Family Involvement in a Hawaiian Language Immersion Program

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Abstract

This study investigated the ways in which family members of students in a Hawaiian language immersion program were involved in their children's education and identified the effects of and barriers to involvement. A sociocultural theoretical approach and Epstein's framework of different types of involvement were applied. Participants included 35 families whose children were enrolled in Papahana Kaiapuni, a K-12 public school program in Hawai'i. The program uses the Hawaiian language as the medium of instruction. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants about their program experiences. Kaiapuni family involvement practices were consistent with Epstein's typology. Consistent with previous research on family involvement in other contexts, Type 2 (school-home communications) and Type 3 (voluntary involvement) were prevalent. However, different from previous reports, participants were more involved in school decision making (Type 5). Families felt that their involvement promoted (a) the development of children's values, (b) family and community bonding, (c) children's English language learning, and (d) family members' learning about Hawaiian language and culture. The most frequently mentioned barrier to involvement was a lack of proficiency in the Hawaiian language.

Key Words: family involvement, parents, immersion programs, indigenous education, native language instruction, Hawaiian language, culture, Hawai'i

Introduction

United States national policy includes the promotion of family-school partnerships to improve student achievement (Goals 2000). Studies of family involvement practices have consistently identified the important role that families play in their children's learning. In their review of the literature, Henderson and Mapp (2002) identified three predictors of students' achievement across SES groups: (a) a home environment that encourages learning, (b) family's high expectations for their children's achievement and careers, and (c) family involvement in children's education at school and in the community. In general, the literature suggests that there is less involvement among poor, single-parent, less educated, and minority families (Comer, 1988; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Lareau, 1989; Leitch & Tangri, 1988). Unfortunately, teachers may believe minority and other non-mainstream families are uninvolved or uninterested in their children's education (Chavkin, 1993; Clark, 1983; O'Connor, 2001; Valdés, 1996). These beliefs persist despite evidence that regardless of ethnic, racial, or minority status, most families want their children to succeed in school and wish to be highly involved (Epstein, 1990; Met Life, 1987).

The purposes of this study were (a) to investigate the ways in which family members of students in Papahana Kaiapuni, a Hawaiian language immersion program, were involved in their children's education, and (b) to identify the effects of and barriers to their involvement. The Papahana Kaiapuni program includes a diverse group of families with the majority of them being Hawaiian (note: in this paper we use Hawaiian and Native Hawaiian interchangeably to refer to people of Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian ancestry). These indigenous people of Hawai'i represent approximately 20% of the state's population (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Although most researchers have studied *parental* involvement, we broadened our focus to include involvement by other family members, as Native Hawaiian households often include extended family members, including grandparents (Kana'iaupuni, Malone, & Ishibashi, 2005). Approximately 25% of all Native Hawaiian households with children include live-in grandparents, one third of whom share child caretaking responsibilities.

The Hawaiian Language Immersion Program

This study focused on Papahana Kaiapuni, a K-12 public school program that uses the Hawaiian language as the medium of instruction (Yamauchi & Wilhelm, 2001). Formal English instruction in the Kaiapuni program begins in Grade 5. Although most Kaiapuni students enter the program in kindergarten

primarily as English or Hawai'i Creole English speakers, most respond to their teachers in Hawaiian by the end of the year (Slaughter, 1997). The program is open to all students, although the majority of students and their families are part-Hawaiian. In the 2004-2005 school year, there were 19 Kaiapuni sites on all major islands in the state of Hawai'i, enrolling approximately 1,500 students (Hawai'i State Department of Education, 2005). At the start of the current study (1999-2000), there were 17 Kaiapuni sites throughout the Hawaiian islands. All but two of these schools also housed the more typical program conducted in the English language.

The Kaiapuni program began in 1987, after intense lobbying from Hawaiian language speakers and activists (Wilson, 1998). Following the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893, the Hawaiian language was banned from all governmental activities, including public education. This ban marked the beginning of a decline in the number of Hawaiian speakers. In the 1970s, there was renewed interest in Hawaiian history and culture. By the 1980s, the language was viewed as being at risk for language extinction, with some estimates suggesting that there were fewer than 30 speakers under the age of 18 (Heckathorn, 1987). The grassroots movement to promote the language has been associated with a broader renaissance of Hawaiian culture and coincides with a revival of interest in indigenous cultures and ethnic studies (Benham & Heck, 1997).

The Kaiapuni program is a more culturally compatible form of education for Hawaiians because of its emphasis on Hawaiian language and culture. Program evaluations suggest that Kaiapuni students were as proficient in English as their non-immersion peers and also attained a high level of proficiency in Hawaiian (Slaughter, 1997). Kaiapuni supporters suggest that beyond language revitalization outcomes, the program may also be more effective in teaching Hawaiian children than is typical of the English language public school program (Benham & Heck, 1998; Yamauchi, Ceppi, & Lau-Smith, 1999, 2000). Compared to other peers, Hawaiian students tend to score lower on standardized measures of achievement, have higher drop out and grade retention rates, and are over-represented in special education and under-represented in post-secondary education (Kana'iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2003; Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 1994, 2006; Takenaka, 1995; University of Hawai'i Institutional Research Office, 2002).

Most of the Kaiapuni sites operated as a "school within a school" on a campus that also housed the more traditional English language program (Yamauchi & Wilhelm, 2001). At the time of this study, there were two K-12 Kaiapuni schools that were exclusively for Hawaiian medium instruction. There were also fewer students in middle and high school programs, more demands for

specific curriculum, and a shortage of certified secondary teachers who spoke Hawaiian. As a result, students in some of the secondary school sites took English language classes for subjects such as mathematics and science and enrolled in Hawaiian immersion for the rest of the day.

The Kaiapuni program has been known for its family involvement. A group that included parents who were involved in a private Hawaiian immersion preschool initiated the K-12 program (Wilson, 1998). These family members wanted their children to continue their education in the Hawaiian language. When conducting research on the program's initiation, we interviewed a school board member who had supported the program becoming part of the public schools (Yamauchi et al., 1999). The board member said that within the public school system, he thought the Kaiapuni program had the most intensive family involvement in the public schools, second only to athletics. We conducted this study to determine whether families were involved in ways that were different from other settings and to examine the effects of and barriers to involvement.

A Multidimensional Approach to Family Involvement

Researchers typically measure family involvement as a unidimensional construct, although there is evidence for its multidimensionality (Ho & Willms, 1996; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004). Involvement is often defined in narrow ways that are based on family members being visible in educational settings, for example, as volunteers at school. An alternative view, such as that provided by Epstein's framework, also includes family members' involvement at home and in the community (Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Epstein identifies six types of family involvement practices: (a) parenting practices to meet basic needs or to create an educational home environment, (b) home-school communication, (c) participation as volunteer or audience, (d) home learning activities, (e) participation in school-related decision making, and (f) knowledge and use of community resources.

We used this multidimensional framework because it helped clarify whether certain types of families are really not as involved, or are involved in ways that are not as visible to school personnel. For example, Fantuzzo, Tighe, and Childs (2000) studied families of low-income preschool children. They found that although the educational level of the primary caregiver was related to school-based involvement and home-school communication, there was no effect for home-based practices. Analyzing data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Peng and Wright (1994) found that, compared to other groups, Asian American parents spent less time directly assisting students with school assignments. However, these parents had the greatest expectations for higher education. We were interested in whether Kaiapuni families were involved in ways that were different from other groups described in the literature.

Sociocultural Theory

We were also interested in whether participation in the program affected participants' views on being Hawaiian and the Hawaiian culture. Although Epstein's framework was helpful in identifying different ways that Kaiapuni families were involved in education, we also applied sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) to assist in explaining how those activities influenced development. Sociocultural theory suggests that social interactions within a particular community are the basis for the development of individuals' ways of thinking. For example, we were interested in whether family involvement was related to the development of family members' ideas about education or about Hawaiian culture and language. Writing from such a perspective, Rogoff (1995) described how participation in activities can "transform" individuals' understandings about themselves and the world around them. Thus, involvement in certain educational activities may shape family members' views about their roles in education and other related issues.

Method

Participants

Thirty-five families participated in the study, including 17 with children in elementary school, 13 in middle school, and 5 in high school. The mothers of each family participated, as well as 8 of the fathers. In one case, a mother and two grandparents were involved. The participants' ages ranged from 29- to 60-years old, with a mean of 41.7 years. Of the participants, 83% (n = 38) reported that they were of Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian ancestry. The ethnicity of the remaining participants included European American (n = 4), Japanese American (n = 1), combinations of Asian and European American (n = 2) and a combination of American Indian and European American (n = 1).

We recruited at least two families from each of the 17 school sites in existence in 1999. A "snowball" method of recruitment was used such that initial participants were recruited through the Hawai'i State Department of Education and other program contacts. These early participants nominated subsequent potential interviewees.

Procedure

Between the years 1999 and 2000, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants about their program experiences. When there was more than one participant from the same family, they were interviewed together. The interviews were part of a larger investigation of family perspectives on

the program. (See the Appendix for the interview questions.) Each interview was 60-120 minutes long and was audiotaped and transcribed.

Data Analysis

For the larger study, members of the research team read through all transcripts and discussed themes that emerged from the responses. One of the themes was "family involvement." Once consensus was met regarding the themes and sub-themes, the researchers coded each transcript. Initially, the researchers coded two of the same transcripts independently, and met to establish consensus on coding criteria. Once consensus was met, the same process was repeated for two more transcripts to attain consensus across two coders. After this process, the remaining transcripts were divided among the authors, and these transcripts were coded independently.

In a second round of coding, the authors examined excerpts coded earlier under "family involvement" and further coded these data according to Epstein's six types of involvement practices and for "barriers to involvement" and "effects of involvement." The group established criteria for the coding and coded one set of excerpts as a group. After meeting to discuss discrepancies and to further refine the coding criteria, the remaining excerpts were divided and coded independently.

Results

In this section we present our results from the perspective of Epstein's six types of family involvement practices. We also present the effects of and barriers to family participation in the Kaiapuni program (note: all given names are pseudonyms).

Type 1: Parenting

Families discussed the ways in which they structured their home environments to be more conducive to learning. Fourteen participants said that they provided books in both English and Hawaiian languages to encourage reading. Three parents said that they provided English-Hawaiian dictionaries, and two mentioned providing a computer to assist children with school assignments.

We did not explicitly ask about basic parenting activities, and thus, participants' responses generally did not reflect this aspect of Type 1 involvement. However, one mother talked about how she focused more on her son's individual needs, rather than spending time at parent meetings and other school activities:

> He's just one of those that needs more one-on-one…so as a parent…I focus more on him, staying away from the [parent association]…I was really bad in the meetings…I did maybe two or three meetings…I did several fundraiser meetings for [the] golf tournament. Couldn't attend all of them like I usually did, just [because] I needed to stay home with him. (Makamae)

Type 2: School-Home Communication

The majority of the families reported having frequent contact with their children's teachers. Thirteen family members said that teachers made themselves available, day or night. As one parent noted, "I call the teacher at home.…Everything is just call the teacher at home…that is our line to the whole school system" (Sarah). In addition to telephone calls, parents said that they communicated with teachers through written student planners, progress reports, and through formal and informal meetings. Formal meetings included open house, conferences, orientations, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Informal meetings occurred when family members dropped off or picked up their child from school and stopped to chat with the teacher about their child's progress and other topics. Teachers also spoke informally with families outside of school or at school functions. One parent described her child's teacher as more of a friend or family member:

> We're very good friends with the teacher. It's close-knit. [For] example, my daughter does something bad in school, I can tell her, "I'm going to talk to your teacher this evening." And she knows that the teacher sometimes comes over for dinner. It's not like a public school system where the teacher is there and not part of the family unit. (Leilani)

Although this was the only family member who mentioned that her family invited their teacher to dinner, other participants talked about the close, family-like relationships they had with teachers, and how this was different from their experience in the English language program.

Type 3: Volunteer or Audience

Similar to what is reported in the literature for families in other communities, Kaiapuni families said that they participated as audience members for school functions. Twenty-five participants said they attended sporting events, concerts, and other school productions. Families said there were many ways that they volunteered in the program. They suggested that fundraising was the most common way that families were involved. Families raised money for student transportation, classroom activities, sports tournaments, field trips,

and other events. Eleven families said that fundraising for transportation was a particular concern, as many students lived outside their school district, and transportation was not provided by the state. One participant explained, "Our whole thing is to support our school, so [we're] fundraising all the time.…Our big thing now is $24,000 for one bus for one year" (Aolani). The largest fundraising event was the *Ho`omau* concert, organized collectively by volunteers from all Hawaiian language immersion schools statewide. Thousands of people attended this annual musical concert in Honolulu that raised up to $14,000 for each school.

Twenty-five families also said that they volunteered to help teachers both in and out of the classroom. Participants said they chaperoned for excursions, camping trips, and neighbor islands visits. Many schools had a *lo'i* [taro patch], and families volunteered to work there. Other parents said that they volunteered to assist with curriculum development. For example, a few families mentioned volunteering to work in "cut and paste sessions." These sessions were organized to create Hawaiian translations of English texts. Volunteers cut out typed Hawaiian translations of English books and pasted them over the original text. Those who participated did not necessarily need to speak Hawaiian.

Type 4: Home Learning Activities

Kaiapuni family members said that they were involved with learning at home in a number of ways. Fourteen participants said that they read to or encouraged their children to read. Those who could speak in Hawaiian read to their children in both languages. However, most family members thought their role was to reinforce English language learning. This was particularly true before Grade 5, when formal English language instruction began in the program. One mother explained how she articulated this to other families:

> Other parents, they would take their child out because the English skills weren't strong enough. And they would say, "Well, because my daughter doesn't read English." I [say], "That's your job. You put your child here because it's an immersion program, and the teachers are there to teach your child Hawaiian language, culture, and all that. Your job as a parent is to teach them the English skills." (ʻŌlena)

Family members reinforced school learning at home by checking that homework was completed and providing assistance as needed. Older siblings sometimes provided homework assistance to younger children. Parents felt that sibling help was particularly important in later years because many adult family members did not speak Hawaiian. Other home learning activities included discussions and activities that incorporated Hawaiian language and culture. One

mother said that she and her son talked about what he was learning in school and how it related to their family's activities. For example, they talked about the *Kumulipo*, the Hawaiian creation chant:

> [My son] would ask me things like, in the *Kumulipo*, which is the creation chant, where does God fit in that?…You know these are all questions, and this is deep…we'd talk, and I'd say…this is mommy's *mana'o* [opinion]. This is how I see it. (Angela)

Type 5: Family Participation in Decision Making and Leadership

There were a number of levels at which families were involved in decision making in the Kaiapuni program. At each school, there were two parent groups, one specifically for the immersion program and one for the more typical PTA. Although two participants mentioned participating in the PTA group, others saw this organization as primarily involved in the English language program. Families most frequently mentioned their immersion program parent group as a way that they were involved in school decision making. The groups were forums to deliberate on school issues and develop action plans. Some decisions were more mundane, for example, deciding when a school event might be held. Other decisions held greater consequences, for example, deliberating on whether their program should apply for charter school status. In some cases, the parent organization provided input into how funds would be spent:

> We had to make real heartbreaking kinds of decisions…decisions about money, where does it go? And who gets what, how much do the classrooms get?…The hard decisions are always money. Where to get it and how to spend it.…It always boils down to parents. You're the decision makers, and you've got to toe the line. (Sarah)

The parent groups often convened committees that made decisions about specific aspects of the program. For example, many sites had a curriculum committee to review and provide feedback on the curriculum. One father noted that the families at his school met "regularly and talked about what curriculum there should be, if there should be changes, what changes" (Chris). Participants said there were discussions in parent groups about when English should be formally taught in the program, an issue that continued to be controversial.

Finally, families reported that they were often politically active in advocating for Hawaiian immersion programs statewide. Nineteen families talked about how they and others attended rallies at the state capital, provided testimony, and lobbied the state legislature and school board. This work was necessary because the program did not have guaranteed funding each year. One parent described the intensity and importance of this work:

> Every four years we have to go and make sure the legislature gives us money. It's not a done deal. We have to keep at it. That means I gotta go call people on the phone – Congress or my representatives. Gotta go down the whole list. Gotta e-mail everybody. Sometimes we have to march. It sucks. I guess the program could be finished at somebody's whim if they didn't want to fund it. (Cecilia)

Type 6: Knowledge and Use of Community Resources

Almost all families said that they used community resources to support their children's education program. These families identified resources that they accessed to enhance their children's school learning. These included sports programs, college courses, programs for English language learning, and Hawaiian cultural programs and activities. Three families shared that it was important for them to be aware of available community resources that could support their children's learning in the Hawaiian language immersion program. One parent shared that she felt the Kaiapuni program needed a community liaison to assist parents in accessing community resources and to support the development of the program.

> Each public school has what they call a PCNC. It's a community facilitator…that person…links up the…families, the community, [and] the school. Kula Kaiapuni could benefit greatly from that type of a program. 'Cause when you draw the community into the school…you make the community feel like they own the school. Then the community will participate in terms of decision making…. (Sarah)

Positive Effects of Involvement

Families said that their educational involvement affected both children and adults in their family. Specifically, their involvement promoted (a) the development of children's values, (b) family and community bonding, (c) children's English language learning, and (d) family members' learning about Hawaiian language and culture.

Values Development

Six families mentioned that involvement in their children's education influenced the development of important values. Kauanoe suggested that through her involvement she modeled values she wanted her children to learn, "I'm able to be their role model in illustrating discipline and commitment, and respect." Another mother noted that the values she and her parents reinforced with her son at home were the same that he learned in school:

> I feel that he's centered because he knows…what he's learning in school is the same thing he's learning at home. And we work closely with Kaiapuni values and our own values together. So he's surrounded. He's very centered. (Lokelani)

'Anela felt that her family's involvement in the program demonstrated to her children that hard work was needed for good outcomes. She explained that her children recognized that their school could not exist without the efforts of many families.

> They understand that…with everything, there comes a price. And [they] have to learn to work hard and earn what it is that they get. That way, hopefully, we've instilled some sort of appreciation for what they have because many times over…they take things too lightly and think it's just, it's so easy to get it done.

Family and Community Bonding

Related to the development of shared values, families noted that their educational involvement increased bonding within the family and the broader community of people associated with their schools. June recognized that her family's involvement in the Kaiapuni program led to family cohesion, "Everybody [in the family] played a part in it. From my oldest child to my youngest. Both my husband and [me]. So, you know, it just was really neat. Sense of closeness, I guess." Iris suggested that her involvement sent a message to her children that she cared about them, "I think kids like to know that their parents care enough to be involved." 'Anela suggested that her involvement led to her children confiding in her more often: "Our involvement with our kids in the program has been real beneficial for them.…[They know] that there is someone that they can confide in. Like who better than to confide in than their parents?"

In addition to bonding within their own families, participants said that their involvement created a sense of community in the program. Through their participation, families got to know each other and were supportive. One parent pointed out how this happened when many families worked together:

> Bonds are created when we do have fundraisers, like for instance we have a *kulolo* [a taro dessert] fundraiser, and the whole family gets involved. So bonds are created between families, and the children learn to respect each other more. ('Iolani)

English Language Learning

Four family members talked about how their involvement promoted their children's English language proficiency. Because the Kaiapuni program did not

begin formal English language instruction until Grade 5, many families felt that it was their responsibility to emphasize English literacy at home. One mother explained that the students "get introduced to [English language instruction]…late in elementary school, and if they can't read a road sign by fifth grade, something's wrong at home" (Iris). The participants described how their efforts to read to and with their children in English were helpful in developing English language skills. Lokelani described how she answered her son's questions about English,

> He asks me, "Oh that's [an English] word, yeah mom? How do you say that?" I can't teach him every English rule, but when he asks me, I'll answer him. "How come it's /ch/ sound?" I'm like, when you see the "c" and the "h" together, it's /ch/ sound. "Oh, so it's chips?" And that's the end of English. I don't push it or shove it down his throat or anything. When he asks, then I acknowledge it.

Hawaiian Culture and Issues

Families discussed how their educational involvement led to family members learning about Hawaiian culture and language. One parent recalled that she was sometimes unsure whether her children appreciated her family's efforts to learn about Hawaiian dance and language, but later realized they did:

> I had to force my daughters to go hula for years and years and years, and it was a struggle. And I never saw anything until we went to the Merrie Monarch [a prestigious hula competition]. They had performed, and they walked off the stage. And they were backstage, and one daughter turns to the other daughter and says, "Wow, I'm so happy mommy [forced us to] go *hula*." A little comment like that…I just started crying, and they couldn't understand why I was crying. 'Cause it's a struggle at times. ('Iolani)

Although one of the goals of the Kaiapuni program was for children to learn about Hawaiian issues, participants felt that they and others in their families who were not enrolled in the program also benefited. For example, Makamae described how her daughters, who were not in the program, got to know their brother's Kaiapuni teachers. The young women were professional hula dancers and often needed to translate songs from Hawaiian to English. They would sometimes ask a Kaiapuni teacher for assistance.

> Malia would ask every once in a while…she'll have a song that she needs to [translate]. She'll try and translate it herself…then she'll call one of her aunties over here. All these *kumu* [teachers] are like aunties to her.

Another parent suggested that the Kaiapuni program helped her to return to her Hawaiian culture.

> It's made me more aware. The issues, Hawaiian issues…growing up, I was raised by Hawaiian grandparents [who] spoke Hawaiian. And I guess the values and the cultural values that they [instilled are] there, but as you get older and they're no longer there, it kinda disappears, and you can't continue it…with the Hawaiian language it's helped me to at least bring that part back…made me recognize what my values are. (Kanoe)

Barriers to Involvement

Families reported a number of barriers to being involved in their children's education. The most frequently mentioned barrier was an inability to speak Hawaiian. According to the Hawai'i State Department of Education, at the time of our study, approximately 20% of Kaiapuni parents were Hawaiian language speakers (Yamauchi & Wilhelm, 2001). One participant talked about how the private Hawaiian immersion preschools required parents to learn the language in order for their children to enroll in the program. Within a public school system, Kaiapuni educators could not mandate such parental participation; however, 'Anela felt this hurt the program:

> The biggest barrier and biggest downfall for Kaiapuni is not in some way mandating [Hawaiian language learning among parents]…how do you get these parents to realize that they're not helping their children? If they expect their children to excel in the language program, they have to be there to support them in every which way possible.

'Anela noted that there were a number of resources that family members could draw upon for Hawaiian language learning, including courses offered at community colleges, by the private immersion preschools, and informal classes she herself held in her home.

Participants who did not speak Hawaiian also realized that this was a barrier to their involvement. One such parent said that the fundraising and other parent involvement activities distracted her from learning the language, "Just… planning for the fundraiser, takes time…it's like weeks and weeks of planning. And that's what I put on the side, my language" (Puanani).

In addition to not speaking Hawaiian, participants also mentioned time and transportation as barriers to their participation. This is illustrated by one parent's description of her family's "typical" day:

> A typical day is very hectic…get up, out the door, and because we're out of district, we have to get up even earlier and rush these kids to the bus stops or drive them to school, so I drive…I think I put in extra 15, 20

> miles every day, just getting to these schools for these kids. Dropping them off, all day, picking them up. Then the homework sets in and you gotta try your best to decipher their homework. And I'm a…4-year taker of the language. And I find it difficult, at 3rd, 4th grade. (Lilinoe)

Some families said that they "burned out" after a few years of being highly involved, noting that involvement could be exhausting. Those with other children who did not attend the program said that they often felt the intense involvement was unfair to those family members. One mother cautioned other families to balance being involved in the program and also attending to the family's other needs. When two daughters who were not in the immersion program graduated from high school, she realized that she had paid little attention to their needs:

> There was a lot of neglecting going on…I blame the program because that's all we did…it was only immersion, immersion, immersion. Meetings, parties, gatherings, everything…the two girls didn't have a choice there. They had to clean up after us. They had to provide for us. They had to babysit when we had meetings here. They had to do it. They didn't have a say. And I really feel bad about that part. (Makamae)

The intensity of program participation also created tension in families in which only one parent was committed to their children being in the program. One participant said that she appreciated that both she and her husband were committed to their children's enrollment: "There are many, many, many parents in Kaiapuni, where it's only one *makua* [parent] who wants it. And they struggle. And in the long run, depending on who's stronger, they pull out" ('Iolani).

Two families from one particular school said that a barrier to their involvement was that some of the educators did not want to hear parent voices. Finally, parents said that factions within parent groups often developed and this dissuaded them from participating. As one parent said, "The ideal thing would be for us to be *pili* [be unified, work together]…it's our responsibility to *pili*…our parents don't all *pili*.…We're still fractured" (Lani).

Discussion

Kaiapuni families reported participating in school involvement practices that were consistent with Epstein's typology (Epstein, 1987; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Similar to previous research on family involvement in other contexts, Type 2 (school-home communications) and Type 3 (volunteer or audience) involvement were prevalent (Epstein & Dauber; Yap & Enoki, 1995). Yap and

Enoki suggest that educators tend to narrowly define parental involvement by focusing on families' communications with schools as the primary ways that they participate. However, different from what has been reported in the literature, families in our study often telephoned teachers at home with questions and concerns. This is consistent with a previous study suggesting that Kaiapuni teachers viewed their relationships with students and their families as similar to that of extended family members (Yamauchi et al., 2000).

Also different from what has been reported elsewhere, our findings suggest that Kaiapuni families were more involved in school decision making than has been reported in other studies. Participants said that they made decisions about curriculum, program priorities, and how money would be spent. Families also were politically active by providing testimony to the state board of education and legislature. A prior study of Kaiapuni teachers showed that, like the parents, their involvement in the program promoted political activism (Yamauchi et al., 2000).

Research suggests that parental involvement can have positive effects on children and their families. There is substantial evidence that parental involvement is related to higher academic achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). In our study, however, participants tended to focus on the effects of their involvement on the development of children's values and family and community bonding. The only academic effect mentioned was English language learning, which a number of participants felt was the responsibility of families because of Kaiapuni's emphasis on Hawaiian language. Research on family involvement has also suggested that involvement can influence adult family members in positive ways. For example, O'Connor (2001) found that low-income parents' involvement in schools promoted their sense of identity and increased their employment opportunities. Results from the current study suggest that participants' involvement in the Kaiapuni program increased their own knowledge and interest in Hawaiian culture. This was also the case for other children in the family who were not enrolled in the program.

Creating Different Roles for Family Involvement

The Kaiapuni program may be more successful in promoting a greater range of involvement practices because of the unique roles that have developed for families. For example, the greater emphasis on decision making and political advocacy may be related to the history of the program as a grassroots effort that developed through the political efforts of families and other activists (Wilson, 1998; Yamauchi et al., 1999). Such a history may have created an expectation that families would take a political role in garnering program support. The immersion parent groups at each school appear to be forums for family input on

important program policies. This is different from more typical school PTAs that often serve primarily informational and fundraising roles. We also noted that a statewide advisory council was created to make recommendations on matters concerning the program. The advisory council consisted of parents, educators, and community members from all of the islands. Council participation is another example of roles created for families to be more involved in making decisions.

Overcoming Barriers

Participants in the current study noted a number of barriers to family participation in the program. The most frequently mentioned barrier was inability to speak the Hawaiian language. This is similar to difficulties experienced by other monolingual families whose children attend bilingual programs. For example, being able to help their children with homework was the biggest worry for monolingual English-speaking parents of students in a Spanish-English program (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000). A few families in our study dealt with this issue by asking older siblings to assist with homework and focusing on areas where adults could participate as English speakers. Some participants who were Hawaiian speakers appeared irritated by their perceptions that some other parents would not take the time to learn the language. Clearly, this has been an area of contention. We have heard of program meetings that were conducted in the Hawaiian language, where parents who were non-speakers of the language used Hawaiian-English translators to communicate. Although this does raise the status of the Hawaiian language, it may also inhibit some family participation.

A number of barriers to family involvement have been noted in the literature. Educators may have inaccurate perceptions about low-income, ethnic or racial minorities, and non-traditional families. They may believe these families are less invested and interested in education and less effectual in promoting positive outcomes (Chavkin, 1993; Clark, 1983; Valdés, 1996). One study found that teachers held stereotypical views of low-income and minority families until they interacted with these parents. After working with such families, the teachers no longer held biased attitudes and tended to agree that all families, regardless of income level or ethnic group, wanted to be involved in their children's education and held high expectations for them (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1990). The majority of families who participate in the Kaiapuni program are Hawaiian, an ethnic group that has a long history of negative academic outcomes. Although the program involves self-selection of families who enroll their children in a special program, our study suggests that there are many ways that Hawaiian families can be involved. There are lessons for

educators who work with families such as ethnic minorities and others who have historically not appeared to be as involved in school affairs. Educators may promote family participation by increasing the ways people can be engaged. It may be particularly important for families to have opportunities to engage in decision-making processes. Such engagement may lead families to feel more ownership of and responsibility for schooling, leading to a greater sense of efficacy.

Limitations

This study was limited by its small sample size, and results may not generalize to other family members in and outside the Kaiapuni program. Participants were also volunteers who were nominated by others in the program. It is possible that these families were more involved than others in the program. The data involved self-report, and participants may also have responded in socially desirable ways either because they wanted to please the researchers or to portray a positive image of the program.

Future Research

Data for this study were collected in the 1999-2000 school year. It would be helpful to investigate whether family involvement has changed since then, as some of the characteristics of Kaiapuni families are different. For example, at the time data were collected, it was estimated that 20% of all the adult family members who had a child enrolled in the Kaiapuni program spoke the Hawaiian language at home. By 2006, this had decreased to 5% (V. Malina-Wright, personal communication, February 24, 2006). Educators attributed the decline in Hawaiian speaking households to an earlier cohort effect. Initial participation in Kaiapuni consisted of families of Hawaiian language university professors and other language activists who already spoke Hawaiian at home. More recently, families in the program tended to reflect the more general population of non-Hawaiian speakers.

Future research could also address whether involvement practices revealed in this study also exist in other language immersion and indigenous educational programs. It would be helpful to more closely examine the relationships between family involvement and student and family outcomes. Finally, longitudinal research is needed to trace the developmental trajectory of family participation, illuminating involvement over time and the effects of and influences on participation.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Would you state your name and spell it for us?
2. If you don't mind, would you tell us your age?
3. What is your ethnicity? (If multiple, is there one that you particularly identify with?)
4. Where did you grow up?
5. Can you tell us a little about your family? Who lives with you and how they are related?

6. What high school did each of you attend? Could you describe your post-secondary education and that of the other adults in your household?
7. What is your current occupation and that of the other adults in your household?
8. Do you speak Hawaiian?
    a. If yes, from whom? Why did you decide to learn the language?
    b. If no, do you think it affects your involvement with the school? Does it affect your working with your child? If so, how?
9. What role does the Hawaiian language play in your lives? (family and individuals)
10. How long have you been involved in the Kaiapuni program?
11. What roles have you played in the program? What kinds of school related activities have you been involved in? How often?
12. Can you tell us about each of your children's educational history? Where they have gone to school, where they go now, and what grades they are in? (Pünana Leo?)
13. Why did you choose to enroll your child in Kaiapuni? Could you talk through the process of how you heard about the program, what you considered and why you decided to send them to this particular school?
    a. Follow up question: Roles they played in the decision making process; importance of perpetuation of Hawaiian.
    b. Follow up question: Why leaving English-only or Kaiapuni for different children.
14. What are your goals for your child in terms of his or her education? (in general)
15. What were you expecting when you first enrolled your child in the Kaiapuni program? Were your expectations met or not?
16. Could you compare Kaiapuni with the English only program? (Any differences for students? Any differences for families?) How do you know?
17. What do you like about the Kaiapuni program?
18. What would you like to see changed or improved?
19. How long do you intend to keep your child in the program?
20. How, if at all, do you think being a Kaiapuni student affects your child's future?
21. What kinds of educational activities do you do with your kids, both related and not related to school? (language-related activities?)
22. From the very beginning of the Kaiapuni program, the policy has been to introduce English in Grade 5 for one hour and to continue this through high school. What do you think about this policy?
23. Has this program influenced you personally? If so, how? Has this program influenced your family? If so, how?
24. (If the child is Hawaiian…) Do you think this program has influenced the way your child sees him/herself as Hawaiian? Has it influenced how others in the family see themselves?
25. (For Hawaiian participants) What do you think about non-Hawaiians participating in the program (students and educators)?
26. (If the child is not Hawaiian) What is it like to be a non-Hawaiian in this program? What has it been like for your child?

27. Do you think families influence the program? In what ways? Can you think an example of how your family or another has influenced the program?
28. In what ways, if any, do you think the program influences the larger community? (People not necessarily involved in Kaiapuni)?
29. What kinds of questions or responses have other people made to you about having your child in the Kaiapuni program? What is your response? (extended family, other community support)
30. What advice do you have for families thinking of enrolling their children in the Kaiapuni program?
31. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about what we have been talking about?
32. Are there other parents that you recommend that we talk to about these issues?