observable behaviors that indicate ways children become engaged in social interactions and learning experiences” and is viewed as “one of the most important domains of early childhood development” (Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2010, p. 11).

These foundational skills are inextricable: Engagement is made possible by self-regulation, engaged children may tolerate more potential distractions by self-regulating more successfully, and engaged and self-regulated behavior enables children to choose activities in which they are interested and therefore more engaged (Palmer et al., 2012).

Since adult behavior in both the home and school settings influence a child's development of foundational skills leading to self-determination (Wehmeyer et al., 2003), this study used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of human development as an organizational framework in which the child was in both the microsystem of the home (where the family fostered his foundational skills for self-determination) and the microsystem of the Head Start agency (where the staff fostered his foundational skills for self-determination). I theorized that young children may encounter difficulties with determining and meeting adults' expectations when moving between home and school environments if these environments differed significantly. Specifically, as discussed previously, the underlying principles and expressions of self-determination inherent to American education (Trainor, 2005) and emphasized in the Head Start Learning Framework may differ from the way refugee families fostered these skills in their children before and during their Head Start enrollment. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate and describe how both Head Start staff and a refugee family fostered the foundational skills leading to later self-determination in a young child at risk for disability, specifically answering the following research question: How do Head Start staff and a refugee family foster the foundational skills leading to self-determination in a young child at risk for disability?

Method

Researcher Background

As a certified teacher who taught elementary school for 7 years, lived and worked in several countries, and volunteered as a "mentor" to help refugees settle into life in the U.S., I have repeatedly experienced the differences between expectations in home and

school surrounding the three foundational skills in focus (i.e., self-regulation, choice-making, engagement). Since recognizing my relevant experience and bias and assuming a self-critical stance can help guard against imposing my own assumptions on this study (Maxwell, 2005), I state openly that I am awed by refugees' resilience. I believe refugees add tremendously to U.S. society and should be recognized for the strengths and richness they bring.

Research Design

The data answering this research question derives from a larger descriptive case study using an embedded, single-case design. Yin (2009) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). A case study design was an appropriate method for answering this research question because it had the “ability to deal with a full variety of evidence- documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations” (Yin, 2009, p.11) to explore the complex social phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2009).

Participant Selection

Using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), I sought a Head Start agency that (a) was within an hour's drive, (b) served refugee families, and (c) was open to an outside researcher conducting participant observation for 4 months. I contacted several Head Start agencies that met the first two criteria and interviewed staff at two Head Start agencies that met all three criteria. I selected Riley Head Start¹ (RHS) over the other contender because it was more diverse; exactly half of the families (66 out of 132) spoke

¹ This and all other names are pseudonyms.

a language other than English at home; and its refugee families came from Somalia, Sudan (North and South), Liberia, Nigeria, Vietnam, Haiti, Burma, and Iraq. In addition, the education director was interested in learning more about the broad topic of differing behavioral expectations for children from refugee families at home and RHS. In fact, she identified the different norms and expectations between home and RHS, specifically for children from immigrant families from Somalia and Myanmar (refugees resettled in the area), as presenting an ongoing challenge for the children, families, and staff at RHS.

Within the RHS community, I sought one child who was (a) enrolled in RHS (assumed age 3-5), (b) had parents or guardians who were refugees and willing to participate in this study, and (c) had a diagnosed disability or several disability risk factors. The education director and teachers identified several possibilities; one boy, Habib, whose parents were refugees from Somalia, particularly stood out due to his behavior and risk factors. I sought and received IRB approval before beginning this research, and Habib's family and all teachers at RHS granted their informed consent.

Data Collection

I collected data using multiple methods, including observations, semi-structured interviews, and documents. Data collection happened simultaneously, as information from each source triangulated data from other sources (Maxwell, 2005) and informed subsequent data collection (Yin, 2009).

Observation. I observed in Habib's classroom for approximately 50 hours (18 visits) during the first 4 months of school (September-December). Classroom observations typically lasted 3.5 hours, the length of a day's session, and occurred either

one or two times per week. I observed in Habib's home for approximately 20 hours (9 visits) during the same period. Home observations lasted from 30 minutes to 4 hours.

My observations were conducted as participant observations, in which I was principally an observer and secondarily a participant (Adler & Adler, 1994). I tried to minimize the effect of my presence on the behaviors I was observing. For example, when Habib or another child showed difficulty self-regulating, I would distance myself from the situation and observe the actions of the adults in charge. To clarify what I observed and my understanding of the intention behind adult actions, I conducted numerous dialogical interviews during and following my participant observations (Carspecken, 1996). These informal dialogical interviews lasted from 5 minutes to a half hour.

Field notes. My field notes began with my "jottings" and "head notes" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p.19) from while I was in the field to remember notable details when writing field notes later. As a way to process the information (Agar, 1996; Emerson et al., 1995), I captured my field experiences while still fresh in my mind on my audio recorder immediately afterwards, while driving. Before returning to the field, I used my jottings, head notes, and audio recording of field notes to generate typed field notes.

Semi-structured interviews. In addition to numerous dialogical interviews, I conducted semi-structured phenomenological interviews (Charmaz, 2006) with 16 adults (teachers at RHS and three of Habib's family members). These interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours. I audio recorded and transcribed these interviews (with the

exception of two interviews with interviewees who did not want to be recorded; I took copious notes during those interviews).

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview protocol through main “organizational categories” (Maxwell, 2005). I did not use the term *self-determination* in the interviews because its various interpretations could have led to ambiguous data (Patton, 1990). Instead, I focused the interviews on learning about the interviewees’ lives; how the interviewees perceived their roles in fostering the child’s self-regulation, choice-making, and engagement; and what the interviewees desired most for the child now, in the near future, and in the distant future.

Document collection. Document collection, an important method for triangulating evidence from other sources as well as informing existing and opening new lines of inquiry (Yin, 2009), included collecting and analyzing lesson plans, newsletters, notes sent to families, assessment data, enrollment forms, Head Start policies, curriculum guides, and enrollment statistics.

Data Analysis

The iterative nature of qualitative research requires that data collection and preliminary data analysis occur fluidly and simultaneously in order to inform each other (Maxwell, 2005). I used a five-part cycle of data analysis: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2011). This cycle was recursive, and several parts of the cycle occurred simultaneously.

Using NVivo 10 (QSR International, 2012), I created a database organizing all of my field notes (audio and written), interviews (audio and transcriptions), and documents. While collecting data, I wrote periodic analytic memos about themes emerging from all

data sources as well as from my personal responses to the data (Maxwell, 2005). I shared these analytic memos with two colleagues bi-weekly. They responded in writing and/or discussion. These memos, notes from the discussions, and my colleagues' written responses became part of the NVivo database. These documents were a component of the interpreting part of the analytic process, though the ideas were tentative (Maxwell, 2005).

As I entered data into the database, I disassembled it by using open coding to create level one codes (Yin, 2009). To create a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009), I used NVivo to highlight parts of data that supported each code. These numerous codes were tentative.

After collecting all data and completing open-coding, I reread all documents to revise codes and look for patterns in which data could reassemble. I sought themes within the data that specifically answered the research question for this study. These patterns allowed me to reassemble and interpret the data. As these interpretations emerged, I checked them through confirmatory interviews with the lead teacher in Habib's classroom, Habib's mother, and the family advocate (Yin, 2011). These interviews were similar to the dialogic interviews in that they were conversational and open-ended, with me stating the tentative findings and asking respondents how they perceived them. Participants confirmed most of the themes and clarified points where the themes did not completely match their experiences. I audio-recorded and transcribed these member checks. Analysis of these transcriptions led to conclusions. Three months after the end of data collection, I checked the conclusions with confirmatory interviews

with Habib's father and the educational director at RHS and revised the findings according to their feedback. The resulting findings are presented here.

Findings

Since picturing the child at the heart of this study as well as his family and teachers is imperative to understanding the adults' behaviors aimed at fostering his foundational skill development, I first introduce the participants as they were at the study's beginning. Next, I explain a continuum of adult behavior domains that emerged from the data (i.e., protection, intervention, and affective response) and use it to describe the adult behaviors that fostered Habib's development of the foundational skills leading to future self-determination. Finally, I describe the participants at the conclusion of the study before discussing the importance and implications of the research.

Participants at Beginning of Study

I first introduce Habib, the central character, focusing specifically on his foundational skills leading to later self-determination (i.e., self-regulation, engagement, and choice-making). Second, I introduce the adults—Habib's family and his teachers at RHS—and their relationship at the beginning of this study.

Habib. With chocolate-colored skin and large brown eyes that danced when he shyly showed his perfect white smile, Habib was average weight and height for his 4 years. He lived in a three-bedroom apartment in the outskirts of a large Midwestern city with his mother, Ugaaso, father, Muuse, grandmother, Fatu, and three younger siblings (Zahra, 3; Abdu, 2; Amina, 6 months). Attending RHS in August was the first time Habib and Zahra were outside their home without their parents.

Habib displayed unpredictable and often inappropriate behaviors when over-stimulated or in new situations at both home and RHS. Upon entering the classroom the first time, during the “parent orientation” preceding the start of school, Habib’s hands clung to Muuse’s fingers and his wrinkled brow and questioning eyes showed his intense fear. Muuse smiled, encouraged his son, and spoke openly and clearly in English. Habib looked around, eyes darting from one bright light to another. Wide-eyed, Habib watched his teacher queue up a Spanish and English “hello song” on the smartboard, still grasping his father’s hand. The music and dancing started; Habib crumpled to the floor, screaming. Frantically, he pulled blocks from the shelf and dolls from a basket. He curled up in the fetal position, and his father picked him up and held him in a standing position. When his father went to Zahra’s room for a few minutes (the parent orientations were concurrent), Habib ran after him until a teacher caught him and held the door shut.

Habib’s inability to self-regulate inhibited his engagement and choice-making capacity. The lights, music, noise, and movements on the computer, as well as the chimes from the marble sculpture in the science area, hindered Habib’s self-regulation and engagement. At the onset of this study, Habib’s parents said he would run into the parking lot as soon as they opened the door to the apartment, regardless of oncoming traffic. According to his parents, they did not have any toys out with which the kids could play because Habib and his siblings would just break them. They said, overall, he was very hard to control. Like at RHS, Habib’s inability to self-regulate precluded his ability to make good choices and achieve a high level of engagement with his home environment.

Adult Participants. The adult participants in this study were Habib's family and his teachers at RHS.

Habib's family. Habib's parents had gotten married 5 years earlier in the Midwestern city where they lived. Muuse had come to the U.S. in 2000 as a refugee from Somalia by way of Nairobi, Kenya. He was 16 years old when he arrived, could not read or write, and had never been to school before. A hard worker, he enrolled in ESL classes at the local high school and graduated in 4 years. At the time of this study, he was 30 years old. Ugaaso, Habib's mom, was 15 years old when she arrived in 2006. She had lived in Dadaab, a large refugee camp in eastern Kenya, since she was a toddler. Ugaaso never went to school in Somalia or in the U.S. She learned English by taking some adult ESL classes and watching TV. Habib's grandmother, Fatu, was 66 years old and had lived in the U.S. for 6 years. She was from a small village in Somalia that she described as "nice" because it had a lot of goats, camels, and cows.

Habib's family emanated a jovial calm, and their unconditional love for their children permeated their home. Fatu would spend hours holding Amina, singing to her in Somali and laughing but did not interact much with Habib in my presence. She, Ugaaso, and Muuse laughed when watching the children play. Reprimands or directives to their children were rare, and they did not seem at all bothered by the normally high activity level of their children.

Habib's parents wanted their children to be happy, safe, and successful; and they said, "whatever makes them happy, we give it to them." They recognized their four children as individuals, saying Habib was "shy" and "smart," Zahra was "easy," Abdu was "the troublemaker" and Amina was "just like her sister." In terms of the

foundational skills for self-determination, Habib's family allowed them to develop skills naturally, without intentional intervention, within the protective cocoon of their apartment. His parents explained that children in Somalia played in "enclosed buildings with an open area in the middle...like a courtyard... You are not scared about people grabbing and stealing them. They play outside with their cousins and friends and do whatever they want." Although perhaps more active in intentionally shaping skills other than those in focus for this study (e.g., intentionally working on building his literacy and numeracy skills), they demonstrated an unconditional acceptance of Habib's self-regulation, choice-making, and engagement skill level and did not try to accelerate his development within their home.

Teachers. Cassie, the lead teacher in the Turtle Room, had been working in early childhood for 16 years, 5 of which were at Head Start, but this was her first year at RHS. Youthful, articulate, and cheerful, Cassie had been a single teenage mother who persevered to complete college and become a certified teacher. She understood from experience some of the battles many of her students' families were fighting. The assistant teachers in the room were Sharon and Nina. Sharon had taught for 14 years at RHS as an assistant and lead teacher. A mother of five children (four of whom were adopted from foster care), she was deeply religious and saw her work as "ministry" to help those in need. Sharon was planning to retire the following year but ended up leaving at winter break to move to another state. Nina, a self-described former illegal Mexican immigrant and single mother who experienced substantial hardship during her quest for citizenship, came to the U.S. 25 years prior to this study and started at RHS as a cook 3 years later. She worked as an assistant teacher and a lead teacher for the 12 years prior to

this study. Lacking the newly mandated college credit to remain an assistant teacher at Head Start, Nina was planning to leave RHS to open an in-home daycare the following year. All three teachers were married and had children who lived with them.

These three teachers had similarities and differences that made them a dynamic team. Cassie and Nina's calm presence of mind permeated the classroom climate and Sharon's organization helped the classroom run smoothly. All three teachers cared for the children in their classes and perceived their job at RHS as benefitting the children and families they served. They all stated that their own life experiences and ongoing professional training influenced the way they approached their work and the experiences they had at work influenced their personal lives.

RHS subscribed to several curricula, including Creative Curriculum's "The System," Conscious Discipline, and Second Step. While obvious threads from these curricula related to the three foundational skills under investigation manifested in the classroom, each teacher had her own style as well as comfort with and gravitation towards specific strategies. Teachers chose strategies and lessons from each curriculum to serve their present needs. Sharon stated, "We all have the same values and we just get along"; the findings illustrate, however, that their techniques for fostering Habib's foundational skills varied.

Relationship between Habib's family and teachers. At the beginning of this study, the relationship between Habib's parents and teachers was generally respectful, but they did not know much about each other. They had only met at the parent-teacher conference at Habib's home (held during the week preceding the start of school). Although Ugaaso spoke English well, the teachers believed that she did not speak English

because Muuse did most of the talking during the conference. The only details about the family the teachers knew were that they were Somali and the children had never been to school. After the parent-teacher conference at their home, Ugaaso did not know the teachers' names and said they came to "fill out some papers." Because the teachers conducted 34 home-based parent-teacher conferences in a week (a visit to each of their students' homes), the detail they could recall from each home visit was limited.

Adult Behaviors Influencing Foundational Skills

Most adult behaviors that influenced Habib's foundational skills for self-determination can be described by their degree of protection, intervention, and affective response. Figure 1 presents these three domains as continua of adult behaviors. Figure 1 posits a metaphorical continuum; it describes a range of adult behavior influencing Habib's foundational skills leading to later self-determination but there are no pre-determined points within it. Figure 1's metaphorical continuum is useful because it allows me to describe, organize, and contrast the adult behavior that influenced Habib's foundational skills in both environments under study. I rarely observed adult behavior that was at the absolute ends of Figure 1. I describe the adults' behaviors below, but, first, a few more words about Figure 1 are in order. .

Figure 1 displays three domains of adult behavior: protection, intervention, and affective response. The behavior I describe in the protection domain ranged from adults restricting Habib's behavior to permitting his freedom. Structure represented the center of this range. The behavior I describe in the intervention domain ranged from low adult direction to high adult direction of child behavior. The center of this continuum was intentional interaction, in which the adult provided strategic support to enhance child skill

development and build on child interest. The behavior I describe in the affective response domain ranged from cold to warm, centered on neutral.

Adult behaviors varied according to contextual variables. As described previously, there were two environments for adult behaviors: Habib's home and his Head Start classroom. Likewise, the behavior of the two groups of adults introduced in the previous section influenced Habib's development of the foundational skills leading to self-determination: his family and his teachers. The following section describes the behavior of these two sets of adults within these two environments according to the three domains of adult behavior. Having described Figure 1 and its utility and having contextualized it, I now describe the adults' behavior.

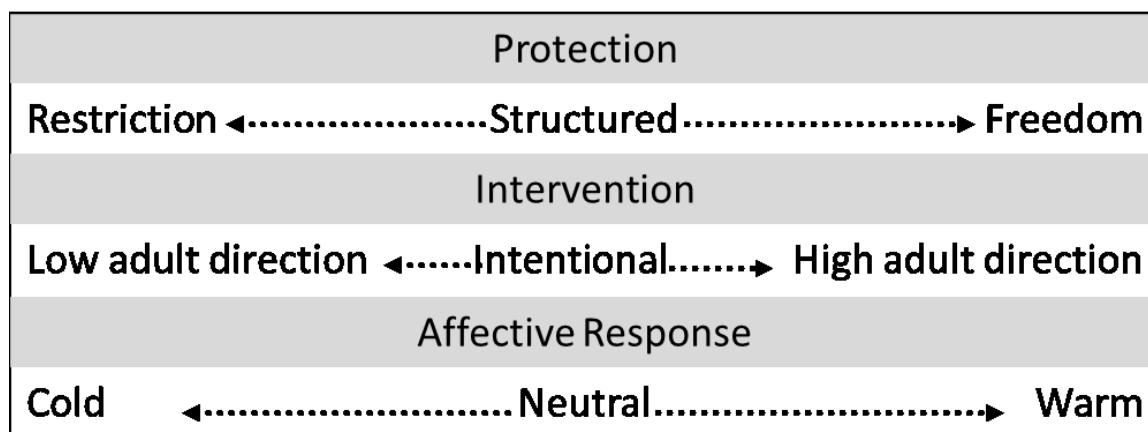


Figure 1. Continua of adult behavior domains within which Habib's foundational skill leading to future self-determination were actualized and developed.

Protection. The protection domain ranged from restriction to structure to freedom. In an effort to protect Habib, adults sometimes restricted opportunities for him to develop foundational skills leading to self-determination.

Family. Inside the apartment, Habib's family allowed him relative freedom with limited materials, yet they restricted his opportunities to choose to go outside. Within the

apartment, Habib's family permitted him and his siblings freedom about with what and how they engaged. For example, Habib would run quickly in the long hallway of the house and jump onto the couch. The children would all eat snacks on the couch and were allowed to choose the snacks they ate and how much they ate. One time, they made a mess of the snacks, but the parents did not reprimand them. There were very few toys or art supplies available to the children; when they did have access to toys, they would destroy them, and they dirtied their clothes, the rug, and the couch when they had access to art supplies.

Habib's parents restricted Habib's access to materials. There were usually no toys available to Habib and his siblings. The parents had bought toys for their children but explained that they "just break them" and "don't know how to treat toys." Ugaaso explained that young children did not understand how to treat their toys until they are about 7 years old. She took away their toys if they didn't treat them right and kept them in storage in the basement. In addition, the parents kept all the doors to bedrooms locked during the day so the children did not "trash the rooms." Since the children would unravel the toilet paper, they kept it locked up in the bedroom. Ugaaso said little boys never listen. The best way to correct a child's behavior, according to Habib's parents, was to limit the child's opportunities to choose to engage in negative behavior by limiting the child's access to materials or situations. Ugaaso said, "I like that they play, but I don't like that they break the cars. I just take them away. I don't know how to teach them not to break the cars."

Due to safety concerns, the family restricted Habib's opportunities to go outside. The family was extremely concerned about their children running into the parking lot in

front of their apartment when they opened the door. Numerous locks held the door shut (including one at the top of the door, out of the children's reach). The children wanted desperately to get outside. When the children managed to get outside the apartment they would run as quickly as they could onto the asphalt and roll around in the parking lot with no regard for their safety. They conceived creative ways to get the door open for them to do this: One time, they put a toy car (that I had brought over) through a hole in the screen window and called their mother to come get it. When she opened the door to get the car, the three older children bolted in different directions and started to roll. Ugaaso panicked and collected the children as quickly as she could, holding them tightly by the arm to get them inside the house. They repeated the tactic later in the day, but Ugaaso left the car outside, shut the windows, put on the air conditioning, and did not say anything about the toy car lying on the ground. The difficulty of safely bringing their children outside made the parents restrict their outings and never leave the home with all children unless both parents were present.

Another manifestation of their protection of their children was their unwillingness to leave their children with others, including family members, because they did not want people "to get angry with them for doing something wrong." They had never left their children for any amount of time, including with Fatu. This restricted their children's opportunities to experience various environments and engage with other adults, but it also protected them from perceived danger. Like going outside, Habib's parents feared they would not engage and self-regulate appropriately in other environments. By restricting their access to other environments, however, they restricted their children's development

of the foundational skills in other environments, further hindering their ability to adapt to those environments.

Teachers. While Habib's family members allowed their children to develop their foundational skills with some restriction and some freedom, his teachers generally used structure to establish behavioral expectations and scaffold activities for the whole class. In times when they perceived a crisis, however, teacher behavior tended towards the restriction end of the continuum. In addition, when Habib's behavior was not their primary concern, his teachers occasionally allowed him more freedom within the established structure of the classroom.

A large part of the classroom structure was explicitly establishing clear expectations about classroom rules and basic expectations. Cassie explained:

We need to teach what listening looks like and practice that. It's not stuff we know kids are coming straight from home with. We know that. We expose them to it. It's just like exposing them to Geo Boards. We know they haven't done it before. You're not going to just flop it out there. You're just going to introduce them to it and get them used to the idea. Show them what it looks like, model it, think through it together, and then use some of your older children as examples.

Teachers were clear and assertive when enforcing rules. This clarity helped children understand expectations. Cassie explained, "Anything that is not a choice... we will just say, 'do it.'" For example, children were not allowed to touch the food until all students were seated at the tables. When Habib reached out to touch the plastic wrap on the food, Sharon sternly said, "Habib, we wait for everyone to be ready before touching the food. Keep your hands on your lap while you wait."

Teachers usually held the children accountable for the choices they made, strengthening the structure of the classroom. For example, when Habib decided to move from the block area to the science area, Sharon said, “You took out the blocks to play with them. You can change your mind, but you need to put away the blocks before you make another choice.” While holding the children accountable for their choices was an important aspect of the structure in the Turtle Room, it is important to note that the teachers did not always hold Habib to the same standards as the children who were more accustomed to the RHS context. For example, Habib often forgot to move his name shape to the center where he was working. Teachers rarely told him to get it because they perceived he did not understand what to do with it. Eventually, he understood its purpose and began to move it on his own.

Another aspect of structure was explicitly teaching and modeling how to engage in new activities available at center time. For example, Cassie taught a whole-group lesson in which she modeled putting tissue paper in water in a clear plastic cup. She engaged the students by calling it “magic,” activated the students’ prior knowledge by asking them to predict what would happen when she placed the tissue paper in the water, and allowed them to assess their predictions vocally by yelling out if they were correct as the water changed color. The students’ enjoyment of the lesson was obvious, and the students who chose to engage with that activity at center time knew exactly what to do when they arrived at the center. In addition to engaging with their own plastic cups of “magic” water, the students engaged in predicting and assessing their prediction of their classmates’ work, as Cassie had modeled with her example. No teacher interacted with

the children during this activity; the structure proactively established allowed them to engage freely.

Another aspect of the classroom structure was breaking larger activities into several small steps. While this strategy was helpful for many students, it was not always helpful for Habib, as illustrated by the following pumpkin-sketching activity, because the numerous steps were difficult for him to manage in addition to self-regulating. After a class-wide discussion describing the pumpkin, Nina demonstrated creating a pen and watercolor depiction of a pumpkin. Sharon taught the beginning part of the lesson and emphasized that children needed to sit “criss-cross applesauce.” A boy sitting next to Habib told him how to sit; Sharon praised the boy for helping Habib follow directions. Every time Habib moved his legs from the “criss-cross applesauce” position during the demonstration, the boy would tap him on the shoulder and remind him how to sit (four times during the 6-minute lesson). Nina and one student modeled all the steps of the activity to the whole class (i.e., sketch, trace in marker, paint), but Habib focused his attention on trying to sit correctly during the lesson. At the end of the lesson, Sharon dismissed the students who were “sitting quietly.” Habib and one other boy were sitting quietly but not “criss-cross applesauce”; Sharon did not call on them until last, when the popular stations were already full.

Thirty minutes later, Habib found a spot at the pumpkin-drawing station but did not seem to understand the steps. He wrote his name and showed it to Cassie and Nina. Neither paid him any attention because they were trying to help the students who were finishing their products. Habib finally looked at his neighbor’s paper and drew a small circle on his own. He then reached for the paintbrush and painted over the circle he had

made. He tried several times to get his teachers' attention but to no avail. Finally, he left the station to play elsewhere. While the other students were held accountable for following the multiple steps, the teachers gave Habib freedom to skip them.

At times of potential danger or disorder, the teachers used restricted his movement to control his behavior, especially during the first month of school. During the first week of school, for example, Nina made sure the door was closed so Habib would not run into the hallway and guarded the bathroom door so he did not go into the adjoining classroom (the bathroom was between the two classrooms). Sharon and Cassie often held him on their laps when reading books so he would contain his body. After she suspected that he pulled the fire alarm on the first day of school, Sharon stood in front of the fire alarm to ensure Habib did not pull it and cause the entire building to evacuate. As Habib's self-regulation, choice-making skills, and engagement skills improved, teachers restricted his movements less.

Intervention. The adult intervention continuum ranged from *low adult direction* to *intentional interaction* to *high adult direction*. Activities with low adult direction were initiated by children to pursue their interests and actions. Adults were passive in these activities. Activities characterized by high adult direction were initiated by adults to meet their goals and were not informed by the interests or needs of children. The term intentional interaction refers to adults acting purposefully to provide opportunities through which children can develop specific skills (Epstein, 2007).

Family. The freedom usually permitted Habib and his siblings within their home was congruent with the low adult direction of activities in that environment. The children engaged at will in the absence of intentional intervention. In contrast, his parents'

restriction of engagement in potentially hazardous activity (e.g., going outside) was an example of high adult direction. Instead of using moments when their children were not self-regulated, making choices that resulted in desired outcomes, or engaged to intentionally interact with them to teach them different behavior, Ugaaso and Muuse either did not engage in the conflict (let the children direct the situation) or ended the conflict (directed the situation themselves).

An example of this aversion of teaching from such situations occurred during one of my final days with the family. While I was in Fatu's corner of the living room, the children started to look through my backpack. Ugaaso noticed and took away my backpack without speaking to the children. I asked her then: "I notice you take things away from the kids instead of teaching them that they have made a bad choice. Like my backpack just now. How can they learn if you do not explain it to them?" She responded, "They don't know. They don't understand. They just do that and they shouldn't. So I move it so they stop."

Teachers. Teachers used a variety of intentional interaction strategies that blended and modified adult-directed and child-directed learning to respond to the situation at hand and maximize learning opportunities (Epstein, 2007). To do this, teachers intentionally arranged the environment, engaged with students, and responded to student need.

Arranging environment. Teachers intentionally arranged the environment and themselves in the environment to help students develop their self-regulation, choice-making, and engagement skills. The classroom was broken into clearly defined areas with ample circulatory and transition space. Areas had a range of brightness, but no area

was extremely bright. The lights in the classroom were almost always turned off, and the blind on the large north-facing windows filtered natural light. A book nook in the corner had soft chairs to sit on when reading. A safe, cozy area was next to the smartboard, private enough to be comfortable but close enough to the main areas of the classroom to not be secluding. During center time, there were a variety of different activities (e.g., blocks, science, reading, computer, pretend, art), positions for engaging with materials (e.g., on the carpet, in chairs at a table, on a reclined chair), and noise levels (e.g., headphones for computer, quiet area for reading, loud exploration at the science center).

In addition to the architectural design of activities, teachers planned their responsibilities and locations to maximize their efforts and allow them to remain present with the students. During typical whole-class sessions, one teacher taught, one teacher supported students to engage and self-regulate, and one teacher cleaned up and/or set up materials for the next activities. When students were at centers, the teachers each had either areas or specific children to monitor. If a student would benefit from individualized coaching on self-regulation, choice-making, or engagement, usually the teacher in that area or the teacher specifically monitoring that student was available to provide necessary guidance. Habib, especially in the beginning of this study, often benefitted from additional guidance. This guidance was more toward the high adult direction end of the continuum and is discussed in the following section.

Teachers also organized materials to ensure children could access them. While Cassie taught the “magic” tissue paper lesson discussed previously, for example, Nina cut tissue paper in thin strips, filled a pitcher with water, arranged towels on the table, and placed plastic cups at each available spot. In addition to this organization, the other

materials in the classroom were orderly and easily accessible. Being able to access materials quickly and easily helped the children engage with them quickly and stay engaged while the materials remained organized. This model taught children how to organize and respect the materials they used.

Engaging with students. Teachers often engaged with students to intentionally improve their self-regulation, choice-making, and engagement skills. For example, when Habib was curiously touching the play dough, Sharon asked him if he could make it flatter and encouraged him, “Look! When you pushed it, it got flatter! Can you make it even flatter?” Another example occurred when teaching patterning. Cassie spent time working with each child individually and encouraged them to continue making patterns in pairs or small groups. Many children, including Habib, stayed engaged in this activity after working with Cassie.

Activities were more adult directed when targeted towards children who they perceived would benefit from more explicit instruction. Especially in the beginning of the year, Habib’s activities were often more adult-directed than his peers’ activities. According to Sharon, she “seemed to bond with him,” so she sat with him at his table for meals and attended to him when she thought he needed redirection or one-on-one instruction. Sharon described Habib to be “like a kid in a candy shop” at school, overwhelmed by so many choices. When the students had the broad assignment to draw their self-portraits, for example, Sharon sat next to Habib and told him to draw each part of his body. She said each body part and then pointed to it on herself. He finished the drawing much quicker than his peers, who engaged with less adult direction.

Responding to student need. The Turtle Room teachers almost constantly adjusted their behavior to intentionally respond to student need. During the second week of school, Habib had a particularly difficult day. He impulsively touched numerous things at the lunch table (e.g., his cup, Sharon's cup, Sharon's diamond ring, his neighbor's fork), to which Sharon responded with firm statements of "No, Habib." After lunch, he went to the carpet, where Cassie told him to get a book. He picked up a book, flipped through the pages quickly, and then picked up a doll. Cassie stretched out her arms and gently said, "Come sit with me." Habib sat in her lap, she hugged him and read the book with him. She whispered in his ear, and he smiled. She allowed him to stay in her lap as she transitioned to leading the class in Mother Goosey Bird.

Affective response. Adults' affect in response to Habib ranged from cold to neutral to warm. With some exceptions, both Habib's family and teachers usually had a warm affect in response to him. The ways they displayed this warmth varied greatly, however.

Family. Interactions with and observations of Habib's family demonstrated their deep and constant love for Habib and his siblings. They spoke about their children with pride and unconditional acceptance of their natural personalities. They did not, however, praise their children in their children's presence. For example, Muuse whispered when he told me Habib was "a smart guy" but "kind of shy." While usually warm in response to Habib, Ugaaso reprimanded him strongly when he ran outside, indicating a cold response when he made a dangerous choice. No child-produced work was noticeable in the apartment, but photos of the children were displayed on both parents' phones and the start-up screen to Muuse's computer read, "I love my kids."

Teachers. While teachers were consistent and assertive, they were also usually warm when fostering all three foundational skills, especially when children showed an improvement in the skill or set a positive example for other students. This warmth consisted of praise, acknowledgement of good work, and positive redirection. There were occasional cold responses to Habib as well.

Often, teachers praised children's specific behaviors. For example, when he sat down on the rug without prompting, but a few other students played around in the circle area, Cassie said, "I love the way Habib is sitting on the carpet, waiting calmly. He is making a good choice and setting a great example!" At this point in the year, Habib did not usually sit calmly on the carpet.

Teachers also warmly fostered children's development of the foundational skills by taking photographs of them engaged in activities and by displaying their work. The weekly newsletter sent home always included pictures of children engaged in activities. Teachers also photographed work the children produced, like their name written in salt or a block tower they built. Children's work was prominently displayed on the bulletin board in the hallway.

When children made unacceptable choices, teachers usually spoke to them calmly and helped them understand both natural and imposed consequences with a warm affect. For example, during a read aloud, Habib repeated every word as Cassie read it aloud. Cassie and the other students had difficulty focusing. Cassie stopped reading and said, "Habib, I am losing my focus when I hear you repeat the words." He kept doing it, seemingly unaware of his behavior, and Cassie asked him to move to the back of the group of children. She stated, "You are enjoying the book and listening to it, but it is too

hard for me to read it while you say the words out loud. If you sit in the back, I will be less distracted, and we can all enjoy the book more.” Although she was clearly exhausted, she still spoke to Habib with kindness and respect.

While Cassie and Nina usually used calm and warm techniques to teach Habib and his classmates the foundational skills, Sharon often used harsher, colder techniques. Her responses to Habib varied on the continuum from cold to slightly warm. Sharon thought that Habib understood what was expected of him but chose not to listen. Unfortunately, her negative view of Habib’s intentions seemed to color the way she viewed and responded to his behavior. For example, a character in a book Cassie read aloud to the class washed her hands. When Habib heard “wash hands,” he rubbed his hands together to sign wash hands, seemed excited about knowing what to do, poked Sharon to get her attention, and asked (nonverbally, by rubbing his hands together and pointing to the sink) if he should wash his hands. She ignored him, trying to model how to pay attention to the read-aloud. When Habib stood up to wash his hands, Sharon turned and yelled, “No Habib!” Then, with harsh motions showing her frustration with his behavior, she took out a picture symbol of a stick figure sitting and put it an inch from Habib’s face to tell him to sit down and be quiet. She put her hand in front of him to restrict his movement.

Another time, Sharon was sitting next to a table and an easel without enough room to pass through. Habib needed to go by and tried to see if he could make it. He tapped Sharon and waited patiently for her to scoot her seat forward. He received no response. He squeezed through and knocked over the paint with his shirt, getting it all

over himself. Sharon turned around and loudly exclaimed, “Oh Habib! No! No! What are you doing?!” In contrast, Cassie and Nina did not display this cold affect.

Description of Participants at Conclusion of Study

Habib. During the 4 months of this study, Habib’s self-regulation, ability to make choices that resulted in the intended consequence, and engagement blossomed. As he became more accustomed to his Head Start environment and learned from his teachers, his skills improved at RHS and at home. Habib no longer ran into the parking lot at home when the door opened. Ugaaso reported he listened much more and was “nicer.” Cassie said, “I feel like he wants to please us. [and] tries hard to follow the rules and stay where he’s at... I think that happened gradually, as he noticed the positive response to his actions. There’s been a big change!” Cassie also told Muuse: “I have never had a child learn so quickly some things, as far as numbers and letters and writing and things like that.” He showed the highest level of engagement, persistence (McWilliam & Casey, 2008), by problem-solving and communicating with words (e.g., answering questions during a class-wide read aloud); engaging with materials, peers, and teachers in appropriate symbolic manners (e.g., pretending he was the daddy in the dramatic play area); and transferring his skills to help his parents care for his younger siblings (e.g., telling his brother not to climb on the counter).

Family. The behaviors of Habib’s family changed slightly throughout this study. His family continued to love him unconditionally and allow him the freedom to develop inside his apartment without much intervention from them. Because he started to help take care of his younger brother, however, Ugaaso and Muuse began to praise his behavior. As Habib’s foundational skills for later self-determination improved, the

apartment became more relaxed and quieter and his siblings' foundational skills improved as well. Habib's freedom increased outside the home as he showed more self-regulation; Muuse started bringing Habib on outings to do errands. At the end of this study, I noticed some instances of intentional teaching directed at Abdu (but not at Habib).

Teachers. The behaviors of Habib's teachers changed over the course of this study as Habib's behavior changed. In the beginning of the study, they were collectively more restraining, adult-directed, and negative. At the end of this study, they gave Habib more freedom, interacted more intentionally, and were significantly more positive when responding to him. Cassie especially showed a genuine fondness for Habib, saying he had "a quirky sense of humor that always makes me laugh" and was "one of the quickest learners I have ever seen."

Relationship between teachers and family. During the 4 months of this study, teachers sent home in Habib's backpack weekly newsletters and lesson plans and a monthly menu. They also called for permission from his family for a vision screening and a special education evaluation. In addition, Muuse followed Habib's bus to school on the first day to talk with his teachers about his concern that Habib would not use the bathroom on his own. Muuse also attended the two family events held in the classroom: an orientation for families and Bring Your Parent to School Day. Ugaaso and Muuse were both present during the first parent-teacher conference (at their home before the start of school), and Muuse attended the parent-teacher conference at RHS.

Ugaaso and Muuse upheld their respect for Habib's teachers throughout this study but did not get to know them well. They demonstrated their respect by expressing their

gratitude to the teachers for teaching Habib how to behave so well. Cassie, the teacher responsible for maintaining Habib's assessment portfolio and conferring with his family, showed respect for Habib and his father by consistently being positive when talking with them and about them.

Habib's parents and teachers did not, however, have a collaborative and goal-oriented partnership characterized by trust and two-way communication (Head Start Act, 2007). While Muuse developed an understanding of the expectations Habib's teachers had for his foundational skills for self-determination, the teachers did not have a clear understanding of his family's expectations for them in their home environment. In addition, communication was mostly one-way; there was no established system for the family to communicate with the teachers. It is noteworthy that the teachers, Head Start agency administration, and director of the local resettlement agency had never heard of the interagency collaboration between Office of Head Start and the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Discussion

This study examined how teachers and family members of one child from a refugee family fostered his foundational skills leading to later self-determination. Habib encountered difficulties with these foundational skills when moving between home and school environments, especially at the beginning of this study. The adult behaviors aimed at fostering Habib's foundational skills fell into three domains: protection (ranging from restriction to freedom), intervention (ranging from low adult direction to high adult direction), and affective response (ranging from cold to warm). RHS teachers' behaviors for fostering Habib's foundational skills leading to increased self-determination were

structured and intentional, contrasting greatly with his family's low adult direction and allowance of freedom within their apartment's protected space. During this study, Habib's foundational skills developed greatly, his behavior in both home and school environments improved as a result, and his comfort and ability to learn increased at RHS. In turn, his teachers' affective response towards Habib became warmer and their instruction even more intentional and structured while his family permitted him more freedom outside and recognized his behavior with more explicit affection (light praise). His family credited his teachers with the improvement in his foundational skills.

Limitations

A note of caution and clarification must precede the following limitations. This qualitative case study was meant to explore this complex phenomenon within the microsystems of this specific child. The findings might transfer to other specific situations, but it is the responsibility of the "potential appliers" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316) to reach such a conclusion. This exploratory study focused solely on one child and is meant to demonstrate the specific experience of a child navigating two parallel worlds. This study does not generalize to all Somali families, children at risk for disability, or Head Start agencies, but I have attempted to provide enough detail for readers to apply, with caution, this study's findings to their work.

This study has four limitations. First, the 4-month time span of this study did not allow the longitudinal view of the child's development and adult behaviors over the entire year. More time would have allowed a deeper insight into the dynamic relationship between Habib's behavior and the adult responses to it. It would have also allowed me to investigate how adult behavior changed as the year went on. I also would

have developed more trust with the participants, perhaps revealing more natural circumstances than the 4-month time span incurred. Second, the timing of the observations of Habib's family inhibited gaining an understanding of adult behaviors at all times. All observations took place during the day or early evening; I considered it too intrusive to observe during morning and nighttime rituals. Third, talking about the issues discussed in this paper did not seem particularly comfortable or natural for Habib's family. I did not want to change their natural behaviors or give them the impression that I thought their natural behaviors were good or bad, so I was careful about questions I asked and the use of my recorder. While this caution arguably allowed me to observe their family in a more natural light, it resulted in fewer direct quotations. Fourth, while I discussed the themes and data with two research collaborators as I encountered them, I conducted all interviews, observations, and document collection alone. Being the sole data collector enabled me to put together a holistic picture of the home and school environments but may have narrowed the findings of this study.

Connection to Literature

The research base on young children's foundational skills leading to self-determination is increasing (Brotherson et al., 2008; Erwin & Brown, 2003; Erwin et al., 2009; Palmer & Wehmeyer, 2003; Wehmeyer et al., 2003; Wehmeyer & Field, 2007). Limited research, however, has focused on developing these skills in both diverse home environments and preschool environments for the same children. I found no research conducted with young children from refugee or other immigrant families focusing on adult behaviors to foster these foundational skills for self-determination or related constructs (e.g., executive function, social-emotional skill development) in both home

and school environments. This study started to fill this gap by describing and analyzing both environments of one focal child from a refugee family.

This study's findings were consistent with previous literature that has found that expectations for children's behavior and foundational skill development in the home and school environments varied considerably (Day & Parlakian, 2004) and had few linkages (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Garbarino, 1992). Researchers have reported that expectations for children from refugee families' behavior at home often differed greatly from what was expected of them at school (Hurley et al., 2011; Tadesse et al., 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). In addition, consistent with this study, previous research has found that many refugee families have a genuine interest in creating a link between their home environment and their children's schools but lack the ability to do so (McBrien, 2005, 2011; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). This study's findings that the adult behaviors for fostering foundational skills leading to increased self-determination can be contrasted along a continuum of three domains (i.e., protection, intervention, and affective response) offers a new framework for intervention that has not been previously addressed in the literature.

Implications for Practice

Children such as Habib, who traverse parallel worlds, would benefit from teachers and families being more aware of adult behavior in their other environments.

Consistency across environments is not the goal; refugee families' unique practices reflect their culture and are not wrong if they are different from teachers' practice (Shrestha, 2011; Tadesse et al., 2009). Instead, families and teachers should seek a better understanding of adult expectations and behaviors within the domains of protection,

intervention, and affective response in the other environment and use this knowledge to view each child's behavior. These three domains provide a framework for interventions focused on adult behavior.

Parent-teacher conferences are natural opportunities for adults to learn about other adults in the child's life's expectations for child behavior and adult practices related to this intervention framework. Conferences at home are especially good opportunities for teachers to gain an understanding of the home environment, children's behavior within it, and the families' responses. A systematic way to do this would be for teachers to use the Head Start Framework to guide these discussions and observations.

One particular intervention demonstrates how this could be done. Palmer and colleagues' (2012) Foundations for Self-Determination Framework for fostering young children with disabilities' foundational skills leading to self-determination focuses on establishing, through partnership, consistent adult cues in home and school environments and making both environments accessible for children. This intervention could work seamlessly towards Head Start's goals relating specifically to the social-emotional development and approaches to learning domains of the Head Start Framework (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2010). Its focus on partnership could ensure that the goals and practices are relevant in both environments and aligned with families' beliefs (Brotherson et al., 2008).

Through the Foundations for Self-Determination Framework for intervention, teachers and families use the Routines-Based Interview (RBI) (McWilliam, 2006) to guide conversations about how children use foundational skills within everyday routines successfully and where adults would like to increase their use of these skills (Palmer et

al., 2012). The RBI promotes a conversation about adults' expectations for children and highlights difficult routines in both home and school environments. With clearer ideas about expectations and needs in the other environment, teachers and families could work together to support mutually beneficial goals while respecting culturally-appropriate adult behavior within the protection, intervention, and affective response domains.

This case study provides a hypothetical example for illustrative purposes. Ugaaso and Muuse's desire to increase the foundational skills of Habib and his siblings was hampered by the lack of knowledge on how to do so. Perhaps, Habib's family and teachers could have discussed specific goals and strategies to achieve them through the use of the RBI. In doing so, it would be important for his family and teachers to understand each other's behaviors within the protection, intervention, and affective response domains. Let's imagine they decided to focus on the mutual goal of increasing his self-regulation during transitions. If the intervention plan required abundant praise by Habib's family, it would not fit well with their behaviors within the affective response domain and would therefore not be responsive, practical, or sustainable. Conversely, if the intervention called for teachers to restrict his access to materials (so Habib would not play with them during transitions), it would not fit well with the teachers' behaviors within the protection domain. Understanding adult behaviors within the continuum would enable adults to create interventions in partnership that respond to the natural actions of those adults. Although these continua are fluid, any intervention must take into account the adults' comfort level and desire to change their behaviors in order to be responsive and sustainable. In addition to increasing children's foundational skills

leading to later self-determination, such intervention frameworks could increase linkages between home and school environments.

Implications for Research

This exploratory study has numerous implications for future research. More research should focus on exploring and documenting experiences of refugee children with or at risk for disability and their families as they encounter the school system in the U.S. One line of research should create and evaluate practices for increasing partnership between home and school environments. First, research should explore how refugee families and Head Start staff partner around fostering children's foundational skills for later self-determination or, more broadly, social-emotional development. Such research should incorporate the intervention framework of the three domains for adult behavior outlined in this study. Second, researchers should use design-based research methods (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012) to iteratively create culturally-responsive interventions for increasing children's foundational skills for self-determination. For example, research should investigate innovative practices, such as the Foundations Model for Self-Determination (Palmer et al., 2012), with refugee families to determine their effectiveness and, if appropriate, iteratively improve and tailor them to work with this population.

A second line of research should explore these children and families' resilience. Why do some children thrive and others struggle when they enter school, encounter its expectations and behaviors, and acculturate? How do adult behaviors within the three domains of protection, intervention, and affective response affect children's resilience? How can educators and school systems build on their strengths and maintain or even

augment children's protective factors during this process? Why do some refugee families encounter so much turmoil yet maintain hope, and how does this hope affect their children? What role can the education system play in maintaining this hope?

Longitudinal research will be especially important in answering these questions and measuring the effects of interventions on child, family, and professional outcomes over time. Researchers and practitioners should continue to ask: What more can be done to support refugees with young children, especially those with disabilities or at risk for disability, as they enter the education system?

Implications for Policy

The policy implications for this study relate to several core concepts of disability policy (Turnbull & Stowe, 2001a). Specifically, policy should build professional and family capacity for partnership, cultural responsiveness, and individualized appropriate intervention. In addition, policy should increase agency coordination and collaboration by formalizing the partnership between the Office of Head Start and the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

Head Start strives to build partnerships between its staff and families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, & Office of Head Start, 2011), but, as demonstrated by this case study, these partnerships are not always realized. Through system and family capacity building, policy should strengthen partnership practice, because increased partnership would result in more cultural responsiveness, individualized appropriate intervention, and prevention. In order for professionals to be aware of families' behavior within the domains of protection, intervention, and affective response, their professional development should focus on

culturally responsive practice and partnership with families. Families should also be aware of professionals' behavior within these behavior domains and family education activities should focus on building families' capacities to partner with their children's teachers. Head Start agencies should provide activities and materials to teach families about how professionals teach their children as well as what behavior is expected from children at school and why.

In addition, the interagency collaboration between the Office of Head Start and the Office of Refugee Resettlement could be an optimal partnership. The "policy on the books" of coordination and collaboration (as discussed in the introduction) contrasts with the "policy on the streets" (Turnbull & Stowe, 2001b), however, since neither the local resettlement agency nor the RHS leadership had heard of this interagency collaboration effort. Policy should provide formal requirements in terms of collaboration and coordination for these agencies, perhaps by including the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the list of coordinating agencies named in the Collaboration and Coordination section of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. § 98379(e)). These agencies have much to offer each other (BRYCS, n.d.). Possibilities for mutually beneficial collaborative activities between these agencies are indefinite and should be explored and documented. For example, resettlement agencies have vast cultural knowledge of groups of refugees in the area that could be useful for Head Start staff working with these populations. Resettlement agencies already provide newly arrived refugees with cultural training that includes navigating the education system; Head Start staff could conduct these trainings for families with young children and perhaps enroll children at the resettlement agency with the help of their staff translators.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates that children's home environments may differ greatly from their Head Start environment, and this difference can be difficult for children (especially children with disabilities or at risk for disability) to navigate. Adult behavior within three domains (i.e., protection, intervention, and affective response) in each environment fosters children's foundational skills leading to later self-determination. In addition, the interactions between home and school environments foster children's development of these skills. Adults in each environment should have an understanding of the adult behaviors within these three domains in the other environment in order to understand the child's behavior and needs. This framework for intervention should guide future research, practice, and policy.

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CHAPTER 3

Family Partnership with a Head Start Agency: A Case Study of a Refugee Family

Abstract

The attendance of children from refugee families at Head Start agencies provides the opportunity for Head Start staff to foster trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented family partnerships that are characterized by comprehensive two-way communication and that are intended to support child and family outcomes. These partnerships could help launch refugee families as partners in their children's education in the U.S. and ultimately improve family and child outcomes. This qualitative case study examined the relationship between a refugee family whose child was at risk for disability and the staff at the Head Start agency he attended. The findings indicated that the relationship between the family and Head Start staff was positive but fell short of the type of partnership that the Head Start national standards advocate. As a result, the family and Head Start staff did not take full advantage of the opportunity to learn from each other. Implications for practice, policy, and research are discussed.

Chapter 3:

Family Partnership with a Head Start Agency: A Case Study of a Refugee Family

The national Head Start program rests on the core value of promoting all aspects of child development and learning (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, & Office of Head Start, 2010) through a strengths-based, “cultural-relativistic” (Zigler & Styfco, 2010, p.36), and “whole-child” approach (Zigler & Styfco, 2010, p.37). Although much of this development and learning occurs while children are physically at Head Start agencies, the role of children’s families in fostering child development cannot be understated (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Zigler & Styfco, 2010). Accordingly, Head Start strives to engage families in order to build partnerships between Head Start staff and families, foster positive relationships between adult family members and their children, and cultivate ongoing learning and development of both adult family members and children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, & Office of Head Start, 2011). The Head Start approach is to engage families in order to establish partnerships with them; engagement is the means to the end of partnership.

Head Start has always served diverse populations and strived to adapt to the communities they serve (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (BRYCS), n.d.; Zigler & Styfco, 2010). This diversity currently includes children of refugees living in the U.S., most of whom meet the Head Start income eligibility guidelines (BRYCS, n.d.). Indeed, the Office of Refugee Resettlement recently called for Head Start and refugee resettlement agencies to partner to provide comprehensive services to refugee families

with young children (BRYCS, n.d; Head Start Connection, n.d). The Administration for Children and Families stresses collaboration between its agencies with similar missions. Accordingly, Head Start's mission to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services (About Head Start, n.d.) in partnership with families (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2011) fits well with the Office of Refugee Resettlement's mission (Head Start Connection, n.d.). Having noted the congruence of missions, it is now appropriate to define the population classified as "refugee" and to provide facts about that population.

A refugee is someone who:

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (United Nations High Commission on Refugees, n.d.)

During 2011, the U.S. resettled 56,424 refugees (U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Thirty-four percent of refugees admitted to the United States in 2011 were under 18 years of age (U.S. Department of State et al., 2012).

Improving their children's educational opportunities is a goal for many refugee families (Schiller, Boggis, Messenger, & Douglas, 2009). Refugee and immigrant families may have different perceptions of education (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Tadesse, Hoot, & Watson-Thompson, 2009), expectations for their children's

development (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Day & Parlakian, 2004; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001), and perceptions of their role in their children's education (Kalyunpur & Harry, 2012). Each of these perceptions may vary from teachers' perceptions (Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; Tadesse et al., 2009). Contrasting expectations can cause difficulty for children, especially when few linkages exist between environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Day & Parlakian, 2004; Garbarino, 1992; Huang & Isaacs, 2007) and when students have disabilities or developmental delays (Brotherson, Cook, Erwin, & Weigel, 2008). These expectations have implications for family and agency partnerships.

The family's fostering of young children's skills determines their skill level at school or daycare entry. Parenting beliefs, practices, and expectations are shaped by culture (defined here as a person's dynamic values, beliefs, and assumptions as influenced by preceding generations and shaped by an individual's experiences; Day & Parlakian, 2004). Young children from refugee families' experiences at home may vary from their experiences at Head Start. Since "culturally-based differences may lead to conflict and feelings of being misunderstood or judged—for both families and practitioners" (Day & Parlakian, 2004, p. 1), practitioners and families should partner to respond to culturally-based differences in order to support each child, family, and practitioner's positive development (Day & Parlakian, 2004; Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012, Office of Head Start, n.d.). In light of the research indicating that culture affects child development (e.g., Day & Parlakian, 2004; Office of Head Start, n.d.; Rogoff, 2003) and that children's education in Head Start programs proceeds on the premise that family engagement is a means to family partnership, it is appropriate at this point to address the

distinctions between these terms.

Head Start recognizes the importance of promoting cultural responsiveness through strong partnerships with families (Office of Head Start, n.d.). The Head Start Act (2007) charges Head Start agencies with numerous responsibilities aimed at involving and serving families (42 U.S.C. § 9837(b)(1)-(7),(10)-(13)). Specifically related to family partnership, the Act states that each Head Start agency must “facilitate and seek the involvement of parents of participating children in activities designed to help such parents become full partners in the education of their children” (42 U.S.C. § 9837(b)(3)(A)). Although the Act does not define “full partners,” the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (hereafter referred to as the Head Start Engagement Framework; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services et al., 2011) offers the following concise definition of family partnership: “Staff and families build ongoing, respectful, and goal-oriented relationships...[by] identifying and acting on family goals and aspirations and using program and community supports and resources to promote progress on family and child development goals” (p. 4). In addition, the code of federal regulations requires Head Start staff to:

engage in a process of collaborative partnership-building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports... as early after enrollment as possible... [taking] into consideration each family's readiness and willingness to participate in the process.
(45 C.F.R. §1304.40(a)(1))

Although these descriptions of partnership are fairly consistent, the federal regulation is more explicit in that it specifies that collaboration, trust, and building on

family strengths are inherent to family-professional partnerships. In addition, it states that Head Start agencies must ensure that “effective two-way comprehensive communications between staff and parents are carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year” (45 CFR §1304.51(c)(1)). With the overall goal of creating trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnerships characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes, Head Start agencies are required to provide numerous opportunities for family partnership. Table 1 highlights these requirements.

Table 1

Head Start Regulations for Family Partnership (45 CFR 1304.40(a)-(b),(d)-(i))

Family goal setting (45 CFR 1304.40 (a)(1)-(5))

- Engage in a process of collaborative partnership-building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports.
- Provide opportunities to develop and implement individualized family partnership agreements that describe family goals, responsibilities, timetables and strategies for achieving these goals as well as progress in achieving them.
- Create a variety of opportunities for interaction with parents throughout the year.
- Interact in culturally respectful ways.

Accessing community services and resources (45 CFR 1304.40 (b)(1)-(2))

- Work collaboratively with parents to access appropriate services and resources and provide parents opportunities for evaluation of them.

Parent involvement—general (45 CFR 1304.40 (d)(1)-(3))

- Involve parents in program policy-making and operations.
- Provide parent involvement and education activities responsive to parent need.
- Remain open to parents during all program hours.
- Welcome parents and encourage them to observe children and participate in activities.
- Provide parents with opportunities to participate in the program as employees or volunteers.

Parent involvement in child development and education (45 CFR 1304.40 (e)(1)-(5))

- Provide opportunities to include parents in the development of the program's curriculum and approach to child development and education.
- Provide opportunities for parents to enhance their parenting skills, knowledge, and understanding of the educational and developmental needs and activities of their children.
- Provide opportunities for parents to share concerns about their children with program staff.
- Provide opportunities for children and families to participate in family literacy services.
- Conduct two home visits.
- Conduct staff-parent conferences twice a year to enhance the knowledge and understanding of both staff and parents of the educational and developmental progress and activities of children.

Parent involvement in health, nutrition, and mental health education (45 CFR 1304.40 (f)(1)-(4))

- Provide medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health education programs for program staff, parents, and families.
- Ensure that the nutrition education program includes nutrition education about selection and preparation of foods to meet family needs and in the management of food budgets as well as parent discussions with program staff about the nutritional status of their child.
- Ensure that the mental health education program provides a variety of group opportunities for parents and program staff to identify and discuss issues related to child mental health.
- Provide individual opportunities for parents to discuss mental health issues related to their child and family with program staff.
- Encourage parents' active involvement in planning and implementing mental health interventions for their children.

Parent involvement in community advocacy (45 CFR 1304.40 (g)(1)-(2))

- Support and encourage parents to influence the character and goals of community services in order to make them more responsive to their interests and needs.
- Provide families with comprehensive information about community resources.
- Provide parents regular opportunities to work together, and with other community members, on activities that they have helped develop and in which they have expressed an interest.

Parent involvement in transition activities (45 CFR 1304.40 (h)(1)-(4))

- Assist parents in becoming their children's advocate as they transition to another setting by holding a staff-parent meeting toward the end of the child's participation in the program to enable parents to understand the child's progress.
- Promote the continued involvement of Head Start parents in the education and development of their children upon transition to school by providing education and training to parents about exercising their rights and responsibilities concerning their children's education in the school setting and assist parents to participate in decisions related to their children's education.

Parent involvement in home visits (45 CFR 1304.40 (i)(1)-(4))

- Make no less than two home visits per program year to the home of each enrolled child, unless the parents expressly forbid such visits, scheduled at mutually convenient times.

Note. These regulations have been condensed to fit this table. Regulations related to pregnant women, Early Head Start, and home-based program options were omitted.

Head Start agencies are mandated to create trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnerships characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes, but, as shown in Table 1, most of the federal regulations on family partnership relate to activities instead of the quality of the relationship between Head Start staff and families. Similarly, research pertaining to this topic has focused on activities that could create the relationship and does not address the quality of the relationship. In addition, research and policy use a variety of terms to

describe overlapping constructs of “involvement,” “engagement,” and “partnership.” In the family partnership section of the federal regulations (Table 1), such activities are referred to as “parent involvement” and *parent* is defined as: “a Head Start child's mother or father, other family member who is a primary caregiver, foster parent, guardian or the person with whom the child has been placed for purposes of adoption pending a final adoption decree” (45 CFR 1306.3 (h)). The Head Start Engagement Framework promotes “engaging families as equal partners in their children’s learning and development” (2011, p. 4). In this chapter; I refer to activities aimed at family involvement or engagement as “family partnership activities” and individuals’ participation in such activities “actions towards partnership.” I use researchers’ terms when referring to their research.

All studies of family involvement in Head Start have demonstrated a positive correlation between family involvement and child outcomes (Henrich & Gadaire, 2008). Numerous studies demonstrate that family involvement in Head Start is effective at increasing family and child outcomes (e.g., Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childes, 2004; Hindman, Miller, Froyen, & Skibbe, 2012; Jeynes, 2003; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Another line of research has sought to predict family involvement in Head Start (e.g., Castro, Bryant, Piesner-Feinberg, & Skinner, 2004; McWayne, Campos, Owsianak, 2008; McWayne & Owsianik, 2004; Unger, Jones, Park, & Tressell, 2001) and understand barriers to family involvement (Hindman et al., 2012) and parent involvement (Lamb-Parker et al., 2001). Lamb-Parker and colleagues (2001) reported that the three most substantial barriers to parent involvement at Head Start were busy schedules, having young children at home, and maternal depression. Hindman and colleagues (2012)

reported that family involvement increased for all participant groups throughout the school year, but the overall variance accounted for by factors of ethnicity, race, and immigration status diminished over the course of the year. Castro and colleagues (2004) found that parent employment was the strongest predictor of parent involvement (negative correlation), and classroom quality and teacher experience were the strongest Head Start-related predictors of parent involvement.

The limited research on refugee families with young children in preschool in the U.S. draws three consistent conclusions pertinent to relationships between refugee families and Head Start staff. First, refugee families are often unfamiliar with the pedagogical techniques in U.S. schools and may find them to be inappropriate (Birman, Trickett, & Bacchus, 2001; Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2008; Tadesse et al., 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). Second, although many refugee families have an interest in their children's education, they do not always have the ability to be involved in their children's education in ways schools expect due to numerous potential barriers (e.g., lack of understanding of involvement, financial and family responsibilities, lack of cultural and linguistic knowledge) (McBrien, 2005, 2011; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009). Third, refugee families often have different expectations for their children's behavior than teachers (Hurley, Medici, Stewart, & Cohen, 2011; Tadesse et al., 2009; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009).

The present study is part of a larger case study focused on how members from a refugee family and Head Start staff fostered a young child at risk for disability's foundational skills leading to later self-determination. The purpose of this specific study was to investigate the formation of the relationship between the Head Start staff and the

child's family. Specifically, I sought to describe the actions towards partnership of the Head Start staff and the family that could have developed a partnership between them and determine what factors facilitated or impeded the formation of this partnership.

Method

Researcher Background

By assuming a self-critical stance, I can help guard against imposing my own assumptions on this study (Maxwell, 2005). Therefore, I state openly that I have volunteered to work with several refugee families and taught their children in my classroom. I have been constantly awed by their resilience and believe their presence in the U.S. adds tremendous value to our society, and that refugees should be widely recognized for the strengths and richness they bring. I also was amazed by the high-quality Head Start program featured in this study and I developed a deep respect for its children, families, teachers, and administrators.

Research Design

The data presented here are part of a larger descriptive case study that used an embedded, single-case design. A case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). This design had the “ability to deal with a full variety of evidence- documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations” (Yin, 2009, p.11) to explore the multifaceted social phenomenon of partnerships (Yin, 2009).

Participant Selection

I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) to find a Head Start agency that (a) was within an hour's drive, (b) served refugee families, and (c) was agreeable to participating in this study. I started the search by contacting Head Start agencies that met the first two criteria and interviewing staff at two Head Start agencies that met all three criteria to determine their openness to this research. I selected Riley Head Start² (RHS) for its diversity (exactly half of the families [66 out of 132] spoke a language other than English at home); the range of African countries from which refugee families came (i.e., Somalia, North Sudan, South Sudan, Liberia, Nigeria, Vietnam, Haiti, Burma, and Iraq); and the education director's interest in the study.

Once I found RHS, I sought one child who was (a) enrolled in RHS (assumes aged 3-5), (b) had parents or guardians who were refugees and willing to participate in this study, and (c) had a diagnosed disability or several disability risk factors. As enrollment began in August, the education director identified several possibilities; one boy, Habib, whose parents were refugees from Somalia, stood out because of RHS staff's concerns about his behavior and development. His family was willing to participate in the research and granted informed consent. All teachers at RHS also granted informed consent.

Data Collection

I collected data through observations, semi-structured interviews, and documents. All data collection occurred simultaneously, as information from each source triangulated

² This and all other names are pseudonyms.

data from other sources (Maxwell, 2005) and informed ensuing data collection (Yin, 2009).

Observation. I observed in Habib’s classroom for approximately 50 hours (18 visits) and in his home for approximately 20 hours (9 visits) over the first 4 months of the school year. I also observed during the family/classroom orientation, two parent-teacher conferences, a parent activity night, and a fatherhood initiative activity. My observations were participant observations; I was an observer first and a participant second (Adler & Adler, 1994). I attempted to minimize the effect of my presence on the research participants by alternating between engaging in their everyday tasks with them and sitting separately when observing interactions. To clarify what I observed and validate my interpretation of the intention behind actions, I conducted numerous informal member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) during and following my participant observations in the form of dialogical interviews (Carspecken, 1996) that usually lasted between a few minutes and a half hour.

Field notes. While in the field, I wrote “jottings” and made “head notes” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p.19) to aid my memory of important details when writing field notes from my office. I captured my field experiences on my audio recorder as I drove home, a technique that helped me process the information (Agar, 1996; Emerson et al., 1995). I used my jottings, head notes, and audio recordings to generate typed field notes before going back into the field.

Semi-structured interviews. I conducted semi-structured phenomenological interviews (Charmaz, 2006) with 16 adults (teachers at RHS and three of Habib’s family members). These interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 2.5 hours. I recorded and

transcribed all but two of these interviews (two interviewees did not want to be recorded; I took detailed notes instead). The interviews followed a semi-structured interview protocol (Maxwell, 2005). I focused the interviews on brief life stories (i.e., what they had done to bring them to their current life situation); what the interviewees desired most for the child now, in the near future, and in the distant future; and how they perceived their relationship with the other party (teacher/family).

Document collection. Document collection included collecting and analyzing lesson plans, newsletters, notes sent to families, assessment data, enrollment forms, Head Start policies, and curriculum guides. I used data from documents to confirm findings from other methods as well as generate more questions to investigate in the field.

Data Analysis

The iterative nature of this study required that data collection and preliminary data analysis occurred simultaneously and informed each other. The five-part cycle of data analysis I used included compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Yin, 2011). This cycle was recursive and fluid.

Using NVivo 10 (QSR International, 2012), I created a database for all field notes (audio and typed), interviews (audio and transcriptions), and documents. While collecting data, I wrote analytic memos about themes that emerged from all data sources as well as my personal responses to the data (Maxwell, 2005). I shared these analytic memos with two colleagues bi-weekly. These memos and my colleagues' responses to them (written and/or verbal) became part of the database. Memo writing and sharing were components of the "interpreting" part of the analytic process, and the ideas were tentative (Maxwell, 2005).

I disassembled data by using open coding to create level one codes upon entry into the database (Yin, 2009). I highlighted parts of data that supported each code in Nvivo to generate a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). I used the theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2005) of microsystems (i.e., home and RHS) and the macrosystem (i.e., link between the two microsystems) derived from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory of human development to organize the codes as they emerged. After collecting the data, completing the level one codes, and locating the codes in appropriate theoretical categories, I reread all documents to revise codes and look for more specific patterns in the data. These patterns enabled me to reassemble and interpret the data to arrive at tentative conclusions. I checked these conclusions with RHS staff (i.e., Habib's lead teacher at RHS, the family advocate who worked with his family, and the education director) and Habib's family members (i.e., mother and father, separately) (Yin, 2011) and used my new understandings of the constructions to revise my findings.

Findings

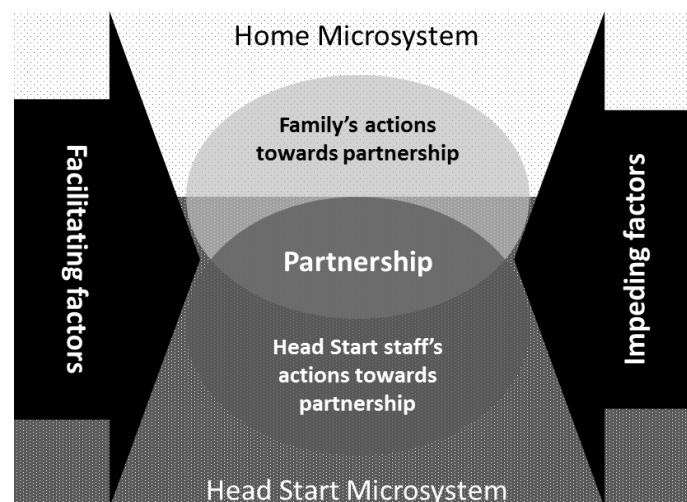


Figure 2. Conceptual model of factors influencing each party's actions towards partnership.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework for human development (1979), the framework used to analyze the findings (shown in Figure 2) conceptualized partnership to be the result of actions of both the staff and the family, which interacted (demonstrated by the overlapping spheres) and occurred mostly in the Head Start microsystem but also in the home microsystem. Facilitating factors and impeding factors in each environment affected each party's actions towards partnership. This section begins with a description of the participants, thereby describing the context for the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Next, Table 2 displays the alignment of partnership activities offered by RHS with the federal regulations for Head Start. This section then describes not only these activities but also how Habib's family responded to them. Thereafter, this section analyzes the factors that facilitated the formation of partnership. Finally, this section analyzes factors that impeded the formation of partnership. As the data indicate, both Habib's family members and RHS staff worked hard to accomplish a positive relationship, but their actions did not result in a trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnership characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes.

Participants

Habib and his family. Habib was 4 years old and the oldest of four children. He lived in a three-bedroom apartment in the outskirts of a large Midwestern city with his mother, Ugaaso, father, Muuse, grandmother, Fatu, and three younger siblings. Ugaaso, Muuse, and Fatu were Somali refugees and spoke Somali to each other and their children at home. Attending RHS in August was the first time Habib and his 3-year old sister, Zahra, were outside their home without their parents.

At the beginning of this study, the RHS staff were concerned about Habib's development because he displayed unpredictable and often inappropriate behaviors when over-stimulated or in new situations at home and at RHS. For example, he impulsively ran from the classroom a few times and his parents reported the same behavior at home. He also spoke little English, responded to teachers only by repeating their words, and spoke only haltingly in Somali. His teachers referred him for special education evaluation due to possible language and cognitive delays. He and his siblings had no toys in their living room and spent much of their time watching TV and running back and forth in their apartment's long hallway.

Habib's parents, Ugaaso and Muuse, had married 5 years earlier in the Midwestern city where they lived. Muuse had come to the U.S. in 2000 from Somalia by way of Nairobi, Kenya. He was 16 years old when he arrived, could not read or write, and had never been to school. Four years later, he had graduated from high school and spoke English well enough to find steady employment cleaning rental cars. At the time of this study, he was 29 years old. Ugaaso was 15 years old when she arrived in 2006. She had lived in Dadaab, a large refugee camp in eastern Kenya, since she was a toddler. Ugaaso had never attended school in Somalia or in the U.S. She learned English by taking ESL classes at a local social service agency and watching TV. Fatu was 66 years old and had lived in the U.S. for 6 years. Fatu did not speak English but Ugaaso and Muuse were both proficient in spoken English.

Habib's family appreciated their four children as unique individuals and allowed them to develop within the safety of their apartment without much intentional adult intervention. Muuse said children in Somalia grow up in "enclosed buildings with an

open area in the middle... [where] you are not scared about people grabbing and stealing them. They play outside with their cousins and friends and do whatever they want.”

Habib’s family was extremely concerned with the perceived danger of the neighborhoods where they lived since coming to the U.S. Ugaaso stayed in the apartment with the children most of the time, leaving once a week to go food shopping alone (while Muuse stayed with the kids). Occasionally, the whole family went together to visit relatives or go to Chuck E. Cheese. While in the apartment, Ugaaso and Muuse limited children’s access to materials they could not hurt. In sum, the children were restricted to living inside the apartment most of the time but experienced relative freedom with limited materials within those walls.

Habib’s teachers. Habib’s lead teacher, Cassie, had worked in early childhood for 16 years, 5 of which were at Head Start, but this was her first year at the RHS location. Cassie was energetic and empathetic, understanding from her own experience as a single teenage mother some of the battles many of her students’ families were fighting. Sharon, one of Habib’s assistant teachers, had taught for 14 years at RHS and was the mother of five children (one biological and four adopted from foster care). The other assistant teacher, Nina, described herself as a former illegal Mexican immigrant. She was a single mother who experienced substantial hardship during her quest for citizenship, came to the U.S. 25 years prior to this study, and started working at RHS 3 years later while her son attended the program. Although all three teachers were in the classroom, Cassie is the most prominent in these findings because she was responsible for maintaining Habib’s assessment portfolio and running his parent-teacher conferences. Sharon often worked with Habib in the classroom, but Nina had limited interactions with

him because she spent most of her time during this study with the Spanish bilingual students.

Habib's classroom at RHS contrasted greatly with his home context. Although his family environment offered freedom with limited materials within a confined space, the RHS classroom offered structured interactions with a wide range of materials. Also, although his family promoted his natural development with little intentional adult intervention, the teachers used intentional instruction to boost his development. His family was extremely loving and warm, but they did not usually offer praise; by contrast, the teachers at RHS offered specific praise for children's efforts but responded to Habib (especially in the beginning of this study) with less warmth than his family.

Partnership Activities

RHS accomplished the federal regulations for family partnerships in Head Start (as highlighted in Table 1) through numerous activities. Table 2 displays the alignment of RHS' activities with the federal regulations. The remainder of this section provides details about RHS' activities and Habib's family's involvement in them. Since this section aims to report the findings of this study, I include only a few interpretative discussions to clarify the data.

Table 2
RHS Activities Corresponding to Federal Regulations for Family Partnership in Head Start

Federal Regulations	RHS Activities								
	Healthy University	Home visit	Parent-teacher conference	Communication from classroom	Family activities at RHS	Open invitation to classroom	Fatherhood initiative	Parent committee and policy committee	Parent activity night
Family goal setting	X					X	X		
Accessing community services and resources	X	X		X				X	
General parent involvement		X			X	X	X	X	X
Parent involvement in child development and education		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parent involvement in health education	X	X	X	X	X				
Parent involvement in community advocacy	X						X	X	
Parent involvement in transition activities		X	X	X					
Parent involvement in home visits		X							

Note. Table 1 provides detail about the federal regulations listed in abbreviated form here. More detail can be found in 45 CFR 1304.40(a)-(b), (d)-(i).

Healthy University. Healthy University, held at the human services center where RHS was housed, was an event for families to enroll children in Head Start and access other community services. The staff of entities that provide services available at the

center (i.e., public health services, mental health services, family therapy, employment services) set up tables in the foyer of the building. When families brought their children in to enroll them in Head Start, the two full-time Head Start family advocates (Darlene and Cassandra) met with them individually within the foyer. Family advocates interviewed families to assess their eligibility for Head Start. If a family met the eligibility criteria, they set up Individualized Family Care Plans (IFCPs) for the family. The IFCP stated the family's goals. In addition, the family was expected to complete the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA; LeBuffe & Naglieri, 1999), a 37-item behavioral screener. District special educators assessed children at Healthy University with the BRIGANCE Preschool Screen II (Brigance, n.d.) if the parent or family advocate voiced a concern about the child's behavior or development. The DECA was sent to the district office, but the BRIGANCE became a part of the child's educational file.

Muuse brought Habib and Zahra to Healthy University. While Zahra was calm and stood by her father, Habib ran around and did not respond to his father or other adults. Describing his behavior afterwards, an administrator apologetically said she could not think of another way to describe it then to say Habib "acted like an animal." On his BRIGANCE screener, the special educator wrote that she recommended a special education evaluation "BUT could also be Somali culture??" She also wrote that he was "VERY distracted. Needed constant prompts from dad and me. Walked on toes. Dad says he uses Somali and English. Uses two words at a time. Dad says hard to understand and omits sounds in both languages. Points a lot." Muuse reported difficulty filling out all the paperwork while also trying to contain Habib, who kept trying to run away. The

family's IFCP listed as the family goals enrolling Ugaaso in ESL classes and finding a medical and dental home for the children. The IFCP was not revisited during the following 6 months, and Muuse and Ugaaso indicated that Ugaaso did not plan to enroll in ESL classes until Amina was in school (in 2.5 years). The family also expressed frustration with their health care situation, because their children's doctor would only see them for scheduled appointments and not in emergency situations.

Home visit. Habib's teachers visited his family in August prior to the start of school. This home visit lasted for approximately 20 minutes. The teachers reported that Habib, Zahra, and Abdu were not home during the visit, but Muuse said that they were sleeping in their bedroom with the door closed. During this visit, the following goals were set for Habib's development: "follow directions, write name, count 1-20, letters, social interaction, sharing." Cassie said,

We provide [families] with information for... getting ready for kindergarten... We give them resources if they need food, utility, or clothing assistance. We will provide them with information about safety. There are bits and pieces from the advocate and Head Start site that they throw into our parent-teacher conferences [at home].

When asked about this home visit, however, Ugaaso said, "They came to fill out some papers."

Parent-teacher conference. Cassie met with Muuse at RHS for 25 minutes in mid-November. This conference took place in the foyer of the site (a public space) and was scheduled at Muuse's convenience. This conference was organized by a checklist Cassie was required to follow. Of the 25 minutes of the conference, the first 9 minutes

consisted of Cassie telling Muuse about Habib's academic development. She was very positive as she explained his development and current skill level, stating that she had "never seen a child learn some things so quickly, as far as writing and letters and numbers and things like that." Muuse interjected short statements while Cassie talked but generally just listened to what she said and repeated some of her key words to show his comprehension. Cassie did not offer him a chance to talk during this part of the conference. After 9 minutes, Cassie stated her goals for Habib (increasing lower-case letter recognition and counting 1-15), and then asked Muuse, "What other things would you like him to be working on?" Muuse said he would like him to work on putting words into sentences, and Cassie said, "we will get him there... he is always watching... and repeating."

When Cassie paused to check off the first three items on her checklist and write Muuse's additional goal after the goals she had generated, Muuse volunteered that they are also working with him at home on these skills. Cassie suggested some strategies Muuse could use with Habib, such as naming items seen while driving to build his vocabulary. She then turned the conversation to Habib's linguistic ability in Somali, asking Muuse if he had any concerns for Habib's development in his home language. He reacted by saying they had no concerns and "we're doing the best that we can." Cassie responded: "You're obviously doing really well with him, because he is picking up everything very quickly for us." At the conclusion of this conversation, Cassie asked Muuse if he had any questions; he said did not. She then checked off that item on her list.

Cassie then read a worksheet on transitioning to kindergarten aloud to Muuse. Although she and Muuse had just set goals for Habib, Cassie explained that “they” (presumably kindergarten teachers) wanted him to be able to follow three-step directions and develop social skills (e.g., “talking more to his friends and being able to relate to them”), fine and gross motor skills, pre-literacy skills, and self-help skills. She gave Muuse a piece of large-ruled paper for Habib to use to practice writing his name. When she finished explaining this new set of expectations and goals, she checked it off her list, added “social skills” to the list of goals, and began to speak about her biggest concern.

Cassie stated that her biggest concern was that Habib would not eat at RHS, but Muuse did not seem to share her concern. She asked Muuse precise questions, such as if Habib ate specific items (i.e., fruit, vegetables, and bread). Muuse answered her precise questions explicitly but did not expand on them to offer contextual information. In actuality, Habib ate a full meal at 11:00 AM before going to RHS every day and again when he returned home at 4:30 PM. His mother served him, and he sat on the couch or floor and ate by himself out of a bowl. This style of eating contrasted greatly with the expectations at RHS, where children were expected to serve themselves and sit politely at a table. Though Habib’s nutrition was a major concern for Cassie, she did not solicit from Muuse information about how he ate at home, if his family was concerned about his nutrition, or strategies he thought might help Habib start to eat at school. After discussing his nutrition, Cassie wrote two more goals: “nutrition, try new foods.” Muuse had expressed neither concern about his nutrition nor desire for him to try new foods. At the conclusion of this conference, Cassie signed the checklist she had used (Muuse had not yet seen it) and then passed it to Muuse for his signature.

Muuse did not seem rushed or annoyed by Cassie's use of the checklist or the paperwork they needed to complete. After she had explained where to sign, he clicked his pen constantly while reading through the form, taking 58 seconds. He then signed it. Notably, immediately after this conference with Cassie, Muuse met with Zahra's teacher and encountered the same paperwork and checklist.

Communication from classroom. The teachers used numerous techniques to communicate with families, including weekly newsletters, weekly lesson plans, in-kind homework sheets, phone calls, and a monthly menu. These techniques, however, were uni-directional, as discussed subsequently.

Weekly newsletters. Sent home in children's backpacks on Mondays and displayed outside the classroom, the newsletters reviewed specific lessons, how the class responded to them, and how they connected to learning objectives. They also explained objectives and lessons for the week to come and their importance for child development. The newsletters showed photographs of students engaged in activities. They also suggested ways families could help develop target skills at home and provided talking points for families to use with children to discuss the activities completed at RHS. At the bottom of the newsletters, the teachers compiled requests of parents to help the classroom run smoothly (e.g., send in appropriate clothing) and encouraged families to visit classrooms and check children's backpacks for school materials.

Habib's family expressed appreciation of the teachers' communication efforts. Although they acknowledged the newsletters and said they read them, they kept the items in Habib's back pack. Conversations about the newsletters revealed that they had some knowledge of what was communicated but not a complete understanding. For example,

they knew when events were scheduled but not what Habib did at school. Cassie explained this as a phenomenon among three or four immigrant families in her class every year: “We had a little girl that came to school with her sister’s backpack from the past...it still had everything in it from her sister.” She said she did not think the families that left all the papers in their children’s backpacks read them, stating “there’s so many papers in there...they probably wouldn’t even know which ones they read or not.”

Weekly lesson plan. On Mondays, Habib’s teachers also sent home a detailed lesson plan for the week and posted it in the hall at RHS. Lesson plans listed large group and small group lessons and objectives and had sections on family partnerships (i.e., notes to families about how they could support classroom activities), outside activities, health and nutrition, assessment, conscious discipline, classroom climate, and materials used. Similar to the newsletters, Habib’s family kept these in his backpack for the duration of this study.

In-kind homework sheets. These sheets encouraged families to spend time engaged with their children in academic tasks. Habib’s family did not turn in these sheets, but they said they did the assigned tasks. Possibly, they did not understand how to complete the sheets which had several small boxes for the names of participants, book titles, times spent on reading, and signatures.

Notes pinned to children’s shirts. These notes communicated directly with families about urgent matters. An example of a note sent to Habib’s family pinned to his shirt was the consent form for his special education evaluation. His family returned it the following day.

Phone calls. Teachers handled items that required discussion by calling families directly. For example, Cassie called Muuse to request parental consent for a special education evaluation for Habib. She followed up the phone call with the consent form pinned to Habib's shirt. This was the quickest way to get a response from Habib's family, whose speaking ability surpassed their reading ability in English.

Monthly menu. The monthly menu was sent home to inform families what food children were served at RHS. Ugaaso, however, acknowledged receiving the menu but expressed that she did not know what foods her children were served at school. Possibly, Ugaaso and Muuse had difficulty reading the crowded writing on the menu (the entire month was on one 11 x 17 piece of paper) or understanding the vocabulary used to describe food items (e.g., "roasted winter vegetables").

Uni-directional communication. Communication was mostly uni-directional, from RHS to Habib's family; there was no clearly articulated mode of communication for his family to use to communicate with teachers. The communication that existed was basic and specific to tasks. For example, on the first day of school, Muuse followed Habib's school bus to RHS (a 30-minute circuitous drive) and then accompanied Habib to his classroom after waiting for other buses to arrive (a 10-minute wait on the sidewalk). He then waited for a few minutes in the hallway with no attention from the teachers. Finally, he motioned for a student teacher to come to the door. He asked her to get a teacher and then told Sharon (the teacher who responded) he was concerned about Habib using the bathroom when necessary. Muuse knew no other way to get this simple information to the teachers than to follow these time-consuming steps.

Family activities at RHS. There were two family activities at RHS during this study: family/classroom orientation and Bring Your Parent to School Day.

Family/classroom orientation. The week before school started, new families were invited to bring their children in to the classroom to participate in some of the typical routines. RHS offered several orientation sessions to honor families' work schedules. Family members and children sang classroom ritual songs and did dances to go along with them. They also had some time to explore the classroom. The children sat at tables and, using plastic tongs, served themselves bags of crackers. After about 1.5 hours of activities with the children in the classroom, adults attended an orientation to Head Start logistics while the children played in other classrooms. According to the education director, Barbara, this orientation targeted teaching immigrant families how RHS expects children to behave and to "develop a common language about behavioral expectations."

Muuse brought Zahra and Habib to the morning session of the family/classroom orientation (though the children were in their respective classrooms). Muuse interacted with Habib and tried to make him behave according to how he thought the teachers desired. For example, Habib cried and curled up in a ball when the teachers put on animal music, and everybody started to dance around and act like animals. Muuse lifted his son and held him into a standing position so he could participate like the other children. He moved Habib's arms for him as if they were a tiger's paws. Habib alternated between laughing and crying during this activity. When Habib went to the science center to play with a toy that made music, Muuse instructed him to stop touching it; Cassie came over and explained that it was okay for him to play with the toys. Habib

chose to do a complex alphabet puzzle; Muuse tried to help him but did not know how the pieces fit. Cassie came over to help them and praised Habib for being able to match so many of his letters. Muuse then encouraged Habib to say the letter names out loud; Habib whispered some of them, and Cassie wrote them down on a sticky note for his assessment portfolio.

Reflecting on it afterwards, Muuse said, “actually it was a little bit hard. It [was a] difficult first day for school of the kids... is my first time [at the kids’ school]... I remember different rules every time.” He said Zahra was “friends with everybody... she just play every time;” but Habib was “shy if he don’t know the place and people. He’s quiet and shy and don’t want to talk to nobody. Just quiet... and covered his ears. He not like it.”

Bring Your Parent to School Day. On this day, families attended school with their children. They were exposed to typical activities and routines at RHS and had the opportunity to interact with teachers. Muuse attended this activity for about an hour, splitting his time between Habib and Zahra’s rooms, and leaving to get to work 2 hours after the activity started. Muuse was very active during his time in Habib’s classroom. He took charge of making books out of cereal boxes by organizing the materials and enlisting Habib and another 4-year old in the class to assemble the books. After the children put the materials in place, Muuse stapled them. Muuse then helped Habib write some words in a book. Commenting on it afterwards, Muuse expressed enjoying the time in the classroom but wishing he could have stayed longer and did not have to leave to go to work: “It [was] good. It difficult... I don’t have a lot of time to go to work. I think they want me to stay more time in school.”

Open invitation to classroom. RHS always welcomed families into the classrooms. Teachers and administrators expressed this invitation during activities at RHS as well as in written material sent home to families. Several family members came to the classroom while I was there, but nobody in Habib's family came for unscheduled events.

Fatherhood initiative. The fatherhood initiative focused on planning activities to bring fathers to RHS and interact positively with their children. The fatherhood initiative activity during this study was about fire safety. Muuse attended this activity with Habib. Facilitated by the business manager (the only male on staff), this activity started with a movie about fire safety and evacuation. The fathers then discussed with their children evacuation routes at their homes. Finally, the fathers and children conducted a mock fire drill. Muuse said, "It's OK, but a little difficult to leave Ugaaso with the kids on my day off. Friday's the Muslim holiday, like Sunday for Christians."

Parent committee and policy committee. Head Start parent committees are charged with advising staff on local program policies, activities, and services; planning and conducting activities for parents and staff; and participating in recruiting and screening potential employees (45 CFR 1304.50(e)(1)-(3)). Elections for the parent committee and the parent representative to the policy committee took place during the first and only parent activity night at RHS. The parents present elected a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, and vice secretary for the RHS parent committee, as well as a parent representative and alternate for the policy committee. The children played outside and ate dinner in the classrooms while 40 family members ate dinner and attended the event upstairs in a conference room. Barbara led the meeting, which lasted from 5:30

PM until 7:30 PM, while teachers stayed with the children. There was no translator present; one Arabic-speaking mother expressed frustration that she could not understand or participate for lack of translation. No member of Habib's family attended this event, because it took place in the evening while Muuse was working.

Parent activity night. The parent committee was charged with organizing parent activity nights with Barbara's guidance. Barbara was particularly interested in hosting parent trainings in Conscious Discipline, the behavior management curriculum employed by RHS and described as Barbara as "a passion of mine." Conscious Discipline, premised on the belief that changing child behavior starts with changing the behavior and self-awareness of the adults who interact with them (Bailey, 2000), has a training series for parents that RHS invested in the year prior to this study. The opening of a new Head Start site with the same leadership as RHS, however, took much of Barbara's time during the duration of this study; the parent activity nights did not happen this fall because she was occupied with opening the new center.

Summary of actions towards partnership. While the RHS staff and Habib's family had a positive relationship overall and several activities allowed Habib's family to learn from RHS staff, there were few opportunities in which the RHS staff solicited information from Habib's family about their perspectives and goals for Habib. As a result, the RHS staff did not learn about Habib's home context and lacked family input that could have influenced their teaching. Muuse participated in activities that did not interfere with his work schedule but offered only information that was expressly solicited and held no expectations for partnership. The result was a positive relationship but not a trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnership characterized by

comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes. The following sections describe facilitating and impeding factors that influenced the formation of such a partnership between these two parties. Figure 3 displays these factors.

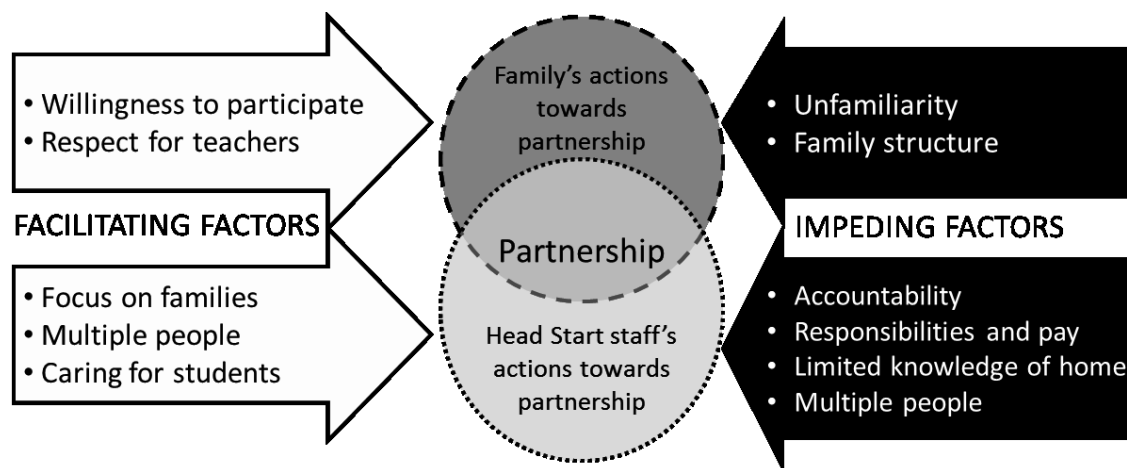


Figure 3. Factors that facilitated and impeded each party's actions towards partnership.

Facilitating Factors

Numerous factors facilitated a partnership between Habib's family and the RHS staff. Figure 3 displays these factors and the following section provides more detail, starting with the family's facilitating factors and continuing with the staff's facilitating factors.

Family's facilitating factors. The main factors at home that facilitated Habib's family's actions towards partnership were their willingness to participate and their respect for teachers.

Willingness to participate. Muuse's attendance at all parent activities offered by RHS that did not conflict with his work schedule demonstrated his willingness to participate. He also responded quickly to phone calls and notes sent home. He was

present and patient at Habib's parent-teacher conference and the home visit. Ugaaso did not go to RHS but was present during the home visit and welcoming of this research.

Respect for teachers. Habib's family felt very positively about their children's experiences at RHS and respected the teachers for their expertise. For example, Ugaaso expressed gratitude for the work of the teachers when she explained how it affected her life: "School is good... He has learned different things. Since he started school, Habib does not run away when I open the door. And since he does not run away, Abdu does not run away." She was also very proud that Habib taught his brother some of the self-regulation skills he learned at school: "One time, Habib said to Abdu, 'You can't do that. Don't do that—the teachers say, 'Don't do that!'" In addition, Ugaaso made comments about not knowing how to teach her kids. One day, for example, she said, "I don't know how to teach them. I don't remember how they do it in Somalia."

Staff's facilitating factors. The main factors that facilitated the staff's actions towards partnership were their focus on families, multiple people working with families, and caring for children.

Focus on families. Working with the families of the diverse groups of refugees who have moved into RHS' catchment area in the past few years has been challenging for RHS but, according to Barbara, they have welcomed the challenge. Their focus on families has remained strong, and they created some innovative ways to bring families into RHS. For example, the family/classroom orientation had previously been much shorter and focused only on the logistics of coming to school (e.g., bus schedule, sickness policy). Barbara spearheaded the classroom-based component of the orientation to demonstrate RHS' expectations for children, create some common language between

home and school, and increase families' comfort level in the RHS classroom environment. This drive to improve services and support was confirmed by Cassie. She explained that Barbara and the site supervisor "respect your opinion and your creativity. They want you to know that, because they want to make sure that their program is bettering itself...Just making those little changes and always trying to grow professionally is important."

Multiple people. While taking actions towards family partnerships was important to the program and staff, teachers at RHS had multiple responsibilities in the classroom. Therefore, the actions of staff towards family partnerships were shared between multiple staff members, including the family advocates, Barbara, the site supervisor, the business manager, and the special educators who worked for the district where RHS was located. The three teachers in Habib's room took responsibility for maintaining the assessment notebooks for specific children for the duration of the year (approximately 11 students each). Communicating with families, however, was shared among all the teachers, with the exception of Nina solely talking with families who spoke Spanish only. Family advocates worked with all families in specific rooms (Darlene worked with all families in both sessions of Habib's classroom and one other classroom), setting up the IFCPs and connecting them with necessary resources and services. Having multiple people working towards creating partnerships was a facilitating factor because it allowed for quicker responsiveness. It was also an impeding factor, however, as will be discussed subsequently.

Caring for children. Overall, the staff at RHS was drawn to their work because they cared about their students and families. Specifically towards Habib, Cassie

manifested this care through loving actions (e.g., hugging him on the first day of school because she saw he was scared), speaking about him positively (e.g., stating to Muuse: “He is very fun to have in class. He makes me laugh every day and that is the best medicine”), and taking an interest in getting to know him. Cassie said: “That child is eager. He wants to learn. He is a sponge. But I think that’s great because he is learning that language and eventually it will click.”

Impeding Factors

Numerous factors impeded the formation of a partnership between Habib’s family and RHS staff. The right side of Figure 3 displays these factors and the following section provides more detail, starting with the family’s impeding factors and continuing with the staff’s impeding factors.

Impeding factors at home. Two factors impeded the family’s actions towards partnership: unfamiliarity with partnership and family structure.

Unfamiliarity. Habib’s family had no experience with Head Start or any other preschool. They never attended school before coming to the U.S., when Muuse attended an accelerated ESL high school program. Muuse and Ugaaso understood that family involvement was an important aspect of Head Start, and Muuse attended every RHS event that did not conflict with his work schedule; but they did not seem to understand or have high expectations for family partnership. When asked about how they wanted to work with teachers, Muuse said, we “want to learn ways they do it over there. Our kids do not know. The kids they don’t know...” When pressed for more information about partnership with teachers, Muuse said, “They teach kids and help us understand what

they do here... We want to learn from the teachers, because they know what the kids should do here.”

Family structure. Contrary to the majority of families at RHS whose mothers were more involved in their children’s schooling than their fathers, Muuse was more involved in RHS-based activity than Ugaaso. In fact, Ugaaso had never been to RHS because she was “so busy with the kids.” Asked if she would attend an event if RHS offered childcare for her children (which they did), she replied that she would not leave her children with strangers because “they might get angry with them for doing something wrong.” Ugaaso saw her primary role as making sure her children were safe and did not want to compromise their safety to attend events at RHS.

Furthermore, Ugaaso reported that she did not foster her children’s development as much as she would like because she did not know how. She expressed a desire to learn more about parenting strategies that would facilitate her children’s development of these skills and acknowledged that the teachers at RHS had these skills. However, she did not have any ideas for how she could learn from them more directly.

While Ugaaso was not involved in the RHS community, she was extremely involved in Habib and his siblings’ education at home. Muuse worked 40 hours a week, returned home late at night, and needed to sleep in. During this time, Ugaaso took care of the children. She did not, however, have a clear idea of Habib and Zahra’s experiences at RHS. She worked with them on reading and speaking English, mostly by allowing them to watch *Your Baby Can Read* (n.d.) DVDs on the TV and engaging in the program’s songs and dances with them. Conversely, the teachers did not know what Ugaaso did with the children at home. Since she was the primary care giver for the children at home,

her absence at Healthy University, the parent-teacher conference at RHS, and family activities at school impeded the formation of partnership.

Impeding factors at RHS. Four factors impeded the RHS staff's actions towards partnership: accountability, responsibilities and pay, limited knowledge of home, and multiple people.

Accountability. A strategy to maintain consistency and accountability was the use of mandated checklists to document all formal interactions (i.e., parent-teacher conferences, home visits). These checklists, while useful for ensuring consistency in agenda items, dictated the order and manner in which such interactions took place. The previous discussion of the parent-teacher conference was one example of this. Although Muuse shared information at Habib's conference, Cassie was checking off required components of the conference. Barbara commented on this, acknowledging that the checklist caused teachers and families to "lose eye contact." Completing this task and losing eye contact while he talked could have given the explicit impression that Cassie was not listening and the implicit impression that she did not value his ideas, though Muuse did not seem to take note of this behavior and, in retrospect, expressed satisfaction with the conference. All papers needed to be signed by family members and teachers, giving them a formality that could have undermined a sense of trust. In aiming for consistency in content, these checklists diminished responsiveness, as demonstrated by the previously described unnatural flow of Habib's parent-teacher conference and Ugaaso's belief that the teachers came to her house for a home visit in order to "fill out some papers."

Responsibilities and pay. Teachers' time was limited: They were exempt employees required to complete tasks that took up most of their time while on duty. RHS operated two sessions four days a week, which required twice as many meetings and relationships, as well as double the paperwork, organization, and cleaning than a single day-long session would. Teachers reserved Friday for professional development, meetings, paperwork, cleaning the classroom, collaborating, and crafting communications. Barbara said, "it's just so many things coming down on teachers."

Accountability paperwork took a substantial amount of time. In addition to the paperwork for meeting with families, compiling comprehensive assessment data in a timely manner, and ensuring the room was cleaned to standards (for which there was a checklist), the teachers had several accountability checklists to complete every day for routine items with children. The teachers were required to do a roll call every time they entered or exited the building, which was at least four times every day. They also needed to check off the children's names every time they were served food. Teachers also had to write the purpose of each outing and sign the forms properly. Barbara reported that each time teachers conducted a roll call "takes seven minutes... think about it...seven minutes when you cannot have your eyes on the children, and you cannot be engaging with the children."

In addition to their numerous responsibilities, RHS teachers were not paid well. Cassie worked a second job as a gymnastics teacher to make enough money to support her family yet still struggled financially. She said, "I really appreciate what the program has done for me and what I have learned about children and the way to really deal with families ... Ideally I would work here and get paid what the school district pays." The

teachers were not paid over the summer and did not receive health care coverage during that time. Cassie shared,

I hurt my knee this summer and had no insurance so I was walking on a torn MCL for about six or seven weeks before I had any kind of insurance. And it was just a rough start to the year... If I could just transfer out that money and benefits that comes with the school district job then that is what I would do because I want to be with this job.

Nina was a former Head Start parent and had recently been demoted from lead teacher to assistant teacher, because she did not have the college credits necessary to be a lead teacher. Barbara said, “We were forced to not only reduce her status but to reduce her pay... and she is a past Head Start family who is being successful and is here because of her heart... and it is getting harder and harder to hold on to that.” Although Habib’s teachers successfully supported students as they were expected to, the high level of responsibility, low pay, and accountability measures diminished their ability to perform the parts of their job for which they were not specifically held accountable.

Limited knowledge of home. The teachers had a limited understanding of Habib’s family life in general. Cassie said,

It’s a pretty big family. Family is very supportive especially the dad. I think he’s more Americanized and he feels more comfortable to come ask questions and come here and to check it out. He wants to come here to make sure he is doing everything that he can.

Cassie was surprised, however, when I mentioned that Habib’s family spends significant time watching *Your Baby Can Read* because they want their children to read.

When I shared that information, we talked about how Habib's habit of repeating words might come from that program's emphasis on repetition. It was apparent to Cassie that such simple information could have informed her instruction of Habib, but she had never solicited it from his family.

Multiple people. A strategy to lighten the teachers' responsibilities was to spread responsibility for working with families among numerous people, a facilitating factor to partnership discussed previously. It was, however, also an impeding factor to partnership activities, because numerous people worked with the child and family but did not always share information amongst them. For example, the teachers had not seen Habib's family's IFCP, which was created by the family advocate and kept in Habib's family's file in her office. When a family showed significant difficulties or when a teacher really struggled with a child in the classroom, a collaborative problem-solving team would come together to work on the IFCP with the family and teachers. All families started the year with an IFCP, however, and only the families or children with the most significant needs had meetings with a collaborative problem solving team. Although teachers and special educators had concerns about Habib's development significant enough to refer him for special education evaluation, there was no IFCP team meeting for him, and the family advocate was not aware that he had been referred for this evaluation.

In addition to the three teachers in the classroom, the local district's special educator and speech pathologist came into the room to work with individual students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). While there, they also performed casual observations of other students, including Habib. In addition, a mental health worker consulted for the district and, similar to the special educators, supported specific students

but also worked less formally with others, including Habib. In addition, a behavioral specialist for the Head Start region came in a few times during the duration of this study to offer support for students, including Habib. These specialists all came to the room for several hours during this study but had not provided systematic feedback to Cassie. In Cassie's words, "It's so stressful...they've added more kids with more special needs and more language barriers. Everybody's overwhelmed... and [they haven't] really given me any input a lot of times...there's kind of that breakdown of communication... and everything's running together." Habib's file showed no input from any of these specialists, most likely because he did not live in the district for which most of them worked, and they were therefore not authorized to work directly with him. Habib's family did not know any of these specialists or that they were working, however informally, with Habib.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the formation of the relationship between the Head Start staff and a refugee family whose child was at risk for disability. The findings described the actions of Head Start staff to partner with this family and how the family responded. The findings then documented factors that facilitated and impeded the relationship turning into a trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnership characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes. In sum, the findings demonstrated that RHS offered multiple activities for family involvement or engagement and that Habib's father participated in the events that did not conflict with his work schedule. Communication was mostly from the school to the home, however, and the RHS staff did not genuinely solicit information

from Habib's family about their perspectives. Habib's family did not have high expectations for partnership, and the RHS teachers did not raise those expectations.

Overall, factors that facilitated Habib's family's actions towards partnership were their willingness to participate in family involvement activities and their respect for the teachers. The factors that facilitated RHS staff's actions towards partnership were a focus on families, multiple people interacting with the family, and caring for the students.

Factors that impeded the family's actions towards partnership included the family structure (e.g., mother being the primary caregiver but not willing to leave children with strangers) and unfamiliarity with the school system and family partnerships. Factors that impeded the RHS staff's actions towards partnership included strict accountability measures, numerous responsibilities and low pay for the teachers, limited knowledge of the home context, and multiple people working with the child and family but not communicating. After stating the limitations of this study, I connect the findings to the literature and discuss implications for practice, policy, and research.

Limitations

A note of clarification must precede the limitations: The intention of using an embedded, qualitative case study design was to research the partnership around this particular child; this study did not attempt to compare Habib's family or teachers with other families or teachers. The primary goal of this study was to explore and document the process of forming a partnership between a refugee family whose child was at risk for disability and the Head Start staff who taught the child.

There were four main limitations to this study. The first limitation was that data collection spanned the first 4 months of the school year (September-December);

Hindman and colleagues (2012) found that family involvement increased throughout the year. Following this family and staff for an entire school year would have been ideal and would have revealed more information, but time restraints precluded doing so. In any case, Sharon moved to a different state in January, and Cassie and Darlene both took a leave of absence for personal reasons starting in February. It would also have been interesting to follow Habib into kindergarten and beyond, but his family planned to move at the end of the academic year to be closer to Ugaaso's family in a different state.

The second limitation of this study was also a barrier to partnership formation: numerous staff responsibilities with limited time. The staff members at RHS were generous with the time they devoted to talking with me, but they had important tasks to do and limited time. In addition, Darlene took a leave of absence for 6 weeks during this study.

The third limitation was that this research emerged from a larger case study; it is possible that I missed data from the beginning of the year because it was not the sole focus of the research from the onset of the study. The fourth limitation was my data collection method at Habib's home. I felt most comfortable getting to know the family over the 20 hours I spent in their apartment by engaging with them and their children. We watched movies, cooked, ate, and played together, but I did not take detailed notes or tape record conversations while in their home as often as I would have liked because it would have been too unnatural. Therefore, although the data were captured in my extensive field notes, I did not capture as many of their words as I would have liked.

Connection to Literature

By describing and analyzing the relationship between the refugee family and Head Start staff of one child at risk for disability, this study fills a gap in the literature base about family partnerships in Head Start and, more specifically, about refugee family partnerships with Head Start. Although numerous quantitative studies offer substantial data on family involvement (e.g., Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Hindman et al., 2012; Jeynes, 2003; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999), no studies specifically investigated both sides of building trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnership with refugee families characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes.

Habib's father participated in the events that did not conflict with his work schedule, while his mother was neither involved in activities at RHS nor was particularly active in home visits. This finding contrasts with the findings of most large-scale self-report studies of Head Start families that have found mothers to be more significantly involved than fathers (e.g., McWayne et al., 2008). However, Ugaaso's low level of involvement in conferencing is consistent with previous research that has found a correlation between the mother's education level and her involvement in home-school conferencing (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Lareau & Shamar, 1996; McWayne et al., 2008).

That this study found communication between home and school to be generally from school to home, not bi-directional, is not surprising. This finding relates to Hindman and colleagues' (2012) finding that few families from their nationally representative sample communicated with Head Start staff more than a few times per week, though Habib's family communicated with RHS staff even less. Bernhard,

Lefebvre, Killbride, Chud, and Lange (1998) found that immigrant parents in their Canadian sample wanted more information from teachers than teachers volunteered but did not want to be disrespectful or demand too much of the teacher's time. Furthermore, much of the uni-directional communication from RHS was in writing despite Habib's family's low literacy level. Nderu (2005) found that Somali families of middle school students reported that written communication was a barrier to their involvement in school because they did not know what papers to return. These families preferred oral communication (Nderu, 2005).

Habib's family's respect for teacher expertise and unfamiliarity with the school system resulted in low expectations for a partnership with the Head Start staff. This finding is consistent with previous research on refugee families (BRYCS, 2007; Hwa-Froelich & Westby, 2003; McBrien, 2011; Nderu, 2005). Families' respect for teacher expertise is a common theme in partnership literature, especially for immigrant (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012) and working-class families (Lareau, 2011), but often leads to an imbalanced relationship in which teachers do not learn about the home environment, and families do not know how to communicate with teachers (BRYCS, 2007).

Implications for Practice

The time when their children are at Head Start, especially for refugee families and/or families whose children are at risk for disability, is extremely important in launching families as partners in their children's education. Achieving trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnerships with refugee families characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes would increase teachers' knowledge of home environments and families' funds

of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), which would in turn improve their teaching (Moll et al., 1992; Office of Head Start, n.d.). Such partnerships would create cohesion between environments, and families would learn from Head Start staff and appreciate the value of their own knowledge (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). Teachers and families would both benefit from building these partnerships, but children would benefit the most because their parallel worlds would have increased cohesion and appreciation of each other. To work towards creating such partnerships, Head Start staff should be given more authority and professional development to be responsive to the families they serve, options for family involvement should be more accessible to all families, and families should be knowledgeable about their options for partnership.

Teacher responsiveness. Head Start staff should be given authority and professional development to be responsive to the families and children they serve. Head Start staff should value learning about the home environment, families' funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Office of Head Start, n.d.), and families' concepts of family involvement and partnership (Dachyshyn & Kirova, 2008; Moll et al., 1992; Lopez, 2001). Head Start staff should also be provided the time and professional development to learn how to engage in true reciprocal communication with families to learn this valuable information from families (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012) and develop an awareness of their own perspectives on families (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012; Lea, 2012). In addition, Head Start agencies should increase their methods of communication from home to school to ensure everyone can access them. They should also make certain that families understand these methods. A review of strategies to create culturally responsive

partnerships is beyond the scope of this chapter; Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, Soodak and Shogren (2011) and Kalyanpur and Harry (2012) provide recommended strategies.

Family involvement options. Increasing family involvement requires understanding both family preferences for involvement (Nderu, 2005) and ways families are already involved (Lopez, 2001) and responding appropriately (BRYCS, 2007). RHS demonstrated the desire to increase family involvement in creating the family/classroom orientation and other family involvement activities. Hurley, Saini, Warren, and Carberry (2013) found that inviting refugee families to plan menus and prepare ethnically diverse food resulted in more responsive relationships. Planning activities that could involve younger siblings (BRYCS, 2007) could help alleviate the barrier of parents not wanting to leave their children in childcare. Families should be involved in the process of creating increased options for family involvement, but different understandings of involvement and partnership might inhibit families' generation of innovative solutions to their barriers (Ariza, 2000; BRYCS, 2007).

Family awareness of partnership. Increasing families' awareness of partnership in Head Start and the U.S. education system is paramount to increasing their expectations for trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnerships characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes. Rights come with responsibilities, and families, especially immigrant and refugee families who are unfamiliar with the U.S. education system, need to learn about both their rights and the corresponding responsibilities (Waterman & Harry, 2008). Starting during the cultural orientation activities typically provided by resettlement agencies, refugee families should be taught about family involvement opportunities in Head Start and the

K-12 education system (BRYCS, n.d.; Waterman & Harry, 2008). Ideally, this education would be offered by Head Start and school officials in concert with other orientation programs offered by resettlement agencies (BRYCS, n.d.).

Implications for Policy

There is an inherent conflict with respect to policy. On the one hand, it seems clear that Head Start policy should emphasize, and Head Start practice therefore should advance, trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnership characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes. On the other hand, there are other justifiable policies that take precedence; these emphasize various types of accountability and occupy Head Start staff so much that advancing partnership is secondary. To move creating these partnerships to the forefront, policy can support building accountability measures and appropriate measurement instruments. Although important research about family involvement from the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey data set (e.g., Hindman et al., 2012) informs Head Start policy in meaningful ways, the data measured only family involvement but not the quality of the involvement nor whether the involvement itself created partnership; relationship quality was an absent element of this research. Similarly, the Head Start Engagement Framework takes a critical step in evaluating parent and family engagement within specific activities and uniting researchers with a shared definition of family engagement but does not attempt to measure the quality of family partnership (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service et al., 2011).

Implications for Research

This exploratory study resulted in more questions than it sought to answer, and research should continue to explore this complex and important topic. First, research should establish tools for measuring trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnerships between Head Start staff and families that are characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes in Head Start. Second, researchers should partner with innovative Head Start agencies to research the partnership and family involvement activities they have in place as well as how they established these activities. Third, researchers should work with refugee communities and Head Start agencies to increase innovative and responsive techniques and document the processes of developing the programs as well as the results.

First, research should establish tools for measuring family partnership in Head Start. Such tools would help clarify that family involvement and engagement are not synonymous with partnership. The Beach Center Family-Professional Partnership Scale (Summers et al., 2005) is an 18-item self-report satisfaction scale with a family version to measure family satisfaction with their child's teacher's partnership practices and a professional version to measure the teachers' satisfaction with their own partnership practices. Although this scale was created for partnerships around children receiving special education services, it could also be used to measure partnerships for all families in Head Start. This satisfaction scale could be complemented by a survey documenting actions towards partnership.

Second, researchers should seek innovative Head Start agencies with which to partner and research the partnership activities they have in place as well as document how

they established these activities. Many of the strategies at RHS, for example, were commendable and successful. The RHS leadership and teachers were committed to identifying weaknesses in their program and attempting innovative solutions to them. Working with such dedicated and knowledgeable leaders, researchers can bridge the practice-to-research gap by documenting and evaluating responsive programs aimed at increasing partnership.

Third, researchers should work with refugee communities and Head Start agencies to increase innovative and responsive programs and document the creation process and the results of the programs. The field will benefit from more in-depth study of refugee families' perceptions of partnership and what practices they would like to see in place to increase partnership. Such research should include both refugee family members (Hurley et al., 2011) and Head Start staff as part of the research team and could be conducted within a participatory action research approach (Hurley et al., 2011; Santelli, Singer, DiVenere, Ginsberg, & Powers, 1998).

One practice that warrants further research is the use of video recording to increase partnership. These videos can be made of children in classrooms, homes, and communities to enhance communication between families and teachers about child behavior. Such videos could be made available to families and teachers prior to parent-teacher conferences in an effort to “flip” or invert conferences (DeWitt, 2012), allowing face-to-face time to focus on discussion rather than only sharing knowledge. Videos of parent-teacher conferences could also be useful for increasing communication and reflecting on practice. Family members who could not attend the conference could watch the video instead. Additionally, families could watch the videos afterwards to ensure

they understood the conference. Teachers could also watch the videos to reflect on their behaviors and the family's responses (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2011). Families and teachers could also watch such a video prior to a subsequent meeting to refresh their memories of the discussion. Video recording school-based events for families, such as family trainings and policy council meetings, could help absent families understand what happens at such events (Hindman et al., 2012). Since the culture at these events is foreign to many families, especially refugee or immigrant families, these videos could help gradually build their confidence to participate. For people, who have difficulty attending these events, such as Ugaaso, such remote access could facilitate their skill acquisition. In addition, these videos could be watched in large groups or smaller groups, perhaps culturally or gender homogeneous, and followed by discussions among family members. Staff representatives could then disseminate knowledge gained from the families to other staff members in a systematic manner.

Conclusion

Children from refugee families' attendance at Head Start provides the opportunity for Head Start staff to foster trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnership characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes. Such partnerships could help launch refugee families as partners in their children's education in the U.S. and ultimately improve family and child outcomes. This study examined the relationship between a refugee family whose child was at risk for disability and the staff at the Head Start he attended. The findings indicated that the relationship between parties was positive but fell short of the type of partnership Head Start advocates. As a result, the Head Start staff and family did not take full advantage of

the opportunity to learn from each other. The Head Start community will greatly benefit from increased focus on building trusting, collaborative, respectful, and goal-oriented partnership characterized by comprehensive two-way communication to support child and family outcomes for all families, especially refugee and immigrant families new to the U.S. education system.

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CHAPTER 4

Research Agenda

Abstract

In this chapter, I rejoin the two subsections of this study presented in chapters 2 and 3 and then propose a research agenda stemming from the research presented thus far in this dissertation. After connecting the focus of the previous two chapters, I connect their research implications. Next, I propose a research framework to guide future research. Finally, I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of possible future research.

Chapter 4 Research Agenda

This qualitative case study answered the two interrelated research questions discussed in this dissertation, but it also raised several more. The research studies reported in Chapters 2 and 3 are connected; understanding how the two sets of adults in Habib's school and home environments were or were not conjoined through partnership (i.e., Chapter 3) was critical to understanding and contrasting how these two disparate sets of adults fostered Habib's foundational skills leading to future self-determination (i.e., Chapter 2). The rich qualitative methods I used to do this case study enabled me to research these areas simultaneously. In addition to answering the research questions discussed thus far, this case study laid the foundation for numerous future inquiries. In this chapter, I describe topics for future research stemming from this case study. First, I describe a framework to guide future research. Then, I describe possible research studies falling within each of the following main categories: refugee families, staff, and family-professional relationships.

Research Framework

The ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1994) emphasizes the need for researchers to examine both the numerous contexts that influence a child's development as well as the complex and often reciprocal relations among these contexts. It is represented by nested circles surrounding an individual. The microsystems are closest to the individual and represent the individual's immediate settings (e.g., home, school) (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The next circle, the mesosystem, "comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings

containing the developing person” (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). The next circle represents the exosystem, which refers to environments where the individual in focus does not spend significant time but where occurrences might affect the actions of people interacting with the individual in focus (e.g., parent’s workplace) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The next circle represents the macrosystem, which represents societal blueprints for specific cultures or subcultures (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The last parameter of the ecological theory of human development is the chronosystem, which represents change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

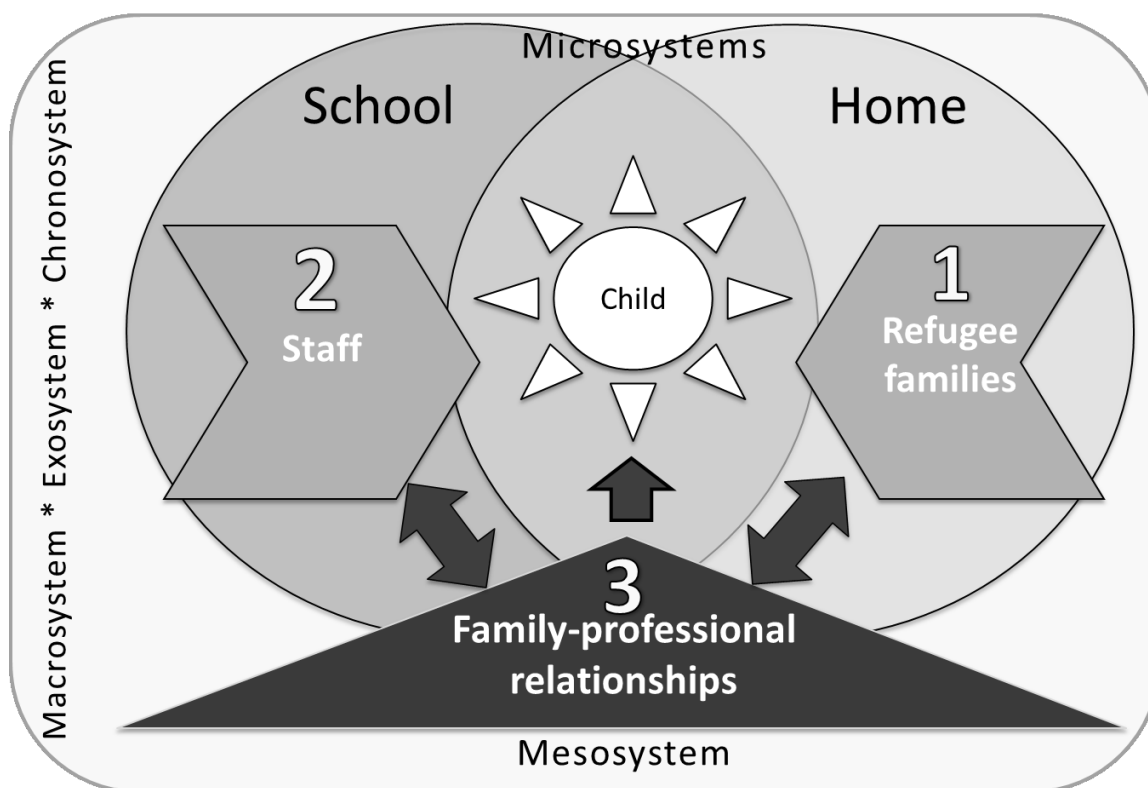


Figure 4. Framework for future research resulting from this case study.

Figure 4 presents a research framework that acknowledges the dynamic relationship of the microsystems, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994). Within the microsystems of home and

school, staff, refugee families, and children work together. The mesosystem, or relationship between the staff and refugee families, affects how the adults work together and relate to the children. The macrosystem, or policy and societal assumptions, affects the way the staff and families perceive each other and work together. The exosystem (e.g., teacher's home life, parent's work) also affects the adults, the adults' relationships with the children, and the adults' relationships with each other. Last, the chronosystem might affect other systems because relationships, expectations, environments, and skills change over time.

The numbers on Figure 4 correlate with categories within which research should focus. The dynamic nature of the levels of the ecological systems prohibits untangling them; The following sections outline ideas for this research without pinpointing the specific ecological systems that affect each topic.

1. Refugee Families

Two main lines of research relate to refugee families. First, research should seek to understand refugee families' perceptions of partnership and practices that would help them become partners with their children's teachers. Second, research should aim to understand children from refugee families' resilience and their families' resilience.

The field will benefit from more in-depth study of refugee families' perceptions of partnership, what practices they think would increase partnership, and what barriers impede these practices. Such research should use a participatory action research approach (Santelli, Singer, DiVenere, Ginsberg, & Powers, 1998) to partner with refugee family members (Hurley, Medici, Stewart, & Cohen, 2011).

Research should also explore these children and families' resilience. Research should seek to understand why some children from refugee families thrive and others struggle when they enter school, encounter its expectations and behaviors, and acculturate. The three domains of protection, intervention, and affective response provide a framework for investigating adult behaviors that might foster children's resilience. This work should also investigate how educators and school systems can build on students from refugee families' strengths and maintain or augment their protective factors. Specifically, researchers should seek to understand why some refugee families encounter so much turmoil yet maintain hope, and how this hope affects their children. What role can the education system play in maintaining this hope? How can partnership strengthen children's, educators,' and families' resilience?

2. Staff

I did not conduct this study to learn about teacher motivation and resilience, but fascinating themes emerged on this topic. The teachers at RHS were confronted with situations that, in my opinion, could have easily led to teacher burn out. They were not paid well, were required to do more and attain higher levels of education without a raise in pay, and did not receive the benefits of non-exempt employees. Yet RHS did not have a high rate of teacher turn-over. Many of the staff members were former Head Start families themselves, and all of the staff members were dedicated to the mission of helping the children and families they served. Many teachers specifically talked about the enjoyment they derived from their relationships with children and adults from refugee families. Although not the focus of the case study presented in this dissertation, I was awed by several RHS teachers' compassion, ethics, and ability to thrive despite adversity.

Preliminary data analysis from this study suggested that teachers benefited from their jobs by increasing their professional skills, applying their professional skills to their personal lives, and increasing the richness of their personal and professional lives through meaningful relationships with co-workers and some families. Researchers should focus on gaining a better understanding of what teachers receive from their work and how. Specifically, research should focus on understanding how teachers benefit from working with (a) children with disabilities and/or challenging behavior, (b) children from refugee families, and (c) the families of children from categories (a) and (b).

3. Family-Professional Relationships

This case study has resulted in numerous implications for research on family-professional relationships. First, researchers need to establish appropriate tools for measuring family partnership in Head Start and K-12 school environments. Second, researchers should partner with Head Start agencies to explore existing practice around partnership related to fostering the foundational skills for self-determination and around partnership in general. Third, researchers should partner with Head Start agencies to iteratively create culturally-responsive interventions for increasing family partnerships.

Research should establish tools for measuring family partnership in Head Start and K-12 school environments. Such tools would help clarify the difference between family involvement and partnership. The Beach Center Family-Professional Partnership Scale (Summers et al., 2005), developed for measuring family members' satisfaction with their relationship with their children with disabilities' teachers, might be appropriate for measuring partnerships for all families in Head Start. Research should confirm its

applicability or adapt it as necessary. In addition, researchers should examine scale items in terms of their applicability to refugee populations and modify as appropriate.

Researchers should partner with Head Start agencies to explore existing practices related to both fostering children's foundational skills for later self-determination and family partnership. Many of the strategies at RHS, for example, were commendable and successful. The RHS leadership and teachers were committed to identifying weaknesses in their program and attempting innovative solutions to them. Most teachers and the education director expressed a strong desire to learn from the research I conducted, including "the good, the bad, and the ugly." Working with such dedicated and knowledgeable teachers and administrators, researchers can bridge the practice-to-research gap by documenting and evaluating responsive programs aimed at improving practice and increasing partnership.

Researchers should use design-based research methods (Anderson & Shattuck, 2012) to iteratively create culturally-responsive interventions for increasing both children's foundational skills leading to later self-determination and family partnership. For example, research should investigate innovative practices, such as the Foundations for Self-Determination Intervention (Palmer et al., 2012), with refugee families to determine their effectiveness and, if appropriate, iteratively improve and tailor them to work with this population. Such research should incorporate the intervention framework of the three domains for adult behavior outlined in this dissertation (i.e., protection, intervention, and affective response).

Summary

In conclusion, this case study answered some questions and laid the foundation for many more important lines of inquiry. Researchers and practitioners should continue to ask: What more can be done to support refugee families with young children, especially those with disabilities or at risk for disability, as they enter and travel through the education system? What more can be done to help teachers support refugee families and their children on this journey? How does this work generalize to other immigrant families and other families whose children have disabilities or are at risk for disability?

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