Article

ECE Program Supports and Teacher-Perceived Support from Families: Are They Connected?

Natalie Schock 1,* and Lieny Jeon 2

1 Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80210, USA
2 Department of Advanced Studies in Education, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD 21218, USA; lieny.jeon@jh.edu
* Correspondence: natalie.schock@du.edu

Abstract: According to the Conservation of Resources theory of stress, early care and education (ECE) teachers who receive greater tangible and interpersonal supports from their workplaces will be more positive and effective in their roles. This may translate to them perceiving or eliciting greater support from families, which is a key component to family engagement, a growing area of study in the ECE landscape. This study explores whether four program-level supports (benefits, professional development supports, teacher social supports, program-level family involvement activities) are associated with teacher-perceived support from families. The hypothesis was that all four will be positively associated. This study uses survey data from 102 preschool teachers and 13 preschool program directors in urban areas of two US states. We use ordinary least squares regression with cluster-robust standard errors and a stepwise build-up modeling procedure to determine associations between independent and dependent variables. While teacher social supports had the expected positive association with teacher-perceived support from families, family involvement activities were negatively associated. Our findings suggest that programs looking to improve family engagement may consider interpersonal/cultural supports for teachers and the larger school community. All else equal, simply offering more family involvement activities may not improve engagement culture.

Keywords: early care and education; family engagement; school climate; preschool; family–school relationships

1. Introduction

The family–teacher relationship is the core of family engagement in school (Nzinga-Johnson et al. 2009). It describes the mutual efforts and collaboration of families and teachers to support children’s academic learning and overall development (Kim and Sheridan 2015). In US early care and education (ECE) settings—which comprise preschool, center-based child care, family-based child care, Head Start, and other educational and care programs for children before kindergarten—the family–teacher relationship is associated with a range of outcomes, including attendance (Waanders et al. 2007) and literacy growth (Nix et al. 2018). Pomerantz et al. (2007) state in their review of family engagement literature that that when families are authentically engaged in their children’s schooling, their children may develop more academic and behavioral skills and have greater motivation. Moreover, an ECE behavioral intervention studied in randomized control trials (RCTs), the “gold standard” of scientific studies in which participants are randomly assigned to conditions and their outcomes compared to test causal effects, suggests that the family–teacher relationship may be a mechanism of improving young children’s social skills (Kuhn et al. 2017; Sheridan et al. 2010, 2017). However, despite these benefits and increased attention to family–educator relationships in recent years (Nitecki 2015), little is
known about the building blocks of the relationship, such as mutual support, communication (Vickers and Minke 1995), and perceptions of shared understanding and similarity (Hinde 1997).

Understanding how to facilitate positive relationships between families and teachers is critical. As these relationships are bidirectional (Kim and Sheridan 2015), strong family–teacher relationships may enable information-sharing, mutual support, collaborative solutions to children’s problem behavior, and a positive affect extending to the child–teacher relationship (Dearing et al. 2015; Shpancer 1997; Zulauf and Zinsser 2019), which is associated with children’s academic and behavioral development (Lipps and Zinsser 2018). Teachers’ and families’ perceptions of each other are important to the relationship, as qualitative research suggests, teachers and families may withdraw from each other if they perceive they are unsupported, devalued, or disrespected (Lareau 2011; Lasky 2000; Puccioni 2018).

Generally, positive mutual perceptions enable trust-building between teachers and families (Adams and Christenson 2000, 1998), while negative perceptions are a barrier to trust and goodwill (Adair and Barraza 2014; Epstein and Becker 1982; Lareau 1989, 2011; Lareau and Horvat 1999). Zulauf and Zinsser’s (2019) mixed methods study suggests that supports from ECE programs are important in shaping teacher perceptions of parents, or providing a buffer to the stress that family relationships can entail (Corr et al. 2014; Cumming 2017; Faulkner et al. 2016). This study extends their work in a quantitative analysis of program-level supports and their association with an element of teachers’ family-related perceptions (i.e., teacher-perceived support from families).

1.1. Family–School Dynamics and the Role of Teachers’ Perceptions

Although family–school relationships are bidirectional (Kim and Sheridan 2015), US K–12 literature suggests that educators often take the lead in establishing and maintaining the relationship (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997), and in ECE settings, most home–school communication is initiated by educators (Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta 2005). In addition, teachers’ invitations play a powerful part in families’ construction of their involvement role and can influence parents by making them feel important and valued (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997). Thus, when teachers more actively request involvement from families, families’ school-based involvement activities tend to increase (Green et al. 2007). In addition, parents consider teachers who proactively request involvement as having higher quality (Epstein 1984).

Qualitative research suggests that teachers may feel that the onus is on them to engage with families (Mahmood 2013). Thus, while schools overall bear responsibility for initiating family engagement (Clarke et al. 2009), teachers can be seen as the drivers of this relationship and the “glue” that holds it together (Patrikakou and Weissberg 1999, p. 36). Given that the perception of mutuality is important to relationships generally (Hinde 1997), and that perceived support is particularly important to family–teacher relationships (Elicker et al. 1997; Lang et al. 2016; Vickers and Minke 1995), a high level of teacher-perceived support from families may support a healthy family–school relationship. This may be positively associated with children’s success, as family–school relationships are positively associated with children’s academic and non-academic outcomes (Van Voorhis et al. 2013). Healthy family–school relationships are important especially in ECE settings when these relationships are being established (Epstein 1992).

Family relationships are a significant part of ECE teachers’ work also because ECE programs are often two-generational (Chase-Lansdale and Brooks-Gunn 2014; Schmit et al. 2014), requiring that educators be skilled in serving both children and their families. In addition, ECE may naturally entail more family contact, as young children often depend on adults to verbalize needs and advocate for them to a greater extent than older children. The two-generational demands mean that ECE workplace supports are all the more important so that teachers have “bandwidth” to cultivate healthy family–school relationships (Hobfoll 1989), which is associated with children’s outcomes (Van Voorhis et al. 2013).
At the same time, US teachers often lack preservice and professional development training in cultivating family relationships (Clarke et al. 2009; Patrikakou and Weissberg 2000) and can perceive the obligation to do so as overwhelming or an “add-on” (Brown et al. 2009; Mahmood 2013). They may feel ill-equipped to meet families’ needs, particularly when serving a materially disadvantaged population (Faulkner et al. 2016). Kotaman’s (2016) qualitative study of kindergarten teachers in Turkey suggests that teachers’ perceived inability to meet parents’ expectations may cause stress. In addition, educators may define family engagement as school-centric activities, such as classroom volunteering (Gross et al. 2019; Lareau 2011; Lasky 2000; Lawson 2003), while lacking familiarity with “invisible” forms of engagement, such as family talks about manners and behavior (Arias and Morillo-Campbell 2008; Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez 2018; Koury and Votruba-Drzal 2014). In other words, a teacher may perceive more support from a father who regularly volunteers than one who focuses on behavior management at home. Such misunderstandings can stymie family–teacher goodwill and the development of a healthy relationship (Lareau 2011; Lasky 2000; Puccioni 2018).

Thus, the importance of family relationships in ECE settings—and the challenges in managing them—point to a need to understand program-level supports that may be associated with teacher–family relationships. Responding to calls for more research into the processes of family engagement (Walker et al. 2010), particularly relationship aspects in ECE settings (Hall-Kenyon et al. 2014; Moorman Kim et al. 2012; Sheridan et al. 2012), this study seeks to deepen understanding of the family–teacher relationship by examining associations between various program-level supports and teachers’ perceived support from families.

1.2. Theoretical Supports

This study builds on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory of stress (Hobfoll 1989, 2001), which links individuals’ real or perceived resources to stress. COR states that when employees perceive adequate resources, they are “freed up” to acquire greater resources. For instance, teachers with paid time off may experience greater well-being and energy, psychic resources they could use to learn new techniques and cultivate workplace relationships, which spur well-being and energy, continuing the cycle. In contrast, teachers with inadequate resources may struggle to preserve what they have, forgoing education opportunities and avoiding others, further losing psychic resources (Lane and Hobfoll 1992). For instance, teachers who lack time for socializing at work may experience loneliness and low mood and preserve their limited psychic resources through further isolation. The theory aligns with self-determination theory, which holds that when workplaces provide adequate supports, employees perform better and with greater energy and well-being (Deci and Ryan 2008; Ryan and Deci 2000). Applied to an ECE family engagement context, teachers with adequate workplace supports may be better equipped to cultivate actual support from families or have positive attitudes that allow them to perceive greater support from families.

These theories inform our quantitative exploration of associations between program-level supports and teacher-perceived support from families. While several studies find associations between teachers’ perceptions of climate and their work quality within the classroom (e.g., Dennis and O’Connor 2013; Guo et al. 2011; McGinty et al. 2008), and Zulauf and Zinsser (2019) suggest teachers’ climate perceptions influence their perceptions of families, less is known about how actual program supports for teachers may associate with their perceived support from families. Such associations may provide new insight into which resources may best support teachers in their family engagement efforts and responsibilities. Moreover, a deeper understanding of these associations will provide insight into which resources may best support teachers in their family engagement efforts and responsibilities.
1.3. The Role of Program-Level Supports in Family-Teacher Relationships

According to COR theory (Hobfoll 1989), teachers in more supportive programs may elicit greater support from families by an increased mood, energy, and work quality. They also may have “freed up” resources (e.g., time, energy) to devote to cultivating family engagement (Hobfoll 1989), which in turn is associated with children’s academic and behavioral outcomes (Van Voorhis et al. 2013). In addition, teachers who perceive that their programs support them — regardless of the number and type of actual supports offered — may be more likely to have an empathetic affect manifesting in positive perceptions of families (Zulauf and Zinsser 2019). This speaks to the importance of teachers’ perception of a positive, supportive climate at their centers. In this study, we explore four types of supports that may be associated with teacher-perceived support from families via “freed up” resources or contributing to a positive climate, and thereby teacher affect. They are compensation benefits, support for professional development, social supports for teachers, and program-level family involvement activities.

1.3.1. Non-Wage Compensation as a Potential Predictor

Teachers in US ECE settings have notoriously low compensation, with wages often considered to be “unlivable” (Whitebook et al. 2014). Child care providers can earn less hourly than animal caretakers (Whitebook et al. 2014), and teachers may rely on other sources of income (e.g., spouse wages) to make ends meet (Mcdonald et al. 2018). Compensation studies consistently point to the importance of wages (Arndt 2018; Bellm and Whitebook 2006; Phillips et al. 2016; Whitebook et al. 2014), suggesting the possibility of similar association with benefits. Hall-Kenyon et al. (2014) suggest that, given the low wages that US ECE teachers typically earn, benefits may take on even greater importance, constituting a financial guardrail that higher paid individuals create through saving. Indeed, increasing non-wage compensation (e.g., paid time off), or benefits, is recommended to improve ECE (Smith and Lawrence 2019; Whitebook et al. 2018). Moreover, according to COR theory (Hobfoll 1989, 2001), benefits may constitute a resource that reduces teachers’ stress, enabling psychic resources that they can invest for greater resources, including support from families. Thus, in this study, we extend literature on US ECE teachers’ wages by examining compensation benefits as an independent variable predicting teacher-perceived support from families.

ECE wage literature suggests that benefits may be associated with teacher-perceived support from families through teacher quality. For instance, in an Australian study, Leigh (2012) demonstrates that a 1% increase in starting teacher’s salary is associated with a 0.6 percentile rank increase in the aptitude of students taking education classes. Moreover, higher teacher pay is associated with student academic achievement (Hendricks 2014) and behavior (King et al. 2016). Thus, the notoriously low compensation of ECE (Ackerman 2006; Mcdonald et al. 2018; National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team 2013; Shdaimah et al. 2018; Bellm and Whitebook 2006) may make it difficult to retain preservice teacher students (Early and Winton 2001) and hire and retain high-quality teachers (Barnett 2003), especially as the demands and market for ECE grow (Moss 2006; Whitebook and Ryan 2016). Moreover, Lerkkanen et al. (2013) found that mother’s trust in teachers is positively associated with the quality of the teacher’s practices, underscoring Xu and Gulosino’s (2006) statement that family–teacher relationship-building may be a component of teacher quality. Thus, compensation may be associated with teacher and family–teacher relationship quality, and in this study, we explore if these wage findings translate to benefits.

A second potential mechanism is through teacher stress, with which low pay is associated (Phillips et al. 2016). Qualitative research suggests that low wages take a psychological toll on teachers, with teachers finding low wages to be demoralizing and part of their overall sense of being perceived as unskilled or mere “baby-sitters” instead of professionals (Gerstenblatt et al. 2014; Moloney 2010). According to COR theory, high-stress
individuals may alienate potential interpersonal supports (Hobfoll 1989; Lane and Hobfoll 1992). Thus, if low compensation benefits are associated with high stress, teachers with few benefits may be less likely to cultivate or perceive family support.

1.3.2. Program-Level Support for Professional Development as a Potential Predictor

Professional development (PD) refers to a variety of practices (e.g., teacher training, mentoring, workshops) that promote the development of educators’ abilities to generate positive outcomes for children (Sheridan et al. 2009; Snyder et al. 2011). Sheridan et al. (2009) state that a long-term goal of PD is to improve teachers’ ability to promote families’ attitudes and abilities to create the best supported learning environment for the child. Policymakers find that successful family engagement programs incorporate ongoing training (Stark 2010).

PD activities may be associated with family–teacher relationships by improving teacher quality generally or by training teachers to collaborate with families. Teachers’ credentials, training, and education are associated with teacher quality (Torquati et al. 2007) and sensitivity to children (Gerber et al. 2007), as well as children’s outcomes (Saracho and Spodek 2007). Moreover, ECE teacher education programs often provide little training in cultivating and maintaining family relationships (Evans 2013; Patrikakou and Weissberg 2000), particularly practical experience (Early and Winton 2001). Thus, ongoing PD may provide such training, with evaluation studies suggesting PD can improve teachers’ practice, including their perspectives in working with families from minoritized groups (Evans 2013; McMillan et al. 2012; Trumbull et al. 2003).

In addition, PD opportunities may be associated with family–teacher relationships by improving the overall climate of the school. Qualitative studies suggest that ECE teachers have a strong desire for PD, viewing it as a much-needed and valuable way to raise the reputation of the profession (Harwood et al. 2013; Nelson and Lewis 2016) and implement interventions and improvements to classroom practices (Kilgallon et al. 2008). In addition, in a study of program-level social-emotional supports including training, teachers at highly supportive programs were less likely to be depressed and reported higher job satisfaction (Zinsser et al. 2016). As a welcoming climate is an important factor in eliciting parent support and engagement (Baker et al. 2016; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2005; Nietski 2015), to the extent that PD improves the overall climate of the school, it may have a positive association with teacher-perceived support from families.

1.3.3. Program-Level Social Supports for Teachers as a Potential Predictor

Social support refers to the help, positive affect, and information that individuals receive from those with whom they have interpersonal relationships, and among teachers, it is negatively associated with burnout and positively associated with emotional well-being (Greenglass et al. 1997; Russell et al. 1987; Sarros and Sarros 1992). In a qualitative study with 20 Head Start teachers, Wells (2017) found many benefits of social supports among teachers. Teachers derived the most benefits from their co-teachers and program directors, but also, teachers across classrooms showed support by covering each other for bathroom breaks, celebrating birthdays, and eating lunch together (Wells 2017). Moreover, those with plentiful and high-quality social support systems at work had better attitudes and could counteract stress (Wells 2017). Similarly, Kupila and Karila (2019), in a project analyzing the development of teacher identity among ECE teachers in Finland, found that social supports among teachers enabled them to feel less isolated, share their emotional experiences, brainstorm or role-play to address challenges, and absorb norms and tips on the profession through peer mentoring. Likewise, Kilgallon et al. (2008) found that ECE teachers used social supports to implement pedagogical changes, share knowledge, and deepen their understanding of their work.

Consistent with these qualitative findings, Cramer and Cappella (2019) found that assistant teachers who seek out social support are more likely to be satisfied with their work. Jeon and Ardeleanu (2020) found that ECE teachers with a positive work situation—
including interpersonal relationships—use more positive emotional regulation strategies and feel less stress. McGinty et al. (2008) also suggest that teacher-perceived collegiality in their program is associated with their attitudes towards teaching. Thus, teachers at programs with strong social supports may be more positive, perceiving greater support from families, or more effective, able to elicit greater support from families.

1.3.4. Program-Level Family Involvement Activities as a Potential Predictor

Program-level supports for family involvement are associated with greater levels of involvement (Ansari and Gershoff 2016), and qualitative work suggests that families appreciate repeat invitations for involvement (Bruckman and Blanton 2003). Moreover, program-level family involvement activities (e.g., classroom volunteering, attending school events, participating in a parent council) may associate with teacher-perceived support from families because teachers often define family engagement as participation in school-based involvement activities (Gross et al. 2019; Lareau 1994; Lareau and Horvat 1999). In other words, teachers may believe supportive families are those who assist them in their work (Christianakis 2011; Lareau 1994). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) also pointed to the importance of school-level efforts, suggesting that schools create climates that can promote parents’ role construction as involved parents.

Furthermore, frequent contact is an important factor in relationship development between families and teachers, and in particular, the development of trust (Adams and Christenson 2000, 1998). The more families and teachers interact, the more opportunities they have to demonstrate consistency and trustworthiness and know each other as individuals (Adams and Christenson 1998). Thus, to the extent that program-level family involvement activities facilitate more contact, they may be associated with teacher-perceived support from families. For instance, a grandmother who volunteered in the classroom weekly would have regular opportunities to establish a trusting relationship with the teacher and would visibly demonstrate her support for the teacher. However, other studies find a non-significant association between program-level family involvement activities and family involvement (Green et al. 2007; Walker et al. 2011), leaving an opening for further exploration. Thus, in this study, we explore program-level family involvement activities as a potential predictor of teacher-perceived support from families.

1.4. The Present Study

We hypothesize that program-level supports for teachers will be positively associated with their perception of support from families. Self-determination and COR have identified possible mechanisms by which this may occur: (1) promoting teachers’ work engagement and quality by meeting their psychological needs, and (2) by reducing stress and facilitating teachers’ use of energy for the acquisition of greater resources. Moreover, qualitative (e.g., Nitecki 2015; Tebben et al. 2021; Zulauf and Zinsser 2019) and quantitative (e.g., Goddard et al. 2015; Jung and Sheldon 2020; Lubienski et al. 2008) studies suggest an interplay between program climate and culture and teachers’ attitudes about parents. The present study extends such work by examining associations between program-level supports, as reported by ECE program directors, and perceived support from families, as reported by teachers. Specifically, we examine: “To what extent are program-level supports (measured by compensation benefits, professional development supports, social supports [program-level social supports and teacher-perceived collegiality], and program-level family involvement activities) associated with teacher-perceived support from families?”

2. Materials and Methods

This study uses a dataset with 102 teachers (53 lead, 8 co-lead, and 41 assistant) from 13 ECE programs in two states. Six programs are Head Start, five are for-profit, and two are public preschools. Among teachers, 45% had a bachelor’s or greater, and the median
salary was USD 20,000–25,000, with range of less than USD 5000–75,001 or greater. The sample was mostly Black (49%) and White (43%), with the remaining 8% combined in a category called Other, comprising Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (n = 3), Multiracial (n = 2) and Other (n = 3). The mean years of ECE experience was 11.85 with a range of 0 (less than one year) to 34 years.

2.1. Procedure

These data were collected as part of a larger study on teachers’ social-emotional capacity. They were collected in spring of 2016. To recruit ECE programs, research team members coordinated with local ECE agencies to obtain a list of programs. They randomly selected programs to participate. The eligibility criterion was that the program had to have at least four classrooms with full-time programming. We selected 13 programs. Team members called program directors and invited them to participate. After obtaining consent from directors who agreed, they sent directors a survey about directors’ professional background program-level practices and policies, which took about 10 min to complete. To recruit teachers, team members visited the schools and described the study. All lead teachers were eligible, and all assistant teachers of all participating lead teachers were eligible. After obtaining consent from teachers who agreed to participate, team members distributed a paper teacher survey asking about teachers’ professional background and perceptions regarding support and climate, which took about 20 min to complete. Team members collected completed surveys at a later date.

All respondents gave informed consent before participating. We conducted this study in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. The Institutional Review Boards of The Ohio State University (2015B0181) and Johns Hopkins University (HIRB00003643) approved this study.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Dependent Variable: Teacher-Perceived Support from Families

To measure teacher-perceived support from families, we used a subscale of the Scales Measuring Aspects of Child-Care Quality (Emlen et al. 2000), which has been used to measure teachers’ perception of family support (e.g., Jeon and Ardeleanu 2020). Emlen et al. (2000) tested validity in the original scale, which is reported by parents, and found that the full scale had a 0.69 correlation with parents’ perception of overall ECE quality. Our version was the child-care provider measure, adapted by the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (Reichman et al. 2001). The subscale has six items, and items have adequate internal reliability (α = 0.85 in the current sample). The items assess frequency (1 = never, 4 = always) of relationship perceptions. An example item is: “Family members are supportive of me as a caregiver”. Note that these items reflect teachers’ perception of support from families, and not perception of families in general. We summed as suggested by previous studies (Emlen et al. 2000; Jeon and Ardeleanu 2020), and as the completion rate was high and all items were positively phrased.

2.2.2. Independent Variables: Program Supports

We measured program support variables using director responses to survey sections about program characteristics. First, we measured compensation benefits by asking which of four different types of benefits their program provided to teachers: paid sick days, paid vacation days, tuition coverage for own children, and mental health supports (1 = yes, 0 = no). We calculated the sum of these four items. Second, we measured professional development supports by asking which of nine types of professional development supports their program provided. Supports (binary, 1 = yes) were finance-related (e.g., paid days off, reimbursement, compensatory time, college courses, college books), direct (e.g., on-site programs), or personnel-related (e.g., mentors, coaches). We used the sum of these nine items.
Third, directors reported which of four social supports (e.g., shared release hours for planning time, binary, 1 = yes) their program offered. We used the sum of these four items to represent program-level social supports. Furthermore, we measured teacher-perceived social supports by using the *collegiality* subscale from the School as a Caring Community Scale (Battistich et al. 1997, α = 0.91 in this sample). The scale has six items (e.g., “Teachers frequently consult with and help one another”), with responses on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all true; 5 = Very true).

Finally, to measure program-level family involvement activities, directors were asked which of 10 program-level family involvement activities (e.g., “We ask parents to help with assignments so that children’s learning continues in the home”, “We hold regular parent-teacher conferences”, “We have parent meetings/council”) their program used. We dropped three items that were selected by all directors (“Parents can visit and stay in the classroom”, “We ask parents to volunteer for class activities”, “We encourage teachers to communicate with parents regularly”). We used the sum of the remaining 7 items to represent family involvement activities.

2.2.3. Covariates

We conditioned on teachers’ educational attainment (binary, 1 = bachelor’s or greater), years of experience working in ECE (continuous), lead status (binary, 1 = lead teacher), salary (continuous), and program Head Start status (binary, 1 = Head Start).

2.3. Analytic Plan

This study examines associations between compensation benefits, professional development supports, teacher social supports, and program-level family involvement activities after controlling for demographics and experience. Because teachers’ data are nested within programs’ data, we explored the intraclass correlation (ICC) within a hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) design with teachers at Level 1 and programs at Level 2. The ICC was less than 0.01%, indicating that there was almost no variance in the dependent variable between programs. Thus, we used multiple linear regression analysis using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression in Stata 16.0.

To check for homoscedasticity, we performed statistical and visual tests. Specifically, we used White’s (1980) and Breusch and Pagan’s (1979) tests, which test the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity. Table 1 shows the results, with $p$ values surpassing the 0.05 threshold, indicating a failure to reject the null. However, visual tests showed some narrowing of residuals at high values of perceived support, so we used cluster-robust standard errors (Colin Cameron and Miller 2015; Croux et al. 2003) using the Stata specification `cluster`.

**Table 1.** Results of tests of homoscedasticity for models C–F.

|                | White $p$< | Breusch–Pagan $p$< |
|----------------|------------|-------------------|
| Model C        | 0.41       | 0.80              |
| Model D        | 0.25       | 0.80              |
| Model E        | 0.36       | 0.75              |
| Model F        | 0.71       | 0.70              |

Notes: These test the null assumption of homoscedastic distribution, so failure to reject the null (i.e., $p$ values greater than 0.05) indicate homoscedasticity.

For this exploratory study, we used a stepwise build-up modeling procedure. Specifically, Model A is a null model with the dependent variable only, showing the intercept for comparison. In Model B, we added conditioning variables (teacher educational attainment, experience, lead status, salary, race, sense of community, and program Head Start status). We included teacher race first because employee supports may be useful or perceived differently according to an employee’s race (Sloan et al. 2013). Second, if families
internalize widespread biases against people of color (Wilkerson 2020), knowingly or not, they may be more likely to hold common perceptions that ECE is not “real” school (Moloney 2010) or that teachers are mere “baby-sitters” (Nelson and Lewis 2016) if their teacher is a person of color, which may influence their support.

Model C adds benefits, Model D adds professional development supports, Model E adds social supports (i.e., program-level social supports and teacher-perceived collegiality), and Model F, the full model, adds program-level family involvement activities. We performed sensitivity analyses, testing the models separately for Head Start and non-Head Start centers, for centers with high- and low-average student family incomes, and for the two states.

3. Results
3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of key variables and Table 3 shows bivariate correlations. Correlations between the dependent variable, teacher-perceived support from families, and key independent variables were small in magnitude, ranging from −0.13 (benefits) to 0.10 (social supports). This suggests a limited association between center-level supports and teacher-perceived support from families. Some independent variables were correlated (e.g., program-level social supports and involvement, 0.84, p < 0.001), so we examined multicollinearity using variance inflation factor (VIF) values. We retained all independent variables because all VIF values were less than 10 (Wooldridge 2016). The VIFs for involvement and social supports were 6.90 and 5.77, respectively, notably higher than other variables, which were less than 2.6. In addition, the F test of joint significance, which tests the significance of the model overall against a null hypothesis of a model without independent variables fitting the data as well, shows that the model is jointly significant, with $F = 2.00$ (4, 89) and $p = 0.10$.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and comparison of missing and non-missing observations.

|                      | Non-Missing | Missing | t Value | df |
|----------------------|-------------|---------|---------|----|
|                      | N  | Mean  | sd  | Min. Max. | Skew. | Kurt. | N  | Mean  | sd  | Min. Max. | Skew. | Kurt. |
| Support              | 101| 19.29 | 3.20 | 11  | 24 | −0.39 | 2.65 | 17 | 20 | 3.32 | 13 | 24 | −0.39 | 2.11 | −0.80 | 99 |
| Benefits             | 93 | 2.48  | 1.23 | 0   | 4  | −1.13 | 3.34 | 9  | 1.22 | 1.09 | 9  | 0   | 3   | 0.73  | 2.27 | 2.76  | 91 |
| Prof. Dev            | 102| 4.98  | 2.19 | 2   | 9  | 0.50  | 1.88 | 18 | 4  | 1.82 | 2  | 7   | 0.88 | 1.94  | 1.92 | 100  |
| Social Supports      | 98 | 3     | 1.09 | 1   | 4  | −0.72 | 2.24 | 14 | 1.93 | 1.33 | 1  | 4   | 1.00 | 2.22  | 4.83  | 96   |
| Colloegiality        | 102| 3.62  | 0.91 | 1.667 | 5 | −0.21 | 2.11 | 18 | 3.79 | 0.86 | 2.50 | 5   | −0.35 | 1.93  | −1.06 | 100  |
| Involvement          | 102| 5.18  | 1.45 | 3   | 7  | −0.38 | 1.68 | 18 | 4.94 | 1.16 | 4  | 7   | 0.67 | 1.82  | 1.10  | 100  |
| Teacher BA           | 102| 0.45  | 0.50 | 0   | 1  | 0.31  | 1.10 | 18 | 0.56 | 0.51 | 0  | 1   | −0.36 | 1.13  | −1.24 | 100  |
| Teacher Exp.         | 102| 11.85 | 8.79 | 0   | 34 | 0.90  | 2.85 | 18 | 14.33 | 8.87 | 0  | 30  | 0.23 | 2.20  | −0.80 | 100  |
| Lead Teacher         | 102| 0.61  | 0.49 | 0   | 1  | −0.46 | 1.21 | 18 | 0.56 | 0.51 | 0  | 1   | −0.36 | 1.13  | 0.18  | 100  |
| Teacher Salary       | 99 | $20–$25 K * | 1 | 0.23 | 4.02  | 15  | 7  | 2.24  | 3 | 10 | −0.33 | 1.65 | −4.03 | 97   |
| Race Black           | 102| 0.49  | 0.50 | 0   | 1  | 0.36  | 1.13 | 18 | 0.89 | 0.32 | 0  | 1   | −2.37 | 6.63  | −3.75 | 100  |
| Race White           | 102| 0.43  | 0.50 | 0   | 1  | 0.02  | 1.00 | 18 | 0.11 | 0.32 | 0  | 1   | 2.37 | 6.63  | 2.95  | 100  |
| Race Other           | 102| 0.08  | 0.27 | 0   | 1  | 2.78  | 8.73 | 18 | 0   | 0   | 0  | 0   | −  | −     | 1.32  | 100  |
| Head Start           | 102| 0.45  | 0.50 | 0   | 1  | 0.62  | 1.38 | 18 | 0.94 | 0.24 | 0  | 1   | −3.75 | 15.06 | −4.91 | 100  |

* Median. Teacher salary is continuous from 1 to 10, where 1 is USD 5000 or less and 10 is USD 75,001 or greater. BA is educational attainment of bachelor’s degree or greater. Skew. is skewness and Kurt. is kurtosis.
### Table 3. Bivariate correlations.

|                      | Support | Benefits | Prof. Dev. | Social Supp. | Collegiality | Inv. BA | Exp. | Teacher Salary | Race Black | Race White | Race Other | Head Start |
|----------------------|---------|----------|------------|--------------|--------------|---------|------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Support              | 1.00    | 0.13***  | 0.11***    | 0.38***      | 1.00         | 0.05    | 0.26 | 0.19***        | 0.05       | 0.02       | 0.05       | 0.02       |
| Benefits             | -0.13***| -0.07*   | 0.13       | -0.49***     | 0.38***      | 1.00    | 0.07 | -0.14***       | 0.07       | 0.05       | 0.01       | 1.00       |
| Prof. Dev.           | -0.13***| 0.12***  | -0.07*     | -0.16***     | -0.05        | 1.00    | 0.05 | 0.25***        | 0.25       | 0.08       | 0.06       | 0.08       |
| Social Supp.         | 0.10*** | 0.10     | -0.07*     | 0.25***      | 0.05         | 1.00    | 0.05 | 0.21***        | 0.10       | 0.08       | 0.10       | 0.10       |
| Collegiality         | 0.25*** | 0.25***  | 0.25***    | 0.25***      | -0.07*       | 0.11*** | 1.00 | 0.06***        | 0.14       | 0.09       | 0.09       | 0.10       |
| Inv. BA              | 0.13*** | 0.13***  | 0.13***    | 0.13***      | -0.07*       | 0.12*** | 1.00 | 0.13***        | 0.13       | 0.13       | 0.13       | 0.13       |
| Exp.                 | 0.07*** | 0.07***  | 0.07***    | 0.25***      | -0.07*       | 0.07*** | 1.00 | 0.07***        | 0.07       | 0.07       | 0.07       | 0.07       |
| Teacher Salary       | 0.07*** | 0.07***  | 0.07***    | 0.07***      | 0.07***      | 0.07*** | 1.00 | 0.07***        | 0.07       | 0.07       | 0.07       | 0.07       |
| Race Black           | 0.10*** | 0.10***  | 0.10***    | 0.10***      | 0.10***      | 0.10*** | 1.00 | 0.10***        | 0.10       | 0.10       | 0.10       | 0.10       |
| Race White           | 0.05**  | 0.05**   | 0.05**     | 0.05**       | 0.05**       | 0.05**  | 1.00 | 0.05**         | 0.05       | 0.05       | 0.05       | 0.05       |
| Race Other           | -0.08** | -0.08**  | -0.08**    | -0.08**      | -0.08**      | -0.08** | 1.00 | -0.08**        | -0.08      | -0.08      | -0.08      | -0.08      |
| Head Start           | -0.38***| -0.38*** | -0.38***   | -0.38***     | -0.38***     | -0.38*** | 1.00 | -0.38***       | -0.38      | -0.38      | -0.38      | -0.38      |

***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05.

### 3.2. Regression Analyses

Table 4 shows regression results. Model A shows a statistically significant intercept of 19.30 (p < 0.001). In Model B, we added conditioning variables (experience, lead teacher status, salary, race, and Head Start status), none of which were statistically significant, and which yielded an R² of 0.10. In other words, these covariates explained 10% of the variance in teacher-perceived support from families. In models C, D, and E, we added benefits, professional development, and social supports (i.e., program-level social supports and teacher-perceived collegiality), respectively. The coefficients were not statistically significant, and the variables did not substantially change the R². In other words, benefits, professional development, and social supports were not associated with teacher-perceived support from families.

In Model F (full model), we added involvement, which had a statistically significant negative coefficient of −0.99 (p < 0.05), meaning that teachers perceived less support from parents when their programs had more involvement opportunities. In addition, in Model F, program-level social supports became statistically significant (1.56, p < 0.01), suggesting that, when controlling for number of involvement practices, teachers perceived greater support from families at programs with greater social supports. The R² of Model F was 0.18. This indicates that an additional 8% of the variance was explained by the key independent variables compared to Model B (covariates only). No covariates were statistically significant in any models.

### Table 4. Associations with teachers’ perception of support from families.

|                      | Model A | Model B | Model C | Model D | Model E | Model F |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                      | Null Covariates | Benefits | Prof. Dev. | Social Supports | Involvement |
| Benefits             | -0.24 (0.23) | -0.25 (0.24) | 0.15 (0.34) | -0.10 (0.31) |
| Prof. Dev. Supports  | -0.05 (0.12) | -0.05 (0.20) | -0.03 (0.19) | |
| Program Social Supports | 0.59 (0.44) | 1.56** (0.49) | |
| Collegiality         | 0.41     | 0.42     |         |         |         |
Involvement & (0.43) & (0.40) \\
Experience & 0.07 & 0.07 & 0.07 & 0.06 & 0.05 \\
 & (0.04) & (0.04) & (0.04) & (0.03) & (0.03) \\
Lead Teacher Status & -0.05 & -0.02 & -0.03 & 0.01 & -0.06 \\
 & (0.64) & (0.61) & (0.62) & (0.64) & (0.61) \\
Teacher Salary & 0.15 & 0.15 & 0.16 & 0.20 & 0.30 \\
 & (0.23) & (0.23) & (0.25) & (0.26) & (0.25) \\
Race White & -0.93 & -0.84 & -0.84 & -0.80 & -1.57 \\
 & (0.59) & (0.62) & (0.64) & (0.62) & (0.73) \\
Race Other & 0.35 & 0.43 & 0.41 & 0.64 & 0.07 \\
 & (1.54) & (1.53) & (1.53) & (1.49) & (1.50) \\
Head Start & 0.20 & 0.05 & -0.08 & 0.82 & 0.69 \\
 & (0.71) & (0.82) & (0.95) & (0.99) & (0.84) \\
Constant & 19.30 *** & 18.43 *** & 19.10 *** & 19.39 *** & 14.63 *** \\
 & (0.28) & (1.33) & (1.08) & (1.05) & (2.54) \\
 & & & & & (2.08) \\
$R^2$ & 0.10 & 0.10 & 0.10 & 0.12 & 0.18 \\

Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. N = 102.

4. Discussion

In this study, we examined the associations between four types of program-level supports (program compensation benefits, professional development support, social support, and family involvement activities) and teacher-perceived collegiality, and ECE teacher-perceived support from families. We hypothesized that all five key independent variables would be positively associated with teacher-perceived support from families, in accordance with the conservation of resources theory of stress (Hobfoll 2001). These theories posit that teachers in well-supported work environments may have more positive attitudes and work quality, which may facilitate greater actual or perceived support from families. Importantly, the dependent variable is teacher-perceived support from families, and as such, could reflect actual support, perceived support, or some combination thereof.

4.1. Benefits and Professional Development Supports: Null Findings

The null effects for benefits and professional development supports may speak to the limits of a program simply offering supports. First, an offered support may be infeasible. For instance, if directors provide reimbursement for PD expenses, but do not advertise that fact, or teachers cannot afford the up-front costs, the support is, practically speaking, nonexistent. Similarly, operational challenges could stymie the usability or take-up of ostensibly supports. For instance, if paid PD days or reimbursements take months to process, teachers may be reluctant to participate in them. This is especially true given the typical US ECE worker salary, which is so low that its median qualifies those with a family of three for food stamps in every US state (U.S. Department of Education 2016).

Second, the offering of supports does not necessarily mean supports are high-quality, frequent, or intense, all of which may be necessary to realize benefits (or even associations). Hall-Kenyon et al. (2014) state that supports that are poorly tailored or not executed well can backfire and have unintended negative consequences. In this way, these results echo those of Harding et al. (2019), who propose that null associations between ECE professional development and teachers’ well-being, attitudes, and teaching practices are due to variation in PD quality and content. Underscoring this point is that program directors reported program-level resources, while teachers reported their perception of support from families. It is possible that teachers were not aware of the supports that their pro-
grams had, or that they perceived ostensible supports as burdens. For instance, PD supports, shared meeting times, or even mental health benefits all could feel like add-ons to full slates of work.

Together, these findings point to the importance of the quality, intensity, and feasibility of supports, and of climate overall. Structural supports may mean little if they are not usable or perceived as beneficial. Moreover, climate may “override” the presence or absence of program-level supports. In other words, a program that offers robust PD supports but has a climate where PD feels like an “add-on” may realize fewer benefits for teachers than a program with few PD supports but a warm and growth-oriented climate. Ultimately, the null findings suggested limitations of structural markers of teacher supports and the need for exploration of process markers of teacher supports.

4.2. Positive Significant Association with Social Supports

Among the hypothesized independent variables, only program-level social supports were significantly positively associated with teacher-perceived support from families (Model F). It may be that social supports were significant because this type of relationship-building support is more effective than benefits, professional development, and family involvement at creating a friendly and encouraging environment. Zulauf and Zinsser (2019) conducted a mixed methods study comparing ECE teachers who expelled students to those who did not. They found that non-expelling teachers reported greater support from their program administrators, not in terms of explicit professional development or benefits, but from friendliness, helpfulness, and advocacy. Moreover, non-expelling teachers described positive and proactive parent communication norms that are “part of the programs’ culture” (Zulauf and Zinsser 2019). In addition, these teachers were more likely to express empathy with families and have positive reactions to children’s problem behaviors. Thus, social supports may promote healthier family perceptions (or even relationships) through improvements to overall climate. Sensitivity analyses suggest this positive association is driven by Head Start centers and centers serving children from relatively low-income families. As these children are more likely to present challenges to teachers (Reardon and Portilla 2016), which are associated with teacher stress (Friedman-Krauss et al. 2014), social support—given the warmth and knowledge-sharing with which it is associated (Kilgallon et al. 2008; Kupila and Karila 2019; Wells 2017)—may take on a greater importance in these settings.

Therefore, if social supports are successful at building connections among teachers, this variable may speak more to the overall climate of programs than relatively discrete supports such as benefits, professional development, and involvement activities. In other words, helping teachers connect socially may contribute more to their attitudes and workplace perceptions above and beyond “check the box” supports such as benefits. Interestingly, however, teacher-perceived collegiality, which is teachers’ perceptions of the social support climate in their program, was not significantly associated with the outcome in any model. It is possible that when it comes to how teacher think about families, intentional supports by programs to create connections among teachers may be more important than what teachers just feel about their climate. In addition, it could be that different climate-related factors may be associated with teacher-perceived support from families and other family engagement-related constructs (e.g., welcoming environment, feeling that administrators “have your back”; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2005; Zulauf and Zinsser 2019).

However, note that in Model E, social supports had a much smaller coefficient and was not statistically significant. Thus, social supports were significantly associated with teacher-perceived support from families only when conditioning on program-level family involvement activities. This could reflect the high correlation between collaboration and involvement (see Table 2), indicating that programs with high social supports tend to have many family involvement activities, as well. High correlation would make the effects of social supports indiscernible without parceling them out across values of involvement activities, which would explain the changes between models E and F.
These coefficients were robust in a sensitivity analysis in which models E and F were switched, so that Model E included involvement but not social supports, and Model F had both. Further suggesting that involvement generally has a negative association with teacher-perceived support from families independent of social supports is that when it is not in the model, the constant is higher.

4.3. Negative Significant Association with Program-Level Family Involvement Activities

Contrary to our hypothesis, family involvement activities were negatively associated with teacher-perceived support from families. In other words, at programs with more opportunities for families to be involved, teachers perceived less family support. This interesting finding contradicts other work that has examined family involvement and the family–teacher relationship. For instance, the quantity of involvement opportunities is positively associated with levels of family involvement (Ansari and Gershoff 2016), and family–teacher trust grows as involvement and interactions increase (Adams and Christenson 2000, 1998). Underscoring these findings are Brown et al. (2009) and Mendez (2010), who conducted qualitative evaluations of ECE school readiness interventions that operate through the family–teacher relationship. Both studies found that teachers perceive greater connectedness with families as families’ involvement increased. While these studies’ outcomes are not precisely teacher-perceived support from families, they indicate a generally positive association between families’ involvement behaviors and family–teacher relationships.

We conducted a sensitivity analysis of this finding in which we compared the two states in which data were collected. The analysis showed that the negative association was driven by one state. This may signal that state regulations around family engagement may incentivize program directors to “check a box” regarding family engagement opportunities at the expense of the less certain work of creating a positive work climate and a welcoming environment for families. Moreover, the measure reflected reports from program directors on the number of involvement activities offered. Therefore, it does not reflect families’ actual involvement. It also may not reflect the actual opportunities, as directors may overreport programs’ offerings (Lower and Cassidy 2007). In addition, the activities offered may be difficult for families to participate in. Common barriers include scheduling conflicts and time constraints, rigid working hours, lack of transportation, language barriers, parents’ negative school experiences, and different understandings of parents’ role in their children’s education (Baker et al. 2016; Loughran 2008).

Moreover, if greater involvement activities correspond to greater involvement expectations on the part of teachers, then the same rate of involvement may seem “worse” at a program with many involvement activities than at a program with few. In other words, families who participate in two activities may be perceived as “less supportive” at a program with seven activities than at a program with four activities. As negative perceptions and experiences are processed and remembered more thoroughly than positive ones (Baumeister et al. 2001), larger gaps between expectations and actual or perceived involvement may pave the way for lower teachers’ perceptions of support from families. Furthermore, qualitative work in US K–12 settings finds that parents, especially those from minoritized groups (Kim 2009), may withdraw if they perceive that educators are condescending to them or think they have little to offer (Lareau 2011; Lasky 2000; Puccioni 2018). In addition, educators and families may have different perceptions of what constitutes “family engagement” (Gross et al. 2019), meaning families’ family engagement actions may not be perceived as such by educators, while educators’ expectations may not align with families’ perceptions of family engagement.

Another potential explanation is that a poorly executed involvement activity may push families away, especially families who are low-income and therefore already more likely to be facing barriers to involvement (Grant and Ray 2018). For instance, if programs regularly send home newsletters in a language that some families cannot read, or with outdated information, then families speaking the non-dominant language may feel left out or even turned away. Given that the family–school relationship is bidirectional (Kim and Sheridan 2015), it is im-
portant that schools both make overtures to families and are places where families feel comfortable “engaging themselves.” If a greater number of activities corresponds to a greater number of unintended exclusionary messages, then a negative association would occur, and furthermore be more likely in schools serving lower-income students. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) found that a welcoming environment is foundational to establishing successful family–school relationships, which Nitecki (2015) underscores in a case study of a successful ECE family–school partnership. Thus, a family perception of poor quality or accessibility may undermine a programs’ intended positive effect of involvement activities. It is worth to explore this contradictory finding in future studies because K-12 and some ECE research have emphasized family involvement activities as a way of improving family engagement and children’s outcomes (e.g., Ansari and Gershoff 2016; Hayakawa et al. 2013; Henderson and Mapp 2002). If it does not support teachers’ feelings of relationships with families, however, it is important to re-visit the current family engagement practices.

4.4. Limitations and Future Work

First, as this study’s analytic method is OLS regression and its data are cross-sectional, it cannot support causal claims. The analysis shows associations only, meaning findings do not show that one variable affects or influences another. In addition, although the independent variables in this study met VIF thresholds (Wooldridge 2016), some independent variables were highly correlated, which raises the possibility of multicollinearity. It is possible, for instance, that generally, the same kinds of programs tend to have both high collaboration supports and family involvement activities, or that a third unobserved variable drove both, generating their high correlation.

In addition, while the sample featured randomly selected programs, and a variety of program types, the number of groups (J = 13) is low. This limits generalizability, particularly given the wide-ranging landscape of early care and education, which operates under widely varying regulations, curricula, and funding models (Chaudry et al. 2017), and is not compulsory, as is K–12 education. Moreover, the sample was mostly Black and White, and had relatively few participants from other racial or ethnic backgrounds. Future studies should incorporate larger samples from more diverse backgrounds and represent a larger number of programs.

A further limitation is the lack of variables that would provide context for the supports. For instance, data about the content of professional development, teachers’ awareness of social supports, perception of benefits, and family take-up of involvement opportunities would enable more nuanced and deeper understanding of the associations between program-level supports and teachers’ perceived support from families. Although the covariates explained 10% of the variance, none were statistically significant, suggesting that other variables account for the variation in teacher-perceived support from families. Likewise, data about the quality of the supports would help contextualize the findings. Similarly, the dataset did not contain measures of the quantity and quality of training teachers had received about how to engage families, which could have explained variation in their perceived support. Moreover, the dependent measure has only six items and thus is limited in its capture of teacher-perceived support. For instance, it does not allow separate analyses of material and emotional support. Together, these limitations mean that the results should be interpreted with caution.

Thus, future work should expand this study through both larger samples and with contextual variables. Analyzing director-reported supports with teachers’ awareness or uptake thereof would address the possibility that ostensibly offered supports are infeasible, impractical, or unknown by those they seek to benefit. In addition, qualitative research may help us understand unexpected findings on family involvement activities. Such work will necessitate more complex studies with additional research questions but will facilitate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the interplay between contextual supports within programs and teachers’ perceptions of family support.
4.5. Implications

As both the absolute and proportionate number of US children using ECE programming grows (National Center for Education Statistics 2019), stakeholders are exploring ways to expand, improve, and equalize programming (e.g., Chaudry et al. 2017). At the same time, ECE practitioners remain chronically underpaid (Whitebook et al. 2014), and often misconstrued as baby-sitters (Nelson and Lewis 2016), even as their role grows in importance and demands (Cassidy et al. 2019). Thus, stakeholders have called for improved supports for the ECE workforce (e.g., Schilder 2016; Ullrich et al. 2017).

This study contributes to family–school relationship literature first by finding that program-level social supports for teachers is positively associated with teacher-perceived support from families, while program-level involvement activities are negatively associated. Put another way, the only positive association with teacher-perceived support from families in this study was with social supports—a measure that included collaborative and relationship-building items such as shared planning time, staff meetings, and social events. This is an understudied area in the family engagement literature. As such, this study points to the possibility that interpersonal relationships among teachers have a role not only in creating positive environments for those within the program (i.e., teachers and children), but also for the wider community (i.e., families).

Moreover, it may have a larger role than other types of supports, such as benefits and professional development, commonly listed in the ECE literature (e.g., Phillips et al. 2016; Whitebook et al. 2014). Specifically, this study points to the possibility that climate factors, above and beyond supports “on paper”, may contribute to teachers’ perceptions of support. Thus, policymakers and program leaders may consider the overall environment, and not merely “check boxes”, when considering ways to support teachers. Program leaders may carve out dedicated time for teachers to socialize or be mindful when creating schedules. Together, the findings in this study suggest that the existence of supports for teachers, such as paid days off or reimbursement for workshops, may not be enough to actually support teachers.

Thus, this study is a caution against assumptions about impacts or effects of program-level teacher supports, especially because it raises the possibility that offering many ways for families to be involved in school may predict negative teacher perceptions. This negative association suggests that the how of interventions bears on their success, as much or more than the what of interventions. Rather than simply adding opportunities for families to be engaged, such as a Facebook page or newsletter, school leaders should attend to how educators talk about family engagement, perceive families, and cultivate expectations within the school, and be mindful of the families’ needs and perspectives when designing engagement opportunities. In this way, this ECE study aligns with recommendations from Epstein (2016) regarding school, family, and community partnerships in K–12 settings.

Thus, interventions seeking to improve family–school relationships for Head Start and other ECE programs may start with climate surveys and qualitative work exploring how teachers—and families—perceive the climate, structure, and ostensible benefits of their workplace. Such work could inform interventions that are responsive and relevant. In addition, it may create more efficient supports, as reallocating resources from low-uptake or irrelevant supports could be helpful to ECE programs, which often operate on lean budgets.

In centralized programs such as Head Start, teacher supports may be prescribed and regulated. However, given the vast variation in ECE program settings, sizes, scopes, aims, geographies, populations, and degree of formality, there is hardly a standard of support across the ECE landscape (Pianta 2007). Thus, policymakers at federal, state, and local levels would do well to consider the quality, relevance, and accessibility of supports as more children attend formal preschool (Friedman-Krauss et al. 2020) and states seek to refine their Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (Boller and Maxwell 2015).
Above all, this study points to the need for nuanced analysis into the environments in which ECE educators labor, and the many relationships they manage to do so. As such, it contributes to an expanding body of work that highlights the large (Bainbridge et al. 2005) and growing (Harper 2018) importance of these educators, and the need for attention into if—and, if so, how and how well—they are supported.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, N.S. and L.J.; methodology, N.S. and L.J.; software, N.S.; validation, N.S. and L.J.; formal analysis, N.S.; investigation, L.J.; resources, L.J.; data curation, L.J.; writing—original draft preparation, N.S.; writing—review and editing, L.J.; visualization, N.S.; supervision, L.J.; project administration, L.J.; funding acquisition, N.S. and L.J. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the Johns Hopkins University 21st Century Cities Initiative Award for Doctoral Research on Urban Issues (no grant number). We also acknowledge that the original data collection was conducted by The Ohio State University, Cynthia Buettner as the Principal Investigator.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Boards of The Ohio State University (2015B0181, date of approval 10 September 2015) and Johns Hopkins University (HIRB00010159, date of approval 30 October 2015).

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** The data are not publicly available due to IRB restrictions for confidentiality.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors would like to thank Cynthia K. Buettner, the Principal Investigator of the larger study, for use of this dataset.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

**References**

Ackerman, Debra J. 2006. The Costs of Being a Child Care Teacher: Revisiting the Problem of Low Wages. *Educational Policy* 20: 85–112.

Adair, Jennifer Keys, and Alejandra Barraza. 2014. Voices of Immigrant Parents in Preschool Settings. *YC Young Children* 69: 32–39.

Adams, Kimberly S., and Sandra L. Christenson. 1998. Differences in Parent and Teacher Trust Levels: Implications for Creating Collaborative Family-School Relationships. *Special Services in the Schools* 14: 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1300/J008v14n01_01.

Adams, Kimberly S., and Sandra L. Christenson. 2000. Trust and the Family-School Relationship: Examination of Parent-Teacher Differences in Elementary and Secondary Grades. *Journal of School Psychology* 38: 477–97. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405(00)00048-0.

Ansari, Arya, and Elizabeth Gershoff. 2016. Parent Involvement in Head Start and Children’s Development: Indirect Effects through Parenting. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 78: 562–79. https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12266.

Arias, M Beatriz, and Milagros Morillo-Campbell. 2008. Promoting ELL Parental Involvement: Challenges in Contested Times. Tempe: Education Policy Research Unit. Available online: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506652.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Arndt, Sonja. 2018. Early Childhood Teacher Cultural Otherness and Belonging. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 19: 392–403. https://doi.org/10.1177/1463949118783382.

Bainbridge, Jay, Marcia K. Meyers, Sakiko Tanaka, and Jane Waldfogel. 2005. Who Gets an Early Education? Family Income and the Enrollment of Three- to Five-Year-Olds from 1968 to 2000. *Social Science Quarterly* 86: 724–45. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2005.00326.x.

Baker, Timberly L., Jillian Wise, Gwendolyn Kelley, and Russell J. Skiba. 2016. Identifying Barriers: Creating Solutions to Improve Family Engagement. *School Community Journal* 26: 161–84.

Barnett, W. Steven. 2003. Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualifications. Philadelphia: Pew Charitable Trusts. Available online: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED480818.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Battistich, Victor, Daniel Solomon, Marilyn Watson, and Eric Schaps. 1997. Caring School Communities. *Educational Psychologist* 32: 137–51. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326988sep3203_1.

Baumeister, Roy F., Ellen Bratslavsky, Catrin Finkenauer, and Kathleen D. Vohs. 2001. Bad Is Stronger than Good. *Review of General Psychology* 5: 323–70. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.4.323.
Bellm, Dan, and Marcy Whitebook. 2006. Roots of Decline: How Government Policy Has de-Educated Teachers of Young Children. 

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley. Available online: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED495838.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Boller, Kimberly, and Kelly Maxwell. 2015. QRIS Research: Looking Back and Looking Forward. Early Childhood Research Quarterly 30: 339–42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.10.002.

Breusch, Trevor S., and Adrian R. Pagan. 1979. A Simple Test for Heteroscedasticity and Random Coefficient Variation. Econometrica 47: 1287–94.

Brown, Jill R., Dr Lisa L. Knoche, Carolyn P. Edwards, and Susan M. Sheridan. 2009. Professional Development to Support Parent Engagement: A Case Study of Early Childhood Practitioners. Early Education and Development 20: 482–506. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280902783475.

Bruckman, Marilyn, and Priscilla W Blanton. 2003. Welfare-to-Work Single Mothers’ Perspectives on Parent Involvement in Head Start: Implications for Parent-Teacher Collaboration. Early Childhood Education Journal 30: 145–50.

Cassidy, Deborah J., Christine Lippard, Elizabeth K. King, and Joanna K. Lower. 2019. Improving the Lives of Teachers in the Early Care and Education Field to Better Support Children and Families. Family Relations: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies 68: 288–297. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12362.

Chase-Lansdale, P., Lindsay, and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn. 2014. Two-Generation Programs in the Twenty-First Century. The Future of Children 24: 13–39.

Chaudry, Ajay, Taryn Morrissey, Christina Weiland, and Hirokazu Yoshikawa. 2017. Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Christianakis, Mary. 2011. Parents as ‘Help Labor’: Inner-City Teachers’ Narratives of Parent Involvement. Teacher Education Quarterly 38: 157–78.

Clarke, Brandy L., Susan M. Sheridan, and Kathryn E. Woods. 2009. Elements of Healthy Family-School Relationships. In Handbook of School-Family Partnerships. Edited by Sandra L. Christenson and Amy L. Reschly. New York: Routledge, pp. 61–79.

Colin Cameron, A., and Douglas L. Miller. 2015. A Practitioner’s Guide to Cluster-Robust Inference. Journal of Human Resources 50: 317–72. https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.50.2.317.

Corr, Lara, Elise Davis, Kay Cook, Elizabeth Waters, and Anthony D. LaMontagne. 2014. Fair Relationships and Policies to Support Family Day Care Educators’ Mental Health: A Qualitative Study. BMC Public Health 14: 1214. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-1214.

Cramer, Travis, and Elise Cappella. 2019. Who Are They and What Do They Need: Characterizing and Supporting the Early Childhood Assistant Teacher Workforce in a Large Urban District. American Journal of Community Psychology 63: 312–23. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12338.

Croux, Christophe, Geert Dhaene, and Dirk Hoorelbeke. 2003. Robust Standard Errors for Robust Estimators. Discussions Paper Series 03.16. Center for Economic Studies. Available online: https://lirias.kuleuven.be/retrieve/76622 (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Cumming, Tamara. 2017. Early Childhood Educators’ Well-Being: An Updated Review of the Literature. Early Childhood Education Journal 45: 583–93. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-016-0818-6.

Dearing, Eric, Erin Sibley, and Hoa Nha Nguyen. 2015. Achievement Mediators of Family Engagement in Children’s Education: A Family–School–Community Systems Model. In Processes and Pathways of Family-School Partnerships Across Development. Edited by Susan M. Sheridan and Elizabeth Moorman Kim. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 17–39. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-16931-6_2.

Deci, Edward L., and Richard M. Ryan. 2008. Facilitating optimal motivation and psychological well-being across life’s domains. Canadian Psychology, Ottawa 49: 14–34.

Dennis, Sarah E., and Erin O’Connor. 2013. Reexamining Quality in Early Childhood Education: Exploring the Relationship between the Organizational Climate and the Classroom. Journal of Research in Childhood Education 27: 74–92. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2012.739589.

Early, Diane M., and Pamela J. Winton. 2001. Preparing the Workforce: Early Childhood Teacher Preparation at 2- and 4-Year Institutions of Higher Education. Early Childhood Research Quarterly 16: 285–306. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(01)00106-5.

Elicker, James, Illene C. Noppe, Lloyd D. Noppe, and Cheryl Fortner-Wood. 1997. The Parent–Caregiver Relationship Scale: Rounding out the Relationship System in Infant Child Care. Early Education and Development 8: 83–100. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566935eed08017.

Emlen, Arthur, Paul Koren, and Kathryn E. Schultz. 2000. A Packet of Scales for Measuring Quality of Child Care from a Parent’s Point of View. Portland: Regional Research Institute for Human Services. Available online: https://health.oregonstate.edu/sites/health.oregonstate.edu/files/sbhs/pdf/2000-A-Packet-of-Scales.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Epstein, Joyce L. 1984. School Policy and Parent Involvement: Research Results. Educational Horizons 62: 70–72.

Epstein, Joyce L. 1992. School and Family Partnerships. Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Available online: https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED343715 (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Epstein, Joyce. 2016. School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools. Second Student Economy. Boulder: Westview Press.

Epstein, Joyce L., and Henry Jay Becker. 1982. Teachers’ Reported Practices of Parent Involvement: Problems and Possibilities. The Elementary School Journal 83: 103–13.
Evans, Michael P. 2013. Educating Preservice Teachers for Family, School, and Community Engagement. Teaching Education 24: 123–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2013.786897.

Faulkner, Monica, Paula Gerstenblatt, Ahyoung Lee, Viana Vallejo, and Dnika Travis. 2016. Childcare Providers: Work Stress and Personal Well-Being. Journal of Early Childhood Research 14: 280–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X14552871.

Friedman-Krauss, Allison Hope, C. Cybele Raver, Pamela A. Morris, and Stephanie M. Jones. 2014. The Role of Classroom-Level Child Behavior Problems in Predicting Preschool Teacher Stress and Classroom Emotional Climate. Early Education and Development 25: 530–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2013.817030.

Friedman-Krauss, Allison H., W. Steven Barnett, Karin A. Garver, Katherine S. Hodges, G. G. Weisenfeld, and Beth Ann Gardiner. 2020. The State of Preschool 2019: State Preschool Yearbook. New Brunswick: National Institute for Early Education Research. Available online: http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/By2019_Full_Report.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Gerber, Emily B., Marcy Whitebook, and Rhona S. Weinstein. 2007. At the Heart of Child Care: Predictors of Teacher Sensitive in Center-Based Child Care. Early Childhood Research Quarterly 22: 327–46. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.12.003.

Gerstenblatt, Paula, Monica Faulkner, Ahyoung Lee, Linh Thy Doan, and Dnika Travis. 2014. Not Babysitting: Work Stress and Well-Being for Family Child Care Providers. Early Childhood Education Journal 42: 67–75. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-012-0571-4.

Goddard, Roger, Yvonne Goddard, Eun Sook Kim, and Robert Miller. 2015. A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis of the Roles of Instructional Leadership, Teacher Collaboration, and Collective Efficacy Beliefs in Support of Student Learning. American Journal of Education 121: 501–30. https://doi.org/10.1086/681925.

Grant, Kathy B., and Julie A. Ray. 2018. Home, School, and Community Collaboration: Culturally Responsive Family Engagement. New York: Sage Publications.

Green, Christa, Joan Walker, Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey, and Howard Sandler. 2007. Parents’ Motivations for Involvement in Children’s Education: Empirical Test of a Theoretical Model of Parent Involvement. Journal of Educational Psychology 99: 532–44. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.532.

Greenglass, Esther R., Ronald J. Burke, and Roman Konaarski. 1997. The Impact of Social Support on the Development of Burnout in Teachers: Examination of a Model. Work & Stress 11: 267–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678379708256840.

Gross, Deborah, Amie F. Bettencourt, Kathryn Taylor, Lucine Francis, Kelly Bower, and Demetria L. Singleton. 2019. What Is Parent Engagement in Early Learning? Depends Who You Ask. Journal of Child and Family Studies 29: 747–760. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01680-6.

Guo, Ying, Laura M. Justice, Brook Sawyer, and Virginia Tompkins. 2011. Exploring Factors Related to Preschool Teachers’ Self-Efficacy. Teaching and Teacher Education 27: 961–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.03.008.

Hall-Kenyon, Kendra M., Robert V. Bullough, Kathryn Lake MacKay, and Esther E. Marshall. 2014. Preschool Teacher Well-Being: A Review of the Literature. Early Childhood Education Journal 42: 153–62. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-013-0595-4.

Harding, Jessica F., Maia C. Connors, Allison Friedman Krauss, Nikki Aikens, Lizabeth Malone, and Louisa Tarullo. 2019. Head Start Teachers’ Professional Development, Well-Being, Attitudes, and Practices: Understanding Changes over Time and Predictive Associations. American Journal of Community Psychology 63: 324–37. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12327.

Harper, Amelia. 2018. More Cities Implement Universal Pre-K When State, National Efforts Fall Short. Education Dive. July 23. Available online: https://www.educationdive.com/news/more-cities-implement-universal-pre-k-when-state-national-efforts-fall-sho/528273/ (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Harwood, Debra, Audrey Klopper, Aijke Osayin, and Mary-Louise Vanderlee. 2013. ‘It’s More than Care’: Early Childhood Educators’ Concepts of Professionalism. Early Years 33: 4–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2012.667394.

Hayakawa, Momoko, Michelle M. Englund, Mallory N. Warner-Richter, and Arthur J. Reynolds. 2013. The Longitudinal Process of Early Parent Involvement on Student Achievement: A Path Analysis. NHSA Dialog 16: 103–26.

Henderson, Anne T., and Karen L. Mapp. 2002. A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement. Austin: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Available online: https://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Hendricks, Matthew D. 2014. Does It Pay to Pay Teachers More? Evidence from Texas. Journal of Public Economics 109: 50–63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2013.11.001.

Hinde, Robert A. 1997. Relationships: A Dialectical Perspective. East Sussex: Psychology Press.

Hobfoll, Stevan E. 1989. Conservation of Resources: A New Attempt at Conceptualizing Stress. American Psychologist 44: 513–24.

Hobfoll, Stevan E. 2001. The Influence of Culture, Community, and the Nested-Self in the Stress Process: Advancing Conservation of Resources Theory. Applied Psychology 50: 337–421. https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00062.

Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen, and Howard Sandler. 1997. Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children’s Education. Review of Educational Research 67: 3–42.

Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen, Joan Walker, Howard Sandler, Darlene Whetsel, Christa Green, Andrew Wilkins, and Kristen Clussos. 2005. Why Do Parents Become Involved? Research Findings and Implications. The Elementary School Journal 106: 105–30.

Jarrett, Robin L., and Sarai Coba-Rodriguez. 2018. How African American Mothers from Urban, Low-Income Backgrounds Support Their Children’s Kindergarten Transition: Qualitative Findings. Early Childhood Education Journal 46: 435–44. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-017-0868-4.

Jeon, Lieny, and Katherine Ardeleanu. 2020. Work Climate in Early Care and Education and Teachers’ Stress: Indirect Associations through Emotion Regulation. Early Education and Development 31: 1031–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2020.1776809.
Jung, Sol Bee, and Steven Sheldon. 2020. Connecting Dimensions of School Leadership for Partnerships with School and Teacher Practices of Family Engagement. School Community Journal 30: 9–32.

Kilgallon, Pam, Carmel Maloney, and Graeme Lock. 2008. Early Childhood Teachers Coping with Educational Change. Australasian Journal of Early Childhood 33: 23–29. https://doi.org/10.17178/18369391080300105.

Kim, Yanghee. 2009. Minority Parental Involvement and School Barriers: Moving the Focus Away from Deficiencies of Parents. Educational Research Review 4: 80–102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2009.02.003.

Kim, Elizabeth Moorman, and Susan M. Sheridan. 2015. Foundational Aspects of Family–School Connections: Definitions, Conceptual Frameworks, and Research Needs. In Foundational Aspects of Family-School Partnership Research. Edited by Susan M. Sheridan and Elizabeth Moorman Kim. Research on Family-School Partnerships. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-13838-1_1.

King, Elizabeth K., Amy V. Johnson, Deborah J. Cassidy, Yudan C. Wang, Joanna K. Lower, and Victoria L. Kintner-Duffy. 2016. Preschool Teachers’ Financial Well-Being and Work Time Supports: Associations with Children’s Emotional Expressions and Behaviors in Classroom. Early Childhood Education Journal 44: 545–53. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-015-0744-z.

Kotaman, Hüseyin. 2016. Turkish Early Childhood Teachers’ Emotional Problems in Early Years of Their Professional Lives. European Early Childhood Education Research Journal 24: 365–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.970849.

Kourney, Amanda S., and Elizabeth Votruba-Drzal. 2014. School Readiness of Children from Immigrant Families: Contributions of Region of Origin, Home, and Childcare. Journal of Educational Psychology 106: 268–88. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034374.

Kuhn, Miriam, Christine A. Marvin, and Lisa L. Knoche. 2017. In It for the Long Haul: Parent-Teacher Partnerships for Addressing Preschool Children’s Challenging Behaviors. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education 37: 81–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271214616659093.

Kupila, Päivi, and Kirsti Karila. 2019. Peer Mentoring as a Support for Beginning Preschool Teachers. Professional Development in Education 45: 205–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/14701421.2018.1427130.

Lane, Carol, and Stevan E. Hobfoll. 1992. How Loss Affects Anger and Alienates Potential Supporters. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 60: 935–42. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.60.6.935.

Lang, Sarah N., Angela R. Tolbert, Sarah J. Schoppe-Sullivan, and Amy E. Bonomi. 2016. A Cocaring Framework for Infants and Toddlers: Applying a Model of Coparenting to Parent–Teacher Relationships. Early Childhood Research Quarterly 34: 40–52. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2015.08.004.

Lareau, Annette. 1989. Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education. Philadelphia: The Falmer Press.

Lareau, Annette. 1994. Parent Involvement in Schooling: A Dissenting View. In School, Family and Community Interaction: A View from the Firing Lines. Edited by Cheryl L. Fagnano and Beverly Z. Werber. Milken Institute Series in Economics and Education. Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 61–73.

Lareau, Annette. 2011. Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lareau, Annette, and Erin McNamara Horvat. 1999. Moments of Social Inclusion and Exclusion: Race, Class and Cultural Capital in Family-School Relationships. Sociology of Education 72: 37–53. https://doi.org/10.2307/2673185.

Lasky, Sue. 2000. The Cultural and Emotional Politics of Teacher–Parent Interactions. Teaching and Teacher Education 16: 843–60. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00030-5.

Lawson, Michael A. 2003. School-Family Relations in Context: Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement. Urban Education 38: 77–135. https://doi.org/10.1177/0041126702238687.

Leigh, Andrew. 2012. Teacher Pay and Teacher Aptitude. Economics of Education Review 31: 41–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2012.02.001.

Lerkkanen, Marja-Kristiina, Eve Kikas, Eija Pakarinen, Pirjo-Liisa Poikonen, and Jari-Erik Nurmi. 2013. Mothers’ Trust toward Teachers in Relation to Teaching Practices. Early Childhood Research Quarterly 28: 153–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2012.04.005.

Lippard, Christine N., Karen M. La Faro, Heather L. Rouse, and Danielle A. Crosby. 2018. A Closer Look at Teacher–Child Relationships and Classroom Emotional Context in Preschool. Child & Youth Care Forum 47: 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-017-9414-1.

Loughran, Sandra B. 2008. The Importance of Teacher/Parent Partnerships: Preparing Pre-Service and in-Service Teachers. Journal of College Teaching & Learning 5: 35–38.

Lower, Joanna K., and Deborah J. Cassidy. 2007. Child Care Work Environments: The Relationship with Learning Environments. Journal of Research in Childhood Education 22: 189–204. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568540709594621.

Lubienski, Sarah Theule, Christopher Lubienski, and Corinna Crawford Crane. 2008. Achievement Differences and School Type: The Role of School Climate, Teacher Certification, and Instruction. American Journal of Education 115: 97–138. https://doi.org/10.1086/590677.

Mahmood, Sebha. 2013. First-Year Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers: Challenges of Working with Parents. School Community Journal 23: 55–86.

McDonald, Paula, Karen Thorpe, and Susan Irvine. 2018. Low Pay but Still We Stay: Retention in Early Childhood Education and Care. Journal of Industrial Relations 60: 002218561880035. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185618800351.

McGinty, Anita S., Laura Justice, and Sara E. Rimm-Kaufman. 2008. Sense of School Community for Preschool Teachers Serving At-Risk Children. Early Education and Development 19: 361–84.
McMillan, Dorothy J., Glenda Walsh, Colette Gray, Karen Hanna, Sheelah Carville, and Owen McCracken. 2012. Changing Mindsets: The Benefits of Implementing a Professional Development Model in Early Childhood Settings in Ireland. *Professional Development in Education* 38: 395–410. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2011.637226.

Mendez, Julia L. 2010. How Can Parents Get Involved in Preschool? Barriers and Engagement in Education by Ethnic Minority Parents of Children Attending Head Start. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* 16: 26.

Moloney, Mary. 2010. Professional Identity in Early Childhood Care and Education: Perspectives of Pre-School and Infant Teachers. *Irish Educational Studies* 29: 167–187. https://doi.org/10.1080/033233110037979068.

Moorman Kim, Elizabeth, Michael J. Coutts, Shannon R. Holmes, Susan M. Sheridan, Kelly A. Ransom, Tara M. Sjuts, and Kristin M. Rispoli. 2012. Parent Involvement and Family-School Partnerships: Examining the Content, Processes, and Outcomes of Structural versus Relationship-Based Approaches. CYFS Working Paper 2012–6. Lincoln: Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, & Schools.

Moss, Peter. 2006. Structures, Understandings and Discourses: Possibilities for Re-Envisioning the Early Childhood Worker. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 7: 30–41. https://doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2006.7.1.30.

National Center for Education Statistics. 2019. Digest of Education Statistics. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Education Sciences. Available online: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_202.10.asp (accessed on 30 August 2021).

National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team. 2013. Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings Form the National Survey of Early Care and Education. OPRE Report #2013-38. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available online: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/nsece_wf_brief_102913_0.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Nelson, Jennifer, and Amanda Lewis. 2016. I’m a Teacher, Not a Babysitter: Workers’ Strategies for Managing Identity-Related Denials of Dignity in the Early Childhood Workplace. In *Research in the Sociology of Work*. Edited by Steven Vallas. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, vol. 29, pp. 37–71. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0277-283320160000029013.

Nitecki, Elena. 2015. Integrated School-Family Partnerships: Building Quality Involvement through Multidimensional Relationships. *School Community Journal* 25: 195–219.

Nix, Robert L., Karen L. Bierman, Mojdeh Motamedi, Brenda S. Heinrichs, and Sukhdeep Gill. 2018. Parent Engagement in a Head Start Home Visiting Program Predicts Sustained Growth in Children’s School Readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 45: 106–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.06.006.

Nzinga-Johnson, Sekile, Jean A. Baker, and Jana Appuperlee. 2009. Teacher-Parent Relationships and School Involvement among Racially and Educationally Diverse Parents of Kindergarteners. The Elementary School Journal 110: 81–91. https://doi.org/10.1086/598844.

Patrikakou, Evanthia N., and Roger P. Weissberg. 1999. The Seven P’s of School-Family Partnerships. *Education Week*, February 3.

Patrikakou, Evanthia N., and Roger P. Weissberg. 2000. Parents’ Perceptions of Teacher Outreach and Parent Involvement in Children’s Education. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 20: 103–19. https://doi.org/10.1300/J005v20n01_08.

Phillips, Deborah, Lea J. E. Austin, and Marcy Whitebook. 2016. The Early Care and Education Workforce. *The Future of Children* 26: 139–58.

Pianta, Robert C. 2007. Early Education in Transition. In *School Readiness and the Transition to Kindergarten in the Era of Accountability*. Edited by Robert C. Pianta, Martha Cox, and Kyle Snow. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc., pp. 3–10.

Pomerantz, Eva M., Elizabeth A. Moorman, and Scott D. Litwack. 2007. How, Whom, and Why of Parents’ Involvement in Children’s Academic Lives: More Is Not Always Better. *Review of Educational Research* 77: 373–410. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430305567.

Puccioni, Jaime. 2018. Understanding How Kindergarten Teachers’ Beliefs Shape Their Transition Practices. *School Community Journal* 28: 249–72.

Reardon, Sean F., and Ximena A. Portilla. 2016. Recent Trends in Income, Racial, and Ethnic School Readiness Gaps at Kindergarten Entry. *AERA Open* 2. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858416657343.

Reichman, Nancy E., Julien O. Teitler, Irwin Garfinkel, and Sara S. McLanahan. 2001. Fragile Families: S Ample and Design. *Children and Youth Services Review* 23: 303–26. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0190-7409(01)00141-4.

Rimm-Kaufman, Sara E., and Robert C. Pianta. 2005. Family-School Communication in Preschool and Kindergarten in the Context of a Relationship-Enhancing Intervention. *Early Education and Development* 16: 287–316. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15566395eed1603_1.

Russell, Daniel, Elizabeth Altmayer, and Dawn Velzen. 1987. Job-Related Stress, Social Support, and Burnout among Classroom Teachers. *The Journal of Applied Psychology* 72: 269–74. https://doi.org/10.1037//0021-9010.72.2.269.

Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci. 2000. Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being. *American Psychologist* 55: 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68.

Saracho, Olivia N., and Bernard Spodek. 2007. Early Childhood Teachers’ Preparation and the Quality of Program Outcomes. *Early Child Development and Care* 177: 71–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430500317366.

Sarros, James C., and Anne M. Sarros. 1992. Social Support and Teacher Burnout. *Journal of Educational Administration* 30. https://doi.org/10.1108/0957829210008826.

Schilder, Diane. 2016. *Early Childhood Teacher Education Policies: Research Review and State Trends*. Washington, DC: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes. Available online: http://nieer.org/wp-
Schmit, Stephanie, Hannah Matthews, and Olivia Golden. 2014. *Thriving Children, Successful Parents: A Two-Generation Approach to Policy*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

Shdaimah, Corey, Elizabeth Palley, and Amanda Miller. 2018. Voices of Child Care Providers: An Exploratory Study on the Impact of Policy Changes. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* 12: 4. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-018-0043-4.

Sheridan, Susan M., Carolyn Pope Edwards, Christine A. Marvin, and Lisa L. Knoche. 2009. Professional Development in Early Childhood Programs: Process Issues and Research Needs. *Early Education and Development* 20: 377–401. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280802582795.

Sheridan, Susan M., Lisa L. Knoche, Carolyn P. Edwards, James A. Bovaird, and Kevin A. Kupzyk. 2010. Parent Engagement and School Readiness: Effects of the Getting Ready Intervention on Preschool Children’s Social-Emotional Competencies. *Early Education and Development* 21: 125–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280902783517.

Sheridan, Susan M., James A. Bovaird, Todd A. Glover, S. Andrew Garbacz, Amanda Witte, and Kyongboon Kwon. 2012. A Randomized Trial Examining the Effects of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation and the Mediating Role of the Parent-Teacher Relationship. *School Psychology Review* 41: 23–46.

Sheridan, Susan M., Amanda L. Witte, Shannon R. Holmes, Michael J. Coutts, Amy L. Dent, Gina M. Kunz, and ChaoRong Wu. 2017. A Randomized Trial Examining the Effects of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation in Rural Schools: Student Outcomes and the Mediating Role of the Teacher-Parent Relationship. *Journal of School Psychology* 61: 33–53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2016.12.002.

Shpancer, N. 1997. The Link between Caregiver-Parent Relations and Children’s Experiences in Daycare and at Home: What Does the Research Tell Us? *Early Child Development and Care* 135: 7–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/0300443971350102.

Sloan, Melissa M., Ranae J. Evenson Newhouse, and Ashley B. Thompson. 2013. Counting on Coworkers: Race, Social Support, and Emotional Experiences on the Job. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 76: 343–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272513504937.

Smith, Sheila, and Sharmila Lawrence. 2019. Early Care and Education Teacher Well-Being: Associations with Children’s Experience, Outcomes, and Workplace Conditions: A Research-to-Policy Brief. Research Connections. Available online: https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/d8-hedw-ne70/download (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Snyder, Patricia, Mary Louise Hemmeter, and Tara Mclaughlin. 2011. Professional Development in Early Childhood Intervention: Where We Stand on the Silver Anniversary of PL 99-457. *Journal of Early Intervention* 33: 357–70. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053815111428336.

Stark, Deborah Roderick. 2010. *Engaged Families, Effective Pre-K: State Policies That Bolster Student Success*. Education Reform. Washington, DC: The Pew Center on the States. Available online: https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pcs_assets/2010/pknfamilyengagementfinalpdf.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Tebben, Erin, Sarah N. Lang, Eliza Sproat, Jovanna Tyree Owens, and Sydney Helms. 2021. Identifying Primary and Secondary Stressors, Buffers, and Supports That Impact ECE Teacher Wellbeing: Implications for Teacher Education. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education* 42: 143–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2021.1918294.

Torrquati, Julia C., Helen Raikes, and Catherine A. Huddleston-Casas. 2007. Teacher Education, Motivation, Compensation, Workplace Support, and Links to Quality of Center-Based Child Care and Teachers’ Intention to Stay in the Early Childhood Profession. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 22: 261–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2007.03.004.

Trumbull, Elise, Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, and Elvia Hernandez. 2003. Parent Involvement in Schooling: According to Whose Values? *The School Community Journal* 13: 45–72.

U.S. Department of Education. 2016. *Fact Sheet: Troubling Pay Gap for Early Childhood Teachers*. Press Release. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available online: https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-troubling-pay-gap-early-childhood-teachers (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Ullrich, Rebecca, Katie Hamm, and Leila Schochet. 2017. 6 Policies to Support the Early Childhood Workforce. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. Available online: https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/2017/02/06/298085/6-policies-to-support-the-early-childhood-workforce/ (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Van Voorhis, Frances, Michelle Maier, Joyce L. Epstein, and Chrishana Lloyd. 2013. *The Impact of Family Involvement on the Education of Children Ages 3 to 8: A Focus on Literacy and Math Achievement Outcomes and Social-Emotional Skills*. New York: MDRC. Available online: https://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/The_Impact_of_Family_Involvement_FR.pdf?utm_source=MDRC+Updates&utm_campaign=16569d481d-October_31_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_504d5ac165-16569d481d-34959869 (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Vickers, Harleen S., and Kathleen M. Minke. 1995. Exploring Parent-Teacher Relationships: Joining and Communication to Others. *School Psychology Quarterly* 10: 133–50.

Waanders, Christine, Julia L. Mendez, and Jason T. Downer. 2007. Parent Characteristics, Economic Stress and Neighborhood Context as Predictors of Parent Involvement in Preschool Children’s Education. *Journal of School Psychology* 45: 619–36. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2007.07.003.

Walker, Joan, Susan Shenker, and Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey. 2010. Why Do Parents Become Involved in Their Children’s Education? Implications for School Counselors. *Professional School Counseling* 14: 27–41.
Walker, Joan, Christa Ice, and Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey. 2011. Latino Parents’ Motivations for Involvement in Their Children’s Schooling. The Elementary School Journal 111: 409–29.

Wells, Michael B. 2017. Is All Support Equal?: Head Start Preschool Teachers’ Psychological Job Attitudes. Teaching and Teacher Education 63: 103–15. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.12.004.

White, Halbert. 1980. A Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Covariance Matrix Estimator and a Direct Test for Heteroskedasticity. Econometrica 48: 817–38.

Whitebook, Marcy, and Sharon Ryan. 2016. Asking the Right Questions about Preparing Skilled and Effective Teachers of Young Children. National Institute for Early Education Research Preschool Policy Brief. Available online: http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/23-2.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Whitebook, Marcy, Deborah Phillips, and Carollee Howes. 2014. Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study. Berkeley: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Available online: https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2014/ReportFINAL.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Whitebook, Marcy, Caitlin McLean, Lea J. E. Austin, and Bethany Edwards. 2018. Early Childhood Workforce Index: About the Early Childhood Workforce. Berkeley: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Available online: https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2018/06/2-About-the-Workforce.pdf (accessed on 30 August 2021).

Wilkerson, Isabel. 2020. Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents. NewYork: Random House Publishing Group.

Wooldridge, Jeffrey M. 2016. Introductory Econometrics: A Modern Approach, 6th ed. Boston: Cengage Learning.

Xu, Zeyu, and Charisse A. Galosino. 2006. How Does Teacher Quality Matter? The Effect of Teacher-Parent Partnership on Early Childhood Performance in Public and Private Schools. Education Economics 14: 345–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/09645290600777550.

Zinsser, Katherine M., Claire G. Christensen, and Luz Torres. 2016. She’s Supporting Them; Who’s Supporting Her? Preschool Center-Level Social-Emotional Supports and Teacher Well-Being. Journal of School Psychology 59: 55–66. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2016.09.001.

Zulauf, Courtney A., and Katherine M. Zinsser. 2019. Forestalling Preschool Expulsion: A Mixed-Method Exploration of the Potential Protective Role of Teachers’ Perceptions of Parents. American Educational Research Journal 56: 2189–2220. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831219838236.