Engaging Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families to Support Elementary School Emergent Bilinguals' Emotional and Mental Well-Being: Teachers' and Families' Perceptions

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Family-school engagement has been found to influence students' emotional and mental well-being. Meanwhile, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) families have often been found to perceive and respond to engagement efforts differently than Euro-American families. The unique needs of emergent bilinguals, a subsample of the CLD community, render it necessary to delve deeper into examining how family-school engagement can influence their emotional and mental well-being. This examination is particularly important given that CLD families and school staff have, at times, been found to hold very different perceptions of each other and of family-school engagement efforts. These discrepancies have, in turn, functioned to inhibit respectful and effective engagement efforts. For this study, I have utilized a phenomenological exploratory approach informed by the cultural reciprocity framework to explore and compare the perceptions of teachers and families regarding emergent bilingual students' emotional and mental well-being and how family-school engagement efforts can serve to support them. Findings illustrated that teachers of emergent bilingual students were generally aware of the unique cultural and linguistic experiences that influence students' emotional and mental health needs, as well as their families' perception of engagement efforts. Meanwhile, family members held various stances concerning their perceptions of their children's emotional and mental health needs and how to support them. They also shared different ways in which they perceived schools' responses to those challenges.

This study concludes with a discussion concerning why those differences might exist and potential

research and practical implications.

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1.0 Introduction

Since passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), families have been emphasized as an essential component of a successful student's life. Schools were urged to engage families to improve students' academic and nonacademic skills during and beyond their time spent in schools. Unfortunately, many schools have not been able to engage families or sustain their engagement over time (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005). More specifically, engagement levels have been found to decrease when students transition from preschool to kindergarten (K) and elementary school (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2005). Moreover, these low engagement levels are found to be especially pronounced for families identified as economically disadvantaged and also culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010). Students who are CLD and economically disadvantaged have also been found to be overidentified in special education, particularly in high-incidence disabilities, such as specific learning disabilities and emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) (Tefera & Fischman, 2020). Students who are identified as having EBD and who belong to economically disadvantaged CLD families could, therefore, be at a double disadvantage. Low engagement levels between their families and schools could have negative consequences that are far-reaching for those students; this, in turn, would put them at a significant disadvantage compared to students who belong to White families and families with higher socioeconomic status (Leddy, 2018).

1.1 Conceptualizing Family Engagement

Several terms and concepts have been used to describe family engagement in schools. Parental involvement, a term used to represent parents' interactions with the schools, has been used frequently in the literature (Ma et al., 2016; Oswald et al., 2018). Families could be described as involved if they attend school functions, communicate with teachers, or help students at home on their homework, for instance (Oswald et al., 2018).

The family involvement framework, however, has been critiqued as possibly restrictive. Typically, family involvement includes practices during which families are tasked with responsibilities assigned by the school based on student needs that are also identified by the school (Kim & Sheridan, 2015). Kim and Sheridan (2015) consider family partnerships to be a more useful and effective framework to use to promote family engagement. Schools who seek to form family partnerships consider families as essential partners and decision-makers in identifying student needs and in addressing them. They ensure that families are given the platforms to be proactive in their students' educational experience. Emphasis is placed on fostering relational aspects of engagement rather than only structural, as in practices that seek to promote passive family involvement (Kim & Sheridan, 2015). In addition to relational aspects, scholars have stressed the importance of using frameworks that reflect the multidimensional influence of context on students' success. According to these scholars, family engagement frameworks would need to span more than just the family and the school; they would have to include the influence of the community as well (Stefanski et al., 2016). Frameworks that advance school-community partnerships are, therefore, posited to be more encompassing and effective in supporting students to succeed by engaging the community as a whole and thus taking into account their ecological contexts (Stefanski et al., 2016). The community is, therefore, viewed as an influential component

of a student's academic and nonacademic experiences and their family's overall well-being. Using this framework, engagement between the school and the family would need to include the community as well.

Given the range of ways family engagement has been conceptualized, for the purpose of this paper, the term "family-school engagement" will be used to represent the range of ways families might interact with their children's schools. Moreover, I will be utilizing Epstein's (2010) framework, which more specifically delineates the range of ways that families might be engaged with their schools, ranging from mere involvement to more proactive decision-making. In addition, I will be using the term "family" instead of only "parents," as the former has been established as being more inclusive of the various types of familial arrangements that students have (Shumow & Moya, 2019). The only exception is when describing studies in which authors themselves refer to parent-specific interventions; I will be using the term "parent" then for clarity.

1.2 Types of Family Engagement

Epstein (2010) outlined six main types of engagement that schools have been found to implement when seeking to engage families. *Parenting* includes support provided by the school to help families learn or improve on parenting skills to foster healthy home environments that are conducive to students' success. *Communicating* involves the schools' implementation of two-way systems of correspondence between families and schools. Through *volunteering*, families are encouraged to contribute their time to support their students by organizing activities at home or school, or in the community. *Learning at home* includes providing families with the skills and resources to help them support students with homework and other academic activities. In *decision-*

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making, families are involved in the school as leaders and representatives to help influence important decisions to be made by school leaders. Finally, by *collaborating with the community*, schools build connections between families, the community, and themselves to provide a well-rounded set of resources and services to help support students and their families.

1.3 Characteristics of Successful Family Engagement Programs

In addition to the possible types of family engagement programs, Epstein (2010) identified a set of common characteristics that successful programs were found to incorporate. Specifically, effective programs are respectful, inclusive, flexible, democratic, and systematic. Schools design respectful programs when they seek to emphasize families' and students' diverse strengths, and when they are attentive and responsive to families' and students' personal needs and interests. In inclusive programs, schools ensure that their staff reach out to otherwise underserved families, such as those who are culturally diverse or economically disadvantaged, to make sure they are honored as essential partners in their students' learning experiences. Programs are flexible when engagement efforts are built around families' logistical abilities to engage (such as times, locations, and medium of contact) and specific needs of the students. Democratic programs perceive families and students as equal partners along with the school staff in influencing policies and important decisions. Lastly, programs are systematic when schools highlight student achievement and ongoing performance, making sure that families fully understand districts' standards of achievement for the different ages and grade levels.

1.4 Family Engagement and EBD Concerns

Emotional and behavioral skills have been numerously documented as fundamental to students' success in school and beyond as an adult (Domitrovich et al., 2017; Durlak et al., 2011). Specifically, developing those skills early on has been found to predict adult outcomes such as lower chances of delinquency, incarceration, and substance use (Domitrovich et al., 2017). In the long term, the cultivation of emotional, behavioral, and social skills in school may lead to more stable employment and marital status and completion of postsecondary education (Domitrovich et al., 2017). Students' behavioral and emotional skills have also been found to be associated with learning outcomes (Axford et al., 2019). Improving students' emotional and behavioral skills, therefore, leads students to have successful and healthier academic and nonacademic life experiences in the short term and in the long term.

Family engagement has been found to be closely related to students' development of emotional and behavioral skills at school. Parent-teacher relationships were found to mediate the relationship between parents' motivational beliefs and students' externalizing behaviors, with more positive relationships being associated with lower rates of externalizing behavior (Kim et al., 2013). Therefore, the strength of the relationship between families and teachers is not only related to students' behaviors but also influences the extent to which families' motivation about education influences students' behavioral outcomes. This finding reveals the significant role that relationships between families and teachers play in influencing students' experiences. Moreover, school-based involvement of families has been found to be related to students' improved social-emotional well-being (Smith-Adcock et al., 2019) and overall social and emotional learning (Garbacz et al., 2015) at school. Given those findings, it is safe to say that families' involvement

in schools could be an essential factor in contributing to students' capacities to develop healthy social and emotional skills in school and beyond.

1.5 Engaging Underserved Families Who Are CLD

Several scholars have documented that family engagement tended to be significantly lower in schools where the majority of the student body was low income and CLD compared to schools where the majority of students belonged to middle-class White families (Leddy, 2018). The lower engagement rates of economically disadvantaged CLD families with schools is often seen as reflective of low interest in wanting to be involved (McKay & Stone, 2000). Studies that utilized analytical procedures to distinguish between interest and actual ability to be involved found that the opposite was, in fact, true. African American families were found to have higher interest than White families in being involved in school-based events, even though they tended to have lower attendance rates (Wood & Baker, 1999). Logistical factors were found to function as obstacles to those families' sustained engagement, but those were not the only obstacles. A lack of a respectful school climate that builds on a foundation of cultural and social respect has also been posited as another major obstacle to sustained engagement levels for low-income CLD families (Wood & Baker, 1999). CLD families who perceived school climates as culturally incompetent often experienced a sense of isolation and disconnection from the rest of the school community (Yull et al., 2014). As a result, those families did not feel welcome by the schools and were thus less willing to remain engaged with school personnel.

1.6 Cultural Conceptualizations of Family-School Engagement

In seeking to engage CLD families, many schools impose a normative and monocultural conceptualization of what family-school engagement entails (Herrera et al., 2020). Schools proceed to lay out expectations for how families should engage with the school and how to parent and discipline their children outside of it. These assumptions reflect an underlying historical lack of consideration for the myriad ways in which CLD families conceptualize parenting and engagement (Herrera et al., 2020). To illustrate the diversity that exists across families with different cultural and racial identities, a study found that African American families reported being more involved in schools than Latino families and reported having higher levels of parental self-efficacy (Hill et al., 2018). On the other hand, both African American families and Latino families expressed wanting to have more homework assigned to their children, while Euro-Americans wanted their children to have more balance between homework and extracurricular activities (Hill et al., 2018). In addition, family engagement served different purposes for the families; African American families reported wanting to stay engaged to ensure their children were treated fairly by school staff, while Latino families wanted to ensure their children had access to the best opportunities to learn (Hill et al., 2018). Interestingly, both African American families and Latino families reflected a deeper intensity and concern for their children's academic performance and future, while Euro-American families seemed less concerned and more carefree (Hill et al., 2018). These culturally influenced differences in how engagement is perceived and practiced demonstrate that schools seeking to engage CLD families need to recognize the multidimensional nature and complexity of how their efforts are perceived.

An examination of the emergent bilingual demographic reveals yet more nuanced findings. Emergent bilinguals are by no means a homogenous group of students; on the contrary, they

represent a rich range of linguistic, cultural, and racial backgrounds in U.S. schools. Emergent bilinguals could be immigrants, children of immigrants, refugees, or Indigenous people, and some might have experienced limited or interrupted formal schooling or have been long-term English language learners (Menken, 2013). Their unique backgrounds are, therefore, expected to shape their families' parenting practices and those families' conceptualizations of emotional and mental health. For instance, one of the priorities of parenting within immigrant families is teaching children how to transition successfully into a destination country's culture, which is unlike the parenting practices of families native to that culture (Hill, 2021). Level of language proficiency could also play a role in influencing how those families interact with their children. Practicing acceptance as well as hostile control, or firmness, in responding to children's conduct problems was found to be positively correlated for Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans, yet unrelated for English-speaking Mexican Americans and negatively related for Euro-Americans (Hill et al., 2003).

1.7 Cultural Conceptualizations of Mental and Emotional Well-Being

Just as there are differences in how CLD families conceptualize parenting and family-school engagement, it follows that they have also been found to differ in how they conceptualize mental and emotional well-being. Hwang et al. (2008) proposed the Cultural Influences on Mental Health framework to present how culture pervades different domains of how mental well-being is perceived. According to Hwang et al. (2008), cultural background, in addition to individual characteristics, influences the development of mental illness; how distress might, in turn, be expressed; and the sociocultural meanings ascribed to it. These influences are all the more salient

to immigrant families who might be experiencing acculturative stress in addition to other stressors while settling in their host country (Hwang et al., 2008).

In several studies, English language proficiency was used as a measure of acculturation to life in the United States for immigrants. One such study found that Mexican American participants who were interviewed in Spanish, instead of English, had worse self-rated mental health reports than those who were interviewed in English (Kato, 2018). Those considered less acculturated to living in the United States thus scored lower on self-ratings of mental health measures. In addition, those who demonstrated having strong Mexican identities tended to have higher self-reported mental health ratings than Mexican immigrants or U.S.-born Mexican individuals with a weaker sense of ethnic identity (Kato, 2018). For immigrants, having higher English language proficiency in the United States and yet maintaining a strong ethnic identity could mediate how they perceive their own mental well-being.

1.8 How CLD Families and Schools Perceive Each Other Matters

Teachers play a leading role in the creation of safe learning environments that are inclusive of learners no matter their cultural, linguistic, or learning abilities (Farmer et al., 2019). English as a second language (ESL) teachers' ability to establish a secure and welcoming space for emergent bilinguals could help affirm their cultural and linguistic identities, as well as alleviate fears or anxieties that some of them might be experiencing as a result of having experienced trauma before coming to the United States (Curran, 2003). One of the primary tools used to establish such an environment is language. Language is a double-edged sword, however; it can be utilized to "create liberating or oppressive learning spaces" (Herrera et al., 2020, p. 33). It can also be used to

reinforce misconceptions and prejudiced assumptions in teachers' mindsets about emergent

bilingual students and families (Herrera et al., 2020). Examining the messages that school staff

convey in the language they use could, therefore, reveal the type of generalizations that they might

hold about those families and their engagement with schools (Herrera et al., 2020). This

examination is particularly true given that CLD families and school staff have, at times, been found

to hold very different perceptions of each other and the purpose of family-school engagement

(Lawson, 2003). These divergent perceptions could, in turn, function to inhibit respectful and

effective family-school engagement efforts (Yull et al., 2014).

2.0 Literature Review

Plenty of papers have been written on the importance of families' engagement with schools. However, some have focused only on the influence of family engagement on students' academic achievement (Jeynes, 2003, 2007) and thus did not examine outcome measures that included emotional, mental, and behavioral well-being. Others have restricted participants' grade levels to no higher than third grade (Ma et al., 2016). Several studies have included participants from CLD backgrounds; however, either the studies were international and therefore were not focused on unique U.S.-specific conditions (Axford et al., 2019; Nye et al., 2006), or, if the studies were specific to the United States, they limited participation to those under eight years of age (Pellecchia et al., 2018).

Given the existing gaps in the literature, the purpose of this review will be to examine the effect of family engagement programs on CLD families' engagement rates and on outcomes of students at risk for or with EBD at the elementary school grade level. Specifically, this paper poses the following questions:

1) How were participants described in the studies?

   a. What CLD demographics were included for families and teachers?

2) How were family engagement interventions implemented in the studies?

   a. What were the research designs of the studies?

   b. What were the primary types and characteristics of the family engagement interventions?

3) What was the effect of family engagement interventions on outcomes?

   a. What behavioral or emotional constructs were targeted by the interventions?

b. What was the effect of the interventions on improving student behaviors or emotional well-being?

c. What was the effect of interventions on engaging CLD families?

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 Identifying Literature

The author conducted an electronic search, an ancestral search, and a hand search to find articles to review for the purpose of this paper. The electronic search entailed searching for articles through the PsycINFO and ERIC databases using the following terms: (parent* or mother* or father* or caregiver* or famil*) AND (engage* or involve* or participat* or collaborat* or communicat* or partner*) AND (underserve* or underresource* or "low resource*" or poor or poverty or ethnic minorit* or "low SES" or "low socioeconomic" or "low socio-economic" or "free and reduced lunch" or Medicaid or marginalize* or minoritize*) AND (elementary or K-8). The search was also limited by date to articles published in or after the year 2010 to limit the search to the most recent articles and to identify only peer-reviewed articles.

Combined, the searches produced a total of 744 articles. The author reviewed each study by examining whether the title was relevant to the purpose of the paper and then reading the abstract if it seemed to be; if the article's relevance to the paper was unclear, the author skimmed the article to determine eligibility. For articles to be eligible, they had to meet the following inclusion criteria: (a) The study utilizes an experimental or quasi-experimental study design and provides quantitative analyses and results (descriptive and qualitative papers were excluded, such

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as Ingraham et al., 2016); (b) participants included students who were in elementary school (grades K–5); (c) outcome measures included a measure of family engagement with the schools, as well as a measure of student behavioral, emotional, or social outcomes (studies with interventions that did not have family engagement with the school as an outcome, such as Warren et al. [2006], or that did not capture emotional or behavioral outcomes, such as Knapp [2016], were excluded); (d) either the majority of the participants were CLD or the study explicitly examined effects on a CLD segment of the larger sample; and (e) the study was conducted in the United States due to the unique contextual features that shape families and schools in each country. Five articles met all the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The author then conducted a hand search by manually going through all the studies published by four journals between the years 2010 and 2021: (a) *Journal of School Psychology*; (b) *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*; (c) *Journal of Applied School Psychology*; and (d) *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. This resulted in the identification of one more article. In addition, an ancestral search was carried out by screening all the references of all identified studies and then screening the references of any studies identified through that process. This search resulted in the author identifying two additional studies. In total, the search process resulted in the identification of eight studies.

2.1.2 Analysis

The author conducted several rounds of inductive and deductive coding to extract relevant data from the final eight articles. She began by identifying codes deductively by drawing on descriptors that existing literature on the topic of family engagement included or conceptualized. Deductive codes included relevant participant demographics such as age, race, and social

socioeconomic indicators; study designs, and Epstein's types of family engagement and best practices. The author then engaged in an iterative process of identifying codes inductively based on the identified studies. She read the studies several times throughout the coding process to further refine the inductive codes and more accurately describe the articles. The resulting inductive codes included types of disabilities or at-risk conditions targeted, who the intervention was implemented by, outcome measures, and effectiveness of the interventions.

2.2 Results

2.2.1 Nature of Participants

A total of 27,419 students and their families were included across seven out of the eight studies, ranging from four participants in Lopach et al.'s (2018) study to 25,435 participants in Pullmann et al.'s (2013) study (see Table 1). Students were in grades K–5. One of the studies did not provide a disaggregated breakdown of the number of participants involved, but instead provided the number of classrooms that were included (41 classrooms) (Cook et al., 2017). Overall, 43% of the total sample of students and families were identified as Black, African American, or African, whereas about 24% were identified as Latinx or Hispanic. Smythe-Leistico and Page (2018) did not provide the disaggregated percentage of participants who identified as Hispanic in their sample. The majority of the participants were male (71%) across the five studies that provided a breakdown of the gender makeup of their sample (Clarke et al., 2017; Cook et al., 2017; and Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018, did not). In addition, at least 73% of the participants were eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. Some of the studies provided information about

their participants' special education status. Jurbergs et al. (2010) indicated that all their participants had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), whereas Lopach et al. (2018) mentioned that one of their participants had ADHD while one other participant qualified to receive itinerant speech services. Pullmann et al. (2013), on the other hand, did not offer a breakdown of their participants' diagnostic categories, but did mention that about 21% of their participants received special education services. The remaining studies either included participants who were not receiving special education services but displayed concerning behavioral or emotional signs such as externalizing behavioral concerns (Clarke et al., 2017) or offered their intervention to all students regardless of whether they were at risk (Cook et al., 2017; Herman & Reinke, 2017; Houri et al., 2019; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018).

Demographic data about teachers were minimal. Across the studies that provided these data (Clarke et al., 2017; Herman & Reinke, 2017; Jurbergs et al., 2010), there was a total of 158 teachers. Only those studies provided a racial breakdown of teacher participants, with 75% identifying as either Caucasian or White and 21% identifying as African American. Two studies (Houri et al., 2019; Jurbergs et al., 2010) indicated that their teacher participants had between 1 and 32 years of experience. None of the studies provided information about the teachers' specialties at the schools, such as whether they were general education or special education teachers. Four studies were conducted in urban schools (Herman & Reinke, 2017; Jurbergs et al., 2010; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018), whereas one study included both urban and suburban schools (Clarke et al., 2017). The remaining studies did not provide information about the type of school where the studies were conducted.

Table 1 Nature of Participants

Study	Students							Teachers		
	Grade	Gender	At-Risk Category	CLD	SES	Int.	Comp.	N	Exp.	CLD
Clarke et al., 2017	K–3	N/P	Had to have externalizing behavioral concerns	100% LT	71% FRL	23	12	Int. =23 Comp. =11	N/P	None or 100% W
Cook et al., 2017	K–5	N/P	N/P	15%–44% Hispanic in 5 classrooms	65% FRL	5 elementary schools; disaggregated information not complete / 41 classrooms		N/P	N/P	N/P
Herman & Reinke, 2017	K–3	52% M	N/A	76% AA; 22% W; 2% other	50% FRL	896	910	Int. = 53 Control = 52	N/P	75% W; 22% AA; 3% other
Houri et al., 2019	3–5	75% M	N/A (all students)	43% Black; 33% other; 24% W	82% FRL	25	26	N/P	3–28 years	88% W
Jurbergs et al., 2010	1–3	74% M 26% F	All had ADHD.	100% AA	> 80% FRL	PC = 14	NPC = 13 PC = 16	19	1–32 years	63% AA; 37% Caucasian
Lopach et al., 2018	4–5	4 M (100%)	Itinerant speech services, 1; ADHD, 1; ELLs 2 / displayed lower rates of on-task behavior and math performance	1 LT; 1 mixed ethnicity; 1 Pacific Islander; 1 W	Entire school 87% FRL	4	Same participants	N/P	N/P	N/P
Pullmann et al., 2013	K–5	53.6% M; 46.4% F	20.9% received special education services.	53.7% AA; 23.6% Hispanic; 11.8% Asian; 7.4% other; 3.6 % W	70.3% FRL	985	24,450	N/P	N/P	N/P

Table 1 (continued)

Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018	K	N/P	1/3 of K chronically absent	75% Black; N/P Hispanic (sample of interest)	Majority FRL	Total = 45; disaggregated info N/P	N/P	N/P	N/P

AA = African American; ADHD = attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder; CLD = Culturally and Linguistically Diverse; Comp. = comparison group; ELLs = English Language Learner Exp. = Experience F = female; FRL = free or reduced lunch; Int. = intervention group; K = kindergarten; LT = Latinx; M = male; N/P = not provided; NPC = no parent consequences; PC = parent consequences; SES = Socioeconomic Status; W = White

2.2.2 Research Designs

The majority of the researchers utilized randomized controlled designs to conduct their studies. Three studies did not administer randomized controlled trials. Smythe-Leistico and Page (2018) and Pullmann et al. (2013) conducted case studies where they tracked outcomes before and after the intervention. Lopach et al. (2018) utilized a multiple-probe, multiple-baseline study design to track how their intervention influenced the behavioral outcomes of their four participants over time. Table 2 illustrates the research designs that were utilized in each study.

2.2.3 How Family Engagement Interventions Were Implemented

2.2.3.1 Types of Family-School Engagement Interventions

The primary type of family engagement that all studies targeted in their interventions was communication, specifically seeking to improve communication between teachers (Clarke et al., 2017; Cook et al., 2017; Herman & Reinke, 2017; Houri et al., 2019; Jurbergs et al., 2010; Lopach et al., 2018) or schools in general (Pullmann et al., 2013; Smythe-Leistico, 2018) and families. In addition to communication, other family engagement types that studies primarily targeted included parenting (Jurbergs et al., 2010; Pullmann et al., 2013), collaboration (Pullmann et al., 2013; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018), and decision-making (Clarke et al., 2017).

2.2.3.2 Qualities of Family-School Engagement Interventions

Some characteristics were found to be more common than others across the eight studies (see Table 2). In alignment with the purpose of this review, all eight studies implemented

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interventions that were *inclusive* to diverse participants: racially, economically, and linguistically. Studies varied, however, in the degree to which they illustrated the remaining characteristics. All studies except two (Jurbergs et al., 2010; Lopach et al., 2018) incorporated deliberate practices that aligned with the element of *respect*. Specifically, schools were responsive to families' specific needs, translated materials, recruited staff members who spoke families' primary language, and fostered relationships by cultivating families' and teachers' sense of comfort and trust toward one another. Schools were encouraged to build respectful relationships with families through recruiting team members who parents could relate to and feel comfortable communicating with. This was done in several ways, including by hiring members who could speak the same language as families (Smyth-Leistico & Page, 2018), recruiting parent advocates who helped families address barriers to involvement, or hiring family service workers who helped connect families with resources in the community (Pullmann et al., 2013).

In addition, five studies involved families as *partners* and proactive members in the development and/or implementation stages of their interventions (with the exception of Cook et al., 2017; Herman & Reinke, 2017; and Lopach et al., 2018). For instance, in Houri et al.'s (2019) study, teachers were asked to send home letters that included praise for specific behaviors students engaged in, high expectations of students, and an expression of sincere willingness to work together with families to ensure sustained, ongoing two-way communication. In other studies, parents were given opportunities to pilot the interventions and give feedback on preferences, deliver consequences to students at home, and engage in two-way communication with teachers and other school professionals throughout the intervention (Houri et al., 2019; Jurbergs et al., 2010; Lopach et al., 2018; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Finally, two studies of the eight ensured that *flexible* accommodations were put in place to give families options on how to engage (Cook et al.,

2017; Pullmann et al., 2013). Options for engagement included paying families home visits when they could not attend school-held meetings and trainings and giving families the option to communicate via email, text, or telephone.

Table 2 Description of Interventions

Study	Study Design	Name	Description	Primary Type of Family Engagement	Characteristics of Successful Partnership	Imp or Led by
Clarke et al., 2017	RCT; pre/post	Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC)	Strength-based approach to improve students' social skills and behavior and family-school partnership	Communication, decision-making	Respectful, democratic, systematic, inclusive, no flexibility	Consultants
Cook et al., 2017	RCT	Early Truancy Prevention Program (ETPP)	To improve attendance of students by improving communication between teachers and parents	Communication	Respectful, inclusive, flexible, systematic, not democratic	Teachers
Herman & Reinke, 2017	Group randomized trial, pre/post	Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Program (IY TCM)	Teachers examine perceptions and biases about families of challenging students.	Communication	Respectful, inclusive, systematic, no flexibility, not democratic	Teachers
Houri et al., 2019	Double-blind randomized controlled design	Wise feedback, ClassDojo	Wise feedback: letter sent home communicating high expectations and beliefs in ability of students to succeed academically and behaviorally	Communication	Respectful, inclusive, democratic, systematic, no flexibility	Teacher

Table 2 (continued)

			ClassDojo: daily notes sent electronically by teachers, via a two-way communication system, to families			
			Consequences at home and school by celebrating student's success or encouraging to have better next day			
Jurbergs et al., 2010	RCT, between-groups design, pre/post, 3 treatment groups	Daily behavior report cards (DBRC)	School-home notes where teacher evaluates behavior and parents deliver consequences	Communication, decision-making, parenting	Inclusive, democratic, systematic, not respectful, no flexibility	Teacher, researcher, and family
Lopach et al., 2018	Multiple-probe, multiple-baseline	Electronic Home Note Program (EHNP)	Web-based home note	Communication	Systematic, inclusive, semi-democratic, not respectful, no flexibility	Teacher
Pullmann et al., 2013	Evaluation case study, pre/post, between-group comparison	Family support programme (FSP)	Improve families' access to resources and engagement in child's education	Communication, collaboration	Democratic, inclusive, respectful, systematic, semi-flexible: only text message/recruitment flexible	FSWs

Table 2 (continued)

Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018	Case study	Connect-Text	Pre-programmed two-way text-messaging sent by school to parents	Communication, collaboration	Democratic, inclusive, respectful, systematic, semi-flexible: only text message/recruitment flexible	AmeriCorps member employed

FSWs = family support workers; IMP = implemented; pre/post = pre and post intervention; RCT = randomized controlled trial

2.2.4 Dependent Measures

2.2.4.1 Student-Related Constructs

In the majority of the studies, the researchers implemented interventions with the purpose of addressing students' disruptive behaviors by focusing specifically on improving on-task behavior and attention across different subject areas (see Table 3). Other behavioral concerns included adaptive skills, externalizing behaviors (defined as negative behaviors directed outwardly and that can cause harm) (Clarke et al., 2017), and schoolwide behavioral expectations reflecting safety, respect, and responsibility (Houri et al., 2019). The remaining three articles addressed student attendance and chronic absenteeism as their behaviors of concern (Cook et al., 2017; Pullmann et al., 2013; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). It is worth noting that none of the studies included measures of students' emotional well-being.

Students' behaviors were measured in a range of ways. Some researchers (Clarke et al., 2017; Herman & Reinke, 2017) utilized established surveys, such as the Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition (BASC-2), the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS), and the Social Competence Scale–Teacher Version, to measure on-task behaviors, externalizing behaviors, and social skills. Houri et al. (2019), on the other hand, had teachers complete generic rating scales to report students' engagement in safe, respectful, and responsible behavioral conduct in school. Other studies relied on records borrowed from the school's or district's central offices of education to retrieve information about student absence and suspension rates (Cook et al., 2017; Pullmann et al., 2013; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Lastly, several researchers conducted observations to capture data relating to the rates at which students exhibited on-task and off-task

behavior and/or disruptive behavior (Herman & Reinke, 2017; Jurbergs et al., 2010; Lopach et al., 2018).

2.2.4.2 Family Engagement Constructs

Different constructs and measures were used to capture the types of family engagement interventions in the studies. Clarke et al. (2017), Herman and Reinke (2017), and Houri et al. (2019) relied on already established surveys, such as the Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale (PTRS) and the Parent Involvement Measure–Teacher version, to capture the level of engagement, correspondence, and relationship quality that teachers and families had with one another. Other researchers tracked family contact by way of general teacher-reported rates (Cook et al., 2017) or tracking rates that notes or report cards were signed and returned by families during the course of the intervention (Jurbergs et al., 2010; Lopach et al., 2018). Pullmann et al. (2013) utilized survey data collected annually by the school on families' perceptions of engagement opportunities. Smythe-Leistico and Page (2018) did not provide information on the specific measures they used to capture parents' improved ratings of school-parent communication.

Table 3 Descriptions of Constructs Targeted by Studies

	Family Engagement Dependent Variables			Student Outcome Dependent Variables		
Study	Construct	Measure	Completed by	Construct	Measure	Completed by
Clarke et al., 2017	Perceptions of quality of parent-teacher relationship	Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale (PTRS)	Parents and teachers	Student social-behavioral functioning: adaptive skills, externalizing problems, internalizing problems, behavioral symptoms; school problems	BASC-2	Parent and teacher
	Competence in problem-solving	Parent Competence in Problem-Solving	Parents	Social skills	SSRS	Parent and teacher
Cook et al., 2017	Frequency and nature of parent-teacher communication; who initiated contact	Self-developed surveys	Teachers	Attendance	Classroom average attendance rate; percentage of students absent more than minimum number of days	Teacher
Herman & Reinke, 2017	Parent contact and comfort	Parent Involvement Measure–Teacher version	Teacher	Student disruptions and off-task behaviors	Brief Student-Teacher Classroom	Independent observers

Table 3 (continued)

				Student disruptive behaviors and family problems	TOCA-C	Teachers
Houri et al., 2019	Parental behavioral engagement	Rate of notes returned by parent per week		Safety, respect, responsibility	Note with rating scale	Teachers
	Parental relational engagement (open communication, mutual respect, shared values)	Parent-Teacher Relationship Scale (PTRS)	Parents			
Jurbergs et al., 2010	Number of notes returned by parents	Record tracking: notes returned	Not indicated	On-task behavior	Observation	Independent observers
Lopach et al., 2018	Notes reviewed by parents/emails returned	Record tracking: whether notes were reviewed and emails responded to	Primary investigator	On-task behavior	Observation	Researchers
Pullmann et al., 2013	Ratings about perceptions of opportunities for involvement, engagement, and support	Surveys	Parents	Attendance, disciplinary actions	Percentage of school days attended; disciplinary actions: presence of short-term suspensions	School records

Table 3 (continued)

| Smith-Leistico & Page, 2018 | Parent engagement with text messaging | Qualitative | Independent staff member | Attendance | Daily absence rate; yearly rate of chronic absenteeism | District-level administrativ e records |

BASC-2 = Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition; SSRS = Social Skills Rating System; TOCA-C = Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation–Checklist

2.2.5 Results of Family Engagement Interventions

2.2.5.1 Outcomes of Family Engagement

All eight studies have demonstrated promising effects on family engagement outcomes (see Table 4). Communication rates between families and schools improved in the form of notes returned more frequently to teachers, increased responsiveness, increased initiation of contact, and higher rates of enrollment in school-delivered family support programs (Cook et al., 2017; Herman & Reinke, 2017; Houri et al., 2019; Jurbergs et al., 2010; Lopach et al., 2018; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). The effects of the interventions were not merely limited to communication rates. Some studies demonstrated the range of effects that their interventions had on the deeper relational aspects of family engagement. Clarke et al. (2017) and Houri et al. (2019) shared that relationships between parents and teachers significantly improved after delivering the intervention, with the latter demonstrating more significant results in relational engagement for African American families. Houri et al. (2019) found that following implementation of the intervention, parents' response rates to teachers' notes increased significantly, as did parents' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their child's teachers.

Herman and Reinke (2017) found that at follow-up, teachers who received the intervention were more likely to report having higher contact and experiencing higher comfort with parents than those who did not. However, overall, families whom teachers rated as having lower rates of comfort and contact with were more likely to be African American and have lower income. Moreover, improvement in parents' rating of involvement was described as small or modest in Pullmann et al.'s (2013) study, yet parent involvement was significantly correlated with positive student outcomes. Specifically, they reported that for students in the family support programme,

parents reported small or modest improvements in their level of engagement in their child's education and with their school.

2.2.5.2 Student Outcomes

The effect of family engagement interventions on student behavior was generally positive across all eight studies. Specifically, rates of students' on-task behaviors, disciplinary actions, students' safe and respectful behaviors, conduct problems, school readiness, and attendance improved significantly (Cook et al., 2017; Herman & Reinke, 2017; Houri et al., 2019; Jurbergs et al., 2010; Pullmann et al., 2013). Two of the studies did not provide significance levels because they were not randomized controlled trials; however, they also indicated an improvement in the outcome of students' on-task behavior (Lopach et al., 2018) and attendance rates (Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Even though the effects were positive overall, one of the studies presented mixed results, depending on whether the results were reported by families or teachers. Results were inconsistent across behavioral outcomes between teachers and parents in Clarke et al.'s (2017) study, where there was a significant improvement in externalizing behavior based on teachers' ratings and in internalizing behaviors based on parents' ratings.

Table 4 Effects of Interventions on Outcomes

Study	Results	
	Family Engagement	Student Behaviors
Clarke et al., 2017	Parent-teacher relationships: improvement (p = .024) Completed by parents and teachers Parent competence in problem-solving: improvement (p = .030) Completed by parents	Externalizing behaviors PR: N/S; TR: improvement (p = .057) Internalizing behaviors PR: improvement (p = .075); TR: N/S Social skills TR: improvement (p = .087)
Cook et al., 2017	Parent-initiated contact: improvement by text (p < .05), in person (p < .05), and by telephone (p < .05) Completed by teachers Teacher-initiated contact: improvement by text (p < .01) and note on paper (p < .01) Completed by parents	Student absences: improvement (p < .05)
Herman & Reinke, 2017	38.6% more improvement than expected in teacher report of contact rate and/or comfort level Teachers more likely to have lower rates of contact and comfort for AA families Completed by teachers	Higher rates of TR comfort with families associated with observed and TR lower rates of disruptive and off-task behaviors. High comfort/low contact Off-task behaviors: lower rates (p < .01) Disruptions: lower rates (p < .05)
Houri et al., 2019	Notes returned: significant increase (p < .001) across all races	Significant positive relationship between parental relational engagement and teacher ratings of students' safe behavior (p = .006) and respectful behavior (p = .001)

Parent-reported relational engagement:
significant increase (p = .001), increasing more
significantly for Black students
Completed by parents

Table 4 (continued)

Jurbergs et al., 2010	83% of notes returned to school	Pre/post = + ve (p < .001)
		Int./Cont. = + ve (p value not provided)
		PC > NPC (p value not provided)
Lopach et al., 2018	Average = 84% of notes reviewed	33% average increase in on-task behavior
Pullmann et al., 2013	Small or modest improvement in parent rating of involvement Completed by parents	Correlation between family engagement and disciplinary actions: improvement (p < .01) Correlation between family engagement and attendance: improvement (p < .01)
Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018	Positive response from Spanish-speaking families High parent ratings of school-parent communication Completed by independent staff member	Absenteeism reduced by 11.1 percentage points.

AA = African American; Cont. = control; Int. = intervention; NPC = no parent-delivered consequences; N/S = Not significant; PC = parent-delivered consequences; PR = parent reported; pre/post = pre and post intervention; TR = teacher reported; +ve = positive

2.3 Discussion

The purpose of this review was to examine the effect of family engagement programs on CLD families' engagement rates and on outcomes of students at risk for or with emotional and/or behavioral disorders at the elementary school grade level. Specifically, this paper sought to address the following questions:

1) How were participants described in the studies?

   a. What CLD demographics were included for families and teachers?

2) How were family engagement interventions implemented in the studies?

   a. What were the research designs of the studies?

   b. What were the primary types and characteristics of the family engagement interventions?

3) What was the effect of family engagement interventions on outcomes?

   a. What behavioral or emotional constructs were targeted by the interventions?

   b. What was the effect of the interventions on improving student behaviors or emotional well-being?

   c. What was the effect of interventions on engaging CLD families?

2.3.1 Nature of Participants: Racial Incongruence Between Families and Teachers

The demographics across the studies reflect the recurrent trends of CLD students and families making up the majority of underserved school populations and the majority of the teachers

that serve them identifying as White or Caucasian. It should be noted, however, that not all the studies included the demographic breakdown of their teacher participants. Including information about all the participants involved in a study is a need that has been called for by several scholars (Robertson et al., 2017).

Existing evidence illustrates the importance of including this information. Racial consonance between families and teachers was found to predict family involvement differently for Latinx and Afro-Caribbean families, with similarity in teachers' ethnicity improving involvement for the former more so than the latter (Calzada et al., 2015). Calzada et al. (2015) speculated that a possible reason behind this difference is that even though Afro-Caribbean students were mostly placed with African American teachers, cultural differences may have contributed to the consonance. Teacher-child racial and ethnic match was also found to influence families' level and type of involvement for Latinx families, which, in turn, was related to improved attendance rates (Markowitz et al., 2020). The same did not hold true, however, for African American families. Those findings exemplify the importance of including information regarding both teachers' and students' racial makeup, as this level of nuance could help scholars understand more deeply how and why outcomes might vary based on different student demographics.

In addition, even though the studies included families from CLD backgrounds, none of them indicated whether any of their families came from refugee or immigrant backgrounds. The differences in findings that Calzada et al. (2015) revealed between Afro-Caribbean and Latinx participants highlight the importance of knowing more closely the families' cultural backgrounds. Grouping participants solely based on race or ethnicity would mask cultural differences that remain salient to many first-generation immigrant and refugee families. Moreover, students and families of refugee backgrounds could have fled from difficult circumstances in their home countries that

could have led to trauma and unresolved emotions (Sullivan & Simonson, 2016). Their unique circumstances would therefore be expected to result in specific student and family needs that might be quite different from those of non-refugee or non-immigrant students and families who belong to the same racial or ethnic background.

2.3.2 Primary Types of Family Engagement

Communication was the most common form of engagement targeted by the studies reviewed. This was unlike Axford et al.'s (2019) finding that parenting and learning at home were the two most common types of engagement targeted. Scholars have differed in the types of family involvement that should be targeted. Some have emphasized the importance of promoting skills that enhance family-child interactions, such as parenting and learning at home (Malczyk & Lawson, 2019). Meanwhile, others have called for the need to empower families to engage more proactively with schools, and thus conceptualized family involvement from a larger social and contextual framework (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). Those efforts have sought to draw on communities' resources to strengthen families' social capital by enriching collaborative opportunities. Equipping low-income, minoritized families with the training and resources to become influential decision-makers in the school and larger community was found to lead to far-reaching benefits for students and the community at large (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011). Pullmann et al. (2013) conducted the only study that targeted family collaboration and learning-at-home practices in addition to communication. One possible reason behind this is that the intervention that was implemented incorporated both community- and school-based components. More specifically, the family support programme was school based, yet functioned to improve families' access to resources in the community (Pullmann et al., 2013).

2.3.3 Characteristics of the Interventions in Relation to CLD Families

Reaching CLD families who are economically disadvantaged and have been struggling to stay involved with schools requires approaches that take into consideration the contextual circumstances of those families. Encouraging those families to sustain their involvement with the schools necessitates a shift in how schools conceptualize engagement efforts. Houri et al. (2019)'s study is an example of such an attempt. Houri et al. (2019) made a deliberate effort to ensure that teachers' initial contact with families was positive and strength based by providing praise and conveying high expectations of the students.

In addition to relationship building, results presented indicated that several studies involved families as partners whose feedback and involvement was sought throughout the duration of the interventions and who were continuously informed of their students' performance. Only three studies, however, gave families flexible options to engage with the schools, which meant that families' preferences were not considered—a point that could have stood in the way of many CLD families' ability to engage effectively (Houri et al., 2019; Jurbergs et al., 2010; Smythe-Leistico & Page, 2018). Previous efforts to engage CLD families have emphasized the need to treat families as partners whose continuous input and feedback are considered essential elements of a successful culturally responsive family-school engagement program. Practices that expect families to initiate communication with teachers and sustain attendance to school events have been argued to be too rigid and reflective of the cultural and social expectations held by middle-class White families who, more often than not, tend to lead and organize those events at schools (Yull et al., 2014). CLD families, however, have been found to hold different perceptions of their roles in relation to schools and their involvement in their children's education (Lawson, 2003). For instance, Latinx families were found to consider themselves highly involved in their children's education, albeit in

different ways—primarily by involving significant others and other community members (Ryan et al., 2010). In addition, African American families reported being perceived as uninterested or disengaged as a result of not subscribing to traditional modes of family involvement practices. They were, however, found to favor community-oriented approaches to engaging with schools, particularly approaches that revolved around dispelling racial stereotypes and promoting issues of importance to families of color (Yull et al., 2014).

2.3.4 Effect of Family Engagement Interventions on Outcomes

2.3.4.1 Student Outcomes Targeted

Student outcomes measured across the studies reflected the range of factors previously identified as influencing academic performance and success in school. Even though this review's inclusion criteria were meant to capture studies that also focused on students' emotional well-being, all the studies identified examined only behavioral outcomes. Previous researchers have found that families' support of their children's learning not only improves academic and behavioral skills but also contributes to students' socioemotional well-being (Smith et al., 2019). Family involvement in schools has long been called for as an essential ingredient to helping support students' socioemotional or mental health needs (Atkins et al., 2010). In addition, by including emotional well-being as an outcome measure, those studies could have uncovered important findings about the deeper associations between students' mental health and concerning behaviors, as well as the potential that families' engagement might have in ameliorating those effects.

Interestingly, most of the studies defined behaviors from a deficit-based framing, assessing student outcomes that measured constructs such as off-task behaviors, conduct problems, and disruptions. On the other hand, only two studies framed their outcomes in a strength-based manner

(Houri et al., 2019; Lopach et al., 2018). Houri et al. (2019) measured the degree to which students engaged in safe, responsible, and respectful behavior, whereas Lopach et al. (2018) measured on-task behavior. This distinction needs to be explored, given the fact that all the reviewed studies targeted CLD students who are known to be disproportionately identified as exhibiting problematic conduct and behaviors (Annamma et al., 2014). Therefore, compared to White families, CLD families tend to engage in more negative interactions with schools as a result of higher reports of problematic student behaviors. Consequently, the dynamic between CLD families and schools is perceived as inherently negative, only taking place when students exhibit problematic behaviors. Based on a study by Santiago-Rosario et al. (2021), differences in teacher expectations between White and Black students accounted for 21% of the disproportionate rates of office discipline referrals. It is also quite possible that racial bias and stereotypes held by the teachers also result in the perception or expectation that CLD students would, by default, engage in problematic behaviors (Redding, 2019). This bias, in turn, leads to teachers' interpretation of otherwise harmless behavior as problematic. These negative perceptions and expectations of CLD students might, therefore, largely explain why CLD families tend to be more hesitant to engage consistently with schools.

2.3.4.2 Effect on Student Outcomes

All the studies showed some degree of positive effect on some or all the student behavior outcomes. It was not completely apparent, however, whether those outcomes could be specifically attributed to changes in family engagement. Only three studies examined the relationship between specific family engagement components and student outcomes (Herman & Reinke, 2017; Houri et al., 2019; Pullmann et al., 2013). Isolating the effect of engagement on student outcomes has been previously found to reveal underlying differences in effectiveness. For instance, different types of

family engagement were found to moderate behavioral and social skills based on racial and ethnic differences, with African American students benefiting more from familial involvement in schools through improvement of academic-related behaviors (such as staying on-task, for example) (Hill & Craft, 2003). Epstein (2010) emphasized the importance of examining more closely the effect and outcomes of different components of family engagement efforts to understand more clearly how those could be implemented more effectively and practically for different student demographics.

2.3.4.3 Effect on Family Engagement

As was illustrated earlier, the effects that the interventions had on improving family engagement were generally positive across all the studies reviewed. Those promising results should not, however, lead us to overlook a crucial point—namely, that the varying definitions and measures of engagement (whether reported by teachers or families, or both) and the range of characteristics that each program was comprised of (which will be discussed below) could have all influenced the degree of reported effectiveness in each study.

2.3.4.3.1 Conflicting Reports Between Families and Teachers

Even though the effects of the interventions on student and family outcomes were promising, it is worth noting that there were some inconsistencies in reported effectiveness based on who made the reporting (families or teachers). Previous studies also found similarly conflicting results. Droe (2014) demonstrated that families in suburban areas reported a low sense of connectedness with their schools, whereas teachers reported a high sense of connectedness with those families. Such differences illustrate that families and teachers might perceive the role of families in relation to schools very differently.

This is an important point to consider, given the implications it would have for the associations between family engagement and student outcomes. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, those conflicting views could be indicative of the very reason why teachers and families might be struggling with staying engaged with each other. It is difficult to envision a way to improve families' engagement with teachers if both parties see the problem very differently. Lawson (2003) illustrated the extent to which these differences could be detrimental to family engagement efforts when trying to engage low-income urban school families. Teachers were found to hold rigid, technical, and deficit-based theories about those families and why they were not engaged, whereas families stressed the importance of community and context in seeking to build connections with the school. When families felt that teachers' rigidity did not make way for their own concerns and voices to be heard, they responded by disengaging, which, in turn, further reinforced teachers' deficit-based perceptions of them (Lawson, 2003). These patterns could lead to a vicious cycle of counterproductive dynamics between families and teachers, which, ultimately, would be expected to negatively affect students' learning experiences.

2.4 Limitations

Limitations of this review should be noted. Firstly, the terms used to conduct the electronic search, such as the descriptors of low socioeconomic status (e.g., underserve, underresource), might have limited the scope of articles that included CLD participants. Even though the articles were later screened for inclusion of CLD families, the initial use of those search terms might have caused the author to miss other articles that included underserved CLD families but had not explicitly used those keyword descriptors of socioeconomic status. Secondly, only two databases were used to conduct the electronic search. Even though those databases are considered to have an extensive collection of studies representative of the field, including more databases, such as Google Scholar, could have resulted in a larger selection of relevant studies. Thirdly, the years of publication for included articles were limited to those between 2010 and 2021. Expanding the range to include studies published in or after the year 2000 could have led to a richer set of studies on family engagement efforts, shedding light on and possible insight into how those practices might have evolved throughout the years.

2.5 Implications for Research and Practice

Studies discussed earlier have shown how outcomes might vary for families of different racial backgrounds. As illustrated in the results, however, most studies did not isolate participant characteristics in their studies to more specifically pinpoint the effect that changes in family engagement had on student outcomes. Examining specific contextual and demographic backgrounds more closely could highlight important differences in how intervention outcomes

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might vary not only for students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds but also for students and families from different cultural, immigrant, or refugee backgrounds. This could lead to a more realistic understanding of the applicability of family engagement programs across different settings (Epstein, 2010). More research studies that take into account participants' unique backgrounds and how those might influence outcomes are, therefore, warranted.

Conflicting reports between teachers and families reveal that findings could, in fact, be falling short of accurately reflecting outcomes when reports rely on only one party. Both families and teachers need to be solicited for their perceptions of family engagement interventions and their outcomes to achieve as close a representation as possible of the underlying dynamics between them. Future research should, therefore, seek to have both teachers and families complete reports on similar measures of rates and quality of family engagement and student outcomes.

In regard to implementation of family engagement efforts, the results demonstrated that effectiveness could be highly dependent on how school staff and CLD families perceived each other's roles and responsibilities. Schools need to lay down the foundations for respectful and positive interactions early on in the school year, rather than wait for problematic behaviors to take place before reaching out to those families (Byrd, 2020; Wood & Baker, 1999). Ensuring that culturally responsive and strength-based opportunities are put into place to engage CLD families and engaging in constant reassessment of school staff members' biases and stereotypes could pave the way for more respectful and trusting relationships between both parties. These efforts could encourage CLD families to sustain engagement over the long term once they perceive school staff as being supportive and sincere in their efforts to help CLD students succeed.

Based on the findings, flexibility seems to be key in seeking to engage CLD families in the long term. Giving families options not only for times and places to meet but also mediums to

communicate through (e.g., telephone call, email, mail, text message) could help families feel more supported and accommodated. As a result, CLD families could be more able to overcome logistical barriers to engagement, as well as feel more welcome and encouraged to engage with schools more consistently.

2.6 Conclusion and Purpose

As was illustrated in the systematic literature review, the vast majority of existing studies on this topic targeted either academic or behavioral outcomes. Family engagement, however, has been found to also have a strong impact on students' socioemotional and mental health and well-being (Atkins et al., 2010). Students' emotional and mental well-being, however, were rarely represented as a target outcome of family-school engagement interventions based on the findings presented by the review. Hence, examining more specifically how CLD students' emotional and mental well-being is influenced by family engagement efforts is necessary, given that they have often been found to perceive and respond to engagement efforts differently than Euro-American families (Lawson, 2003). In addition, even though all the studies examined the effects of family engagement interventions on CLD students and families, none of the studies included emergent bilingual students. A closer look at the effect of these interventions on those students and their families is, therefore, warranted. Moreover, since some studies demonstrated an incongruence of perceptions between families and teachers regarding intervention effects, there is a need to examine more specifically how and why those perceptions might vary.

Given that perceptions of teachers and CLD families of emergent bilinguals are central to my study, I carried out a phenomenological exploratory study informed by the cultural reciprocity

framework. Accordingly, I explored teachers' and CLD families' perceptions of emergent bilinguals' emotional and mental well-being and how family-school engagement efforts can function to support them. Specifically, the following research questions guided my study:

1) What are teachers' and families' perceptions of the emotional and mental well-being of emergent bilingual students from CLD backgrounds?

2) What are teachers' perceptions of their role in supporting students' emotional and mental well-being?

   a. What are families' perceptions of the role that teachers play in supporting emergent bilingual students' emotional and mental well-being?

3) What are families' perceptions of their role in supporting emergent bilingual students' emotional and mental well-being?

   a. What are teachers' perceptions of the role that families play in supporting students' emotional and mental well-being?

4) What are teachers' and families' experiences in terms of trying to engage with each other to support students' emotional and mental well-being?

3.0 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Cultural Reciprocity

My study drew on the premises of the cultural reciprocity framework, which asserts that to work effectively with CLD families, schools must become aware of their own cultural assumptions regarding family-school engagement and be willing to acknowledge those families' own perceptions of engagement (Haines et al., 2021). Exploring each side's perceptions about what family-school engagement ought to look like is central to this model, as it allows school professionals to recognize how their own perceptions are informed by cultural norms, which could be very different from those held by CLD families. The goal of this framework is to aid both parties in reflecting on the perceptions they hold and the perceptions of each other, with the ultimate goal of reaching solutions that honor families' beliefs and also embrace the perceptions and insights of both families and school professionals (Haines et al., 2021).

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Setting

A major school district that contains several regional centers for teaching ESL was included in the study. The schools are all located in urban neighborhoods. For survey completion, all 20 teachers who currently teach ESL across the district were invited to participate. The original plan for this study was to recruit family members from the same school district for comparative purposes. However, due to pandemic-related shutdowns and limitations in school schedules, school district leaders let me know that they would not be able to proceed with letting me recruit family members at their schools. Alternatively, I contacted two community agencies that work with immigrant and refugee families where I was able to resume recruitment efforts of family members. Moreover, the primary purpose of this study was to focus exclusively on the perceptions of teachers and families of emergent bilingual students at the elementary grade level. However, due to many teachers' roles as itinerant ESL teachers who work with K–12 students and many family members having students in different grade levels, the results, even though they are primarily reflective of the experiences of elementary school students, also include teachers' and family members' reflections on students in other grade levels.

4.2 Participants

Because my sample size for survey completion was very small, I included only results from the participants that I interviewed with the purpose of triangulating my data sources and providing a more in-depth exploration of their data.

I interviewed five ESL teachers (see Table 5) and four family members (see Table 6) for this study, . All five teachers identified as White and female. Teachers described themselves culturally as being of Eastern European, Irish, Hungarian, Welsh, German, Italian, Austrian, and Polish descent. Four of the teachers worked with elementary school students, and three of these teachers also worked with middle school and high school students. One of the teachers reported working only with high school students over the past year. The teachers' years of teaching experience ranged from 1 to 11 years. The schools where the teachers taught were all urban and belonged to one of the largest school districts in the city.

All four family members were mothers of Arab descent. Specifically, three of the mothers were Syrian and one was Algerian. They all spoke Arabic at home. All four families had children in elementary school, and two also had children in middle school. These families' children attended suburban schools, which stood in contrast to the city schools where the teachers taught. The communities where families lived and where their children went to school were predominantly made up of those with immigrant and refugee backgrounds. Because the interviews were held only with the mothers, there were no data regarding whether their children had been diagnosed with any disabilities or identified to receive special education services. Based on what some of the mothers shared, it did seem that some of their children were being considered for special education or psychologist referrals, or were receiving supplementary academic support. The majority of their

children were in elementary school grades (n = 5, grades 2–5), whereas three of their children were

in grades 6 and 7.

Table 5 Participant Profiles: Teachers

| | | | | | | Survey Subscales Mean | | |
Name	Teaching Role	Race	Cultural Background	Grades Taught	Years of Experience as ESL Teacher	Quality of Parent-Teacher Relationship	Parent Involvement and Volunteering	Parents' Endorsement of School
Susan	ESL co-teaches pull-out classroom	White	Eastern European/Polish	3 and 4	2	1.11	.60	1.00
Janet	Itinerant ESL teacher	White	Eastern European	K–12	11	2.00	0	1.00
Alissa	Itinerant ESL teacher	White	Irish/Hungarian	K–8	1	1.89	.60	2.00
Michelle	ESL teacher	White	Welsh/German	10	10	1.67	.60	1.33
Lauren	ESL instructional specialist	White	Italian/German/Austrian	K–12	8	2.00	.80	1.17

ESL = English as second language; K = kindergarten

Note. Pseudonyms have been used.

Table 6 Participant Profiles: Mothers

Name	Family Member	Race	Cultural Background	Child and Grade	Challenges	Survey Subscale Mean			
						Quality of Parent-Teacher Relationship	Parent Involvement and Volunteering	Parents' Endorsement of School	Frequency of Parent-Teacher Contact
Muna	Mother	Other	Algerian	Daughter, 4	Wrongfully sent to the office with entire classroom for a new student's misbehavior	3.40	1.20	3.50	1.50
Noora	Mother	Other	Syrian	Daughter, 7; son, 4	Placed in extra support classes; bullied; anger outbursts and bullying	3.40	.40	4.00	0
Layla	Mother	Other	Syrian	Two sons, 2 and 5	Speech delay/emotional distress/fears and phobias; behavioral	3.00	0.60	3.80	0.50
Dina	Mother	Other	Syrian	Two sons- 3 and 7; daughter, 6	Adjusted well to living in the United States; mother removed them from school with problematic CLD students and placed them in another school with Americans	2.00	0.50	4.00	0.25

CLD = culturally and linguistically diverse
Note. Pseudonyms have been used.

4.3 Materials

I emailed the recruitment and research materials to the director of the ESL program with the instruction that these be sent to the teachers. These materials included an introduction letter, a consent form, and a survey for those wishing to complete it. Likewise, I compiled recruitment packets to send out to families, which included flyers about my study, introduction letters, consent forms, and surveys. Materials were translated to Swahili for one of the community agencies. The majority of the family members in the second community agency spoke Arabic, but the director shared that the materials did not need to be translated for them and thus remained in English.

4.4 Research Design

This exploratory study followed a mixed-methods case study design. I utilized phenomenology as an approach to capturing and analyzing the data. A phenomenological framework renders participants' own descriptions of their experiences as reflective of the essence of the phenomenon or experience being explored (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). By using the phenomenological approach, I sought to capture the perspectives and experiences of teachers and CLD families of emergent bilingual students as they navigated engagement efforts with one another and supported students' emotional and mental well-being. Surveys and interviews were used to capture those unique perspectives. More specifically, surveys were given to families and teachers to complete regarding their perceptions and experiences engaging with each other. The

same survey was given to both teachers and families to explore commonalities and differences in how each party perceived engagement. Follow-up interviews were then conducted with teachers and families to examine more deeply their perceptions and interpretations of students' emotional and mental well-being and of engaging with one another in attempting to support students emotionally and mentally.

4.5 Data Collection Instruments

4.5.1 Parent and Teacher Involvement Measure–Teacher

This is a 21-item survey used to assess different aspects of teachers' engagement with parents (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group [CP-PRG], 1991) (see Appendix A). The statements on the survey refer to a specific relationship the teacher has with a student's family. Teachers were asked to complete one survey each in thinking about students in general in their classroom.

4.5.2 Parent and Teacher Involvement Measure–Parent

This is a 26-item survey used to capture the nature of families' contact and their comfort levels in terms of interacting with their child's school (CP-PRG, 1991) (see Appendix B). Families were requested to complete the survey only once for one child who is an emergent bilingual student in an ESL classroom. The survey was offered in English and Swahili. The survey was estimated to take about 5–10 minutes to complete.

4.5.3 Interviews

I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with teacher and family participants. The interviews took, on average, about 60 minutes to complete and were recorded using the videoconferencing recording feature. Only audio recordings were kept, and any video recordings included automatically in the recording feature of the videoconferencing platform were deleted immediately. The interviews included questions about how families (see Appendix C) and teachers (see Appendix D) perceived and interpreted students' emotional and mental well-being, how they responded to students, what efforts they had undertaken to engage with schools or families to support those students, and their perceptions concerning those engagement efforts. Questions were also asked regarding teachers' and families' cultural understandings of emotional and mental well-being and of seeking support for their students and children. Interviews were held in either English or Arabic, depending on the individual family member's preferences.

4.6 Procedures

I provided an introductory script to the director of the ESL program, who then emailed it to all 20 ESL teachers across the six schools. This script explained the purpose of the study and invited teachers to participate. I then distributed a consent letter and surveys to those who were interested in participating and explained that participation is voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time. I let the prospective teacher participants know that if they were interested in participating, all they had to do was email me back with their signed consent letter and a completed survey, as well as note whether they were interested in also being interviewed. Family members

were recruited through two community agencies. I compiled packets that included a flyer briefly stating the purpose of the study, incentives for participation, and my contact information for those who were interested in participating. I also included consent forms and copies of the survey for those who wished to complete them. I later collected all completed surveys from the community agencies and contacted family members who expressed an interest in being interviewed. Participants were given the option to hold the interview either in person or remotely via telephone or a videoconferencing platform; they could also note whether they preferred the interview to be held in Arabic or English. Only the audio of those interviews was recorded for transcription purposes.

4.7 Data Analysis

4.7.1 Surveys

Because the sample size was relatively small, I only present the descriptive statistics to describe how families assessed their engagement and comfort level with schools and how teachers assessed their engagement trends with families. These analyses were conducted in SPSS.

4.7.2 Interviews

Interviews were analyzed to explore themes on how teachers and families perceived emergent bilingual students' emotional and mental well-being and how they perceived their

engagement efforts to support those students. Themes were examined for possible patterns in how those perceptions were informed by teachers' and families' cultural norms and backgrounds.

In preparation for analysis, interviews were transcribed using a third-party transcription service (rev.com and globalwordsmiths.com). Once transcription was completed, I began analysis by coding the data inductively, coding any segments of data that were relevant to answering the research questions. I then reviewed the codes several times, reassembling some excerpts into more suitable codes, removing codes that were found to be unhelpful or redundant, and/or adding codes that seemed necessary to represent data segments more clearly. Once I finalized the list of codes, a second coder was asked to code 10% of the transcripts to establish inter-coder agreement, coding excerpts that were already unitized by me (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). During that process, the second coder coded several randomly selected excerpts, inter-rater reliability was calculated, and any disagreements were discussed (McDonald et al., 2019). I kept track of reconciliation of the codes and whether any discrepancies were persistent; I refined the codebook by redefining some codes, deleting some codes, and merging other codes to represent the data more clearly based on my discussions with the second coder. By the end of this process, the second coder and I reached 92% intercoder reliability for the Arabic transcripts and 89% intercoder reliability for the English transcripts.

Once consensus agreement was reached, I began the second cycle of coding by utilizing pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016). I examined first-cycle codes to identify any possible common themes or patterns, and then placed those codes under larger pattern codes to represent the underlying trends in participants' responses. This coding enabled me to compare patterns across teachers and families and between teachers and families to ascertain how both parties perceived

students' emotional and mental well-being and how they perceived engaging with one another to

support those students.

5.0 Results

As mentioned earlier, it must be noted that even though the primary purpose of this study was to focus exclusively on the perceptions of teachers and families of emergent bilingual students at the elementary grade level, due to many teachers' roles as itinerant ESL teachers who work with K–12 students and the fact that many family members had students in different grade levels, the results, although primarily reflective of the experiences of elementary school students, also include teachers' and family members' reflections on students in other grade levels.

5.1 Interview Findings

5.1.1 Teachers' and Families' Perceptions of the Emotional and Mental Well-Being of Emergent Bilingual Students

5.1.1.1 Academic and Cultural Adjustment

Families and teachers described various elements of student well-being that seem reflective of those students' level of academic and cultural adjustment. Ever since schools had returned to in-person instruction after having been remote for the two years when the pandemic was at its worst, teachers had noticed that many students were having a difficult time with social skills. Elementary school students were particularly struggling; they had been studying in isolation during formative periods of when they would typically develop those skills. Susan, a third and fourth grade ESL teacher, shared, "I just feel like ever since we've come back, we've been working really

hard on just them being able to talk to each other and move around in the same space without a fight starting." Lack of opportunities to practice those social skills during the pandemic seems to have led to behavioral challenges in the school, according to the ESL teachers.

Aside from students' difficulties socializing in school, a major theme that emerged based on my conversations with families and teachers reflected students' cultural experiences. Teachers described that students who were struggling to meet school and cultural expectations often found themselves being bullied. Interestingly, the majority of bullying incidents seemed to occur among CLD students. Noora complained that her seventh grade daughter was being bullied by students identifying with the same cultural background, especially after being placed in extra support classes, which possibly might have stigmatized her. Dina, a mother of three, shed more light on those instances of intracultural aggression when she described that many fights used to break out among those identifying with the same cultural background—an issue, she shared, that drove her to move her children to another school. Furthermore, some students seemed to struggle with their mental well-being as they tried to navigate both their families' culture and mainstream culture. Janet shared that one of her students' mental health was deteriorating as he was experiencing challenges communicating with his family about his sexuality, an issue that was considered taboo in his culture. On the other hand, one of the mothers refused the school's referral to therapy for her son, as she deemed his issues not indicative of mental health challenges but rather an emotional need that the teacher could attend to instead. Layla believed that schools here (in the United States) tended to hastily refer students for psychotherapy when it was not necessary. She felt that it was culturally acceptable to do so instead of diving deeper into the factors that might be leading to her son's challenges.

Moreover, teachers and families shared that students who had a difficult time expressing themselves often ended up experiencing emotional challenges in the form of anger outbursts and behavioral challenges such as bullying. This difficulty in expression seemed to be the result of difficulties with English proficiency and/or having experienced trauma. Lauren, an ESL instructional specialist, described the experiences she has had with newcomers from Afghanistan:

> They have seen . . . family members killed. They've lost housing.
> They've moved to . . . different locations before here. . . . They're
> more so responsive with punching someone if they are upset. . . . I
> think it just ties into understanding expectations of school and
> [ways] to express ourselves when we're upset.

Likewise, two of the mothers I interviewed shared that their children experienced different forms of emotional distress, such as crying and anger, as a result of feeling misunderstood and unable to express themselves. Noora shared that her daughter, a seventh grader, ended up engaging in bullying behaviors herself, despite being a victim of bullying. Reflecting about when school administrators told her that her daughter was bullying others, the mother shared the following:

> This is a reaction from my daughter. If my daughter is getting
> bullied, you need to end bullying altogether, not target my daughter
> and saying that she's the bully. She's only responding to being
> harmed, to the abuse.

According to Noora, her daughter felt that she could not rely on anyone to defend her at school, which possibly has led her to coping by bullying others herself and by letting out her anger on her siblings at home.

Not all students were experiencing challenges with adjusting to school and mainstream culture. Dina shared that her children seemed to adapt better here than they had in the country where they were previously hosted as refugees. She shared that "because they're young . . . [and] went back to school, they adapted to the school and studying here, they got used to the other students and teachers." Her children seemed more capable of adapting given their young age, according to her. Likewise, Muna, who has a daughter in fourth grade, shared that her daughter was doing very well at school, had a diverse group of friends, and felt connected culturally to others. Muna's and Dina's children seem to have been able to adjust well to being in a new school and have become more comfortable with their new host country's mainstream culture.

5.1.1.2 Home Environment

Several of the circumstances that seemed to influence students' emotional and mental well-being were reflective of their home environment and responsibilities that they were taking on outside of school. Teachers expressed that emergent bilingual students tended to assume caretaking responsibilities in their homes. Michelle, a 10th grade ESL teacher, shared,

> I think there's a lot of other pressures. Kids have come to me with,
> like, multiple bills and tossed them here and be like, "Can you fill
> out this paperwork for me? No one knows how to do it at my house."
> And I'm like, "OK, we'll go through this." And I'm doing tax forms.
> . . . They're exhausted and tired, but as a second language learner,
> you don't really get to be lazy like a normal high schooler, which is
> tough. Because you have to work so much harder to get at the
> language.

Michelle has witnessed that the pressure to fulfill those responsibilities, as possibly the only English learners in their household, tended to leave many students feeling tired and stressed at school.

On the other hand, assuming caretaking responsibilities was not always viewed as a challenge by teachers. Susan, who teaches ESL in grades 3 and 4, shared that she would often see her students taking care of their families when she gave remote lessons during the height of the pandemic. She described that she

> had lots of girls who were caretakers of multiple siblings, and literally cutting food for dinner while they were doing lessons. And in the background, I would see them climbing up on a counter to get something out because they couldn't reach it because they're nine . . . so, just lots of resilience, independence.

To Susan, taking up these responsibilities was reflective of an underlying strength and resilience that these students exuded as emergent bilinguals.

Mothers also described several instances during which they relied on their children to take care of younger siblings and to help with translating documents and correspondence with the school. Layla, a mother of three, shared that she felt very proud of her high school daughter, whom she humorously described as being more of a parent than she is. Her daughter had advised her not to correspond with the school in response to her brothers' challenges, because it would require her to potentially share that she and the children's father were getting a divorce. The mother took her advice and agreed not to communicate with the school on the matter. Emergent bilinguals thus seem to take on translating and advising roles, which influence their emotional and mental well-being in the school and at home.

Lastly, teachers described another side to their students' mental and emotional well-being that was due to their home environment. Many students seemed to struggle with being hungry. Janet, a K–12 itinerant ESL teacher, shared,

> When kids have been hungry, it's hard to learn when that's all you
>
> can think about. . . . So, a lot of times students would be missing
>
> because they'll go to the bathroom or they'll want to go to the nurse.
>
> . . . It gives you that sense of the sickness that it . . . manifests into,
>
> or they're just tired because they don't have any energy.

According to the teachers, several students struggled with food scarcity in their homes, which, in turn, might have manifested as different forms of illness, affecting their ability to focus in the classroom.

5.1.2 Teachers' and Families' Perceptions of Teachers' Role Supporting Students' Emotional and Mental Well-Being

5.1.2.1 Beyond Teaching

Teachers reported that they strived to help their students overcome their challenges by doing much more than what their roles as ESL teachers entailed. Several teachers shared that they brought snacks to the classroom for those experiencing food scarcity to help stave off their students' hunger. Additionally, when school was remote, it occurred to some teachers that several of their students did not have access to technology or have an internet connection at their homes to study remotely. Janet, a K–12 itinerant ESL teacher, described what she did in response:

> We made Comcast appointments on behalf of them, and there were
>
> over 18 people that were there so that they could get high-speed

internet. We were there to help them with the hot spots and set up

their laptops . . . and it was just terrifying that we were in everyone's

houses [during COVID]. . . . That was the scariest part, teacherwise,

for it. But the kids needed to be on, so we were just going to figure

it out.

She also explained that she did not want truancy officers showing up at her students' homes, given the potential stress that the officers' presence might evoke for them as immigrants and refugees; she, therefore, wanted to make sure they could all still attend school while sessions were remote. In addition, teachers drove families to therapy appointments, as well as connected them with refugee resettlement organizations and even with lawyers when they experienced immigration-related challenges.

Another way teachers felt that they were providing support beyond teaching was in being strong advocates for their students and their students' families in the school but also in the community and in Washington, DC, to speak with legislators. Several of the teachers I interviewed shared their reflections about being aware of their own identity and privilege as White women working with CLD students and families who were immigrants and refugees. They were also cognizant of instances during which their students' families experienced racism. Lauren, an ESL instructional specialist, shared that she had reported a psychiatrist to her supervisor for engaging in racist speculations about her student's family:

The psychiatrist was saying things to me in English that were quite

demeaning to Mom. Just kind of stereotypes of "How is Mom

looking at this?" and "How is Mom not supporting [her son's]

learning?" She should not have been saying these negative things to

me about Mom in English. That was unfair.

The teacher made sure that this instance of racism did not go by unaddressed. In extension, a teacher's appreciation of and respect for families' cultural backgrounds was apparent to Muna, whose children attended a school with predominantly CLD students. She stated,

Their ESL teacher was phenomenal. During the holidays, she would

even come to the house or to our apartment building bearing gifts to

the students. They have a wonderful relationship with her, she's very

creative in how she treats them. . . . They have a great bond with the

teacher.

Her children's ESL teacher seemed to go out of her way to ensure that her emergent bilingual students felt welcome and cared for by personally visiting them in their homes with gifts during the holiday season.

5.1.2.2 Role Limitations

Even though teachers were striving to help students with challenges that stretched beyond academic support, teachers reported being aware of the limits to which they could do so. Lauren shared how she believed it was challenging for teachers to speak about aspects of the child that were not related to learning:

[A family would tell us], "We were at a detention center for three

months." And so then our interpretation is always on the learning

side. "OK, well your child is having a hard time remembering his

letter sounds." I'm not a therapist, but maybe there's a connection

between him feeling anxiety in this building. Being a teacher is so

directed to the learning aspect . . . and it's almost like people, as

teachers, are scared to talk about the other aspects of what it is to be

a child because we are drilled on instruction.

Some teachers felt that they did not have the knowledge necessary to hold discussions with families concerning aspects of the child that might be indictive of their emotional and mental well-being.

Susan, a third and fourth grade ESL teacher, who shared that she did, in fact, pay close attention to aspects of the students that transcended academics, saw herself as an "outlier." She shared that

I feel like some people are a lot more educationally based as a

teacher, where I've always been very social, emotional, and

behavioral. Also . . . some teachers really feel like their job is more

just having to do with the educational portion of that, and that they

don't really have the skills or the knowledge to meet needs when it

comes to social-emotional.

Her reflections illustrated that teachers who are inclined to support students more holistically might see themselves as an exception to the norm.

On the other hand, families might not always be aware of the limits of teachers' responsibilities. Layla, for instance, was upset that her son was referred to the school psychologist; she believed that the teacher should provide him with the kind of emotional support he needed. She framed what she believed he needed as "psychological support not treatment," and thus believed that it was within the scope of what his teacher could offer. Families and teachers might not be entirely on the same page regarding what each other's responsibilities should be in

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supporting students. Later, I discuss this issue in more detail in relation to the cultural implications on families' understanding of and willingness to seek mental health support.

5.1.2.3 Curiosity, Care, and Trust

All the ESL teachers I spoke to expressed a deep love of and interest in learning about and working with individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In working with emergent bilingual students, Michelle shared that "I love any chance we can talk about why they came. I love to get them talking about their stories. I think that's a good way for them to start speaking, because they're really interested to tell their stories." She incorporated her curiosity about students' cultures with their learning by encouraging them to speak about their backgrounds to practice conversational skills in English.

In extension, learning about students' backgrounds enabled teachers to approach students with deeper understanding and empathy, as Lauren described:

> I can at least understand some of the background of the students by
>
> being informed about what's going on in their home country [so]
>
> that I'm not so reactive to think, "OK, I'm going to react like this is
>
> an American student who understands the language and understands
>
> the system." I'm going to show much more patience.

Some of the ESL teachers were careful to be take into account students' past experiences and cultural backgrounds when considering how to respond to their challenges.

Furthermore, several ESL teachers described what seemed reflective of a deep sense of sincerity toward caring for and supporting emergent bilingual students. Lauren shared how she felt toward her students:

We really love them, care about them, want what's best for them.

Anything that we're sharing is not a criticism of [the family] or

[their] child. It's more so "How can we come to an understanding

about what the expectations or rules of school happen to be?"

Thus, ESL teachers that I interviewed viewed their responsibilities toward their students and families with love and a sincere willingness to help them succeed.

Building trust was also considered highly essential by teachers in supporting their students, particularly those presenting with trauma and interrupted education. Lauren reflected on her experience with a young Kinder Garten student from Central America who thought she was going to separate him from his mother like they had done at the detention center. She shared the following:

He was crying [on the first day of school], [and I told Mom that]

"It's OK. You can go," and the little one just immediately bit my

hand as hard as he could. . . . I just kept going back and sitting with

him. . . . Ultimately, I became his favorite person because he learned

to trust me, and he was so happy to be in school and excited.

Many ESL teachers felt that their role was one that needed patience and persistence to develop trust to help their students feel safer and more comfortable with them and at school.

Families also reported that feeling cared for and having someone to trust in school mattered a great deal to their children. For one of the families, this was missing, however. A student who was being bullied did not feel that she could speak to any of the teachers because, according to Noora, her mother, she felt that all the teachers were against her. Noora believed that her inability to find anyone who could defend her at school against bullying was the reason why her daughter

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resorted to exhibiting bullying behaviors herself. Noora felt that her daughter was perhaps not supported because they were refugees who did not have the linguistic abilities or knowledge to navigate the school system as American students do.

5.1.3 Families' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Role That Families Play in Supporting Students' Emotional and Mental Well-Being

5.1.3.1 Culturally Influenced Views About Mental Health

Families represented different attitudes concerning their willingness to accept mental health support for their children. In my conversations with them, it became apparent that many of these attitudes were influenced by cultural values and beliefs. Layla, the mother of a child who had a speech delay, believed that culturally, in the United States, it is fairly common for individuals to be referred for therapy and shared that she believed this was done to avoid addressing the root source of a student's difficulties. In addition, when I asked her why she did not want her son to receive therapy as recommended by the school, she shared that she was not comfortable with her son being asked to share personal information about the family. She believed that this intrusion of the family's privacy is an essential aspect of therapy, which she felt is culturally accepted in the United States.

Alternatively, Muna, who has a daughter in fourth grade, believed that it was important to be willing for one's children to receive mental health support if they needed it. When I asked her why it might be that other immigrants or refugees were not comfortable doing so, she shared that "it has long been considered taboo [in our culture], but now we need to progress; [mental health support] is normal." She shared that she would support her daughter if she needed to use any of the resources available to her at her school to support her mental and emotional well-being. Even

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though Layla and Muna both came from a similar cultural background, they held very different stances regarding their willingness to encourage their children to receive mental health support.

Teachers were well aware of this contention within some cultures. Alissa, a K–8 itinerant ESL teacher, shared her reflections:

> In some cultures, having mental health issues is not OK, or they're like, "That's not a real thing that you're having." I think that's a struggle to acknowledge as cultures and say, "OK, I know where you're coming from, but your child is having this problem, and this is something that we need to address."

Alissa recognized that she had to respond to families' culturally influenced attitudes toward mental health while communicating with the families on how their student might receive the support they need.

5.1.3.2 Perception of Responsibility

Families varied in where they placed responsibility for their students' emotional and mental well-being and thus the degree to which they believed they had agency in supporting their children. Layla and Noora seemed to put the responsibility solely on the school for their children's behavioral challenges. They both felt that schools were not taking into account students' cultural and developmental backgrounds in responding to their challenges and thus felt discriminated against as refugees.

Even though the two remaining mothers, Muna and Dina, perceived their children's emotional and mental well-being as also attributable to the experiences they were having at their schools, they did not place full responsibility on the school and instead seemed to feel more agentic

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in addressing their children's challenges. Dina decided to remove her children from the school where they seemed to be influenced by the presence of problematic dynamics between students. Meanwhile, when their daughter was wrongfully punished, Muna and her husband chose not to intervene so they could teach their daughter to take responsibility for communicating her challenges to the school. Muna explained that "we wanted to teach her to try and be responsible for herself a bit. Like, if you teach a child that you would be intervening every single time, they won't end up developing a [strong] personality." Even though Muna was aware that the emotional challenges her daughter was experiencing were due to other students, she used this opportunity as a teaching moment for her daughter to develop a greater sense of responsibility for her experiences at school.

Teachers, too, described families as demonstrating different levels of agency based on their perception of responsibility for their children's well-being. Contrary to the sentiments shared by the mothers, several teachers described that families seemed to place full responsibility for improving and meeting school expectations on the child. In describing family members' reaction to their children's challenges, Michelle, a 10th grade teacher, shared:

> They're just very stoic people. [They tell their children], "You're
>
> here to get an education, what's wrong with you? Suck it up. Come
>
> on." So, I feel like that is part of that. Like, "You-can-deal-with-it"
>
> kind of attitude.

According to Michelle, families reminded their children of their priority—"to get an education"— as encouragement to resolve their challenges on their own and get back on track academically.

Not all families felt this way, however; teachers shared that some families felt that they had very little control over their children's challenges when they believed those to be cultural or

peer related. This often led families to feel conflicted and overwhelmed, as illustrated in the following example that Michelle relates of a Muslim family's response to finding out that their daughters were taking off their head covers behind their backs at school:

> [The family would say], "Maybe I'm being too old school. I'm judging myself as a parent. They're American now. I want this for them." And they are struggling with what that means to be a parent here in the U.S.

She went on to describe "that parents often get fatigued. They're tired when their kids are really not following the program, and they're getting a lot of calls negatively, they just give up. It's too much for them." Parents who perceived their children's challenges as beyond their control tended to disconnect and shut down from trying to address their children's emotional and mental challenges at school. I discuss this theme in more detail later.

5.1.3.3 Mothers as Primary Caretakers

Another theme that emerged based on my conversations with the mothers revolved around their perception of their role as caretakers. Three of the four mothers I interviewed seemed to view themselves as the primary caretakers of their children. Muna seemed more ambiguous about the extent to which she shared this responsibility with her husband. From speaking with the three remaining mothers, however, it became clear to me that they considered themselves as the primary source of emotional and mental support for their children. In response to my asking whether her children experienced any adjustment difficulties as newcomers to the United States, Dina shared that she made sure they did not experience any acculturative stress of this sort by ensuring that she was always responsive to their needs. She shared that

I didn't let them get depressed or sad over being in a new country. .

. . Wherever they wanted to go, I would take them, never let them

experience difficulties or boredom, even during their vacations, I

would take them out and buy them whatever they would like. . . .

Thanks to God, they're happy here and feeling comfortable.

Dina saw her role as protecting her children against experiencing any mental or emotional distress as they adjusted to living in the United States.

Another mother's experience highlighted the intercultural conflict that immigrant and refugee mothers might experience in navigating their own cultural values about parenting roles while being confronted by Euro-American cultural values held by their children's schools. Layla expressed her frustration that she could not attend a school meeting concerning her son's speech delay because she was not made aware of it. She and her husband were separated, and school correspondence went only to him. The school asked for either the mother or the father to attend the meeting and her husband did, not seeing the need for her to attend as well. When I asked her why she thought it was the case that schools invited either parent, she reflected that "it's possible that [here] mothers and fathers are viewed as having the same responsibility, united. Maybe they discuss [their children's] issues in more detail. It's not like Arab culture; Western [culture] is different." Hence, Layla's cultural values influenced how she viewed her role as a mother who would be more informed about her children and thus more suitable to correspond with in discussing any concerns regarding them with the school. She believed that the father had overlooked essential information concerning their son, which would have otherwise helped the school form a more complete picture of her son's challenges. The mothers I interviewed saw themselves as playing

essential roles in contributing to their children's well-being, roles that could not be substituted by others.

5.1.4 Families and Teachers' Experiences Trying to Engage With Each Other to Support Students' Emotional and Mental Well-Being

5.1.4.1 Connectedness to Schools

The degree toward which families related to schools varied according to mothers' reports and teachers' perceptions of families' engagement. According to teachers, some families tended to be disconnected from being involved in their children's school experiences because they viewed them as irrelevant beyond school boundaries. Janet, a K–12 itinerant ESL teacher, shared her encounter with several families who did not want to stay informed about how their children were doing at school: "There's been a few families who don't want to know . . . what's going on. . . . They just don't want to know period, or if they are being contacted too often, and they'll just text and be like, 'Please stop contacting me.'" Janet said some families did not see the need to be in constant contact with their children's teachers and, in some cases, considered it a nuisance. Relatedly, on the Parent and Teacher Involvement Measure, Janet's mean rating for the parental involvement subscale was 0 on a four-point scale, whereas her mean ratings for the quality of parent-teacher relationship and the parents' endorsement of school subscales were 2.00 and 1.00, respectively. Likewise, Susan, a third and fourth grade ESL teacher, recounted what the paraprofessional, who speaks the same language as many families, told her the parents said when he tried to reach out: "[They said], 'That's not a priority for me right now. I'm not going to deal with that right now. You're a school, you can figure it out at school.'" Some families preferred to let school professionals respond to issues related to their children at school without seeing the need

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to be involved with it themselves. On the survey, Susan's mean rating on the parent involvement subscale was .60. Her ratings on the quality of parent-teacher relationship and parents' endorsement of school subscales were 1.11 and 1.00, respectively. I explore the theme of families' trust in school responses in more detail in the next section.

On the other hand, all the mothers I spoke to seemed to relate more closely to schools. In fact, their mean ratings for the quality of parent-teacher relationship subscale ranged from 2.00 to 3.40 which was slightly higher than teachers' mean ratings (1.11–2.00). When I asked Dina about her willingness to correspond with her children's school, she expressed that she very much was. She stated that she always made sure to attend parent-teacher conferences and would always want to check on how well her children were doing at school. She shared that "I love to go, check up on my children, see how well they're treated, what they're learning, their progress" and that she would keep the school posted when her children were not feeling well and could not go to school or were running late. Dina had a mean rating of 2.00 on the quality of parent-teacher relationship subscale and 3.50 on the parents' endorsement of school subscale. Even though mothers reported feeling generally comfortable in their relationship with their children's schools, most of them could not engage regularly due to reasons that I discuss later.

Janet offered an explanation for why she believed families had varying levels of connectedness to the school. She believed it depended on the degree to which they felt adjusted and "Americanized." She explained,

> It seems like as the families become more Westernized,
> Americanized, more adapted to their new norm, they kind of are . .
> . more hands off, if you will. But if a family, if it's their first child
> and their child's going through the ESL for the first time, a lot of

that is when there's all of the questions, which is great, or

unfortunately just the opposite, there's no questions because they're

afraid to ask.

According to Janet, the level at which families felt adjusted influenced how often they chose to

correspond with the school.

5.1.4.2 Trusting School as Authority

Many of the engagement efforts between the school and families seemed to rely on an

important factor: the level of trust that families had in their children's schools. Relatedly, some of

the school administrators and teachers worked deliberately on building trust with the families to

set a healthy foundation for engagement. In some cases, this trust manifested as a form of "blind

faith" that families put in the school to make the right decisions concerning their children. Susan

shared that, at times, families did not have the time to look in detail at materials or information

given to them to make decisions concerning their children. She explained,

[Parents would think], "Oh, they [the teachers] seem like good

people. And they're looking out for my kid." And especially now

since we're in person, I do feel there's this part . . . of like, "Thank

God . . . at least [the kids are] in school. And whatever happens there,

it has to be better than what was going on before." So, I think

information is given for sure, but I think there is a lot of just blind

faith in our work.

Families who perceived the teachers as having their children's best interests in mind, according to

Janet, ended up putting unquestioning trust in the school's decisions regarding their children.

Lauren, an ESL instructional specialist, was more deliberate about developing trust with her families. Before sharing her recommendations with families, she often made sure she developed trust with them. She shared that "building a relationship is happening over time so that they know there's trust and love there. Not just, 'Boom, you need to go do this thing.'" Once families felt they could trust her, they were usually more responsive and communicative regarding her correspondence efforts. Lauren's mean ratings on the quality of parent-teacher relationship subscale was 2.00, which was relatively higher than most teacher participants, while her mean rating on the parents' endorsement of school subscale was 1.17, which was comparable to other teachers' mean ratings for this construct.

Similarly, mothers felt varying degrees of trust in relation to schools' decisions that influenced their children's well-being. Muna shared that when her daughter was punished for another student's actions, they refrained from intervening, partly because they wanted their daughter to learn to speak for herself but also to see how the school would resolve the matter. When I asked her how the school ended up responding, she stated that "the school responded positively, their response was fair." Muna, therefore, seemed to trust that the school would settle the misunderstanding without the need for their intervention, which the school, in fact, did. Indeed, her mean ratings for the quality of parent-teacher relationship and the parents' endorsement of school subscales were 3.40 and 3.50, respectively.

Not all mothers felt the same level of trust toward their schools. On the contrary, the remaining three mothers felt that they could not trust that their schools would respond positively to their children's challenges. Dina did not feel that her children's school administrators were going to address the problematic behaviors that were occurring among students and decided to move her children to another school. Similarly, Layla felt that her sons' school unfairly punished

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her son for behavior that she believed they wrongly interpreted as negative. Layla's mean ratings on the quality of parent-teacher relationship and parents' endorsement of school subscales were 3.00 and 3.80, respectively. Additionally, Noora felt that she could not defend her daughter at school because she felt that administrators were not responsive to her requests. She instead felt targeted for perhaps not understanding how the school system worked in the United States and for not having the linguistic ability to speak against how the administrators responded to her daughter. Her mean ratings on the quality of parent-teacher relationship and parents' endorsement of school subscales were 3.40 and 4.00, respectively.

5.1.4.3 Accommodating Cultural and Linguistic Factors

One of the things that the ESL teachers that I spoke with seemed to have in common was the tendency for them to reflect on and accommodate families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds in an effort to improve engagement. In some instances, teachers shared an understanding that not being proficient enough in English might have been driving some families away from engaging. Michelle shared her thoughts on the matter:

> Especially if you were a very educated, a well-spoken person in your
>
> first language, and you're like, "I'm going to reach out, and that's
>
> broken English . . . and I don't want to be judged for [it]" . . . I'm
>
> sure that there are those feelings. And I think it's just hard.

Michelle believed that some families might be too ashamed to reach out when they felt that they did not speak the language well enough. Other teachers described how they worked hard to accommodate families' cultural values to correspond more effectively with them regarding their children's well-being. Janet shared an example of when she had to do this:

> We had a student whose father didn't always value what I had to say
> as a woman. So, we had our social studies teacher call, but I had
> scripted what I wanted him to say, and how I wanted it presented. .
> . . So, those are all . . . pieces of the puzzle for getting parents
> involved, getting the information to them, making sure that they feel
> safe being involved and being heard.

Janet believed that to bridge the cultural gap between her and the student's father, it was necessary to have a male teacher convey what she wanted him to know about his son.

Moreover, speaking the same language as students' families and being familiar with the culture also seemed to help schools build cultural bridges with the families, which, in turn, encouraged families to engage more. Susan shared that the principal and their paraprofessional, who spoke many of the families' languages and dialects, visited several families in their homes to communicate about their children. She shared that families became much more willing to engage with them after those visits. Likewise, Alissa who speaks fluent Spanish, shared how Spanish-speaking families related to her: "[They] will call me first just because they know that they will be heard. That they can talk to me in Spanish and have a conversation with somebody." Families felt more comfortable communicating with someone who spoke their language when reaching out to the school.

Relatedly, Lauren, an ESL instructional specialist, shared her thoughts concerning the nature of working with CLD families:

> I think [across the city], we have issues with White Americans who
> don't really understand what's needed because they've never
> worked with an immigrant family before, and so they don't know

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how to approach it. They think that, somehow, they're working with

someone from another planet instead of a human being. "How do

you expect me to do this? How do you expect me to talk to them?"

It's like, "Well, there's an interpretation line. Call, have that

conversation." That's all new to them, but they act like it is the end

of the world.

Lauren illustrated that ESL teachers tended to feel comfortable embracing and navigating families'
cultural and linguistic differences, a tendency that many White individuals with no prior
experience might struggle with in working with CLD communities, according to her.

Mothers also reported how cultural and linguistic factors influenced their engagement with
teachers and administrators at their children's schools. Muna shared that because the majority of
the students were refugees from Arab countries, the school ensured that all forms of
correspondence with the families were sent in both English and Arabic. She felt that the school
was very accommodating to their linguistic needs and made great efforts in engaging with all
families.

Not all mothers felt the same way concerning their cultural and linguistic experiences
engaging with their children's schools, however. Some mothers felt discouraged from reaching
out because they felt that they did not have the English proficiency to communicate with their
children's teachers and administrators. Noora repeatedly expressed her hesitation to contact her
daughter's school to defend her daughter against what she believed were wrongful accusations.
When I asked her if she tried attending events that were held at the school, she shared the
following:

I went once but did not understand anything. I said I wouldn't go

again. Seriously, I didn't understand anything, and they didn't have

a translator because they were all American. I thought to myself,

maybe it was because I was the only Arab there.

Noora, therefore, felt out of place because she could not understand anything, which discouraged her from wanting to attend any other school events.

5.1.4.4 Logistical Considerations

Teachers reported several logistical factors as influencing their families' engagement with the school. Several teachers shared that, at times, a lack of resources meant that they could not have a translator on site to help translate meetings that family members attended. A lack of resources also affected how much time teachers and staff could dedicate to building connections with families. Susan shared this contention by reflecting that "there's not enough time. It's not enough of a value. I guess they can't fund things like that." She went on to share that "everyone's always scrambling about 'How can we make things better?' . . . But nobody wants to spend the money on the things that might really help, which I feel like would probably be building better relationships with families." Even though ESL teachers wished to reach out to families more often, their busy schedules kept them from doing so.

According to Janet, another logistical issue that kept families from being involved was their immigration status:

A lot of parents are often scared to be involved outwardly if they are

here undocumented, or if they're here on a work visa or you know

what I mean? Something to that extent. So, a lot of times that

prevents them from being overly involved.

Those families might have felt that they were risking exposing themselves to immigration officials if they got involved with the school, thus leading them to refrain from doing so.

Challenges aside, teachers mentioned several resources that were otherwise helpful in improving conditions for engaging with families. TalkingPoints, a districtwide online platform, which ESL teachers could use to translate and send/receive messages from families, allowed many teachers to communicate immediately and directly with families. Another helpful resource was the presence of staff who spoke a family's native language and, in some cases, identified with the same cultural background. Susan described how often she asked their paraprofessional to help her communicate with some of the families:

[Mr. Karimi] speaks Swahili, Somali. . . . So, one of the things that's hard is a lot of the kids that identified as speaking Swahili, actually their first language is really more like a tribal language, like Kizigua or Zigula. . . . He even knows some of those too, so that can be really helpful. He speaks French too . . . so he's been . . . my go-to person because he's been at the school for a long time, and he knows a lot of the families.

Having someone who was familiar with the families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds that the teachers could resort to, therefore, helped break down some of the cultural barriers that teachers might have otherwise struggled to navigate. It might have also allowed families to communicate more comfortably with the school, knowing there was someone they could count on to understand their cultural values and traditions.

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6.0 Discussion

6.1 Mental and Emotional Well-Being of Emergent Bilingual Students

Families' perceptions about mental health could be seen as reflective of underlying cultural influences and beliefs. Differences in how teachers and families perceived and responded to students' mental health challenges could point to discrepancies that exist in how each group interpreted those needs and ways to support them. Although therapy referrals seemed central to many teachers' attempts to provide support, some families might consider those unnecessary or as a way to avoid addressing the root causes of their children's challenges. These discrepancies can exist as a result of differences in how mental well-being is perceived and mental health challenges are interpreted culturally (Ziaian et al., 2017). Immigrant and refugee families might also consider receiving mental health support a weakness, believing that their children are resilient and can take full responsibility for overcoming their challenges on their own, as was illustrated in some teachers' responses. Indeed, immigrant resilience is well documented in the literature; students of immigrant and refugee backgrounds have been found to demonstrate an ability to reframe negative experiences and to consider it their responsibility to reach their goals (Bartlett et al., 2017). A study of factors that influence the well-being of students from refugee and immigrant backgrounds demonstrated that resilience mediated the relationship between their sense of social connectedness and their mental well-being (Khawaja et al., 2017). This relationship demonstrates the importance of viewing students' resilience in context rather than as an isolated capability that students either have or do not have. Social connectedness was thus an important variable that contributed to those students' resilience, which, in turn, influenced their mental well-being. As was illustrated earlier,

emergent bilingual students took on many roles and responsibilities as translators and caretakers of younger siblings. However, the mounting pressure of fulfilling those duties, in addition to achieving their families' expectations for them to excel academically, has been shown to negatively affect their emotional and mental well-being (Ziaian et al., 2017). Accordingly, even though students of refugee and immigrant backgrounds have been shown to demonstrate resilience, helping those students to promote and maintain their resilience—and, in turn, their mental and emotional well-being—necessitates fostering protective factors, such as social and family support, school connectedness, and a sense of belonging (Khawaja et al., 2017; Pieloch et al., 2016).

6.2 Intercultural and Intracultural Conflict

To students who are from refugee and immigrant backgrounds, schools might present them with their first and longest exposure to instances of intercultural experiences. These experiences can take place as a result of students' interactions with others who identify with the host country's mainstream culture; they can also result from their experiences attempting to reconcile with their families' strong identification with and endorsement of their background culture. Students might, therefore, experience acculturative stress as they seek to explore new ways of identifying with their culture while learning how to adapt to their host country's mainstream culture (McNeely et al., 2020). Several teachers and mothers that I spoke to highlighted how they perceived students' intercultural experiences. Many students were believed to rebel against their own cultural backgrounds in an effort to acculturate, which left many families feeling disappointed, frustrated, and at a loss over how to reclaim control over their children. In some cases, families completely shut down, rejecting any efforts by the school to engage to resolve students' challenges. Students

who find themselves in this intercultural predicament often lose the ability to rely on their family's support in coping with other stressors, which, in turn, affects their emotional and mental well-being (Ngo & Le, 2007). Relatedly, families who reported facilitating their children's acculturation, such as Dina and Muna, seemed to report that their children were experiencing better well-being and adjustment.

Another form of conflict that was apparent from my conversations with the mothers was intracultural conflict. Dina and Layla both shared that their children experienced problematic behaviors, which were carried out by other students who identified with the same cultural background. In Layla's case, for instance, other students who identified with the same cultural background as Layla's daughter constantly bullied her daughter. This form of within-group discrimination is, in fact, one of many manifestations of internalized oppression, one that "engages the oppressed in the work of their oppression through intrapersonal and intragroup violence and destruction" (David & Derthick, 2014, p. 23). Consequently, this form of oppression has been found to lead to many forms of mental health challenges—namely increased feelings of stress, higher depression, and lower self-esteem (David & Derthick, 2014; Hwang, 2021).

6.3 Cultural Reciprocity in Engagement

For the most part, it was apparent from my conversations with families and teachers that ESL teachers seemed to be thoughtful about their responsiveness and accommodation of their students' and families' cultures. Most of them shared examples that illustrated their curiosity about their students' cultures and their sincere willingness to accommodate families' cultural values to build trust and encourage ongoing engagement with them. Several teachers demonstrated practices

that aligned with the notion of cultural competence, which entails knowledge and skill acquisition believed to be necessary to work effectively with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, according to opponents of this notion, cultural competence serves to oversimplify the skill set needed to work with CLD communities, presenting it instead as a stationary end product that practitioners either achieve or do not achieve (Yancu & Farmer, 2017). Scholars have called for interrogation of this dichotomous treatment of culture in working with CLD communities, where one culture is viewed in contradiction to another, and instead have been calling for a more fluid and process-oriented means of working with diverse cultures (Bartlett et al., 2017; Yancu & Farmer, 2017). Hence, adopting an attitude of cultural humility—which necessitates ongoing self-reflection, an openness to learning, interpersonal sensitivity, and an awareness of privilege and power imbalances—could be a more effective way to relate to CLD communities (Yancu & Farmer, 2017). Even though some teachers seemed to engage in self-reflection about racial privilege as White women working with diverse communities, for the most part, the majority did not express doing so. Scholars have taken this a step further and suggested that a more promising practice would involve incorporating premises of cultural humility within elements of cultural competence to ensure practitioners have the necessary cultural knowledge while maintaining a sense of openness and self-reflection to keep learning (Campinha-Bacote, 2019). Instances during which teachers and staff demonstrated elements of cultural competence and humility—for instance, by speaking families' native languages and expressing curiosity about and finding ways to celebrate and accommodate their students' and families' cultural backgrounds—seemed to help cultivate families' sense of trust and connectedness toward their children's teachers and schools in general.

In line with the cultural reciprocity framework, intercultural experiences between teachers and students and their families need to be viewed as a bidirectional dynamic experience, rather than as a one-way practice that only involves teachers' ongoing accommodation of diverse cultures. Adopting a "processual notion of culture that show[s] cultural production and cultural re-invention as the norm" could enable schools to recognize the heterogeneity of their students' cultural backgrounds and to develop a unique school culture that reflects a dynamic and ongoing exchange and integration of cultures (Bartlett et al., 2017, p.118). This paradigm shift in relating to cultures, in turn, could help families perceive schools with less skepticism and reach out to them more readily and comfortably. In addition to self-reflection and an openness to learn about culture as deemed necessary in the adoption of cultural humility, cultural reciprocity necessitates ongoing dialogue between professionals and families about differences in their cultural values (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012). This understanding of the underlying reasons behind differences in teachers' and families' beliefs is meant to strengthen the bond between both parties, as both would perceive each side as willing to learn about and recognize why those differences exist. During this self-reflective dialogue, teachers practice skills to question their cultural values and communicate about them with families. This transparency could, in turn, encourage families to work with teachers on finding common ground for ways to support students that both sides find effective and suitable.

7.0 Limitations

Even though this study provided a deep examination of the discrepancies that might arise between teachers and CLD communities, particularly those of refugee and immigrant backgrounds, there are some limitations. Firstly, the effect of two years of remote schooling due to the pandemic has confounded my attempt to compare more accurately the trends and frequencies in family members' and teachers' efforts to engage with one another. Many teachers expressed that, due to the pandemic, they were unable to invite families to attend school events or meet in person. Likewise, mothers also shared that the pandemic kept them from being able to meet with teachers regularly. Secondly, although my initial plan for this study was to include family members and teachers from within the same schools to provide a clearer picture on how both sides perceive their experiences of the same environment, engagement efforts, and resources, the plan had to be adjusted. Pandemic-caused school disruptions meant that the schools I set out to collect all my data from shut down repeatedly and experienced mass employee shortages. These difficulties interrupted my ability to collect data from family members within the schools; instead, I collected data from community centers that had more direct and guaranteed access to family members who were willing to participate in my study. Thirdly, caution must be taken when interpreting survey results that were collected from the family members. Even though a deliberate effort was made to ensure that all materials were translated into languages the families felt most comfortable using, one of the community agency leaders expressed having no need for materials to be translated for their families. The lack of translation might have potentially contributed to mothers' inability to fully understand and accurately respond to the survey items. This possibility might have contributed to inconsistencies between their survey and interview responses, the latter of which

was held in their language. Lastly, family members who agreed to participate in my study were all from the same cultural background. This study's findings and conclusions, therefore, cannot be generalized to communities that identify with other cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

8.0 Implications for Future Research

8.1 Post-Pandemic Engagement

Family-school engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic had to be adapted to suit the conditions of social distancing and remote learning, as did all activities that were social by nature. Given the novelty of this experience, the research is still very limited on how these adaptations might have influenced family-school engagement efforts. This topic was not an area of focus for this study because it took place during a time when schools were supposedly going back to in-person sessions. Unfortunately, the unforeseen developments of COVID-19 did, however, end up hindering my efforts to reflect family-school engagement norms as perceived and experienced by the teachers and families. Accordingly, more studies are needed to examine more specifically how the pandemic affected family-school engagement efforts, as well as the ways in which family-school engagement practices resumed post-pandemic.

8.2 Emergent Bilinguals

As was illustrated previously in my literature review, there is scant literature on the effects of family-school engagement efforts on emergent bilingual students and their families. As demonstrated, many of these students are from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, and they have experienced and continue to experience unique emotional and mental challenges. My findings shed light on some of those challenges as perceived by families and teachers. However, much more

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research is needed to provide a clearer picture about how family engagement efforts can more deliberately address those students' emotional and mental needs.

8.3 Comparing Perceptions

As was illustrated in the findings, some of the mothers had reported not feeling heard or understood. Meanwhile, many teachers shared how they perceived engaging with CLD families. Mothers and teachers seemed to shed light on very different aspects of those engagement efforts, which echoes the findings from my literature review on the tendency for families and teachers to have diverging views on engagement. Prior to developing family-school engagement programs, more studies are needed to examine more closely how and why teachers' and CLD families' views and experiences might vary from one another. Findings from such studies can help support engagement efforts by ensuring that CLD families' needs are addressed and that teachers feel supported as they work with CLD students and families. Additionally, similar studies are needed to provide more nuanced comparisons between the perceptions of other CLD communities, teachers of other subjects, and other school staff members and administrators in how they perceive family-school engagement efforts and students' mental and emotional well-being.

9.0 Implications for Practice

9.1 Communicating With Families Regarding Mental Health Support

One of the issues that was raised by teachers and mothers is their inability to reach a shared understanding about their perceptions regarding students' needs (or lack thereof) for mental health support. Hence, it is necessary for school administrators and teachers to reenvision how they approach this topic with families. As discussed earlier, there are many reasons why family members might be hesitant to involve their children in therapy. Family members might feel that they are the target of teachers' deficit thinking in believing that their children are deficient in mental health or are unable to function well emotionally. This tendency is all the more salient in working with CLD communities, who, for the most part, might still consider the discussion of mental health concerns as taboo. It is thus necessary that teachers adopt strength-based perceptions of CLD families' interpretations of their children's mental and emotional health needs. One way to do this is to honor the range of ways in which family members already provide their children with emotional and mental health support at home and in the community (Edwards et al., 2019). In addition, because many students of refugee and immigrant backgrounds demonstrate resilience as they adapt to their new host country, a strength-based approach taken by teachers would translate into their recognition of this resilience when communicating with families. It is imperative that teachers make clear that any support is meant to further promote students' resilience to overcome challenges and experience well-being. Moreover, because many family members are hesitant about involving their children in therapy on their own, family members can be included as essential contributors to the therapy process in working with children. This might

help put families' skepticism at ease concerning their fear of intrusion to the privacy of their home life if only children were to be involved. Lastly, finding ways to incorporate emotional and mental health support to all students within the classroom could prevent the stigmatization of students identified to receive therapy and thus help family members feel more comfortable with the idea.

9.2 Cultural Brokers

As was illustrated from my findings, teachers recounted how helpful it was to have a paraprofessional on site who identified with many of the families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. There did not seem to be many others who teachers could rely on to help establish effective engagement efforts between families and teachers. Having such cultural brokers at schools could function as an invaluable resource—one that both teachers and families can trust and rely on to facilitate communication. Because financial considerations are often a concern for many school districts, instead of hiring several staff members to fulfill this role, schools could involve family members who might be willing to volunteer for such a role. Cultural brokers who are family members do not need to be full time or always available on site, but they could serve as a reliable source of support and connection between the school and other family members. Additionally, instead of involving translators that family members might feel uncomfortable including in conversations about their children's well-being, families might be more willing to trust cultural brokers to translate instead. Moreover, they could also help advise families on issues such as how to navigate the school system and school culture, along with other issues that teachers and families shared often overwhelmed families and prevented them from engaging with schools.

9.3 Spaces for Intercultural Dialogue

Developing trainings and workshops for families and teachers to engage in cultural learning and appreciation could create the needed space for dialogue and cultural reciprocity. In addition to getting teachers involved in self-reflecting about how they are situated racially and culturally in relation to families' cultures, schools could collaborate with places of worship and community centers to create such spaces for families as well. These would be spaces where families can freely, without fear of judgment or concern for power dynamics, learn about cultural practices common in their host country and their children's schools. They can also be encouraged to question and self-reflect on how they would relate to those cultural values given their own. Accordingly, these programs could function as a space for dialogue between family members and students—who are developmentally ready to explore and assert their cultural identities—to explore together what acculturation means to them and how they would be willing to adapt. These conversations could be facilitated by community leaders, therapists, and/or CLD volunteers who have successfully navigated those experiences with their children. Shifting these conversations to spaces outside of the school setting could ease any sense of intimidation or judgment family members might otherwise feel from possibly perceiving schools as unchallenged sources of authority.

9.4 Restorative Justice

Participants reported numerous instances of conflict between students of different cultural backgrounds and among those within the same cultural backgrounds. Emergent bilingual students

experienced bullying from those who did not share that background and from students who shared the same cultural background, which reflects a form of internalized oppression. The majority of reported issues seemed to go unaddressed (as in the case of Dina's example of removing her children from their school because she felt the school was not working on improving conditions) or, when addressed, seemed to result in a worsening rather than a resolution of those problems (as in the case of Noora's son who was wrongfully punished by the school administration). This oversight on the part of administrators and teachers negatively affected students' emotional and mental well-being and their families' sense of connectedness to the school. In a sense, school administrators' and teachers' methods of intervention led to a fragmentation of student relationships, creating resentment and animosity between them. Instead, interventions that apply the principles of restorative justice, and that focus instead on nurturing and mending student relationships, have proven to be much more effective in the promotion of student connectedness to schools and their emotional well-being (Reimer, 2020). Restorative justice programs could help resolve intercultural and intracultural conflict by helping students develop more positive means of relating to and resolving conflict with one another.

10.0 Conclusion

Family-school engagement efforts have been repeatedly shown to be associated with positive academic, social, emotional, and mental well-being for all students (Garbacz et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2013; Smith-Adcock et al., 2019). Given the unique challenges that CLD students endure, particularly those of refugee and immigrant backgrounds, and given their increasing presence in schools in the United States, there is an urgent need to understand how family-school engagement efforts can better support them and their families. Students of refugee and immigrant backgrounds have also been shown to experience unique emotional and mental health needs, given the special circumstances that they experience. However, the cultural forces at play that influence teachers' and families' perceptions of emotional and mental well-being render it necessary to examine exactly how their perceptions differ and how engagement efforts between them can be more effective. The findings in this study have brought to the forefront some of those discrepancies. This study has also illuminated the importance of strengthening engagement efforts between teachers and family members to help them reach common ground in addressing those challenges for the betterment of their students' emotional and mental well-being.

Appendix A Parent and Teacher Involvement Measure–Teacher

Demographic Information

Grade level(s) taught: _____

Years of teaching experience as ESL teacher: _____

Average class size at any given time: _____

How do you identify your racial identity? (Select all that apply.)

☐ Asian   ☐ Black/African American ☐ White ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ Hispanic/Latinx   ☐ Other: _____

Parent and Teacher Involvement Questionnaire–Teacher

A number of teachers have mentioned to us that their attempts to get families to be more involved in their child's school life are not as successful with some families as with others. With that in mind, we would like you to answer the following questions about your relationship with one student's family and their involvement with the school. The term "family" in this survey is used to represent a parent, an extended relative, or any caregiver who is primarily responsible for this student.

Please circle, highlight, or make bold the number that best completes each statement:

	Never	Once or Twice a Year	Almost Every Month	Almost Every Week	More Than Once Per Week
1) How often has this child's family called you in the past year?	0	1	2	3	4
2) How often have you called this child's family in the past year?	0	1	2	3	4
3) How often has this child's family written you a note in the past year?	0	1	2	3	4
4) How often have you written a note to this	0	1	2	3	4

child's family in the past year?

5) How often has this child's family stopped by to talk to you in the past year?	0	1	2	3	4
6) How often has this child's family been invited to visit your school for a special event (e.g., book fair) in the past year?	0	1	2	3	4
7) How often has this child's family visited your school for a special event (e.g., book fair) in the past year?	0	1	2	3	4
8) How often has this child's family been invited to attend a parent-teacher conference in the past year?	0	1	2	3	4
9) How often has this child's family attended a parent-teacher conference in the past year?	0	1	2	3	4
10) How often has this child's family been invited to attend Parent School Community Council (PSCC) meetings?	0	1	2	3	4
11) How often has this child's family been to Parent School Community Council (PSCC) meetings?	0	1	2	3	4
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Interested	Very Interested
12) How much is this family interested in getting to know you?	0	1	2	3	4
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Well	Very Well

13) How well do you feel you can talk to and be heard by this family?	0	1	2	3	4
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Comfortable	Very Comfortable
14) If you had a problem with this child, how comfortable would you feel talking to their family about it?	0	1	2	3	4
	Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
15) How often does this family ask questions or make suggestions about their child?	0	1	2	3	4
16) How often does this family send things to class, like story books or objects?	0	1	2	3	4
17) How often does this parent volunteer at school?	0	1	2	3	4
	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	A Lot	A Whole Lot
18) How much do you feel this family has the same goals for their child that the school does?	0	1	2	3	4
19) To the best of your knowledge, how much does this family do things to encourage this child's positive attitude toward education (e.g., take them to the library, play games to teach child new things, read to them, help them make up work after being absent)?	0	1	2	3	4
20) How important is education in this family?	0	1	2	3	4

	Not At All	A Little	Somewhat	Involved	Very Much Involved
21) How involved is this family in their child's education and school life?	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix B Parent and Teacher Involvement Measure–Parent

Demographic Information

Please indicate how you are related to the student (e.g., father, mother, grandmother,

grandfather): _____

What grade is your ESL child in currently? _____

How would you describe your cultural background? _____

What languages do you speak at home? _____

How do you identify your racial identity? (Select all that apply.)

☐ Asian   ☐ Black/African American ☐ White ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

☐ Hispanic/Latinx   ☐ Other: _____

Parent and Teacher Involvement Questionnaire–Family

You are your child's first and most important teacher. When your child goes to school, teachers become important to them. You and the teachers can work together to help your child do well in school. So, we would like some information about your relationships with your child's ESL teacher and your involvement in your child's school life. If you have more than one child in the ESL program at the elementary school level, please think about only one of your children while answering these questions.

Please circle, highlight, or make bold the number that best completes each statement:

	Never	Once or Twice a Year	Almost Every Month	Almost Every Week	More Than Once Per Week
1) In the past year, you have called your child's teacher.	0	1	2	3	4
2) In the past year, your child's teacher has called you.	0	1	2	3	4

3) In the past year, you have written to your child's teachers.	0	1	2	3	4
4) In the past year, you child's teacher has written to you.	0	1	2	3	4
5) In the past year, you stopped by to talk to your child's teacher.	0	1	2	3	4
6) In the past year, you have been invited to your child's school for a special event (such as a book fair).	0	1	2	3	4
7) In the past year, you have visited your child's school for a special event (such as a book fair).	0	1	2	3	4
8) In the past year, you have been invited to attend a parent-teacher conference.	0	1	2	3	4
9) In the past year, you have attended a parent-teacher conference.	0	1	2	3	4
10) In the past year, you have attended Parent School Community Council (PSCC) meetings.	0	1	2	3	4

	Not At All	A Little	Some	A Lot	A Great Deal
11) You feel welcome to visit your child's school.	0	1	2	3	4
12) You enjoy talking with your child's ESL teacher.	0	1	2	3	4
13) You feel your child's ESL teacher cares about your child.	0	1	2	3	4
14) You think your child's ESL teacher is interested in getting to know you.	0	1	2	3	4
15) You feel comfortable talking with your child's ESL teacher about your child.	0	1	2	3	4
16) You feel your child's ESL teacher pays attention to your suggestions.	0	1	2	3	4

17) You ask your child's ESL teacher questions or make suggestions about your child.	0	1	2	3	4
18) You send things to class like story books and other things.	0	1	2	3	4
19) You read to your child.	0	1	2	3	4
20) You take your child to the library.	0	1	2	3	4
21) You play games at home with your child to teach them new things.	0	1	2	3	4
22) You volunteer at your child's school.	0	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strong Agree
23) Your child's school is a good place for your child to be.	0	1	2	3	4
24) The staff at your child's school is doing good things for your child.	0	1	2	3	4
25) You have confidence in the people at your child's school.	0	1	2	3	4
26) Your child's school is doing a good job of preparing children for their future.	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix C Interview Protocol–Teachers

➢ How long have you been teaching as an ESL teacher at the elementary school level?

➢ How would you describe your cultural background?

➢ How would you describe the linguistic and cultural background of your ESL students?

  o How long have they been in your classroom? (Probe: Please provide a range for all students without identifying any specific student.)

➢ What emotional or mental health needs have students in your classroom had?

  o What would you attribute those needs to? (Probe: Past experiences? Current adjustment difficulties? Etc.)

  o How have you been responding to those needs?

  o What programs/resources does your school provide to support those students?

➢ Have you tried engaging families to support students through those needs?

  o How did you attempt to do so? (Probe: Calling? Inviting to parent-teacher conference? Other ways?)

  o What has their response been? Positives? Challenges?

  o Why do you think they responded the way they did?

➢ What do you think is the family's understanding or interpretation of their child's emotional or mental health needs?

➢ What do you think is the family's understanding of how the school/you can help support their child through those needs?

➢ If there was something you wished the family knew about how you thought about their child's needs, what would you tell them?

➢ Is there anything else you would like to share about working with ESL students and their families?

Appendix D Interview Protocol–Families

➢ How long has your ESL child been at this school?

➢ Where did your child go prior to joining this school?

➢ How would you describe your linguistic and cultural background?

➢ Has your ESL child experienced any interruptions in their education?

➢ How well has your child been adjusting to being a student at this school? Positives? Challenges?

➢ What emotional or mental health needs has your child had ever since coming to this school? How did you find out about them? (Probe: Did you notice them or were you informed by their teacher?)

➢ Why do you think your child has those needs? (Probe: Due to past experiences? Present adjustment difficulties?)

➢ How did you respond to learning about your child's needs? (Probe: Did you reach out to the school or respond only at home?)

➢ How has your experience been engaging with your child's ESL teacher to help support your child? Positives? Challenges?

    o What was the teacher's reaction to your child's needs? What did you think of that reaction?

    o How could the school/teacher have supported you to engage with them more effectively?

    o How would your engagement have been different if this was at a school back home?

➢ If there was something you wished the current school/teacher knew about what you think about your child's needs, what would you tell them?

➢ Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experiences educating your child as an ESL student at this school?

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