PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS AND CHILDREN’S ACADEMIC AND SOCIOEMOTIONAL OUTCOMES

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Lily Jane Low

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Abstract

of

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS AND CHILDREN’S ACADEMIC AND SOCIOEMOTIONAL OUTCOMES

by

Lily Jane Low

Previous literature on parent involvement as well as afterschool programs has found positive relations to children’s developmental outcomes. However, there is little empirical research that has considered parents’ involvement in children’s afterschool programs. The purpose of the current study is to extend the current research to address the influence of parental involvement in afterschool programs. Participants were comprised of parents or primary caregivers of children who were currently enrolled in the target afterschool program at the time of data collection. Fifty-four participants completed self-report surveys regarding their involvement in children’s afterschool programs. In addition, participants rated items based on children’s emotional and behavioral outcomes as well as children’s overall academic performance during the last report card period. A combination of correlations and regressions were conducted to test the hypotheses. Results indicated a significant negative association between parent-child communication and children’s total difficulties, hyperactive tendencies, and conduct
problems. Additionally, findings illustrated parent-child communication as positively associated with participants’ reports of children’s overall academic performance.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Dr. Kristen Weede Alexander

_______________________
Date
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The current exploratory study aimed to extend the existing research on parental involvement in schools to address the value of parents’ involvement in afterschool programs (ASPs). Although a considerable amount of research has focused upon parents’ roles in children’s overall education during the regular school day (Altschul, 2011; Domina, 2005; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2010; Fan & Chen, 2001; Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004), empirical research focused upon the potential role and involvement of the parent in ASPs is sparse. Thus, the primary goal of the current study was to consider the relationship between parents’ afterschool involvement, children’s participation in ASPs, and children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes. Specifically, a correlational study was conducted to identify relationships between children’s academic and social outcomes and parents’ involvement within ASPs. The study addressed the following questions:

1. Do parents’ self-reports of their involvement in children’s afterschool programs, as measured through an adapted version of the Family Involvement Questionnaire – Elementary (FIQ-E), predict children’s emotional and
behavioral outcomes as measured by the parents’ ratings on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)?

2. Does parents’ afterschool involvement, as measured by the adapted version of the FIQ-E, relate to parents’ reports of children’s academic outcomes?

**Statement of the Problem**

Interest in ASPs has increased as the numbers of youth attending these programs has continued to rise. In 1991, an estimated 498,918 children in grades K-8 were enrolled in either center- or school-based ASPs (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). That number increased to 6,433,000 in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) and to 7,062,200 in 2005 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), a 1415% increase in 14 years. Although ASPs have long been a topic of interest, this increase in children’s participation has created heightened attention focused upon what effects they may have on children’s academic and socioemotional development. Previous research has found positive relations between parent involvement in school and educational gains (Altschul, 2011; El Nokali et al., 2010; Ingram, Wolfe, & Lieberman, 2007) as well as developmental outcomes (Domina, 2005; McWayne et al., 2004). However, virtually no research has examined the influence of parental involvement in ASPs and educational outcomes or socioemotional development.

Previous research on parental involvement, which has focused primarily on formal school settings, has found parents’ involvement in children’s education to be an
important factor in promoting positive child outcomes (Domina, 2005; El Nokali et al., 2010; Fantuzzo et al., 2004; McWayne et al., 2004). For instance, El Nokali et al. (2010) found that mother’s self-report and teacher-rated levels of parental involvement were positively associated with higher ratings of children’s social skills and negatively related to problem behaviors. In addition, parental involvement in children’s education has also been associated with parents’ ratings of children’s self-control, responsibility, and cooperative behavior (McWayne et al., 2004) as well as students’ academic success (Ingram et al., 2007). Such studies illustrate the effects parent involvement may have on children’s academic and socioemotional development.

At present, however, a limited amount of research has considered the combination of the two bodies of literature by exploring the possible associations between parental involvement in ASPs and children’s developmental outcomes. Research must be conducted in order to better understand the relationship between the effects of parental involvement in ASPs on children’s developmental outcomes. Therefore, the current study addressed this gap in literature by examining the relation between parents and the academic and socioemotional developmental outcomes of children enrolled in ASPs.

**Significance of the Study**

The attention of child development professionals, parents, educators, and politicians has increasingly focused on the demand for high quality ASPs due to economic and societal trends (Pierce, Bolt, & Vandell, 2010). For example, the growth in
single-parent households and the financial need for full-time employment of both parents in two-parent households are two factors that have contributed to the growing interest in ASPs (U.S. Department of Education, 1993). The primary goals of ASPs of the past and the present have been to provide a safe haven for out-of-school care while presenting diverse opportunities and engagement in developmentally appropriate activities (Halpern, 2002). Aside from the practical and monetary reasons for parents to enroll children in ASPs, government policies, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, have promoted the expansion of ASP enrollment particularly in certain communities to buffer the potential negative influences present in many urban settings such as truancy and neighborhood violence (Hall, Williams, & Daniel, 2010). Roughly 20 to 25% of low- and moderate-income urban children age 6 to 14 participate in ASPs at least three to five days a week (Halpern, 2002). That amounts to roughly three to four million children with rates continuously increasing, which illustrates the importance and need for ASPs especially in populations with greater at-risk students and low-income families.

Beyond offering care for children of working parents, today’s educators and parents view ASPs as a means for providing children with additional educational and developmental support. This expectation and the number of children attending ASPs has led researchers to focus upon the potential effects of ASP participation on children’s academic, behavioral, emotional, and social outcomes (Hall et al., 2010; Junge, Manglallan, & Raskauskas, 2003; Pierce et al., 2010). For instance, Junge et al. (2003) found that children who were enrolled in 4-H afterschool programs reported higher life skills ratings in effective communication, the ability to make decisions and healthy
choices, resourcefulness, and the acceptance of differences. Additionally, compared to children from low-income urban communities placed in informal care arrangements (e.g., self-care, maternal care, babysitters) during the hours following school, similar children enrolled in formal ASPs reported greater time spent on academic and extracurricular activities (Posner & Vandell, 1999). These previous findings demonstrate the inherent differences in how children spend their out-of-school time, whether in ASPs or other arrangements, which then influence what activities children engage in and their developmental trajectories.

Although previous afterschool studies have focused primarily upon children’s educational and behavioral outcomes, it is also important to consider the family influences, specifically parents’ involvement, on such child outcomes. Given the increase in the amount of low- and moderate-income children attending ASPs, the afterschool setting has been considered the third most important developmental context that children spend the most time within following the home and school (Halpern, 2002). Therefore, parental involvement within ASPs promotes a communal partnership, not only between the home and school environments, but also between the home and ASP environments. Although previous research on ASPs has shown positive effects on children’s educational and socioemotional outcomes, the relationship between parental involvement and ASPs should be explored as it may foster a partnership that can promote and influence children’s developmental trajectories.

Despite often being recognized as influential factors in children’s educational outcomes, parents have not generally been considered in the research conducted on ASPs
(Domina, 1995). Previous studies of parental involvement in other school settings have demonstrated positive benefits to children’s developmental outcomes. For example, Fantuzzo and colleagues (2004) found that Home-Based Involvement, a construct of the Family Involvement Questionnaire that encompasses the parental behaviors promoting engagement in learning opportunities in home settings, was significantly related to teachers’ ratings of children’s motivation, attention, and persistence when faced with difficult tasks. Also, Home-Based Involvement was positively related to children’s scores of receptive vocabulary and negatively related to behavioral problems in the classroom. In other similar studies, ratings of parents’ involvement in children’s education at school and home have been positively associated to ratings of children’s social skills, higher scores of academic achievement, and negatively associated with ratings of behavioral problems (Domina, 2005; El Nokali et al., 2010; McWayne et al., 2004).

Although an abundance of evidence supports the positive effects of parents’ involvement within formal school settings, whether through direct contact with schools or through the promotion of learning at home, there has been little research exploring whether a similar pattern of positive outcomes exists for parental involvement in ASPs. Likewise, ASP research has identified some positive outcomes of children’s participation, but further investigation into how parental involvement in ASPs can affect said outcomes is needed. Therefore, the implications of the two domains are directly relevant for consideration when exploring parents’ involvement in ASPs and its associations to children’s outcomes. Research focused upon the parents’ role, specifically in relation to children’s ASP participation, is needed and is addressed within the current study.
Methods

Research Question and Design

In the current study, quantitative methods were employed to understand parental involvement in children’s ASPs. Data collection was achieved through surveys on demographic information, parental involvement practices, and children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes.

Participants and Setting

Participants included 54 parents or guardians of children enrolled in a school-based afterschool program located in Northern California. Of those participants, 43 were mothers, nine fathers, one grandmother, and one person who did not specify the relationship to the child.

Procedures

Participants completed survey packets that were sent home with students along with an informational letter regarding the details of the study. Included in the survey packet was a consent letter describing the data collection procedures, methods of confidentiality, and potential benefits or risks of participation along with the demographic, parent involvement, and child outcome surveys. Participants were instructed to return the packet in a provided envelope and return it to a designated drop
box located at the ASP. Once the survey packet was returned, participants were given a raffle ticket to participate in a drawing for a $20 Target gift card.

Measures

**Demographic survey.** Demographic items were used to assess variables relevant to describing the characteristics of the sample such as parental education, participant relationship to the child, ethnicity, length of children’s enrollment in the ASP, gender of the child, and grade level of the child.

**Parental involvement.** Data related to parents’ involvement in their children’s afterschool program were collected through self-reports on an adapted version of the Family Involvement Questionnaire - Elementary (FIQ-E; Manz, Fantuzzo, & Power, 2004). The survey included a series of 12 questions using 4-point Likert items (Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) related to the frequency of parents’ involvement behaviors and practices in children’s ASPs. The two scales measured were Parent-Child Communication and Home-Afterschool Conferencing.

**Children’s academic achievement.** Participants were asked through one item to report on children’s overall academic performance during the last report card period using a 5-point Likert scale (Far below grade level, Somewhat below grade level, At grade level, Somewhat above grade level, Far above grade level).

**Children’s socioemotional outcomes.** Participants completed the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997) by rating children’s emotional and behavioral difficulties and prosocial tendencies on a series of 25 questions on a 3-point
scale (Not True, Somewhat True, Certainly True). The five scales of the SDQ were hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, peer problems, and prosocial behaviors. A total difficulties score was also computed by summing all scales with the exception of prosocial behavior scores.

**Data Analysis**

Participant responses on the survey packet were examined through a series of quantitative data analyses. Specifically, several $t$-tests were computed to compare participants upon various demographic variables to determine if there were significant differences amongst participants. Correlations were then computed to identify associations between multiple demographic variables and participants’ ratings on the FIQ, SDQ, and children’s academic performance. Lastly, regressions were conducted to test the hypotheses of whether participant reports on the FIQ predicted ratings of children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes.

**Limitations**

There are a number of limitations that must be considered in evaluating the results of the current study on parents’ involvement in children’s ASPs. With the convenience sample used for the study, generalizability of the findings may be limited. In addition, the sample was predominantly of Hispanic/Latino descent and from low socioeconomic
backgrounds; thus, results may only be representative of the specific ASP program used in the current study.

Several limitations in the study were related to the manner of data collection. This study used self-report measures to collect data, which have the potential for response bias. Other factors such as clarity of questions and whether participants read questions thoroughly may have influenced the data. The nature of some of the questions may have potentially made some participants uncomfortable to answer (e.g., asking about their percent of custody over the child, rating their child’s tendency to steal). Due to the participant being the sole informant in the data, results reflect only one perspective of the survey variables.

Given that the FIQ-E did not have an equivalent version specified to measure parental involvement in ASPs, the researcher adapted items in order to account for this specific sample. Additionally, in order to buffer language barriers, the adapted version was translated into Spanish. These adapted versions of the FIQ-E were not piloted prior to data collection. Thus, the adapted versions may be limited as it could have omitted important items or contained unclear terms.

Lastly, with the use of correlational methods, the exact mechanisms underlying the relations found between parents’ afterschool involvement and children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes are not clear. It is difficult to determine whether such associations were found due to parental involvement in the ASP or in the formal school setting. Likewise, it is hard to determine whether such gains and associations were due to parental involvement and not solely to children’s ASP participation.
Definition of Terms

Afterschool programs (ASPs)

The term afterschool programs is used in this thesis to refer to extended learning programs that offer services to school-age children during the hours following the regular school day, which are typically during the hours between 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm. The types of services that are offered generally include structured activities focused upon academic and enrichment lessons instructed or supervised by adults.

Out-of-School Time

Out-of-school time generally refers to the hours that are outside of the regular school day. This refers to any time that the child is not in school including the hours prior to the school day.

Parent

Specific for the current study, the term “parent” will refer to and be used synonymously to the primary caregivers or guardians of children who provide the developing individual with their basic needs.
Parent Involvement

Parent involvement will refer to the behaviors, activities, interactions, practices, etc. that parents engage in to contribute and guide children’s developmental process, academic success, and education. This term will also encompass interactions that include family involvement in children’s education. Parent involvement will be used interchangeably with parental involvement, parents’ involvement, and parent engagement as it has been used in the same manner in previous literature.

Regular School Day

In the current study, the regular school day will refer to the time that children spend in the classroom and at school on a daily basis. This term will be used interchangeably with formal schooling. Thus, the time spent outside of the regular school day will be referred to as out-of-school time (see above).

Organization of the Study

Chapter one presents an outline and brief overview of the current study on parental involvement in ASPs and its association to children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes. Following the current introductory chapter to the study, chapter two is a review of the literature related to parental involvement, afterschool programs, and consideration of parents in ASPs. Additionally, chapter two provides an overview of the underlying child development theory, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological
system of human development, used to support and frame the current study. Chapter three describes the methodology used to conduct the study, which includes the procedures and measures used to collect the data. Chapter four provides the results of the data analyses. Lastly, chapter five will include a discussion of the study’s findings, limitations, suggestions for future research regarding parental involvement in ASPs, and conclusions that were drawn.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the current study is to extend the current research on parental involvement in schools by addressing parent engagement in ASPs. Although previous studies have examined parental involvement in relation to children’s academic and social outcomes, this research has primarily focused on parents’ engagement within the formal school settings. This exploratory study aims to extend the current research by examining the relationship between parents’ involvement in school-based ASPs and school-age children’s academic achievement and socioemotional development.

The following literature review will explore the current research on ASPs and parental involvement in schools. Because a limited amount of research has explored parental involvement in ASPs, the function of this review will be to integrate the respective findings of parent involvement and ASP literature to provide a foundation for the current study. First, Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development and its implications for the current study will be discussed. Following the theoretical framework, previous parent involvement research as well as ASP literature will be presented separately. Lastly, a brief discussion of the limited research that has integrated and considered parents’ roles in out-of-school time programs will be explored followed by a brief summary of the presented literature and its implications for the current study.
Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological System of Human Development

As the current study examined the relationship between the home and ASP environments, a theoretical framework that centers upon examining children’s multiple contexts was needed. One such theory cited in previous ASP and parent involvement literature is Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems theory (El Nokali et al., 2010; Posner & Vandell, 1999; Tan & Goldberg, 2009), which posits that children develop within a set of nested systems. Furthermore, development is driven by children’s interactions, which are afforded by the contexts in which they are directly and indirectly engaged.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) proposed that children’s development occurs within the contexts that have the potential to influence their developmental trajectories. These contexts, which encompass the child in the center, include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The successive systems extend outwards from the child with the interior layers representing contexts that directly influence the child and the outer layers representing contexts more distal to the child.

Although children are influenced by what occurs within the encompassing contexts of their lives, a bidirectional relationship does exist in the ways development occurs. Specifically, the unique characteristics and desires of the developing individual can also affect the direction of his or her own development and the interactions they are afforded (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). For example, a child that is more receptive to engaging
in conversation with parents about events that occurred during their ASP time are more likely to disclose more details and confide in the parent. With greater communication and content, a more developmentally stimulating conversation may ensue between the parent and child. On the other hand, a child that is more introverted and apprehensive to talk may only provide parents with brief and short answers that do not encourage further discussion. Thus, such personal characteristics of the child may influence the parent to inquire or discuss with the child more often regarding their experiences in the ASP or in the latter case, less.

While it may be true that a child is an active agent in their own development, the numerous contexts of a child’s life are equally significant and important to consider. The microsystem is the immediate context of the developing person. In the microsystem, the child has expected roles and behaviors, engages in interpersonal interactions, and partakes in activities with the objects, symbols, and/or people of a setting in which he or she is directly involved (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). For example, the home, school, ASP, community, and neighborhood settings are all considered as microsystems. For a child enrolled in an ASP, the interactions and relationships with peers and adults would lie within the microsystems. Furthermore, the interactions between parents and children, such as the discussions regarding ASP activities and events, would be considered to occur in the home microsystem.

The second-most proximal context of a developing individual’s life is the mesosystem. This context is created when two microsystems containing the child directly or indirectly interact (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Specifically, it consists of the
interrelations that occur between significant individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, ASP staff) of two separate environments. For instance, when ASP staff communicate with parents regarding the child, the interactions are considered as taking place within a mesosystem. Albeit there are other contexts that are important to consider when looking at the relationship between parents’ involvement in ASPs and children’s developmental outcomes (e.g., exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem), previous parental involvement and ASP research has focused primarily upon the microsystem and mesosystem. For this reason, the focus of the current study is to understand the interactions that occur within and between the home and ASP, more specifically, the microsystem and mesosystem.

Beside the consideration of contexts, Bronfenbrenner posited that the underlying mechanisms that drive development within contexts are the proximal processes in which children partake (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Specifically, the increasingly complex and repeated interactions that are afforded by contexts foster children’s development. In order for interactions, including the child, to be significant, the processes must be developmentally stimulating and take place regularly. Thus, parents’ ASP involvement can be influential in children’s development if the interactions occur on a regular basis between the parent and child and/or the parent and ASP. This can be manifested through parents regularly asking children about their ASP activities or having discussions with ASP staff about children’s accomplishments or struggles. As a result, parents can guide children by practicing their skills learned at the ASP or working on any difficulties children may have.
In addition to the consideration of the contexts and proximal processes in which children engage in, Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) place equal importance on the role of time in individual development. This can be signified, for example, as the length of time that a child has been engaged in a proximal process. Additionally, time can be considered as the specific stage of development a child is on such that children who have participated in an ASP for a longer period of time or are older in age may have different outcomes than those who are not. The concept of time is the overarching factor that is fundamental to all components in the bioecological theory. Hence, the child and his or her characteristics, proximal processes, interactions, development of the individual, and contexts undergo changes over time. With the consideration of all components introduced by Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory, it will be used as the framework for the current study as it provides an explanation and understanding to the bridging of children’s environments and the interactions of parental involvement in ASPs.

**Defining Parental Involvement**

In order to fully understand parental involvement in ASPs, it is important to conceptualize it as the interrelations between two prominent microsystems: the home and the ASP. The interactions parental involvement in ASPs affords can foster consistency and continuity between the family and ASP settings. The actions, practices, and behaviors that portray parental involvement in ASPs can include communication with ASP staff regarding children’s progress, discussion with children regarding their ASP
time, volunteering in the ASP, etc. Through these interactions, parents provide children with support and guidance in their learning and development within ASPs.

Due to the dearth of literature on parental involvement in ASPs, research on parent involvement in children’s formal schooling will be referenced in order to understand it within the realms of ASPs. Generally, parental involvement has been referred to as the participation of significant caregivers in the process of children’s education to promote favorable developmental outcomes such as through providing homework assistance, monitoring children’s progress, providing learning opportunities, etc. (Shumow, 2010). However, some researchers argue an adequate definition must consider the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of parent involvement, which would include the various practices and activities parents can engage in as well as the multitude of people who can contribute to the relationship of parental involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001; Fantuzzo, Tighe, & Childs, 2000). Specifically, parents can be involved through a wide variety of ways such as those in the home and school settings; thus, a definition with a few specific descriptors would be all too simplistic.

This notion is the premise underlying Epstein’s (1995) typology of parent involvement, which argues that parental involvement can be defined not only by the actions of parents, but also through the meaningful connections and partnerships with the school and community. Specifically, Epstein outlined six facets that contribute to effective parent involvement in children’s education: parenting (i.e., providing supportive home environments for the child including through meeting basic needs), communicating (i.e., effective communication between the home and school regarding children’s
progress), volunteering (i.e., supporting children’s learning by volunteering in the classroom or school), learning at home (i.e., enlisting the help of teachers to suggest strategies to parents about how to guide and help their children in promoting learning at home), decision making (i.e., collaboration and discussion with parents about school decisions), and community collaboration (i.e., coordination of services and resources offered in the community). As illustrated by these typologies, Epstein argued that an effective and comprehensive definition of parental involvement must include a multidirectional partnership with and enlist help from the school and community contexts. Although the ASP context was not directly addressed in Epstein’s typology, it is relevant to the current study as it illustrates the importance of a partnership formed by the various contexts centered upon children’s learning, such as the ASP and home, in order to promote children’s academic success.

In order to assess the multidimensional factors of parents’ practices that illustrate their involvement in children’s schooling, Fantuzzo et al. (2000) developed the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) based upon Epstein’s (1995) typology. The instrument includes three separate, but equally important, dimensions of parents’ involvement that were created by grouping together Epstein’s six typologies. First, School-Based Involvement describes the activities in which parents can engage in directly at children’s schools such as meeting with other parents to discuss school matters or volunteering within the school or classroom. Second, Fantuzzo et al. defined Home-Based Involvement as the ways parents can promote learning within the home environment. Discussions with children regarding his or her school experiences, providing homework
assistance, and making visits to places that promote learning such as libraries, museums, or zoos are all examples which portray home-based involvement. Lastly, the Home-School Conferencing factor describes the activities and interactions that occur between the parents and school staff and/or teachers such as during parent-teacher conferences or correspondence regarding children’s educational experiences or progress. The current study utilized this multidimensional instrument of parental involvement to guide the study of and define parental involvement in ASPs as it comprehensively illustrates the interactions that occur within and between the microsystem and mesosystem contexts.

The Importance of Home-School Collaboration

Although very few studies have investigated parents’ roles in ASPs, previous research and government policies have indicated parents are an important factor to consider when looking at children’s development. Because researchers have found relationships between parental involvement and children’s academic and social outcomes (Domina, 2005; Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Ingram et al., 2007), educators and government agencies have focused their attention on engaging in efforts to promote parental involvement such as through the introduction of interventions and policies (Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009; Tan & Goldberg, 2009). This intention of educators and policymakers has been reflected in both state and federal legislation (Ingram et al., 2007). Namely, during the 1990s, Congress proposed in the National Educational Goals for schools to invest efforts into creating programs that advocated and
fostered parent participation and partnerships between schools and the family by the year 2000 to promote positive outcomes in children’s education (National Education Goals Panel, 1999).

Furthermore, the federal government established the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 that allocated funding towards improving children’s educational success, especially the outcomes of disadvantaged students (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). One of the methods for improving academic achievement was through increasing parents’ involvement in schools and developing the parent-school mesosystem (Altschul, 2011; Domina, 2005; Moles, 2010). In Section 1118, the NCLB appointed schools to offer guidance and training to help parents become more involved in children’s education. In addition, it called for schools to train educators with strategies to help build partnerships with parents in order to collaboratively work toward students’ academic achievement. As a result of the implementation of those legislations, schools were held accountable in their efforts to establish plans, develop strategies, create programs, and enforce policies that aimed to improve parental involvement and thereby support children’s educational success.

Previous research has supported the importance of such policies as positive relations have been found between parents’ involvement and children’s outcomes (El Nokali et al., 2010). These findings may be due to greater communication fostered between the parent, school, and teacher about the child’s progress and behavior when parents participate in children’s education (Domina, 2005). Through involvement and the knowledge gained through interacting with children’s teachers and school, parents can
address difficulties and reinforce the values and lessons learned in school by providing positive learning experiences in the home. It is important to note, due to the bidirectional nature of these interactions, as proposed by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), teachers and schools can also have a better understanding of children’s home culture as well as characteristics of the home environment and family practices. Teachers can benefit from such knowledge because it can build rapport to help foster mutually trusting relationships with families characterized by communication and positive relations. Through such interactions, teachers can recruit the help of parents to provide extra help on academic struggles and reinforce positive behaviors at home. Thus, parent involvement fosters an extended learning environment within the home environment where parents provide support to teachers and vice versa.

**Parental Involvement and Children’s Developmental Outcomes**

To date, a limited amount of peer-reviewed research has explored the relationship between parental involvement in ASPs and children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes. However, a vast amount of research has identified parents’ involvement in children’s schooling to be positively associated to various developmental outcomes. Although previous studies have been inconsistent in the ways that parent involvement has been measured due to the lack of an operational definition (Fan & Chen, 2001) as well as a focus upon various ages and developmental stages (Domina, 2005), the studies nonetheless provide a substantial foundation that has illustrated the importance of
parental involvement. For example, Altschul (2001) examined the relationship between various parent involvement behaviors and 8th and 10th grade students’ academic achievement. Researchers found a positive relationship between children’s standardized test scores in math, reading, history, and science and interventions presented by parents such as providing educational resources at home (e.g., books, designated area for schoolwork), enrolling children in extracurricular activities (e.g., dance classes, art, soccer), engaging with children in enrichment activities (e.g., visits to the library or museum, music performances), and discussing school-related matters with their children (e.g., educational plans, school experiences). However, a stronger positive relation to children’s outcomes was shown between the types of parental involvement that required both time and financial investment (e.g., educational resources, extracurricular activities) when compared to types of parent involvement that required only an investment of time (e.g., discussion of school matters, homework assistance). Previous studies have also found that children whose parents, as indicated either through self- and/or teacher-reports, engaged in more frequent parental involvement activities or interactions showed positive gains in mathematic skills (Powell, Son, File, & San Juan, 2010), motivation toward school and academic and study skills (Rogers et al., 2009), and adaptive development and mastery of preschooler’s basic school skills (Marcon, 1999). The results of these studies not only indicate the potential influence parents can have on their child’s academic and social development, but it also demonstrates the diverse ways in which parents can engage in children’s education. For this reason, the current study investigated
the methods in which parents illustrate involvement in children’s ASPs and whether such practices would show similar findings in children’s developmental outcomes.

Although previous studies have found positive relations of parents’ involvement, it is also important to consider the various demographic factors that can influence the relationship of these factors to children’s outcomes. Tan and Goldberg (2009) examined whether gender differences existed between mothers and fathers in the levels and types of parental involvement they engaged in. Specifically, previous research has illustrated that mothers and fathers have unique roles in their relationships with their children; thus, the researchers examined whether such differences were also evident in the ways in which parents engage in children’s education. Findings from the study confirmed mothers and fathers contributed to children’s outcomes in differing ways such that even after controlling for reports of mothers’ involvement, fathers’ involvement was still associated with children’s school enjoyment and girls’ lower school anxiety (Tan & Goldberg, 2009). This illustrates the unique contributions that fathers and mothers can potentially have. Additionally, findings indicated positive outcomes of children with two highly involved parents to be the greatest; however, the availability of just one highly involved parent was associated to lower reports of school anxiety when compared to those with two less involved parents. It is important to note the sample used for the study were of intact families with both biological parents, of European descent, and primarily of two-parent incomes ranging from $60,000 to $80,000. Thus, the results from this study beg the question of whether such associations of parental involvement could be found in a more diverse sample.
Previous studies have addressed this issue by considering the factor of socioeconomic status (SES) when examining parental involvement. Domina (2005) investigated the association between parent’s involvement in elementary-age children’s education and their cognitive achievement and behavior outcomes. Results illustrated that children whose parents checked homework, volunteered inside and outside of the classroom, and participated in the school’s parent-teacher association (PTA) demonstrated higher academic achievement in math comprehension and reading recognition. Additionally, the same parental involvement practices were negatively related to mother’s ratings of children’s behavioral problems (i.e., cheating and lying, bullying, disobedience). When controlling for SES, greater favorable outcomes were found on behavioral variables for those children from lower SES background than those of high SES. However, Domina proposed differences found when controlling for SES may be attributed to a possible ceiling effect where children of high SES had lower instances of behavior problems to begin with; thus, only moderate associations in academic and behavioral gains were found in relation to parents’ involvement.

Ingram et al. (2007) have also considered the effects of SES when examining parents’ involvement and found that despite the circumstances related to living in poverty stricken communities, parents who reported being involved through supportive home environments and providing opportunities for learning at home were positively associated to children with higher scores on state standardized achievement tests. The findings of the studies by Domina (2005) and Ingram et al. illustrate the importance for consideration of SES when examining parental involvement; thus, in the current study, items asking for
participants’ number of hours worked per week were used to measure income. Although questions regarding yearly income would be a better indicator of SES, they were not used due to the concern of the ASP director of the target program that such questions would potentially cause participants to feel discomfort; so measures through reporting upon number of hours worked were used in the present study as it may be less invasive.

Parental involvement has also been found to be multifaceted in nature as it can be manifested through a wide range of parent involvement activities and behaviors, such as through the interactions that occur within the home microsystem or the mesosystem through the communication between parents and teachers. Fantuzzo et al. (2004) adopted this view when the researchers created the FIQ. In a longitudinal study, Fantuzzo et al. compared parents’ involvement through home-based involvement, school-based involvement, and home-school conferencing and its respective associations to preschool children’s approach to learning and classroom conduct outcomes. Home-based involvement was found to be the most predictive contributor to greater ratings of children’s motivation to learn, higher scores of receptive vocabulary, and lower levels of classroom behavioral problems exhibited. On the other hand, home-school conferencing was found to have the weakest relationship to children’s outcomes. Fantuzzo et al. hypothesized that children may not be explicitly aware of the communication between teachers and parents that reflect home-school conferencing such as phone calls or notes; thus, they are not as affected by the parent-teacher interaction as those that can be witnessed first-hand such as through school-based involvement.
Similarly, McWayne et al. (2004) found consistent results in that parents’ reports of home-based involvement activities (e.g., discussions with children about the importance of school, providing learning activities where they are able to practice skills and lessons at home) were positively related to scores and ratings of intellectual functioning, reading and math achievement, overall classroom behavior, self-control, responsibility, and cooperative behavior. Findings from these studies indicate the importance of conceptualizing parental involvement not only through visible actions that convey involvement in children’s education at the school, but also those that occur within the home that may be less detectable through a one-dimensional measure. Parental involvement has been illustrated to be a multidimensional construct that can be manifested in a multitude of ways. Thus, this lends an understanding of the multifaceted nature of parent involvement for the current study to investigate whether parents’ involvement in ASPs can also be beneficial.

Through this review of the parent involvement literature, it is apparent that no single parent involvement activity and interaction is consistently found to be positively linked to children’s developmental outcomes (Domina, 2005). Furthermore, the relationship between parental involvement and children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes is not a simple one. With this notion in mind, the current study sought to determine the associations between parental involvement in ASPs and children’s developmental outcomes using a multidimensional approach of understanding parental involvement.
Afterschool Programs as a Developmental Context

The interest in the activities children engage in during the out-of-school hours, specifically in the ASP, has grown increasingly due to economic and societal changes. These include the growth of single-parent households and full-time employment of both parents with greater maternal employment (Halpern, 2002; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005; Marshall et al., 1997). As a result of such changes, there has been a growing interest and importance for ASPs, which provide for the greater need of supervision following the regular school day (Vandell, Pierce, & Dadisman, 2005). In addition to the federal government advocating for the involvement of parents in children’s education, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 also focused attention upon children’s out-of-school time (Lauer et al., 2006; NCLB, 2002; Riggs & Medina, 2005). Specifically, schools were provided funding in order to create and offer supplemental educational services outside of the regular school day (e.g., afterschool programs, before school programs, summer school) that focused upon improving students’ proficiency levels in accordance to the state academic achievement standards (NCLB, 2002). Throughout these societal and economic changes that have focused attention upon ASPs, the purpose, objectives, and practices of ASPs have adapted accordingly to appropriately address changes and needs.

Beyond offering care and supervision of children to working parents, today’s educators and parents increasingly view ASPs as a means for providing children with additional educational and developmental support in a safe and structured environment.
During the depression era, ASPs primarily served the function of providing children with a safe environment in which they could escape from the stressors at home (Halpern, 2002). As the nation’s needs have changed, programs have also gradually evolved to include enrichment activities in the program curriculum such as arts and crafts, ceramics, and dance. In addition to serving the role of a creative outlet for participants, ASPs have incorporated homework help and tutoring in order to address the need for educational resources focused upon improving students’ achievement. Thus, ASPs of the present day aim to provide developmentally appropriate, organized, and structured activities that serve both an enrichment and academic purpose (Halpern, 2002; Kleiber & Powell, 2005).

ASPs that are focused upon supporting positive development in multiple areas can also provide a positive developmental context to children (Hall et al., 2010). Within ASPs, children are not only afforded experiences that encourage both academic and social development, but they also engage in various interactions and form relationships with peers or program staff. These experiences and relationships children have within ASPs are unique because they are inherently different from those experiences and relationships in other contexts such as the school or home environment. For example, within ASPs, children often engage in structured activities with other peers from different school time classrooms or grade levels. However, in the traditional classroom, with exception to during recess or other school events, children typically only engage in learning settings with peers of the same age or grade level. For this reason, Hall et al. (2010) characterized ASPs as an “intermediary environment,” where children are
provided a secure context to learn new roles and form identities. Hall et al. argued that during the ASP time, children are exposed to various activities, adults, and other peers that are independent of their school time classroom; thus, the individuals whom children interact with in ASPs can play the role of significant others of which they can explore and develop identities within the ASP. Consequently, the ASP provides a unique environment in which children are able to engage in diverse experiences that contribute to the ASPs’ role as a developmental context where children can have positive social relationships, engage in identity development, and achieve academic success (Mahoney et al., 2005).

**Program Participation and Children’s Developmental Outcomes**

Previous literature has examined how participation in formal ASPs relates to children’s social and academic outcomes. The activities and interactions children engage in within ASPs contribute to its capacity as a unique developmental context. Shernoff (2010) examined this notion by examining the associations between middle-school students’ ASP participation and children’s outcomes, program attendance, and engagement. It was found that children who participated in ASPs had higher English grades and higher ratings of social competence than those who were in other out-of-school care arrangements. Additionally, students’ perception of the environmental challenge and meaningfulness offered by their ASP were moderately related to academic achievement outcomes. Shernoff argued such positive relations between environments where children engage in activities perceived as challenging and meaningful, such as
those found in ASPs and not of other out-of-school care arrangements, and children’s outcomes are especially important for those who are of disadvantaged and at-risk backgrounds.

Previous literature has found low-income children benefit more from the developmentally stimulating environment of ASPs when compared to other care settings (Marshall et al., 1997). For example, Posner and Vandell (1994) investigated the relations between the types of afterschool arrangements of low-income third-grade children and academic and social outcomes. Specifically, the researchers examined whether differences existed amongst children who were in maternal care, informally supervised by other adults, self-care, or formal ASPs during the hours following the regular school day. When compared to children in other arrangements, children who participated in ASPs spent the most time actively engaged in academic-related activities, enrichment lessons, and in structured and organized activities with other peers and adults (Posner & Vandell, 1994). Additionally, ASP participants spent the least amount of out-of-school time watching television and engaged in unorganized activities (e.g., tag, hide and seek).

In the same manner that children participating in ASPs have differed in the types of activities and interactions they engage in during the hours following school, differences were also found in their academic and socioemotional outcomes (Posner & Vandell, 1994). When compared to those who were in maternal care or supervised informal afterschool arrangements, children from low-income families who were enrolled in formal ASPs had higher scores on measures of reading and math as well as better ratings regarding work habits, peer relations, and emotional adjustment. Furthermore, the
amount of time children engaged in enrichment activities, such as those offered in ASPs, were positively related to children’s emotional adjustment. On the other hand, the amount of time spent in unorganized outdoor activities, such as those frequently reported by those in maternal care, informal adult supervision, or self-care, were negatively related to emotional adjustment. Thus, children who participate in ASPs are more frequently provided with developmentally appropriate and stimulating activities and experiences with adults and peers; whereas, children in other care arrangements are more likely to engage in unstructured outdoor activities that may expose children to deviant activities or association with delinquent peers (Posner & Vandell, 1994).

In a follow-up study, Posner and Vandell (1999) examined the same low-income sample of students when they were in fifth-grade. Consistent with their previous findings, Posner and Vandell found that children who were in formal ASPs spent more afterschool time engaged in organized academic-related and structured enrichment activities than those in other care arrangements. Furthermore, the reported amount of time children spent engaged in such activities was positively related to emotional adjustment, peer relations, and academic achievement outcomes (Posner & Vandell, 1999). Through the research conducted by Posner and Vandell (1994, 1999), it is evident that children, especially those of low-income backgrounds, benefit from ASP participation.

In a similar manner to the studies by Posner and Vandell (1994, 1999), Mahoney, Lord, and Carryl (2005) investigated the associations between low-income children’s afterschool care arrangements and their academic performance and motivational attributes. When compared to children who were in non-adult care, parent care, or care by
another adult, children who were highly engaged in ASPs had significantly higher scores in reading achievement, effectance motivation (i.e., child is intrinsically motivated when faced with difficult problems), and expectancy of success when encountering a novel task (Mahoney et al., 2005). Effectance motivation encompassed children’s intrinsic motivation to work even when no reward was presented. In a subsequent study, Mahoney, Parente, and Lord (2007) found consistent results that positive associations exist between children who were engaged in ASPs and ratings of effectance and social competence. However, no relations were found between ASP engagement and children’s academic grades, which the researchers proposed an explanation might be that academic gains are more gradual thus it may not have been truly captured by the short-nature of the study.

The primary focus and goals of ASP programs may also contribute to the associations between ASPs that serve predominantly low-income students and children’s outcomes. Lauer et al. (2006) compared various out-of-school programs that targeted at-risk populations with low standardized test scores. Findings illustrated that when compared to programs focused on primarily providing academic assistance, programs that offered structured activities that promoted both academic and social development had students with higher gains in math and reading outcomes (Lauer et al., 2006). These studies illustrate that when compared to other care arrangements, ASPs are unique in their availability of a supervised context where children are able to engage with adults and peers in organized and structured activities that promote positive academic, social, and emotional development. ASPs are also unique in providing opportunities for children
to build supportive relationships with peers of varying ages and adults who mostly hold at least a college degree (Mahoney et al., 2005; 2007).

Previous studies that have examined low-income children’s participation in ASPs help illustrate how ASPs can provide a positive developmental context. The associations found between the experiences, interactions, and resources that low-income children are afforded within ASPs and children’s outcomes may be attributed to the possibility that such experiences would not typically be available to them in other care arrangements (Marshall et al., 1997). Additionally, ASPs can provide low-income children a safe haven from home environments and neighborhoods, especially to those who live in impoverished neighborhoods (Hall et al., 2010). As simplistic as it may seem, low-income children have been found to reap the most benefits from participation in ASPs as they are provided with learning opportunities and activities they may not have experienced otherwise such as arts and crafts or academic tutoring (Mahoney et al., 2005; Vandell, Shernoff, et al., 2005). On the other hand, middle-income children have more means and funds for other extracurricular activities (e.g., organized sports, performing arts, scouts, music lessons) that may afford higher quality experiences than those of ASPs. Thus, the differences of benefits of ASP participation between low- and middle-income children may be due to the possibility that middle-income children were hindered or restricted as a result of enrollment in ASPs (Marshall et al., 1997; Posner & Vandell, 1994).

Although parent care, specifically maternal care, has not been found to be as highly related as formal ASP participation to positive academic and social outcomes of
low-income children (Posner & Vandell, 1994; 1999), the involvement of parents in ASPs may enhance the positive outcomes found. Namely, ASPs were found to provide a unique contribution to low-income children’s development; thus, the current study examined whether parents would provide an additional supportive influence such that they are able to reinforce and discuss with children about what is learned or experienced in the ASP. Thus, with parents’ involvement in ASPs, a mesosystem is formed to provide children a sense of continuation between the ASP and home environments. In summary, previous studies of children’s participation in ASPs have identified a variety of benefits. Though most of the ASP research has focused on comparing types of care arrangements and ASP participation, little is known about the potential influence of parental involvement in ASPs. The current study aimed to extend the previous research that has found low-income children’s developmental gains related to ASP participation by considering the influence of parents’ ASP involvement.

**Parental Involvement in Afterschool Programs**

Although an abundance of evidence supports the positive effects of parents’ involvement within schools, whether through direct school contact or through the promotion of learning at home, there has been little research exploring whether a similar pattern of associations exist for parental involvement in ASPs. From the aforementioned research, it is evident that parental involvement within children’s education can influence, to some degree, children’s academic and social development. However, despite
the literature focused upon ASPs and parent involvement, in their respective domains, little is known about the relationship between the two.

Evidence taken from previous research in similar areas suggests parental ASP involvement would be associated to children’s developmental outcomes. Riggs and Medina (2005) have tried to marry the two areas by investigating associations between children’s attendance in Generacion Diez, a school-based ASP, and parents’ involvement in the program. Through the implementation of a parent home-education component to Generacion Diez, researchers sought to make the program a bridge between the school and family. In order to help Latina/o parents feel less intimidated about becoming involved, the ASP staff were available during afterschool hours, assisted parents in relations with children’s teachers, and helped buffer cultural and language barriers that may have existed between parents and the school. At the end of the two-year period, it was found that children’s attendance rates at the ASP were associated with reports of more frequent parent-teacher contact, parents’ engagement in school activities, and better quality relationships between the school and family (Riggs & Medina, 2005). Findings from this study provide implications that parents’ involvement in ASPs is important to consider such that children reap the benefits whether from ASP participation, parents’ ASP involvement, or as illustrated by Riggs and Medina, parents’ ASP involvement that can lead to parents’ school involvement.

Previous research has also indicated the need for the consideration of parents in out-of-school time programs. Bouffard, Westmoreland, O’Carroll, and Little (2011) have stated parental involvement in programs that serve students can benefit children, the
parents, and the program itself. Pinsoneault and Sass (1998, as cited in Bouffard et al., 2011) examined the relations of children’s outcomes to parents who were engaged in Families and Schools Together (FAST) program, which was a short-term program that involved both parents and children. The researchers found that children who participated in the program had better outcomes in academic and social outcomes than those who did not. Results identified parents’ role in ASP could potentially influence children’s developmental outcomes. Thus, in the current study, the relationship between parental ASP involvement and children’s academic and social outcomes will be investigated.

**Summary**

Parental involvement has been shown in previous literature to be positively related to academic achievement and favorable behavior outcomes (Altschul, 2001; Domina, 2005; Fan & Chen, 2001; Fantuzzo et al., 2000; 2004; Ingram et al., 2007; Tan & Goldberg, 2009). At the same time, children’s participation in ASPs has been found to be characterized by greater time spent engaged in organized academic and structured enrichment activities, which have been further linked to children’s academic and social outcomes (Mahoney et al., 2005; 2007; Posner & Vandell, 1994; 1999; Shernoff, 2010). Although there is a considerable amount of evidence that has documented the relations of parental involvement in schools as well as children’s participation in ASPs to children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes, empirical research has not explored to a great extent how parents’ involvement in ASPs are associated to children’s academic and
socioemotional outcomes. In light of this gap in literature, the present study aimed to examine the relationship between parental involvement in ASPs and children’s academic and socioemotional development outcomes. Based upon the previous literature, the following hypotheses were made. First, parental involvement in ASPs would be negatively related to ratings of children’s emotional and behavioral problems and positively related to prosocial behaviors. Second, greater reports of parental involvement in ASPs would be predictive of higher ratings of academic performance.
Chapter 3

METHOD

Research Question

Given that past parent involvement literature has primarily focused on engagement in children’s regular school day, the current study aimed to extend previous research by examining parental involvement in afterschool programs. Two main questions were investigated to assess the relationship between parents’ ASP involvement practices and children’s developmental outcomes. First, does participants’ self-reports of their afterschool involvement on an adapted version of the Family Involvement Questionnaire – Elementary (FIQ-E; Manz et al., 2004) predict children’s emotional and behavioral outcomes as measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997)? Second, does participants’ self-reports of afterschool involvement, as measured by the adapted version of the FIQ-E, relate to participants’ reports of children’s academic outcomes?

Research Design

The current study investigated the relationship between parents’ involvement in ASPs and children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes. Parents or guardians of
children currently enrolled in an ASP completed a survey packet that requested information regarding various demographic characteristics, their involvement practices, children’s emotional and behavioral tendencies, and academic outcomes. Data from the surveys were quantitatively analyzed using correlation and regression methods to examine associations between parental involvement in ASPs and children’s academic and socioemotional developmental trajectories.

### Setting, Recruitment, and Participants

#### Recruitment

All parents of children enrolled in an Afterschool Education and Safety Program (A.S.E.S.) based at a Northern California public school were invited to participate in the current study during the spring of 2013. Due to findings illustrating that low-income children may have different experiences in ASPs (Hall et al., 2010; Mahoney et al., 2005; Marshall et al., 1997; Vandell, Shernoff, et al., 2005), it is important to note that this school is classified as Title I. Under the Title I classification, federal funds are allocated to the school to help children meet state academic standards as there are predominantly low-income families in the population of the school. Families with multiple children enrolled in the same program were instructed to complete only one survey packet regarding the oldest enrolled child. Survey packets were sent home with students on a designated distribution day. If a student was not present on the primary day of the survey packet distribution, they were provided a copy upon their return. An informational letter
regarding the general details of the study and voluntary nature of participation were distributed to parents and guardians for recruitment in the survey packet (see Appendix A). In addition to the study information, each packet included a consent letter, the survey measures, and an envelope for the return of the packet. All information and questionnaires were printed in both English and Spanish in order to accommodate the two predominant languages spoken by the families in the ASP. As stated in the consent letter (see Appendix B), the return of a completed survey packet signified consent given to participate in the study.

**Setting**

This sample of convenience was drawn from the parents or guardians of children enrolled in an A.S.E.S. afterschool program during the 2012-13 school year. The program typically operates for three hours following each regular school day and serves second- to sixth-grade students. Children are eligible for enrollment within the program under the following circumstances: enrollment in the program during the previous academic year, parental request for placement on the waitlist to be enrolled, teacher or principal referral based upon academic needs due to below grade-level academic performance or poor conduct and behavior, and/or safety concerns. The state-funded program focuses upon two main components: an education and literacy element and an enrichment and recreation element. With those components in mind, the structure of the program is based upon activities to enhance student's academic performance to state standards, provide enrichment activities, and promote social engagement. The broad goals of the program
are to ensure a safe environment to students following the school day and to provide activities that promote positive academic, social, and physical health outcomes. Although content areas vary slightly from day to day, the typical schedule includes time for snack, homework, enrichment learning (e.g., arts and crafts, music) and supervised and structured recreation (e.g., soccer, dodge ball). During homework time, students are separated into classrooms according to grade to receive tutoring and homework help from a lead tutor with assistance from extra tutors or student volunteers per availability. However, snack time, enrichment, and recreational activities generally involve the whole program to allow for intermingling and interaction between grades.

Participants

Out of approximately 100 students enrolled in the program at the time of data collection, fifty-four parents returned completed surveys to the researcher. Twenty participants (37%) responded using the English version of the survey packet and thirty-four participants (63%) responded in Spanish. Forty-three participants reported they were mothers of the target child (79%), 9 were fathers (17%), one grandmother (2%), and one person did not specify their relationship. According to the demographic data collected, 13% of participants were single or never married, 74% were married, 6% were separated, and 6% were divorced. One person did not specify their marital status. Nearly 87% of participants described their ethnic background as Hispanic/Latino. The remaining participants described their ethnicity as Asian/Pacific Islander (5%), White/Caucasian (4%) and Black/African American (2%). One person declined to specify their ethnic
background. In addition, participants reported their highest education level ranging from less than a high school diploma to an advanced college degree such as an MA or PhD, with a mean educational level of 1.94, with a 1 signifying less than a high school diploma and a 2 signifying a high school diploma or GED. Of the sample, 30% of parents were unemployed or did not work for pay, 24% worked less than 19 hours, 5% worked between 20 and 34 hours, 37% worked 35 or more hours, and two people did not answer. The current study did not request information regarding annual gross household income; however, based on the status of the school as being under the Title I classification, there is a high percentage of the student population that are from low-income families.

The survey also asked parent or guardian participants to provide demographic information regarding their child enrolled in the A.S.E.S. program, or the oldest when multiple children were enrolled. Ninety-four percent of children lived with the informant at least 75% of the time. The reported number of adults (age 18 years and over) per household including the participant ranged from 1 to 5 \((M = 2.42, SD = 0.84)\), while the number of children per household ranged from 1 to 7 \((M = 2.61, SD = 1.12)\). There were 11 second-grade students, 8 third-grade students, 7 fourth-grade students, 9 fifth-grade students, 16 sixth-grade students, and three did not specify. Out of 54 target students, 33 were girls (61%), 10 were boys (19%). Eleven respondents did not specify whether their child was a female or male. The reported mean of the duration of children’s enrollment in the program reported by parents was 2.02 years with a range from about one month to five years.
Measures

Demographic Survey

Questions regarding several demographic characteristics were included in the survey packet (see Appendix C). Participants indicated their race/ethnicity, family size, parent employment (number of hours), marital status, highest level of education, age and gender of the child (or oldest child if more than one), duration of time the child has been enrolled within the ASP, their relation to the child, and percentage of time the child is in their legal custody if the child lives in more than one home on a regular basis. Due to the data demonstrating the question asking about the amount of time children spent in the participants’ custody was possibly unreliable and invalid, it was not included in the main analyses.

Parental Involvement

To measure parents’ afterschool involvement, participants completed an adapted version of the Family Involvement Questionnaire - Elementary (FIQ-E; Manz et al., 2004). The FIQ-E is a modified version that extends the original Family Involvement Questionnaire for Early Childhood (FIQ-EC, Fantuzzo et al., 2000) developed to assess primary caregivers’ involvement in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade students’ education. Fantuzzo et al. (2000) originally developed the FIQ-EC for use in an elementary school population. The FIQ is a multidimensional scale based upon Epstein’s (1995) typologies used to assess and evaluate family involvement: parenting,
communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community.

For the purposes of this study, the FIQ-E was adapted to assess parents’ involvement in elementary-age children’s ASP. To accommodate for the prevalence of Spanish speaking parents and eliminate possible language barriers to participation, two A.S.E.S. staff members translated the FIQ-E to Spanish. Subsequently, in order to ensure reliable translation, one person translated the measure into Spanish and the other person back-translated it to English.

The FIQ-E included 46 Likert-type items in which respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they participated in different activities (Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always). These were organized into three main constructs of involvement based on the original publication of the measure: School-Based Involvement, Home-Based Involvement, and Home-School Conferencing (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). The original subscales were found to be highly reliable, with Cronbach’s alphas of .85, .85, and .81 for School-Based Involvement, Home-Based Involvement, and Home-School Conferencing, respectively. For the purposes of this study, 12 adapted questions were used to measure parents’ afterschool involvement behaviors and practices. This included 10 items from the Home-School Conferencing scale, which was adapted to Home-Afterschool Conferencing, and two items created to reflect Parent-Child Communication about experiences in the ASP (see Appendix D). FIQ items were scored from one to four. Separate scales existed for calculated Parent-Child Communication and Home-
Afterschool Conferencing (see Table 1). In the current sample, these two factors were reliable, $\alpha \geq .78$.

**Child Outcomes**

**Academic achievement.** Children’s academic outcomes were assessed using three items in which parents were asked to report on their child’s academic performance during the last report card period (see Appendix C). First, participants were asked to rate their child’s overall academic performance during the last report card period on a 5-point Likert scale (*Far below grade level, Somewhat below grade level, At grade level, Somewhat above grade level, Far above grade level*). Subsequently, two free response items asked parents to fill in their child’s best and worst subjects as reflected in their last report card and rate them each using the same 5-point Likert scale (*Far below grade level, Somewhat below grade level, At grade level, Somewhat above grade level, Far above grade level*). The two free response items and their ratings were not used in the current analyses due to lack of reliability and validity; thus, only parent reports of children’s overall academic performance was used in the data analyses.

**Socioemotional development.** Participants completed the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997), which was distributed in both Spanish and English. The SDQ for children ages four to ten (SDQ 4-10) was used to account for the ages of the majority of students in the A.S.E.S. program (see Appendix E). Children’s behavioral and emotional difficulties and prosocial tendencies were assessed through 25-items that measured five different scales: Hyperactivity (e.g.,
“restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long,” “easily distracted, concentration wanders), Emotional Symptoms (e.g., “many worries, often seems worried,” “often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful”), Conduct Problems (e.g., “often fights with other children or bullies them,” “often has temper tantrums or hot tempers”), Peer Problems (e.g., “rather solitary, tends to play alone,” “gets on better with adults than with other children”), and Prosocial Behaviors (e.g., “considerate of other people’s feelings,” “helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill”). A Total Difficulties Score was also generated by summing the scores for hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, and peer problems.

Items were rated by participants based on its accuracy in reflecting their child’s behaviors over the last six months or the current school year on a 3-point Likert scale (Not True, Somewhat True, Certainly True). SDQ items were scored from one to three. Separate scales existed for calculated Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems, Prosocial Behaviors, and a Total Difficulties Score (see Table 1).
Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ) and Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SDQ</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Symptoms</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Problems</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Problems</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Difficulties Score</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIQ</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Child Communication</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Afterschool Conferencing</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procedure

Following the approval of the Institutional Review Board of California State University of Sacramento’s Child Development Department, the director of the target A.S.E.S. program and the principal of the school at which the program was based were contacted and informed about the study. Following the consent provided by both, all parents of children enrolled in the A.S.E.S. program were invited to participate in the current study. Survey packets were sent home with children that included the general information regarding the study, the purpose of the study, and contact information for further inquiries; a consent form describing the data collection procedures, methods of confidentiality, and potential benefits or risks of participation; and the demographic,
parent involvement, and child outcome surveys. To maintain anonymity, the return of the completed packets in a sealed envelope to a secure drop box located at the ASP school site signified given consent, as parents were not asked to supply any identifying information in the questionnaires. Upon the return of the packet, program staff were instructed to give the parent or child a raffle ticket for a chance to enter into a gift card drawing for a $20 gift card to Target. In addition, children earned class points for their participation, which was a reward system the A.S.E.S. program utilized to award the most outstanding class grade of each trimester. As an incentive for the prompt return of survey packets to the ASP, children earned double the amount of class points and two entries into the Target gift card raffle if they returned the survey packet within the first week following the distribution of survey packets to families. To increase the rate of return, the researcher also distributed two short fliers during the data collection period to remind parents to return their surveys if they were interested in participating and the deadlines for participation.

Data Analysis

First, independent samples t-tests were computed between participants who responded in English and Spanish to determine whether statistically significant differences existed in their responses on the survey measures. Additional t-tests were also conducted to determine whether significant differences existed amongst participant responses based upon children’s gender and reported informant relationship with the
child. Subsequently, preliminary analyses using correlational methods were conducted to examine the relations and address associations between multiple demographic variables and participant scores on the FIQ-E (i.e., Home-Afterschool Conferencing, Parent-Child Communication), SDQ (Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Peer Problems, Prosocial Behaviors, and a Total Difficulties Score), and academic outcomes (overall academic performance).

Second, to address the hypotheses regarding parents’ ASP involvement and children’s outcomes, regression analyses were conducted. In order to test for the first hypothesis of whether parent involvement in children’s ASP was predictive of children’s socioemotional outcomes, participant ratings on the SDQ illustrating emotional and behavioral outcomes were entered as the dependent variable in the first series of regressions. Parents’ reports of children’s overall academic performance were entered as the dependent variable in the second series of regressions in order to test for predictability of parents’ afterschool involvement on children’s academic outcomes.
RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Several preliminary analyses were conducted to determine associations amongst multiple variables. First, prior to computing relations among other study variables, independent samples $t$-tests were conducted to compare responses according to parent participants who completed survey subscales in English versus Spanish, informant relationship to child reported, and child gender to investigate whether differences existed. $T$-tests revealed that English and Spanish participants did not significantly differ in their responses on the FIQ, SDQ, and reports of children’s overall academic performance, $t_{(52)} \leq 1.61, p \geq .11$. Additionally, in another series of independent $t$-tests, children’s gender was also compared and results demonstrated that only marginally significant differences on scores of peer problems were found, $t_{(41)} = 1.94, p = .06$. Contrary to what has been found in previous literature, girls received higher ratings of peer problems ($M = 1.48, SD = .36$) than boys ($M = 1.24, SD = .23$). No other significant gender differences were found, $t_{(41)} \leq 1.76, p \geq .09$. Lastly, there were no significant differences between dependent variables when questionnaires were completed by the mother, father, or other informants of the target child, $t_{(51)} \leq -1.86, p \geq .07$. Thus,
languages of participants’ responses, child gender, and participant relationship with the
target child were not used in subsequent analyses.

Second, Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to examine if
various demographic characteristics were associated to parents’ reports on the FIQ, SDQ,
and of children’s overall academic performance. Findings indicated that length of time
children were enrolled in the A.S.E.S. program at the time of data collection was not
significantly correlated with children’s scores on the FIQ, SDQ, and academic
performance, *r*(50) ≤ -.21, *p* ≥ .13. However, the correlation between the reported length
of ASP enrollment and parents’ reports of children’s overall academic performance
approached statistical significance, *r*(50) = .24, *p* = .09.

Parents’ highest level of education was positively correlated with parents’ reports
of children’s conduct problems, *r*(52) = .35, *p* = .01. Results demonstrated a marginal
positive correlation between parent education levels and children’s prosocial scores, *r*(52)
= .24, *p* = .08. Other correlations with parent education level were not statistically
significant, *r*(52) ≤ .17, *p* ≥ .21.

A significant negative correlation was also found between the number of children
living in the household who were under the 18-years old, and parents’ reports of parent-
child communication, *r*(52) = -.49, *p* = .00. Specifically, in households with more
children, parent participants reported lower frequency of parent-child communication. No
other significant correlations were found related to number of children, *r*(52) ≤ -.21, *p* ≥ .13.
Correlations between percentage of time the target child spent with the participant and dependent variables were computed. There were only six children in this sample that were in shared custody arrangements; whereas, the remaining participants reported the target child spent 100% of their time in the participants’ custody. Of those, there was a significant negative correlation between the amount of time spent in the participants’ custody and children’s emotional symptoms, \( r(6) = -.75, p = .03 \). In other words, the greater percentage of time that the target child spent in the respondents’ custody, the fewer emotional symptoms exhibited by children. Other associations with percentage of custody were not found to be statistically significant, \( rs(6) \leq .55, p \geq .16 \). Because of the low number of reported children with shared custody arrangements, this variable was not included in further analyses.

Lastly, associations between child grade level and parents’ ratings on the FIQ, SDQ, and children’s academic performance were analyzed. Statistically significant correlations were found between children’s grade and parents’ reports of children’s overall academic performance, \( r(49) = .40, p < .01 \). Higher grade levels were related to higher parent-ratings of children’s overall academic performance. Other variables were not related to children’s grade, \( rs(49) \leq .12, p \geq .42 \).

**Descriptive Statistics**

Participant responses on the items of the FIQ were examined to determine the frequency of reports on each survey item. As illustrated in Table 2, participants’ reported
frequency on items reflecting involvement in the ASP through parent-child communication was on average between three and four, which indicates a report of “often” or “always” on items. On the other hand, participant reports of home-afterschool conferencing items ranged between one and three indicating an average frequency of “rarely,” “sometimes,” or “often.” Results of the FIQ demonstrate that participants are involved in the A.S.E.S. program through methods of parent-child communication more frequently than forms of home-afterschool conferencing.
Table 2

Percentage of Participant Responses on Items of the Family Involvement Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Participant Responses (%)</th>
<th>1 = Rarely</th>
<th>2 = Sometimes</th>
<th>3 = Often</th>
<th>4 = Always</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent-Child Communication</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask my child about their day during A.S.E.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask my child about their activities or experiences in A.S.E.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Home-Afterschool Conferencing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about the daily school routine.</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about classroom or program rules.</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff if I am concerned about something my child said.</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about my child’s relationship with peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I write notes to A.S.E.S. staff about my child or activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about my child’s accomplishments.</td>
<td></td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about my child’s difficulties at school and/or A.S.E.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about work my child should practice at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about personal matters if it is relevant to school and/or A.S.E.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about disciplinary matters.</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis Testing

Predicting Socioemotional Development Outcomes

A series of linear regressions was conducted to test the first hypothesis that greater reports of parents’ involvement in children’s ASP, as measured by the FIQ, would be associated to lower ratings on the difficulties subscales (i.e., emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems, prosocial, total difficulties score) and higher ratings of prosocial skills on the SDQ. Due to statistically significant correlations with children’s scores on the conduct problems subscale of the SDQ, parent education was included in the regression analysis as a control variable. The number of children reported living in the household was also included as a control variable due its significant negative relationship with parents’ reports of parent-child communication.

Regressions were conducted to decipher which variables (e.g., FIQ, parent education, number of children in the household) predicted conduct problem scores. Children’s conduct problems score was significantly predicted, $F(4, 49) = 2.80, p < .05$, with parent education being the only significant positive predictor, $\beta = .36, p < .01$ (see Table 3). Results demonstrate that the higher participants reported their educational level, the higher the ratings of conduct problems exhibited by children.

The regression predicting hyperactivity was statistically significant, $F(4, 49) = 3.44, p < .05$, with parent-child communication being the predictor, $\beta = -.49, p < .01$ (see Table 3). When compared to children whose parents’ reported lower levels of involvement in their ASP, children whose parents reported more frequent parent-child
communication about their experiences and day at their ASP were more likely to have lower parent-rated scores on the SDQ hyperactivity subscale.

Additionally, children’s total difficulties score on the SDQ was significantly predicted, $F(4, 49) = 3.70, p < .05$, by parents’ reports of parent-child communication on the FIQ. Parent-child communication was negatively related to children’s total difficulty scores, $\beta = -0.57, p < .01$ (see Table 3). Thus, higher average levels of parent-reported parent-child communication were related to lower rates of children’s total difficulties. Results showed no significant regressions with other subscales on the SDQ, adjusted $R^2 \leq .02$.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Conduct Problems</th>
<th>Hyperactivity</th>
<th>Total Difficulties Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Child Communication</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.49**</td>
<td>-0.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Afterschool Conferencing</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent education</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of children in household</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>2.80*</td>
<td>3.44*</td>
<td>3.70*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.

Predicting Academic Trajectories

In order to test the second hypothesis that greater reports of parent involvement in children’s ASPs as measured by the FIQ would be associated to greater parent-ratings of
academic outcome variables, a second regression analysis was conducted. Thus, reports of parent-child communication and home-afterschool conferencing were included as predictors and ratings of children’s overall academic performance was entered as the dependent variable. Given that significant correlations were found with overall academic performance, children’s grade level was included as a control variable. Due to the statistically significant correlation with participants' parent-child communication scores, the number of children reported living in the household was also included as a control variable.

The regression analysis predicting overall academic performance was found to be statistically significant, $F(4, 46) = 3.20, p < .05$, with children’s grade as the positive predictor, $\beta = .43, p < .01$ (see Table 4). When considering parent-child communication, overall academic performance approached significance, $\beta = .28, p = .08$. Higher ratings of children’s overall academic achievement, as rated by parents, was predicted by higher grade levels and having parents who communicated with and asked their children about their experiences in A.S.E.S.
Table 4

*Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Academic Performance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Overall Academic Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Child Communication</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-Afterschool Conferencing</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child grade level</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of children in household</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>3.20*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$. 
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The central goal of the current study was to examine the associations between parent involvement in ASPs and children’s academic achievement and socioemotional development. Though positive aspects of parental involvement in children’s education have been shown to promote favorable academic and social developmental outcomes (Altschul, 2011; El Nokali et al., 2010; Fantuzzo et al., 2004; McWayne et al., 2004), parents’ involvement in children’s ASPs have not been substantially researched. Because children’s participation in ASPs has been associated with positive outcomes (Hall et al., 2010; Mahoney et al., 2005; 2007; Posner & Vandell, 1999; Shernoff, 2010), assessing the role of parents’ involvement in ASPs and its relation to children’s developmental trajectories is an important next step in this area of study.

Based upon findings of previous research in the separate domains of parent involvement and afterschool program engagement, two hypotheses were tested when examining parents’ involvement in ASPs and the relation of this involvement to children’s academic and socioemotional developmental outcomes. First, it was hypothesized that children whose parents were more involved in their afterschool program would have less behavior problems and greater reports of prosocial behavior than those with less involved parents (Fantuzzo et al., 2004; Junge et al., 2003; Mahoney et al. 2005; McWayne et al., 2004). Second, it was posited that parents’ involvement in
children’s afterschool programs would be positively related to children’s academic outcomes (Hall et al., 2010; Ingram et al., 2007; Shernoff, 2010). This chapter will provide a discussion of the major findings from the study based upon these hypotheses followed by the presentation of the limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, and recommendations for practice.

**Parent Involvement in ASPs**

Through examining the descriptive analyses of participants’ responses on the FIQ, findings demonstrate that participants engaged in their children’s ASP through practices that reflected parent-child communication more frequently than through means of home-school conferencing. These findings suggest parent involvement in ASPs may be more indirect such that parents more frequently engage in discussions with children regarding their experiences rather than volunteering at or communicating directly with the program. This finding may be due to the fundamental nature of ASPs as serving the purpose of an extended care arrangement that focuses upon providing structured activities; parents typically are unavailable during the hours the programs are in session due to work or other obligations. Thus, more direct forms of ASP involvement may be less feasible for parents. Additionally, for this particular A.S.E.S. program, children meet parents outside of the program during dismissal rather than caregivers entering the program to pick up students. Thus, interactions between parents and ASP staff that encompass home-
afterschool conferencing are less frequent and afforded except in cases where disciplinary actions occurred during the ASP time.

**Socioemotional Development and Parental Involvement**

Contrary to previous literature, preliminary analyses using *t*-tests demonstrated gender differences in participant reports of children’s peer problems approached significance with higher scores reported for girls. This finding may be explained by referencing the findings of Pierce et al. (2010) in which observer ratings indicated significant associations between positive ASP staff-child relations and social skills with peers for boys, but not girls. Thus, boys’ relations with ASP staff and the gains associated to ASP participation may be related to more positive peer relations; whereas, for girls, participation may not be related to better peer relations. This association may provide an explanation to the underlying relationship of marginally greater peer problems reported amongst girls found in the current study. Boys may have better social skills with peers hence exhibiting less peer problems, but further study is needed, as the current study did not directly measure ASP staff-child relations.

Marginally consistent with the first hypothesis, the multivariate analyses of the relationship between FIQ-E reports and SDQ scores determined associations between parents’ ASP involvement and children’s emotional and behavioral tendencies. Specifically, greater reports of parent-child communication negatively predicted children’s total difficulties, hyperactive tendencies (e.g., restlessness, fidgeting,
distractible, unreflective, not persistent) and conduct problems (e.g., temper tantrums, disobedient, fights or bullies others, lies, steals). This suggests that parents who engage in discussions with children may learn of the various difficulties or conflicts that they experience in their ASP. In addition, children may disclose disciplinary matters that occurred with ASP staff as a result of behavioral issues leading to parents discussing with children the possible repercussions or resolutions to such obstacles. Parent-child communication can also encourage discussions about the program rules or the daily structure of the program. With this open communication, parents and children are able to discuss what is expected and strategies for following the rules. In doing so, children are aware that parents understand what type of behavior is expected in the ASP and if parents adopt such expectations in the home, it may decrease the occurrence of problems arising in the ASP environment.

These results are consistent with findings of previous research on parent involvement in the regular school day. For instance, prior research has found home-based involvement, such as parent-child communication, was negatively related to classroom behavior problems (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). Home-based involvement practices have also been found by researchers to be associated to higher ratings of children’s self-control, responsibility, cooperative behavior, and social skills (McWayne et al., 2004). Furthermore, this finding is consistent with previous literature that has found more social gains than academic, as these are the factors that are frequently focused upon by parents and addressed if behavioral or social issues arise (El Nokali et al., 2010).
Findings are also consistent with results in previous research that children’s ASP participation is positively associated to socioemotional gains (Junge et al., 2003; Mahoney et al., 2007; Posner & Vandell, 1994; Shernoff, 2010). However, the exact nature of the relationship underlying the results indicating negative associations between parents’ afterschool involvement and children’s socioemotional outcomes is unclear. Further research would need to be conducted to determine whether associations are due to parental involvement or children’s ASP participation or an interaction between the two through parents’ ASP involvement.

While the findings of the current study did confirm that parents’ involvement was negatively related to behavioral difficulties, results did not support the hypothesis that positive relations between parental afterschool involvement and children’s prosocial tendencies would be found. The expected association between parent involvement in ASPs and children’s prosocial tendencies may not have been supported due to parents’ general tendency to focus more on the difficulties that children face at school rather than on the promotion of prosocial behaviors. For example, parent and child discussion about socioemotional behavior may more likely to be prompted if disciplinary matters arose during ASP time. Thus, these are the issues that would be addressed rather than the discussion of promoting prosocial behaviors. However, it is unclear whether such findings are specific to the current study; thus, further research is still needed.
Achievement and Parental Involvement

Analyses revealed that greater engagement in parent-child communication, but not home-afterschool conferencing, was positively related to children’s overall academic performance. This moderately supports the second hypotheses that parental involvement in children’s ASPs would predict children’s academic achievement. Findings illustrate that parents who ask about the child’s day or experiences in their ASP may discuss the academic difficulties children faced when doing their homework or other academic-related activities engaged in during the ASP. As a result, parents may provide supplemental homework help to what was offered at the ASP or discuss with children how they overcame those difficulties. In addition, children may report to parents about certain academic skills or strategies that they learned from their ASP tutoring or homework help and in turn, parents could practice and reinforce those lessons with children. Lastly, parents may learn of children’s academic accomplishments in the ASP and positively reinforce such achievements, which could result in greater academic gains.

It is not immediately clear why home-afterschool conferencing was not related to children’s overall communication, but a possible explanation could be that parents may be more likely to contact ASP staff if children were already experiencing academic difficulties. Thus, children were already susceptible to lower ratings of overall academic performance even if parents’ engaged in frequent home-afterschool conferencing. However, further research is needed to determine whether such relations are specific to the current sample.
The current study’s finding that parent-child communication is related to children’s academic outcomes are consistent with previous research on parental involvement that has identified home-based parent involvement as having greater positive associations to academic outcomes when compared to other forms of involvement such as through home-afterschool conferencing (Altschul, 2011; Fantuzzo et al., 2007; Ingram et al., 2007; McWayne et al., 2004). While this may be true, it is hard to determine whether these gains were as a result of parents’ involvement in the formal school setting or due to children’s ASP participation. However, findings illustrate the possibility that parents’ involvement in ASPs can enhance the benefits that children reap (Bouffard et al., 2011); given that previous studies have found positive relations between children’s engagement in ASPs and academic-related outcomes (Mahoney et al., 2005; 2007; Shernoff, 2010).

**Limitations**

There were some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results of the current study on parents’ involvement in children’s ASPs. First, due to the recruitment of participants from one ASP, the study’s findings may only be representative of the specific convenience sample. This sample does not provide understanding to other types of A.S.E.S. programs or ASPs as each program may have a different daily structure and procedures that may influence various factors. For example, although the school generally recommends parental involvement in children’s schooling, the particular ASP of the current study did not have a written and established parent
involvement plan. However, other ASPs that have adopted a parent involvement policy into their program structure may reach different findings and associations. Moreover, the descriptive statistics indicated that the sample predominantly reported their ethnicity as of Hispanic or Latino descent. Also, given that the program was based at a Title I school, it is demonstrated that the school’s population is predominantly of low socioeconomic status. Thus, the participants and findings of the study may only be generalizable and representative of those families and participants enrolled in this specific A.S.E.S. program.

Because the data in this study were collected solely through self-report surveys, findings are also vulnerable to various problems. A response bias may have occurred where participants may have responded in a nature that they perceived the researcher would have desired rather than according to their true beliefs and opinions. Responses may have also been influenced due to the nature of some of the questions (e.g., asking about their percent of custody over the child, rating their child’s tendency to steal), it is possible that participants may have felt uncomfortable. Additionally, as the participant was the sole source of information for the collected data, it may be skewed and shaped to informants’ beliefs of their ASP involvement and of their child’s academic and socioemotional ratings. Lastly, if respondents left a question blank, there was no way to obtain a response to the question due to the anonymous nature of their participation. A missing response may have also been reflective of the potential that participants may not have understood the question as intended or read the question thoroughly.
Due to the fact that there was no equivalent version of the FIQ-E survey instrument specified for ASP involvement, the researcher adapted items from using teacher and participant terms to refer to ASP staff. A Spanish version of the adapted version was created in order to serve the specific program sample. These adapted versions were not piloted prior to data collection. As a result, the adapted version of the FIQ-E survey items may have omitted important items or contained unclear terms. Reliability analysis of the current responses, however, indicated good reliability of the items in the adapted FIQ-E used in this study. As illustrated by participant responses, ASP involvement may be more indirect through forms of parent-child communication. As the adapted FIQ-E survey included two items of parent-child communication, it may not have fully captured the relations between parent and children regarding ASP participation.

Lastly with consideration of the current study using a correlational design, methodological challenges should be taken into account with caution when interpreting the research findings. While statistically significant relations between parents’ afterschool involvement and children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes have been demonstrated by these data, the exact mechanisms underlying this relationship are unclear. It is difficult to determine whether gains in academic, emotional, and behavioral variables were a direct result of parents’ involvement in children’s ASP. Such relationships may be that parents’ were already involved in children’s schooling through the regular school day or that children were already susceptible to such outcomes solely due to their participation in the ASP. Additionally, as presented through
Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory (1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and Epstein’s (1995) parent involvement theory, the nature of development is bidirectional. Thus, it is difficult to discern the exact relationship and explain the process that occurs for the results that were exhibited in the research data.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Despite the vast amount of literature that has been dedicated to examining the effects of parental involvement in formal school settings as well as children’s participation in ASPs, very little research has investigated the effects of parents’ involvement in ASPs. The exploratory nature of the current study has provided some information and suggestions that parents’ roles in ASPs should be considered. For instance, results identified that parent-child communication regarding children’s experiences in the ASP are negatively related to children’s socioemotional outcomes (e.g., hyperactivity, conduct problems, total difficulties) and positively associated to overall academic performance. Due to the use of correlations, further study using other methods may be needed to fully understand the nature of the relationship between parents and ASPs.

Since all participants were recruited from one ASP, future research should consider recruiting participants from different school sites as well as different programs other than solely A.S.E.S. programs. It would provide a broader understanding and allow for generalizability of the findings. Also, the use of a more diverse population needs to be
studied as the current study had a sample of predominantly low-income and Hispanic/Latino participants. With consideration of previous studies suggesting that children of low socioeconomic background experience more benefits of ASP participation (Hall et al., 2010; Halpern, 2002; Lauer et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 1997; Posner & Vandell, 1999), a comparison between a low and high socioeconomic sample could show whether differences exist amongst the experiences and the gains of children in ASPs and parents’ involvement in them.

Instead of solely relying on participants’ self-reports as the sole source of data, future studies should collect information from ASP staff, the target child, and even the child’s school teachers to consider the multiple perspectives of all people involved. With consideration of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, future researchers might consider collecting data from each layer or context involving the child, the parents, and the ASP (i.e., in the home, school, and ASP microsystems). Including the child as a source of data should also be considered given that human development is bidirectional in that children are equally as influential as parents or ASPs in their own development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Future studies may also benefit from utilizing various measures of children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes (e.g., standardized test scores, obtaining report card grades directly from the teacher, test instruments) to supplement parents’ reports. Additionally, measures of parental involvement in ASPs should incorporate more direct measures of parent-child communication to fully understand parents’ ASP involvement as it was found to be related to children’s outcomes, but not home-afterschool conferencing.
Future research may also consider using a longitudinal design in order to determine whether gains or changes in outcomes are due to parents’ involvement in ASPs given that the current study only collected data at the end of the school year. Specifically, using a pretest/posttest design where data are collected prior to children’s enrollment in the program for waitlisted students and every year thereafter to determine whether significant differences in academic and socioemotional outcomes develop over time. Lastly, researchers may consider looking at parents’ involvement practices in children’s formal schooling while examining the relations between parental involvement in ASPs. By doing so, researchers can determine whether parents who are more involved in the regular school day are generally more involved in children’s ASPs and to decipher whether outcomes are due to parents’ involvement in the school, children’s ASP, or the combination and interaction between both.

**Recommendations for Practice**

The findings from the current study make several important implications that are potentially important for consideration by parents and ASP directors and staff. Given the significance of parent-child communication about children’s ASP experiences on both academic and social outcomes as illustrated by the findings of the current study, parents’ roles in ASPs deserve some attention.

As findings demonstrate that parents do play an important role in ASPs, parents should recognize this potential. Findings of the current study showed that parent-child
communication, but not home-afterschool conferencing, to be associated to children’s outcomes. Thus, even if the program that the child participates in does not actively promote parent engagement, the parent can elicit involvement in the home without direct interaction with children’s ASP. Parent-child communication can occur through eliciting and engaging in conversation with children about their ASP. Conversations can include asking children about their ASP activities or experiences about their day in the ASP.

Although the parent-child communication does not necessarily require interaction with the ASP, it is important and may be beneficial for ASP directors and staff to encourage such communication. Program directors could hold informational meetings with parents in which they not only can introduce the program and previous findings of associations of ASP participation to positive outcomes, but also where they can discuss the influence parents have in affecting or even enhancing those outcomes. Providing parents with this evidence and information may help promote parental involvement.

At the very minimum, all programs should adopt a parent engagement plan of which resources are devoted to increasing parental involvement in the ASP. Program directors should designate time and resources to train staff about the importance of involving parents in the programs. Programs can design and offer opportunities for parents to be involved in the ASP in meaningful ways such as parent workshops, inviting parents to volunteer in the ASP, and family nights designed for parents and children to interact (Bouffard et al., 2011), which can, in turn, foster greater parent-child communication regarding the ASP.
Parent involvement in ASPs may often be overlooked or not immediately recognized as crucial given that ASPs are by nature a source of supervision and childcare following the regular school day. Thus, parents are typically at work while such programs are in session, which may limit their ability to engage in home-afterschool conferencing that is shown by direct involvement in the programs. However, programs can still implement other strategies to encourage parents’ involvement when parents are unable to be active at the ASP such as sending children home with regular updates from the ASP about the children’s accomplishments or difficulties. Children can also play the role of a link between the ASP and the family where programs can assign students with questions and topics of which they can talk with parents about regarding their ASP time. Furthermore, even a simple reminder from ASP staff to children during the time of dismissal to tell parents about one thing they did or experienced during their day at the ASP can encourage and promote conversation between parents and children about the program and thereby afford parent-child communication. If ASPs are welcoming and encourage parents to participate in conversation with their child about the ASP by offering various opportunities for involvement, a partnership can be built between the ASP and family. This collaboration constructed with the focus of promoting children’s well-being and positive development, as suggested by Epstein (1995), may potentially enhance and improve the outcomes relating to parental involvement in ASPs.
Conclusions

The current study has identified associations between parental involvement in ASPs and children’s academic achievement and socioemotional outcomes. Significant findings were found that illustrated the importance for parent-child communication about children’s experiences in ASPs. Specifically, parent-child communication, which entails the instances in which parents’ engage in conversation with children about their ASP time or the activities they participated in, were negatively associated to children’s overall total difficulties and tendencies of hyperactivity and conduct problems. In addition, parent-child communication was positively associated to children’s overall academic performance. However, associations between children’s academic and socioemotional outcomes and home-afterschool conferencing were not found. Due to the correlational design of the study, conclusions about the causal relationship or underlying process of the relationship between parents’ ASP engagement and children’s achievement and social gains can not be drawn. However, with the results from the study, it is clear that parents’ involvement does play an influential role and should be considered and further explored in future research. Although there were limitations of the current study that should be considered, the study contributed to the existing literature by exploring the unchartered domain of parents’ ASP involvement with results suggesting its significant associations to children’s developmental outcomes.
Appendices
Appendix A

Survey Packet Informational Letter
Dear Parent/Guardian,

Hello, my name is Lily Low and I have been an A.S.E.S. program tutor for the past two years. In addition to tutoring, I am currently a student at California State University, Sacramento in the Masters program for Child Development. As a part of my graduation and program requirements, I am currently conducting a thesis study examining the outcomes of children participating in afterschool programs.

I am asking you to please take some time to review and complete the two attached surveys and return them sealed within the attached envelope to a tutor in [insert location] by Tuesday, May 21st. If you have more than one child enrolled within the A.S.E.S. program, please complete and return only one survey packet for the oldest child enrolled.

If you agree to participate and complete the survey packet, you will receive a raffle ticket that enters you into a drawing for a chance to win a $20 Target gift card. Your child will also earn class points for your participation. If your survey is returned by Friday, May 17th your child will earn 50 class points and you will receive two entries into the raffle! Your child or yourself can still bring the survey back Monday or Tuesday next week for 25 points and one entry into the raffle.

Your participation is voluntary and completely anonymous. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR CHILD(REN)'S NAME(S) ON ANY OF THE PROVIDED MATERIALS. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Lily Low at [insert email] or Dr. Kristen Alexander, Associate Professor of Child Development. Thank you in advance for your time and willingness to participate in this survey.

Sincerely,

Lily Low
Child Development Masters Student
California State University, Sacramento
Appendix B

Participant Consent Letter
Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in research, which will be conducted by Lily Low who is both a tutor in the A.S.E.S. program and a student in the Child Development Masters Program at California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of the study is to investigate children’s outcomes in afterschool programs for a school assignment.

If you agree to participate, you are asked to complete three attached surveys about your own and your child’s participation in afterschool services and your child’s skills and abilities. Completed surveys should be returned within a sealed envelope to the designated box in your child’s classroom. The sealed envelopes will be collected by the researcher and only be opened once offsite for the purposes of doing this research. Your completion and return of the survey packet indicates you have read this page and agree to participate.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may decline to participate in this study without any consequences. Not participating will not affect your child’s participation in A.S.E.S. in any way. If any questions may seem personal, you do not have to answer any question if you do not want to.

You may not personally benefit from participating in this research. However, results and findings from the study may help to develop the understanding of children’s outcomes in afterschool programs. Also, for your return of a completed survey, you will receive a raffle ticket to be entered into a drawing for a $20 Target gift card and your child will earn class points.

The survey questions will not ask you to provide any identifying information so your answers are completely anonymous. Your participation in this study will be kept confidential. However, the results of the study as a whole may be shared with the community, but when that happens no individual student or school will be identified. After the completion of the study, all completed packets will be destroyed.
If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Lily Low at Dr. Kristen Alexander, Associate Professor of Child Development.
Appendix C

Demographics and Academic Achievement Survey
QUESTIONNAIRE 1

Please respond to the following questions. Your responses are completely anonymous and you may skip any questions you choose.

1. **Person Completing this survey:** (Circle One)
   - Mother
   - Father
   - Other (Specify):

2. **What is your current marital status?** (Circle One)
   - a. Single or Never Married
   - b. Married
   - c. Separated
   - d. Divorced
   - e. Widowed

3. **Does your child (or the oldest child if you have more than one enrolled in A.S.E.S.) live in more than one home on a regular basis (e.g., because parents share custody)?**
   - a. Yes
   - b. No

4. **If you answered, “Yes” to question 3, what percent of the time is the child in your legal custody?**
   - a. 25%
   - b. 50%
   - c. 75%
   - d. 100%

5. **Which best describes your race or ethnicity?** (Circle One)
   - a. Native American or Alaskan Native
   - b. Asian or Pacific Islander
   - c. Black or African American
   - d. White/Caucasian (Not Hispanic)
   - e. Hispanic/Latino
   - f. Other

6. **What is the highest level of education you have completed?** (Circle One)
   - a. Less than high school diploma
   - b. High school diploma/GED
   - c. Some college (Certificate/AA/AS)
   - d. College degree (BA/BS)
   - e. Advanced college degree (MA/PHD)
7. How many adults (18 years and over) live in your household, including yourself?
____________________

8. How many children (under 18 years) live in your household?
____________________

9. About how many hours do you usually work at your job? (Circle One)
   a. I do not work for pay/unemployed
   b. Less than 10 hours
   c. Between 10 and 19 hours
   d. Between 20 and 34 hours
   e. 35 or more hours

10. What is the gender and current grade of your child (or the oldest child if you have more than one) enrolled in the A.S.E.S. program?

    Gender____________________

    Grade____________________

11. How long has your child (or the oldest child if more than one) been enrolled in the A.S.E.S. program?

    ______________________________________________________

12. With the last report card/trimester in mind, how would you rate your child’s overall academic performance? (Circle One)
   a. Far below grade level
   b. Somewhat below grade level
   c. At grade level
   d. Somewhat above grade level
   e. Far above grade level
13. With the last report card/trimester in mind, please write your child’s worst (most difficult) subject.

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

a. How would you rate your child’s performance in their worst subject?
   i. Far below grade level
   ii. Somewhat below grade level
   iii. At grade level
   iv. Somewhat above grade level
   v. Far above grade level

14. With the last report card/trimester in mind, please write your child’s best (least difficult) subject.

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

a. How would you rate your child’s performance in their best subject?
   i. Far below grade level
   ii. Somewhat below grade level
   iii. At grade level
   iv. Somewhat above grade level
   v. Far above grade level
Appendix D

Adapted Version of the Family Involvement Questionnaire
QUESTIONNAIRE 2

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability for your child enrolled in A.S.E.S. (if more than one enrolled, please answer for the oldest child). Your responses are completely anonymous and you may skip any questions you choose.

Please rate the frequency of each of the following behaviors (Rarely, Sometimes, Often, or Always) regarding the A.S.E.S. staff (including tutors and coordinators) and program.

1. I ask my child about their day during A.S.E.S.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always

2. I ask my child about their activities or experiences in A.S.E.S.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always

3. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about the daily school routine.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always

4. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about classroom or program rules.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always

5. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff if I am concerned about something my child said.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always

6. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about my child’s relationship with peers.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always

7. I write notes to A.S.E.S. staff about my child or activities.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always

8. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about my child’s accomplishments.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always

9. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff about my child’s difficulties at school and/or A.S.E.S.
   - Rarely
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Always
10. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff **about work my child should practice at home.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
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</thead>
</table>

11. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff **about personal matters if it is relevant to school and/or A.S.E.S.**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
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12. I communicate with A.S.E.S. staff **about disciplinary matters.**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
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Appendix E

Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire
QUESTIONNAIRE 3

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability for your child enrolled in A.S.E.S. (if more than one enrolled, please answer for the oldest child). Your responses are completely anonymous and you may skip any questions you choose.

For each item, please mark the box Not True, Somewhat True or Certainly True regarding your child’s behavior over the last 6 months or this school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not True</th>
<th>Somewhat True</th>
<th>Certainly True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considerate of other people's feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Often complains of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Shares readily with other children, for example toys, treats, pencils</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Often loses temper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rather solitary, prefers to play alone</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally well behaved, usually does what adults request</td>
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<tr>
<td>Many worries or often seems worried</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constantly fidgeting or squirming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has at least one good friend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often fights with other children or bullies them</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often unhappy, depressed or tearful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generally liked by other children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easily distracted, concentration wanders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kind to younger children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often lies or cheats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Picked on or bullied by other children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Often offers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinks things out before acting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steals from home, school or elsewhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gets along better with adults than with other children</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Many fears, easily scared</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good attention span, sees work through to the end</td>
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References


