

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

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JUSTIN R. LARMIE

B.A., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2004
M.A., University of Illinois-Springfield, 2009
Ed. S., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2013

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JUSTIN R. LARMIE

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Justin R. Larmie, Candidate for the Doctor of Education Degree

University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2018

ABSTRACT

Improved academic performance, among many other factors, has been linked in the research to parental involvement. Unfortunately, many view African-American parents as uninvolved because of the activities in which they choose to participate. This study is a narratological case study that examines the perceptions of African-American parents in regard to parental involvement. The initial research question was: *What are the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement in schools?* The three sub-questions that were used to help answer this were: (1) How do parents define involvement? (2) What are their experiences with parental involvement? and (3) How do teachers involve parents with their child's school?

Parental perceptions of parental involvement were analyzed using qualitative measures. The participants of this study were all African-American – four females and one male. This research study involved the study of parents' perceptions by collecting data sources in the form of face-to-face interviews, written narratives, and a brief focus group.

The findings of the research study imply that the definition of *parental involvement* lacks consideration of various ethnicities. Non-African-American parents might perceive African-American parents as uninvolved or disassociated with the learning of their children, while in reality, the tool by which parents are measured is inadequate. This suggests that school systems should invest time in providing professional development in better understanding how one's lived experiences can shape one's own truths and work to understand the perspective of parents of color .

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined a dissertation titled "A Qualitative Study of African-American Parents' Perceptions of Parental Involvement," presented by Justin R. Larmie, candidate for the Doctor of Education degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Shirley McCarther, Ed.D., Committee Chair
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy & Foundations
Department of Education

Loyce Caruthers, Ph.D.
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy & Foundations
Department of Education

Dianne Smith, Ph.D.
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy & Foundations
Department of Education

Donna Davis, Ph.D.
Division of Educational Leadership, Policy & Foundations
Department of Education

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PREFACE

The small town in which I was raised was surprisingly segregated. Boundaries, although implicit, carved distinct sections of town clearly designated for people of various ethnicities and socioeconomic status. For me, that meant attending a high-performing grade school that served approximately 500 students, of whom over 95% were white. Throughout my childhood, my family attended a church with no ethnic diversity, save an occasional child picked up on the church bus via the church outreach program. As I moved into junior high and later to senior high, I saw for the first time some level of diversity. Each of our five elementary schools fed into the only junior and senior high schools in our town. While still limited, this at least gave me some taste of diversity. It was not until my eighth grade year when I made several African-American friends that I began to realize there were certainly more similarities than differences between them and me. The personal gap between other ethnicities and me continued to disappear as I finished high school and attended college.

Yet as I began my teaching career, I was dismayed by a difference that became apparent in my classroom. While levels of parental involvement in the education, as it related to the schooling, of their children was a bit less than I expected, even more intriguing was the various ways people perceived parental involvement, specifically among African-American families. My experience as a teacher in a low socioeconomic and culturally diverse school setting has afforded me the opportunity to partner with parents of color who appear to range from highly involved to no involvement at all. For these reasons, I chose to conduct research on the lived experiences of African-American parents regarding parental involvement.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

When one considers the idea of parental involvement, there is no set definition used to compare involvement by parents among various ethnicities. Moreover, differences have been found to exist in the levels of parent participation based on social economic status and the type of activities in which parents are likely to be involved (Clark, 1983; Desimone, 2001; Huss-Keeler, 1997; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Menacker, Hurwitz, & Weldon, 1988; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Menacker, Hurwitz, and Weldon (1988) performed a study of parent involvement in a large urban school district using both multiple choice and open-ended questions in a survey. The findings were 61% of parents reported that they were not involved in the school activities; however, 85% of low income students of color reported their parents helped them with homework. Clark (1983) conducted a study involving both high-achieving and low-achieving low-income African American students. He revealed the problems of doing an intensive study of a few families in exploratory field studies. While one cannot often make generalizations, family organizational patterns and social processes in these homes can help one to better understand family behavior with larger family sizes. Parents of the high-achieving students engaged their children in deliberate educational activities within their home, such as monitoring their homework and having children engage in problem-solving tasks, more than the parents of the low-achieving students (Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2000). While supporting learning through home activities and helping with homework are significant, these do not equate to physically being involved with schools.

Parents' involvement in their children's education is considered a cornerstone of the children's success in school (Barnard, 2004; Huss-Keeler, 1997). Traditional parental involvement such as participating at school and supporting children's learning at home contributes to student success in schooling (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 1995). This parental involvement further enhances children's positive attitudes toward schooling and their literacy and learning abilities (Hannon & Jackson, 1987; Hewison & Tizard, 1980). In essence, parent involvement has positive effects on parents' ability to help their children learn (Epstein, 2001).

The lack of involvement of parents when it comes to participation at the school is often viewed by teachers as the parents being uninterested. The parents who actively participate in school functions are viewed as parents who are "interested" (Huss-Keeler, 1997). Actions that affect the teachers' perceptions, such as lack of parent participation in school functions, can add to the complexity of the phenomenon. Not all parents share the same level of participation within the school building. That is not to say the parents are not involved in their children's education by supporting them within the home, but it does not equate to participation in school events. This is particularly true for low income, ethnic, and linguistic parents of color (Epstein, 2001; Glasgow & Whitney, 2009; Huss-Keeler, 1997). Even with a record of considerable advances in student achievement, particularly among African Americans, and the improvements in the state of families, there remained evidence of racial and economic gaps in student achievement (Hill & Taylor, 2004; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1992).

Many researchers believe there is a link between lower academic achievement and less parental involvement (Hart & Risley, 1995; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). Stevenson and

Stigler (1992) used their cross-cultural case-study research to examine American, Chinese, and Japanese schools. Mothers in Asia were reported to have a much higher involvement in their children's education, purchasing texts to read along with their children and maintaining a dialogue with their children's teachers using a log that the students transported from home to school. They found the students to have higher levels of achievement in mathematics, compared to student in the United States, thus leading many to believe high levels of parental involvement contributed to improved academic achievement (Zellman & Waterman, 2010).

The literature outlines the problem of lack of parental involvement with a cultural system in the United States that has witnessed several changes over the years (Berger, 1991; Rosewater, 1989). To clarify the idea of parental involvement, many researchers have looked to the Epstein Model as a framework for parental involvement and a model for urban schools. There are six tenets of the model: positive home conditions, communication, involvement at school, home learning activities, shared decision making within the school, and community partnerships (Epstein et al., 2009). For over 200 years, the level of parental involvement has fluctuated. According to Zellman and Waterman (2010), parents gave up their parental responsibilities for their children's education when they handed them over to teaching professionals in the 19th century. During this time, even parents were viewed as "local influences," and the school reformers of that time were set on eliminating those influences. Studying numerous professional journals, studies, and articles revealed there is not a lot of information to be found about the historical context of parental involvement; however, in the early 1900s, the trend moved away from alienating parents from the school. Parents were encouraged to take part in various activities to support their children, but limits

remained for the parents about how they might be involved in the school. Compared to today's schools, parents would have been encouraged to join PTA, provide baked goods for fundraisers, and show up for the scheduled back-to-school nights (Fruchter, Galletta, & White, 1992). Seminal researcher Lightfoot (1978) had previously discouraged such involvement, arguing it to be too contrived and a superficial level of involvement.

In the early 1990s, there was evidence that growing numbers of families could not provide the economic or psychological support needed for students. In many low-income communities where families of color were likely to reside, schools stepped in to provide for the families who were unable to provide for themselves. Comer and Haynes (1991) explained how some schools accepted the challenge and began to offer opportunities for parents to become more involved. One particular school formulated a school planning and management team made up of teachers and administrators. This group worked to develop a three-step parent-involvement plan, ranging from general participation to active involvement on the planning and management team. These experiences offered parents opportunities to become more involved, developing a greater partnership with the school. This relationship was important because the child was no longer given the choice to decide allegiance to either home or school – both were on the same side.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narratological case study was to explore the involvement of parents of color within a public school in a mid-size metropolitan area in the Midwest. Parental involvement was defined as any interaction the parents have with their children's education. This definition was used when considering the unit of analysis, which were the interactions between the parents and I, whether it was their written narratives, an interview,

or the focus group. The reason I chose to focus on the perceptions of African-American parents is simply because when I first moved to a school with a more diverse population, I heard statements such as, “You won’t have any parent involvement there.” or “You won’t have to worry about parents bothering you.”, alluding to the belief that African-American parents are not involved in their children’s education. What I noticed after only having taught there for a short time was that there was no noticeable difference regarding what I viewed as *involvement* between the African-American parents and any other parents in our school. They were just as present, so I wanted to more closely investigate this dominate narrative.

The theoretical tradition *narratology* uses narratives, either written or spoken, to relay an account of an event or several events connected to a specific topic. Clandinin and Connnelly (2000), in their groundbreaking work on narrative inquiry, explained: “[Narrative] studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places” (p. 50). When using narratives, one must rely on the stories of the participants as the *truths* that they have experienced. Some researchers base their approach to their studies on a constructivist paradigm. They believe that truth is relative and is dependent on one’s perspective (Yin, 2003). Since it is nearly impossible to remove one’s lived experiences from his or her perspectives on what constitutes truth, one’s perspective is likely shaped by his or her own experiences. Similarly, a case study involves the study of a case within a real-life contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2009). While many argue that case study is not a methodology, but more of a strategy of inquiry – a comprehensive way in which one conducts research – Creswell (2013) chooses to view it as a methodology; a type

of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry (p. 97). Case study allows the researcher to explore individuals or organizations through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programs (Yin, 2003) and supports the deconstruction and the subsequent reconstruction of various phenomena (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Research Questions

In this narratological case study, I chose a preliminary central question and several sub-questions that were utilized during the field experience. These questions were subject to change and were used to drive the research as I sought to find their answers. The initial central question was: *What are the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement in schools?* The sub-questions, which helped find the answer to the central question, were:

1. How do parents define involvement?
2. What are their experiences with parent involvement?
3. How do teachers involve parents with their child's school?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is described by Maxwell (2013) as a broader sense of a conceptual framework, referring to the actual ideas and beliefs that one holds about the phenomena studied. These ideas may be written down or not, and may also be considered an “idea context” for the study. This framework is designed to be a map to guide the study to “help assess and refine goals, develop realistic and relevant research questions, select appropriate methods, and identify potential validity threats to the conclusions” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 39). Another purpose of the theoretical framework is to narrow the focus of the topic. This section briefly restates the problem and purpose to focus the framework,

highlights the assumptions and experiences I brought to the study, outlines the selection of key topics of the framework and the rationale for their inclusion, and provides an introduction to key concepts and empirical literature of the study.

A current issue identified in the educational arena is the lack of parental involvement in schools, specifically among parents of color. Studying the phenomenon of parental involvement, I explored parental involvement within a mid-sized metropolitan area in the Midwest. I assume the findings extracted from this case study can be applied to other geographical areas of the nation and will add to the body of research on the topic.

In reviewing research in this area, I divided the literature into four topics. This enabled a broad view from various perspectives. The topics were: 1) historical view of parental involvement, 2) relationships between members associated with the school, 3) parents of color and school involvement, and 4) parent involvement and school leadership. I selected to look at the *historical view of parental involvement* to see how the trends have changed or remained constant over time. *Relationships between members associated with the school* was chosen to set the precedent for what is considered the norm in findings from the studies in the literature review and what types of interactions are viewed as affecting students' academic performance. *Parents of color and school involvement* was chosen to understand what constitutes involvement in the literature as well as finding meanings in the African-American participants' experiences. Finally, another aspect of parental involvement is the relationship between *parental involvement and school leadership*. How do school leaders support parent involvement?

Historical View of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is a topic that has been relevant since the 19th century. It has been considered by many (Desimone, 1999; Fan, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Feuerstein, 2000; McNeal, 1999) and is thought to be linked to cultural systems. A meta-analysis of the effect of parent involvement on students' academic achievement presented evidence that parent involvement (e.g., communicating with the school, checking homework, encouraging outside reading, and participating in school activities) benefited African-Americans and Hispanic/Latinos more than it did Asian-Americans (Jeynes, 2003). According to research, the level of parental involvement has fluctuated for over 200 years. Early in the 19th century, parents handed over their educational responsibilities of teaching their children to teaching professionals as official schools became more popular (Zellman & Waterman, 2010). Families began to pull back from school involvement as the balance of power in the relationship began to change (Jeynes, 2010). School reformers of this time were set on eliminating *local influences* and even parents were considered as such during this time. Throughout the 1800s, the demand for more sophisticated education for teachers began to increase. By 1900, one quarter of the four-year colleges offered professional programs in education. This created a greater separation between the social and cultural classes of people as the continued demand for higher education persisted. Low-income parents and parents of color were less likely to enter schools because they felt the schools belonged to the middle- and upper-class professionals (Harris, 1987; Hiatt, 1994). Therefore, the disconnection between families and the schools increased.

Then, in the 1900s, the trend reversed and parents were encouraged to be involved in their children's schools; however, limits were placed on the amount and types of

involvement (Fruchter et al., 1992). Parents were asked mostly to be a part of the school's PTA, participate in various after-school functions, and to provide baked goods for the schools (Barge & Loges, 2003; Fruchter et al., 1992).

By the late 1900s, the idea of parent participation broadened to encompass other activities. In the 1980s, there appeared to be a shift from the professional administrators holding the greatest authority over educational decisions as schools moved to the idea of local school councils, which were primarily made up of parents. While the roles of the parents involved on these school councils varied among districts, they were responsible for duties ranging from acting at an advisory level to deciding how to use the school resources (Feuerstein, 2010).

For the past 40 years, parent involvement has been regarded as an important element of effective education. Currently, extensive research supports the finding that parental involvement is advantageous for children of all ages (Cox, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 2001). Regardless of the location of the parental involvement, whether it is on the school campus, within the school building, or support offered from home, the effectiveness in facilitating student achievement has been found in many reviews and meta-analyses of the literature (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Among the benefits of student achievement, the rise in parental involvement is also seen as a factor in improved parent-teacher relationships, teacher morale, and school climate (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Relationships between Members Associated with the School

Family and schools can be the most important influences in the lives of children, and the relationships between the two can help determine the children's development (Nzinga-

Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009). The relationship that is desired is dependent upon not just one party, but on parents and teachers as well. One complication in this field of study is the lack of definition of the phenomenon. For example, what constitutes building a relationship between home and school? Does it require the parent(s) being physically present in the school building or does it entail the structure the home offers that support the expectations of the school? Settling on a broader definition of parental involvement might potentially bridge the gap between parents and school faculty who might otherwise feel a certain level of disconnect, if both parties can agree on what is considered to be *parental involvement*.

Other considerations are the age of the students and the setting. Bauch and Goldring (1995) found that the need for parental relationships does not wane as the student gets older. In fact, the necessity of a viable relationship between home and school in rural secondary schools is possibly even more salient because of other factors such as family dissolution rates, many two-parent working families, and unique sociological pressures on children (Amato, 2005; Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Hampton, Mumford, & Bond, 1998; McLanahan & Percheski, 2008). This positive correlation is not only seen in home-school relationships among the rural students, but for urban settings as well. Jeynes (2007) published a meta-analysis focusing on the link between parent involvement and urban student academic achievement. Among his foci were parental expectations, parental style, communication, and homework. Each of those categories was divided into sub-categories. Not only was there a positive correlation in the data as a whole, but the findings for the sub-categories were even more significant. The study focused on various components of parental involvement; the findings were that the more subtle aspects of parental involvement had an even greater

impact than the more demonstrative aspects of parental involvement. For example, parental style and expectations had a greater impact than having household rules or attendance/participation at school functions. The majority of programs studied in this meta-analysis were geared toward parents of color, but the findings supported similar correlations across race (Jeynes, 2007). The support of family outside of the school, in most cases, necessitates a relationship between the parents and the leadership within the school.

Parents of Color and School Involvement

In this research, I used the terms *parents of color*, *black*, and *African-American* interchangeably. Some argue that race exhibits an independent and negative effect on Black parents' involvement by undermining Black parents' ability to comply with institutional standards for participation (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Because of the history of racial discrimination and their own experience with education, parents of color are more likely to approach schools with criticisms and challenges rather than support and deference. This perpetuates a negative perception of teachers about parents of color and their lack of involvement.

Some researchers support the idea that working-class parents place low emphasis on education, which curtails their involvement in their children's schooling and lowers their children's educational aspirations, too (Deutsch, 1967; Sewell & Hauser, 1980; Sewell & Shah, 1968a, 1968b). However, one study shows that African-American families are more likely to intervene and develop a more confrontational stance toward schools, according to teachers, than working-class Whites (Diamond, 2000; Fehrman, Keith, & Reimers, 1987; Kerbow & Bernhardt, 1993; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This study took place in a large urban school district during the height of the district's local, site-based governance reform

movement and included interviews of working- and middle-class African-American parents as well as participant observation in their community and schools. The interviews were semi-structured, but room was left to interpret emerging themes throughout the study. Another example is a study performed regarding the importance of social class and parent involvement in schools which reinforces this idea by arguing that middle-class African Americans typically have greater resources with which to negotiate the educational system than their working-class African-American counterparts, who are expected to potentially negotiate more difficult neighborhoods and interact with lower quality schools using fewer valued resources (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Ten working-class African-American families were chosen for the study, as well as eight middle-class African-American families. Both sets of interviews were part of larger studies of literacy socialization practices and whole-school change. The findings showed that social class played an important role in shaping how the parents chose to customize their children's educational experiences. *Customization* refers to the intervention the parents designed to intervene in their children's education. The research of Diamond and Gomez (2004) supports John Ogbu's (2013) belief that the measure by which other ethnicities are evaluated cannot be that of the White middle class. The factors that affect the students are different based on several competencies – cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and social. Ogbu supports comparisons made between each group, such as: Chicano childrearing and development being studied qua Chicano childrearing and development; Black childrearing and development being studied qua Black childrearing and development; and White childrearing and development being studied qua White childrearing and development.

Ogbu (2003) gave the account of his extensive research of Black students' academic performance in an affluent school district. He described the gap between Black and White students as well as the low academic engagement of the Black students. This study involved interviews, observations, and other data, which shed light on the perceptions of parents and how they viewed the school district, school personnel, and their own children's ability. Throughout the interviews, Ogbu found that in many cases, Black students did not feel they applied themselves as much as the White students. Instead, they did just enough to get by, but did not focus on taking the advanced-placement classes, which would have required more hours devoted to school work. The Black students stated that instead of spending time reading or working on homework, they watched more television and played more video games than the White students.

Parental Involvement and School Leadership

From creating a safe environment and maintaining a positive school climate to providing health education, there are several areas in which the parents may recognize a need for leadership and where they welcome others educating their children. For example, when it comes to leadership providing a safe environment in which the students can learn and collaborate, parents are supportive. The parents' perception of the leader's ability to maintain a positive school climate is thought to affect their perception of their children's academic ability and potential. Parents want to see leadership maintaining a safe school in relation to discipline and bullying (Stockdale, Hangaduambo, Duys, Larson, & Sarvela, 2002). Another factor in the parental perceptions of leadership is the way they view counseling and guidance services. There is strong support in the literature that suggests

parents perceive guidance counselors as playing a critical role in guiding students throughout their educational experiences (Dean, 1989; Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001).

Health education is another area in which parental perception has been considered. Weaver, Byers, Sears, Cohen and Randall (2002) found that 94% of parents believe that sex education should be taught in the school and is essential to the health of school-age children. The perception of parents about health education is that the experiences are likely to lead to positive behavioral decision-making, decreasing the risk of engaging in problem behaviors, and increasing academic attachment and pro-social interactions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This, in turn, leads the parents to believe the school offers a social space that will facilitate their children's success.

In the 1990s, case studies in dozens of Chicago area schools reported productive schools being linked to certain principals sharing common leadership styles and substantive foci. Among the foci is keen attention given to empowering parents, communities, and the professional staff to serve the students more efficiently (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, Bryk, 2001). Parents and community members were invited to take part in shaping and improving the school vision. Their focus was not solely on incorporating more community resources, but empowering their teaching staff as well, by encouraging them to take risks and incorporate new methods of teaching (Sebring & Bryk, 2000). To more closely study this phenomenon, one may consider the involvement of parents from the perspective of race.

Each of the four strands listed were chosen to give a glimpse of the various factors that appear to be connected with parent involvement. The methods I used to collect my data was centered on these topics. Questions were formulated for narratives, interviews, and focus groups that addressed these strands.

Overview of Methodology

Qualitative research is a tool that measures the qualities of a given phenomenon versus the focus on numbers, statistics, and cause and effect, which is common in quantitative research. In a qualitative study, “research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 24). There are various aspects of the study, including collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, refining or refocusing the preliminary research questions, and addressing the validity threats. For example, as one conducts research, one is directed by the data. Data are collected and analyzed throughout the research so they may direct the evaluator’s work – meaning that researchers must remain open to any new concepts that emerge. This particular qualitative study incorporated the theoretical traditions of case study and narratology.

Case study was the theoretical tradition that informed this study because of the nature of the topic. Case study involves the study of an individual or a group over time. This research requires the investigator to collect multiple sources of data and then extrapolate the emerging themes or patterns on which they will report (Creswell, 2013). Case study research requires one to look at a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2009). It is typically comprised of only one or a few individuals, and meaningful results depend on the ability of the researcher to classify the information. I utilized the instrumental case study where I focused on a specific issue, problem, or concern and utilized the cases to best understand the problem (Stake, 1995).

The initial concept of narratology is based on using others’ stories, written or told. The world as described by the narrators constitutes the world as it is, whatever its correspondence with our own world (Prince & Noble, 1991). These experiences are captured

by various means, and the researcher categorizes them by creating small groups with similarities or themes. The purpose of a narratological study is to reduce the idea of many individual or group experiences with a phenomenon down to a universal essence. This study focused on the phenomenon of parental participation in schools.

The setting for this study was a semi-urban school in a mid-sized school district in the Midwest – Johnson Elementary School. This particular school was a prime site for this study as there was a diverse student population and data could be collected through a variety of means. Having worked with many people in this school and district allowed me easy access to corresponding with participants, setting up appointments for interviews, scheduling rooms for focus groups, and working with participants to collect their written narratives. While there was a certain familiarity with the district and its leadership, protocol remained in place for the interactions with the participants. By having them share their narratives in written form, I did not interact with them to gain this information, but the participants recognized me as their audience when they wrote.

Maxwell (1997) defined purposeful sampling as a type of sampling in which “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 87). I chose my participants by utilizing purposeful sampling, specifically criterion sampling. Since the study was focused on African-American parents, I hoped to garner access to parents who would help me gain an understanding of how they perceived parental involvement. Criterion sampling seemed to fit well with my study because criterion sampling can be useful for identifying and understanding cases that are information rich, providing a deeper understanding of the topic of parent involvement and the factors related therein. To ensure a

rich experience, I did not randomly select five parents who happened to be African-American parents only; I was more selective. I looked at student performance as a factor. I attempted to select at least one parent whose child was from the low-performing group, at least one parent whose child was from the mid-performing group, and at least one parent whose child performed at a high level. Another technique of sampling I used was snowball sampling. As I began to make connections to identify participants, someone knew someone else who directed me to other potential participants.

The use of crystallization, which is a more modern approach than triangulation, or gathering even more information by use of interviews, surveys, and observations, can help a researcher to see what is considered a typical, extreme, or intense case (Sandelowski, 2000). Triangulation in qualitative research assumes that if two or more sources of data, theoretical frameworks, types of data collected, or research converge on the same conclusion, then the conclusion is more credible (Denzin, 1978); however, Richardson (2000b) proposed the crystal as a “central imaginary” that is more reliable as it transcends the “rigid, fixed, two dimensional” triangle (p. 934).

I identified seven participants for the case study with a target of five participants for a study that would obtain thick descriptions for depth and breadth. Having seven potential participants provided some leeway in the case that participants would not be able to fulfill their commitments to being a part of the study, which did occur. The number of participants was based on the number necessary to reach data saturation, which is the point where no new information is coming to light (Sargeant, 2012). First, I requested participants to share narratives of their own experiences with parental involvement when they were students. I later asked that they describe their more recent experiences with

parental involvement with their own children's schooling. Finally, I asked for their narratives regarding their hopes and dreams for parental involvement moving forward. These narratives were analyzed using a generic coding process, which involved a theory-based, inductive analysis. "Some researcher methodologists believe that coding is merely technical, preparatory work for higher-level thinking about the study. But we believe that coding is deep reflection about and, thus, deep analysis and interpretation of the data's meanings" (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 72). Each narrative for each participant was read multiple times, as I began to note various words and/or phrases. These words/phrases gave the gist of that portion of the paper. Then I looked for how many times similar words/phrases occurred. Throughout this process, I maintained the goal of letting the data lead the study. The findings from these narratives brought to light the need for a focus group. After the focus group, themes emerged, which I examined further.

I also conducted interviews of the participants to gain their insights via specific questions I posed in an attempt to address the research questions. Open-ended interviews proved to be much like a conversation. This aided in the effort to continue to develop a working relationship, which includes trust, with participants (Patton, 2002).

The data collected through the various means listed above were coded using an inductive coding process. As I analyzed the narratives and transcripts of interviews, I began recognizing similar words/phrases with similar ideas. I notated this as I worked through each piece of data. These words/phrases were later evaluated to identify interpretive codes, which are discussed more thoroughly later in this study. The overall ideas and feelings of the participants were used to form overarching themes and were

recorded as my findings. However, I had to maintain an awareness of my own thoughts and feelings regarding this topic to acknowledge limitations and maintain reliability.

Significance of the Study

The target audience for this research was not only parents, but teachers as well. If both groups can gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of parental involvement and the roadblocks of such, stronger support structures are likely to be formed from which the students may benefit. It is my hope that this study will benefit both the world of educational practice as well as add insight to social issues. According to Fan and Chen (2001), there are many stakeholders who have considerable interest in the research on parental involvement. Among them are policy makers, school board members, parents, teachers, and even the students themselves.

The findings of some current empirical studies state academic achievement is associated with parental involvement (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992; Epstein, 1991; Singh et al., 1995); in contrast, others find little, if any, connection between the two (Bobbitt, 1995; Ford, 1989; Keith, Reimers, Fehrman, Pottebaum, & Aubey, 1986; Natriella & McDill, 1989). The research has been somewhat fragmented because of the lack of empirical studies utilizing a guiding theoretical framework (Fan & Chen, 2001). A limitation of several studies is in how they define parental involvement. The meaning of parental involvement may vary depending on the individual connotation. While it was defined for this study as *any interaction the parents have with their children's education*, it is still questionable as to just what constitutes the interaction. It has held many definitions that should be considered, such as: parental aspirations for their children's academic achievement and their conveyance of such aspirations to their children (Bloom, 1980);

parents' communication with their children about school (Christenson et al., 1992; Walberg, 1986); communication from parents to teachers about their children's education (Stevenson & Baker, 1987); and the communication between parents and teacher (Epstein, 1991). For the purpose of this study, parent involvement was any interaction the parents have with their children's education as it relates to schooling. This was used when considering the unit of analysis, which were the interactions between parents and me about education. I chose to clarify "education, as it pertains to the schooling" because I wanted to maintain my focus on the education that takes place or is associated with the school. I realized that *education* could encompass well beyond the realm of school education and intended to keep my focus honed in on the education that takes place in or is associated with the school.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

With an ever-increasing focus on student achievement, educational leaders are looking at various facets that could be responsible for affecting academic growth. Among the many possible aspects, researchers have identified leadership and its various qualities as being quite impactful on relationships in the realm of education, thus possibly having the ability to positively affect academic outcomes. Creating positive relationships with leaders, whether the leaders are teachers or members of an administrative team, is important to ensure student success. In this review of the literature, I have divided my research focus into four topics. They are: 1) historical view of parental involvement, 2) relationships between members associated with a school, 3) parents of color and school involvement, and 4) parental involvement and school leadership. My intention is to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of parents of color about parental involvement by examining the historical context, various relationships between the home and school, how parents interact with their children's education as it relates to schooling, and how parental involvement coincides with school leadership.

Historical View of Parental Involvement

The topic of parental involvement is certainly not a new one. It has been considered by some for generations and is thought to be linked to a cultural system of sorts. According to research, the level of parental involvement has fluctuated for over 200 years. Early in the 19th century, parents handed over their educational responsibilities of teaching their children to teaching professionals as official schools became more popular (Zellman & Waterman, 2010). School reformers of this time were set on eliminating local influences, and even

parents were considered as such during this time. Throughout the 1800s, the demand for more sophisticated education for teachers began to increase. However, this expectation of educational sophistication was not the same for all groups. Specifically, James Anderson (1988) stated the landowners in the South would tolerate what they considered a pauper's education for poor Whites, but the idea of state government intervening in the education of children was not well accepted, especially for Black students. Anderson also explained how important literacy became for African Americans emerging from enslavement. It was demonstrated by their pursuit of education for themselves and for their children. Their thirst for learning was so great that many embraced self-teaching, utilizing every book, or even parts of books, that were available to them.

By 1900, one quarter of the four-year colleges offered professional programs in education. This created a greater separation between the social and cultural classes of people as the continued demand for higher education persisted. Low-income parents and parents of color were less likely to enter schools because they thought the schools belonged to the middle- and upper-class professionals (Hiatt, 1994). As a result, the disconnection between many families and the schools increased.

Then, in the 1900s, the trend reversed, and parents were encouraged to be involved in their children's schools again; however, limits were placed on the involvement. For example, parents were asked to be a part of the school's PTA, to participate in various after-school functions, and to provide baked goods for the schools (Fruchter et al., 1992).

In the late 1900s the trend continued but broadened parent participation to encompass other activities. For the past 40 years, parent involvement has been regarded as an important element of effective education. Currently, extensive research supports the

finding that parental involvement is advantageous for children of all ages (Cox, 2005; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 2001). Regardless of the location of the parental involvement, whether it is on the school campus, within the school building, or in the form of support offered from home, the effectiveness in facilitating student achievement has been found in many reviews and meta-analyses of the literature (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005, 2007; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Stitt & Brooks, 2014). Among the benefits of student achievement, the rise in parental involvement is also seen as a factor in improved parent-teacher relationships, teacher morale, and school climate (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Many inequalities still existed among the schools, specifically when comparing White schools with those servicing Black students. From 1940 to 1960, the hopes of desegregation nationwide was high, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) demanded access to higher education for Blacks in White institutions. Still, there were groups who did not support desegregation and led efforts to increase funding for the African-American schools. The purpose was to appease the Black teachers, students, and families so they might abort their fight for desegregation. Sadly, even though the conditions became much better than they had been in previous years, there were still noticeable differences between White and Black schools. Black teachers were paid far below the salary of White teachers, and the money allocated per student in White schools far exceeded the amount given in Black schools. Despite the improvements to the conditions, huge discrepancies existed between the two (Walker, 2001).

In the 1980s, there appeared to be a shift from the professional administrators holding the greatest authority over educational decisions as some schools moved toward

having local school councils, which were primarily made up of parents. While the roles of the parents involved in these school councils varied among districts, they were responsible for duties ranging from acting at an advisory level to deciding how to use the school resources (Feuerstein, 2010).

Historically, roles in the school have been identified in a traditional, hierarchical way. The principal is the highest person on the echelon, followed by the teachers, and so on. The students would be near the bottom of the list if they were even considered at all. Alison Cook-Sather (2002) committed a considerable amount of time to bridging the gap between pre-service teachers and students in high schools through a program called Teaching and Learning Together. Pre-service teachers and high-school students corresponded through a series of weekly exchanges of letters. While there were many logistical challenges to such an act, it is important to recognize teachers certainly can learn from the students they teach or will someday teach.

Furthermore, leadership of any level can benefit from including those working with them (even in lesser positions) in making decisions. Problems occur in relationships when leaders view themselves as the individuals who know best and therefore must be responsible for leading everyone else instead of collaborating with them to do what is potentially best for the larger context. Most leaders who struggle with power will not give time to listening, which is an integral part of building relationships. According to Cook-Sather (2002), they will not listen because it is not convenient; listening means you must respond. The patterns of top-down leadership are so deeply established that the leaders must continually and purposefully keep their minds open to listening. It does not mean the suggestions of the subordinates must be implemented, but demonstrates that the leaders are open to accept

others' ideas and are willing to perhaps negotiate. The ability to listen and learn from others is an important component of relationship from which both sides can benefit.

The history of relationships between home and school shows a stark contrast between today and the past. Prior to 1940, a sense of common culture between families and educators existed, and schools were viewed as "natural extensions of the community" (Gareau & Sawatzky, 1995, p. 464). Over the course of time, that camaraderie seemed to disappear as a more adversarial tone took its place. Educators and parents alike adopted the view of students living in two different worlds – their world at home and their world at school. Finally, the pendulum swung back, and the shift from separate responsibilities has changed as families and schools have united in a partnership approach (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Lightfoot (1978) argued that the two entities of home and school are frequently and naturally in dispute because of the roles each plays and the differences in parent-child and teacher-child relationships. She went further to say this was not altogether a bad thing, but could actually be considered beneficial, as it makes children more "malleable and responsive to a changing world" (p. 39).

Conflicting theories exist about the comparison of parent-child and teacher-child relationships. Campbell and Connolly (1987) argued that families and schools are more similar than others have thought. Both engage in socialization processes of children by use of various means such as support, teaching, nurturing, punishment, rewards, and evaluation. Litwak and Meyer (1974) offered the idea of balancing the duties between home and school. School personnel, according to their conceptualization, have the responsibility of providing formal educational experiences, while the family should be responsible for informal learning and motivational tasks. Supporting this theory, Bronfenbrenner (1991) suggested families

provide the more informal learning opportunities for students to prepare them for their more formal experiences within the school. Regardless of the various tasks of each stakeholder, one common theme remains. Family-school relationships should not be based on only two-way communication, parents cooperating with schools, or coordinating learning experiences, but should include collaboration (Adams & Christenson, 2000).

In the historical context, there are some aspects that are specific to certain ethnicities or cultures of people related to their individual journeys in education. For example, considering early-day America, it is not fair to say that African Americans were not involved in their children's education. Their education was so much different than today's education model that it would be difficult to compare to what might be expected today. For many, especially during times when Blacks were enslaved, they were illiterate, as learning to read was considered to be a criminal offence in some areas. Thus, in the early 1800s, many Blacks were unable to read. However, education seemed to be their key to freedom, so many risked extreme punishments and potentially even loss of life to learn to read (Watkins, 2006). According to Morgan (1995), several instances are recorded of Blacks meeting in secret locations to share what they had learned with one another. These clandestine meetings serve as testimonies of just how important education was to the African-American culture at the time given the circumstances of being enslaved. Learning served as one of the few means by which enslaved Blacks could receive more freedom.

African Americans, particularly, tell the story of difficult and unfair times in their history with American schools (Cross, 2003; Spencer, Cross, Harpalani, & Goss, 2003). Ironically, African-American cultural heritage has placed an emphasis on the importance of education, but the amount of discrimination and bias some African Americans have

experienced at school has resulted in a mistrust of both school and its teachers by many African American parents (Lareau, 1987; Ogbu, 1978; Ogbu, 2013; Yull, Wilson, Murray, & Parham, 2018). While many African Americans' quests for freedom via the route of education were their focus, researchers posit how for African Americans and others in oppressed groups, academic achievement does not necessarily result in economic success and upward mobility (Price, 2000, p. 6; Spring, 1993). Arnott and Mattheai (1991) reported the historical practice of Whites withholding educational experiences by offering unequal and separate learning opportunities to the Black community. Then, Whites argued that the Blacks' lack of literacy proved their inferiority and continued to use that as a way to keep the Blacks subordinate to Whites. This gap in achievement continues today and is evidenced through standardized test scores. While there are many ways one might chronicle improvement in the areas of educational equality provided for people of color, a definite gap is still evident. While the number of African Americans who drop out of school has consistently declined over the past 30 years, more than 20% of Black youth from 18 to 21 years of age still lack the necessary skills for entry-level positions, apprenticeships, or post-secondary education (Watkins, 2006). Perhaps the lack of attention given to building relationships in educational training programs is partly responsible for the perpetuation of this achievement gap.

John Ogbu (1998) conducted a series of studies of students of color in the United States and other countries. He reported the reason for their lower academic performance as two-fold: first, the treatment of students of color in society as well as in school and secondly, the way the students of color are perceived and their response to such treatment. These studies began in the late 1960s in Stockton, California. Later, Ogbu studied cultures

outside of the United States and found that in every case, students of color were historically denied equal educational opportunities in “access to educational resources, treatment in school, and rewards in employment and wages for educational accomplishments” (p. 157).

Relationships between Members Associated with the School

A large focus in schools across the nation is student achievement. Recently, schools within the United States studied the crosswalks between their state’s grade-level expectations and the soon-approaching Common Core State Standards. Along with this shift in education, researchers are looking at various factors that are believed to affect student achievement. Among them is the topic of relationships. Regardless of whether it is parent-child, teacher-student, or parent-teacher relationship, each is believed to have an effect on the learning outcomes of children. In this literature review, various home-school relationships have been examined as well as the benefits and barriers. The effects of said relationships are believed to be one of the deciding factors between students’ success in the academic arena and their lack of success. Because the learning outcome is believed to be largely based on these relationships, one must consider other aspects such as whether the students attend an urban or rural school, whether they have one- or two-parent families, the socioeconomic status of the families, and various other considerations.

Kunjufu (1985), in his document *The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*, described the costs associated with sending a child to Head Start for a year. He also mentioned the cost-effectiveness of the program based on the positive outcomes. He then described the costs associated with sending a young man or woman to prison for a year. This cost was nearly eighteen times higher. His response was *either educate me now, or pay later*. This

further supported his idea that investing in others, building self-esteem, and building a belief system should start early – from infancy to nine years of age.

More recently, Kunjufu (2009) described the various ways he viewed teachers and their interaction with students in schools. Throughout his career, he has worked with various types of teachers, whom he believes all fall into one of these categories. The first is the *custodian*, described as the one who is literally counting down the days until retirement. They use the same lesson plans they have used for 30 years and do not build relationships with students. Next are *referral agents*. Referral agents feel their job would be easier if they could decrease the number of students in their classrooms, so they are quick to suggest special education testing or suspension. *Missionaries* are those who realize they teach students of color, but deep down believe their students are culturally deprived, broken, and need to be fixed. They train in elite schools and want to “do well,” but feel the answer lies in teaching the middle-class, White culture and values. The next group is *Instructors*, who feel they do not teach students, but teach subjects. They are likely adept in their content but lack the ability or recognition of the importance of building relationships with students. *Master teachers* understand you may not be able to teach the way you want to teach, but that you must teach the way students learn. They consider learning styles of their students and develop their lessons on that data. Finally, Kunjufu describes *Coaches*. Coaches understand the content, as instructors do, and they have mastered the congruence between pedagogy and learning styles. They, most importantly, understand that you cannot teach children you do not love, respect, or understand.

It has been stated that family and schools can be the most important influences in the lives of children, and the relationships between the two can help determine the children’s

development (Nzinga-Johnson et al., 2009). The relationship that is desired is dependent upon not just one party, but on both parents and teachers. One complication of this field of study is the lack of definition of the phenomenon. For example, who defines what constitutes building a relationship between home and school? Does it require the parent(s) being physically present in the school building, or does it entail the support structure the home offers when considering the expectations of the school?

In the early 1980s, much research was centered around the social contexts of education, focusing on the relationship between teachers and students. In most instances, the teachers were viewed more as leaders and not co-facilitators of a relationship. In these cases, there was inconclusive evidence of the importance of student-teacher relationships (Minuchin & Shapiro, 1983). Therefore, there was a need for continued research on the topic, and it continued to be widely researched throughout the 1990s. The central theme of many studies was the social context of education and student-teacher relationships and how they affected the students' cognitive and social development. Pianta (1997) mentioned the resources that adults bring to students that aid in intellectual, social, and emotional development. Even the everyday experiences of a student, such as encountering teachers' instructional practices, can be viewed as an effective tool in the social development of students (Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998).

Janice Hale (1982) described her feelings towards the racialized treatment of African Americans in the United States. She described what she believed to be the conditions responsible for the steady fall of academic performance among low-income children in predominantly Black public schools. Hale called on teachers to consider their relationships with their African-American students, as she believed that even among middle- and upper-

income families, there are lower educational expectations for Black students. She believed that the key to effectively teaching children lay in principals' ability to provide educational leadership. Hale commissioned the community to monitor the educational performance and cultural experiences being offered to students. She did not believe the problem lay in African-American children's educational limitations, but in how the students have been served. Hale believed in the power of a community.

Many studies, including that of Resnick et al. (1997), claim the interaction children have with teachers helps in both cognitive and social development, even through adolescence. Much of the development that takes place is through simple interactions that are often unintentional on the part of the teacher. Teachers operate as socializing agents and offer students social and intellectual experiences by instilling in them values, providing motivation, addressing their need to belong, and helping them to develop a social identity (Davis, 2003). Davis' synthesis of research focused on finding the answers to three questions: (1) How have we conceptualized relationships with teachers? (2) How have our approaches to studying relationships with teachers shaped our understanding of the phenomenon? and (3) Looking across different approaches to studying student-teacher relationships, what do we know about the nature and influence of student-teacher relationships developmentally?

Through her research, Davis (2003) found common themes emerged. First, not only do teacher-child relationships influence social and cognitive outcomes in children through adolescence, but they can begin as early as preschool. Secondly, the children's perception of adults will likely have an effect on students' beliefs about adults, themselves, and teachers specifically. In return, the indirect effects are the level of academic and social competence,

personal values, and their pursuit of academic and social goals. Next, studies show what appears to be a direct connection between students' perception of teachers and the teachers' interpersonal skills, motivations, and how they socialize the motivation for students to learn. Finally, a theme emerged regarding the ability of students to not only develop social interactions with one teacher, but to use those skills to interact with both other teachers/students and with the academic material.

In addition, there is need for parental relationships. In fact, research shows the need for parental relationships does not wane as the student gets older. In fact, the necessity of a viable relationship between home and school in rural secondary schools is possibly even more salient because of other factors such as family dissolution rates, many two-parent working families, and unique sociological pressures on children (Bauch & Goldring, 1995; Hampton et al., 1998). This positive correlation is not only seen in home-school relationships among rural students, but in urban settings as well. Jeynes (2007) published a meta-analysis focusing on the link between parent involvement and urban student academic achievement. Among his foci were parental expectations, parental style, communication, and homework. Each of those categories was divided into sub-categories. Not only was there a positive correlation in the data as a whole, but there was an even more significant finding for the sub-categories. The study focused on various components of parental involvement, and the findings were that the more subtle aspects of parental involvement had an even greater impact than the more demonstrative aspects of parental involvement. For example, parental style and expectations had a greater impact than having household rules or attendance/participation at school functions. The majority of programs studied in this meta-analysis were geared toward parents of color, but the findings support a similar correlation

across race (Jeynes). The support of family outside of the school, in most cases, necessitates a relationship between the parents and the leadership within the school.

Researchers working from an attachment perspective might view the student-teacher relationship as similar to the parent-child relationship. Since it is believed teachers typically aid in the development of various aspects of socialization, their role can be compared to that of the parent. While “good” teachers are responsible for supporting the students’ motivation for social, emotional, and cognitive development, researchers have shown concern when evaluating those dimensions similar to the parent-child relationships, such as emotional closeness or dependency. Pianta (1999) argued the importance of the teachers’ roles in development coping mechanisms in the area of emotion. Students are presented with various experiences within the classroom, and teachers serve to aid the student in accurately labeling, managing, and expressing the correct emotions. While there is conflicting research on the subject of dependency, many believe those who develop secure attachments with primary caregivers are likely to have better relationships with peers, are able to negotiate physical and social environments, and to exhibit more frequent explorations of new situations (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

Howes, Hamilton, and Matheson (1994) found that the quality of student-teacher relationships seems to predict the future influences of the students’ social and cognitive abilities. For example, students who experienced higher level of insecurities with teachers were less likely to play well with their peers or have meaningful interactions with adults. On the contrary, meaningful trusting relationships between students and their first teachers is a predictor of the children’s perception of their relationships with peers and adults at age nine. Pianta and Steinberg’s (1992) study found a correlation between teachers’ ratings of conflict

and students' behavior, learning, and retention. When teachers report conflict, students were seen to have behavior and learning problems and even experienced retention. In contrast, students reported as having positive relationships were reported as having competence with peers, exhibiting tolerance of frustration, and possessing academic and social skills.

A study by Birch and Ladd (1998) examined connections between students' relationships with their kindergarten teachers and the students' relationships with their first-grade teachers. It is not surprising they found students who did not have a strong relationship with their kindergarten teacher were also the students who exhibited high rates of problematic behaviors and were not close to their first-grade teachers. Those students who developed asocial behaviors, such as avoidance, in kindergarten, were found to be dependent on their teachers in first grade. Surprisingly, students who demonstrated prosocial behaviors during their kindergarten years did not predict their relationships in the first grade. The implication is that negative behaviors in early relationships are better predictors of future outcomes than the demonstration of positive behaviors in early relationships.

Much research has been conducted about the connection between teachers' expectations, attitudes, and behaviors and students' academic outcomes. A look at these connections demonstrates the power in motivating students by developing strong relationships with teachers. The context the teachers create is believed to affect the students' perceptions of learning. The beliefs teachers carry into the classroom about schooling, knowledge, and learning may influence their level of involvement with the class, the instructional material, and particularly with the students (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Likewise, teachers' beliefs about themselves as educators or beliefs about their students' ability to learn can determine the level of interaction with their students and could affect the quality of

their instruction. If an earnest belief in students' learning processes exists, teachers can more deeply experience the revelation of knowledge with their students.

Throughout the past three decades, research was conducted on various dimensions believed to influence the quality of students' engagement in the classroom. They are: tasks, autonomy, recognition, grouping, evaluation, and time (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988; Blumenfeld, 1992; Epstein, 1989; Urdan, Midgley, & Wood, 1995). Among them, the two showing striking importance are autonomy and evaluation. Interestingly, many reformers today are pushing for students to a greater responsibility for their own learning. Teachers are being trained on how to offer students hands-on learning experiences in which they can select a topic, research, formulate a presentation and develop the exploration of learning independent of direct teacher instruction. The struggle for most teachers is in balancing the need for structure with giving students autonomy. By providing structures that help students take on greater levels of responsibility, teachers support the development of student autonomy (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997). Other research records instances of power struggles between the teacher and the student regarding who gains the "upper hand." Manke (1997) and Finders (1997) both referred to this excessive use of controlling behaviors. Teachers must decide whether the outcome of students taking responsibility for their educational inquiry through autonomy outweighs their personal need for control. The tradeoff of not allowing the loss of control is often to stifle the students' intellectual control (Davis, 2003).

Similarly, research indicates time spent in building quality relationships and evaluations used to assess student work are important factors in motivating students to learn. The students' perceptions of how the teacher views the processes of learning and the criterion used to evaluate the students' work have important implications. Teachers who are

more concerned with students' understanding and learning the subject matter or skills will demonstrate the importance of the learning process and not simply assignment completion. Thomas and Oldfather (1997) argued that some teachers view themselves as the "keepers" of knowledge, deciding who gets to know what based on the teachers' perceptions of who is ready for what information. Even the strategies used to exchange information can be restrictive and have a negative impact on the relationships between teachers and students by emphasizing the power differential. This is extremely evident when students are unable to describe what would constitute a good or bad grade (Thomas & Oldfather). These perceived inconsistencies cause students to question the fairness of the teacher. On the contrary, when students are asked to engage in self-evaluation or take part in teacher evaluations through means of discussion, they feel empowered. This aids them in understanding their own strengths and weaknesses (Davis, 2003).

Pianta, Steinberg, and Rollings (1995) explained how a strong, positive relationship with students might be motivation to spend extra time, exhausting additional resources to ensure students' success, from a teacher's perspective. Also, students are likely to view the same uplifting relationship as protection against poor school performance, which they may have previously experienced, associated with unsupportive home environments (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993). From either perspective, the emotional connections between students and caring, non-parental adults are important factors in the students' academic performance (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Heilbrun (1998) offered a definition of power as, "Power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter" (p. 18). If that is the case, students are being served by a system in which they have little to

no power. The reason educational institutions perpetuate this unfair behavior is because of the amount of effort it would require to change the system. School leaders and teachers must be willing to let go of some of their perceived authority and allow students to gain some power through autonomy. There must be a distinct shift in the way we view knowledge, language, power, and self (Oldfather, 1995). Too often students, especially of low socio-economic status or of color, are viewed as empty beings that need to be filled. Little or no attention is given to the individual's background or experiences. Teachers and other school officials are quick to demand change, yet are not always so open when the realization comes that they, too, need to change. For many this is after years of developing and nourishing poor habits and relationships.

A study by Avolio, Zhu, Koh, and Bhatia (2004) investigated the type of structural distance between leader and follower in terms of job responsibility – direct versus indirect. While direct leadership has been well studied, the amount of research of indirect leadership has not received adequate attention. Research on physical distance between leadership and their followers has shown physical proximity as a factor that could decide the level of influence the leader has on his follower (Chen & Bliese, 2002; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). Shamir (1995) contended that those leaders who have closer physical proximity have a greater aptitude of showing individual consideration and sensitivity, supporting their needs. Because of the closeness, physically, they are afforded more face-to-face opportunities to have discussions and build relationships. Many argue this link between distance and organizational commitment applies not only to physical distance but to structural distance as well. For example, being close to one's leader on a hierarchical

structure causes him to have a greater level of commitment to the organization even if his physical location is not near his leader.

There is much research on the direct impact principals have on schools and more specifically, on teachers. Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) performed a quantitative study over the indirect effects of a principal. Of course, consistent classroom visits followed by detailed feedback (Freedman, 2003; Fullan, 1995; Glickman, 2002) and multiple opportunities for teachers to perform peer observations and other direct connections can improve staff morale, heighten enthusiasm, and are likely to raise student achievement, but logically, it is impossible to ensure the principal spends most of his or her day in classrooms. Having many other responsibilities, it is not sensible to assume the principal of any school, unless the school is very small, can manage this task. Therefore, it is imperative to look at the possibility of indirectly affecting classroom practice and student achievement.

There are many factors that affect classroom practice. Among them are teachers' job satisfaction, a sense of professionalism and influence, collegial trust, and opportunities to collaborate (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). While it is easy to see the link between each of these and the classroom, it might be more of a task to see how the principal can identify with each. It is believed one aspect that could prove beneficial is the idea of shared leadership. According to Pounder (1999), sharing leadership may be most effective in reducing teacher isolation as the commitment for the "common good" is increased.

The problem some principals face is the reality of forfeiting power to empower other staff members to acquire decision-making responsibilities. For example, once the power has been designated to a leadership team, the principal must be prepared to abide by actions initiated by the team (Lyons & Algozzine, 2006). This becomes increasingly important to

note as the culture of school leadership moves toward a more collaborative nature.

Leithwood and Mascall (2007) noted that while the responsibility for quality education rests upon the “top” of the organization (principal), more researchers are realizing the need for shared leadership to get the work done.

Even greater than employee participation in decision-making processes, a study by Driscoll (1978) found trust to be a stronger predictor of employee satisfaction. Developing trust is different than developing influence or creating job satisfaction. In fact, one cannot demand trust be present. It is, by nature, more of an indirect result of leadership. Bryk and Schneider’s (2003) study of Chicago elementary schools found relational trust among all adult members of the school to be higher because of the principal’s respect and personal regard for teachers, the level of competence in core role responsibilities, and personal integrity. While the relationships between the principal and teachers are vitally important, research shows levels of trust are paramount in teacher-teacher relationships.

A true model of teacher collaboration in the form of a learning community would have teachers fulfilling the role of mentor, mentee, coach, specialist, advisor, facilitator and so on (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Such a community would find these values so deeply rooted, members may not even be aware of them. It is the nature of the organization to have colleagues observing one another in efforts to identify best practices and effective teaching strategies. A huge level of trust is necessary to foster such relationships. The principal can play a vital role in the process by intentionally scheduling time into the day for teachers to observe, collaborate, and reflect. These supports do not exist only within the school communities. School-community partnerships are becoming more popular as they address

the needs of the whole child, their families, and the community in a broad sense (Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2013).

Not only have investigators made a connection between the positive relationships between teachers and students and social and emotional health, but these relationships are viewed as a protective resource for children who are exposed to high levels of stress (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003; Murray & Greenberg, 2001; Pianta et al., 1995). In Murray's study of student perceptions of relationships with teachers, the following aspects were assessed: warmth, trust, involvement, and expectations. According to Armsden and Greenberg (1987), the findings were similar to research conducted with younger populations and are linked to the conceptualizations of parent-adolescent attachments.

While a wealth of research exists on the positive aspects of adult-child relationships, little exists about the unique and cumulative impact of such relationships on school functioning among early adolescents of color in low-income environments (Murray, 2009). Findings do exist which allude to the fact that both types of relationships, parent-child and teacher-student, are effective in providing benefits to the social and cognitive development of students. Garcia-Reid, Reid, and Peterson (2005) found that support from both teachers and parents, offers unique contributions to student engagement. It would be difficult to decipher which type of relationship offers the greatest potential for academic success. Parents' relationships with their students, their students' teachers, and the school's administration have been shown to have positive outcomes. Similarly, relationships within the school community, such as teacher-student, teacher-administrator, and teacher-teacher have proven beneficial for providing an environment that is prime for students to experience

educational success. Therefore, it is important for parents to be aware of the impact their involvement has on their children's academic growth.

Parents of Color and School Involvement

With the expectation of racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the North American population continuing to increase (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Murphy Kilbride, Chud & Lange, 1998), parents and educational facilities need to build relationships as early as the students' pre-school years. Statistically, children from all continents account for a large number of those being served in Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers across the United States. While parental involvement is important at any age, it is even more vital when the teachers and parents (and children) are culturally and racially divided. Because of the cultural and racial differences, child rearing can appear different between any two groups. Regardless of their approach, both parents and teachers want students to develop and perform well in school (Bernhard et al., 1998).

While the focus is set on involving parents in the education of their child, many ECE centers have formulated a similar goal – teaching parents about proper child rearing (Fein, 1980). Unfortunately, this approach is not very collaborative. Many researchers have called attention to this standard model for ECE centers. As in many schools, the hierarchy of leadership (administration and teachers) over the parents and students becomes evident. The ECE teachers are viewed as the “experts” in the field, making decisions and working to educate the parents on the approaches they, the experts, have deemed effective. This is viewed as derogatory and facilitates a dominant culture and language to the families (Gonzalez-Mena, 1997). That type of model is not based on collaboration but on hierarchy.

Within the social context, problems of subordination of various cultural and racial groups by the majority culture run more deeply. While this is often done unintentionally, the result is the same. Teachers and parents both function within the constraints of their own experiences and interact with others based on how they have construed one another (Bernhard et al., 1998). Even as early as pre-school, students, who are assumed to be racially blind, begin to formulate a racial awareness and knowledge of stereotypes associated with race and culture. Interactions between groups, particularly one from a subordinate group and one from the majority group, can be misunderstood as various incidents can be viewed as racial in the minds of one group. This phenomenon is based on the number of incidents in which those subordinate groups have been accused of such actions, despite the teacher being oblivious, as each group is operating from their own perspective (Derman-Sparks, 1991).

Some argue the point that race exhibits an independent and negative effect on Black parent involvement by undermining Black parents' ability to comply with institutional standards for participation (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013). Because of the history of racial discrimination and their own experience with education, parents of color are more likely to approach schools with criticisms and challenges rather than support and deference. This perpetuates a negative perception by teachers about parents of color and their lack of involvement.

Some working-class parents place low emphasis on education, which curtails their involvement in their children's schooling and lowers their children's educational aspirations, too (Deutsch, 1967; Sewell & Hauser, 1980; Sewell & Shah, 1968a, 1968b). However, one study shows that African-American families are more likely to intervene and develop a more confrontational stance toward schools, than working-class Whites, according to teachers

(Diamond, 2000; Fehrman et al., 1987; Kerbow & Bernhardt, 1993; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The Diamond (2000) study took place in a large urban school district during the height of the district's local, site-based governance reform movement and included interviews of working- and middle-class African-American parents as well as participant observation in their community and schools. The interviews were semi-structured, but room was left to interpret emerging themes throughout the study.

Another example is a study performed on the importance of social class and parent involvement in schools which reinforces this idea by arguing that middle-class African Americans typically have greater resources with which to negotiate the educational system than their working-class African American counterparts, who are expected to potentially negotiate more difficult neighborhoods and interact with lower quality schools using fewer valued resources (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). Ten working class African-American families were chosen for the study, as well as eight middle-class African-American families. Both sets of interviews were part of larger studies about literacy socialization practices and whole-school change. The findings showed that social class played an important role in shaping how the parents chose to customize their children's educational experiences. Customization refers to the intervention the parents designed to intervene in their children's education.

Delpit's (1988) "The Silenced Dialogue" stated how people of color are often left out of conversations on the best practices in educating their children. She suggested that better conversations must be had – not just those involving the ears and mouths, but those that require the mind and heart. Not only do we see through our senses of sight and hearing, but also we use our beliefs. Along with Delpit, Alcoff (1995) maintained that too often one

listens as if he already has the answers. This practice is counterproductive. Listening must have a large part in conversations. Listening to respond with all the answers has not worked well for American education; those in the field must break the reinstatement of hierarchies by listening and learning from others. Even listening to students can help direct a teacher to ask the right questions to enable the students to learn even more. The benefit is not only for the teacher, but for the student, who gains valuable insight as well. According to Cook-Sather (2002), the opportunities students have to articulate their perspectives on school not only give valuable feedback to the teacher(s), but also afford the students the experience to hone their own thinking. Because of their investment in the conversation and the ability to develop their own perspective, students are more likely to take responsibility for their own learning as they realize this is not something being “done to them,” but something in which they are taking part.

There is not a lot of recorded, seminal research in this specific field, but it has of recently become a topic of interest. Therefore, it will take many reputable educational foundations supporting the collaboration of stakeholders to bring about a revolutionary change in how school leaders interact and work hand-in-hand with their learners. To accomplish this expansion, there must be “a fundamental shift of the dominant epistemology in our society and our schools to one based on trusting, listening to, and respecting the minds of all participants in schooling” (Oldfather et al., 1999, p. 313).

Society is perplexed by a mentality of power and privilege among the social classes. So often the dynamic of the public’s White, educated, middle-class leaders is mirrored in the schools in their administration and teaching staff. Thus, there is division between them and the lower-socioeconomic status and ethnic-American families (Ladson-Billings & Tate,

2006; Fuentes, 2013). To ignore the difference in culture and ethnicities is to do a huge injustice to all parties involved. Instead, educators should be cognizant of the variance of social class and ethnicity between the teachers and the families whom they serve to optimize the educational experience (Nzinga-Johnson et al., 2009).

Diamond and Gomez's (2004) study examined the various socioeconomic groups independent of race. They found a great deal of difference between middle-class and working-class African American families in their level of satisfaction and involvement. The middle-class families were said to have more choice and were certainly more satisfied with the education their children received. Others argue it does not matter the level of education or income families have; minorities continue to face discrimination and prejudice, to the point of devaluation in American life (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 2006).

Christopher Murray conducted analyses of research examining how parent and teacher relationships predicted school engagement for a group of students who were primarily students of color, specifically Latino (91%) in a low-income urban setting. As previously stated, relationships can have an effect on students as soon as early adolescence and even sooner. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) has identified early adolescence as a "particularly challenging developmental period." The risks of experiencing difficulties in school, even failure, during early adolescence is increased for students of color from low-income families. Compared to White students, Latino and African American youth are considerably more likely to have higher rates of absenteeism, suspension, poor grades, and school dropout (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Gutman, Sameroff, & Eccles, 2002; Luthar, 1999; McLoyd, 1998).

Woolley and Bowen (2007) identified a growing number of theorists and researchers who are focusing their attention on understanding how supportive relationships between parents and students can promote positive adjustment among those in the high-risk context. Many researchers connect the parent-adolescent attachment to cognitive experiences of warmth, trust, and open communication. Studies predict the positive aspects of good parent-student relationships in the home can be internalized and applied to various settings, such as school (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Therefore, strong relationships within the home are believed to equate to a sense of emotional security, stability, and confidence, which could promote exploration within the school context (Pianta, 1999).

In order for a true partnership to form, parents must feel they are a valued voice in their child's education. The difference in values between various cultural groups is another source of difficulty in educational program content. Specifically, in the ECE, parents express their feelings about what their child needs. When their suggestions are not evident in the program of study, they recognize the discrepancy between their ideas and those conveyed by the teachers. Holloway, Rambaud, Fuller, and Eggers-Pierola (1995) found that mothers' relationships with teachers were harmed by the teachers' perceived lack of acknowledgment of the parents' goals for their children.

The research conducted by Bernhard et al. (1998) uncovered many interesting perceptions of parents and teachers about parental involvement. While both parents and teachers agreed the parental involvement was not enough among minorities, they disagreed about the reason. As with many schools, teachers believe they put forth a lot of effort to plan and facilitate functions, only to find the same group of parents supporting them in attendance. However, the problem is rooted more deeply than that the parents do not show

up. Often, they have valid reasons. Some parents reported that they would like to speak up in meetings, but there are no interpreters provided so that limits the parents' ability to take part. Others say the supervisor does most of the talking and it is usually about fundraising. If this is how the parents perceive the school, they are likely to not participate in future events at all.

Similarly, there is a disparity between what the two groups view as appropriate child rearing. Teachers complain about the students of color being babied, spoiled, and otherwise inappropriately raised at home. While these thoughts were not conveyed to the parents, they certainly affect the teachers' views of the students. According to the study (Bernhard et al., 1998), 32% of the teachers reported significant home-school differences in child rearing that made it difficult for them to work with African-American families and children. Parents, of course, do not consider themselves as causing their child to be ill prepared for school. Parents mostly felt that they worked hard to provide appropriate care and even seemed to be doing specific things that would be helpful to that child within their cultural reference.

In regards to racial discrimination as viewed by teachers compared to parents, there is a large discrepancy. Teachers are often unaware of the incidents and seem to downplay the offense. When asked to describe racist incidents they had witnessed, many teachers (46%) claim to have never seen a racist act as long as they have worked at the facility. Since they work in an ECE center, some even claim such acts to be unlikely, or even impossible, among three- to six-year-olds. Among those who did acknowledge seeing racist behavior, they described the events as verbal behavior, avoidance/exclusion, and attribution of stereotyped roles. The teachers' responses to these actions varied from talking to the children (71%) to documenting the incident (4%). Out of 122 incidents, teachers involved

the parents only fifteen times (Bernhard et al., 1998). Clearly, their perception of the problem was not as important as that of those on the receiving end of the alleged racist behavior.

Parents' responses to questions of race were equally surprising. Some groups, such as Spanish or Cantonese, reported race to be irrelevant to them, stating that racism applied only to Blacks. Some parents had different opinions, such as the parent who called the school to report an incident where her child was called a racially derogatory name. The supervisor got upset at her inquiry and claimed she (the parent) was being racist. The matter was never resolved (Bernhard et al., 1998). Examples such as these can easily give better information as to why a parent would not be compelled to become more involved in the school. The relationship between the parent and the school leadership, be it teachers or administrators, is a good indicator of the level of involvement one could expect from the parent.

Parental Involvement and School Leadership

Historically, American families have been responsible for educating their children. Partnerships between home, school, and church were developed and shared the same goals for learning. In the cases where children did not attend school, the children followed after their parents, with boys often learning the trade of their father and with daughters learning from their mothers how to be homemakers (Roper, 2008). Throughout the 19th century, communities, including parents, were in control of what took place in the schools. The family was active in providing education (Roper).

Today, although the format of the schools has changed considerably, as well as how much control parents and communities have, parental involvement is still paramount in

maximizing education experiences, specifically for families of color. Though many concerns exist about the interaction between school and home, the end result of low-income and parents of color being involved in the school are positive outcomes (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Berg & Lune, 2012). The partnership desired between the home and school is dependent on the involvement of both the parents and the teachers. Because the two groups are the most proximal participants in the lives of the children, their partnership will likely affect the educational outcomes of the children. The problem is the number of barriers that stand between the two groups. It is assumed that parents desire their children to be successful and want them to not only do well, but graduate from high school. There is a notable connection between parental involvement and lower dropout rates (McNeal, 1999), higher student achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001), and even improved attitudes (Desimone, 1999).

So what keeps parents from being more involved? One barrier research revealed is the language barrier. If parents are limited in their ability to converse easily with their child's teachers and leaders in the school, they are likely to pass up opportunities to participate within the school building. Another barrier is the fact that some teachers feel parental involvement to be an intrusion of their professional opinions (Lindle, 1990; Peressini, 1998).

There are several areas in which the parents recognize a need for leadership and where they welcome others educating their children. For example, when it comes to leadership providing a safe environment in which the students can learn and collaborate, parents are supportive. The parents' perception of the leader's ability to maintain a positive school climate is thought to affect their perception of their children's academic ability and

potential. Parents want to see leadership maintaining a safe school related to discipline and bullying (Stockdale et al., 2002). Another factor in the parental perceptions of leadership is the way they view the counseling and guidance services. There is strong support in the literature that suggests parents perceive guidance counselors as playing a critical role in guiding students throughout their educational experiences (Dean, 1989).

Health education is another area in which parental perception has been considered. Weaver et al. (2002) found that 94% of parents believe sex education should be taught in the school and is essential to the health of school-age children. Parents' perception of health education is that the experiences are likely to lead to positive behavioral decision-making, decreasing the risk of engaging in problem behaviors, and increasing academic attachment and prosocial interactions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). This, in turn, leads the parents to believe the school offers a social space that will facilitate their children's success (Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2016).

In the 1990s, case studies in dozens of Chicago area schools reported productive schools being linked to certain principals sharing common leadership styles and substantive foci. Among the foci was keen attention given to empowering parents, communities, and the professional staff to serve the students more efficiently. Parents and community members were invited to take part in the shaping and improving the school vision. Their focus was not solely on incorporating more community resources, but empowering their teaching staff as well, by encouraging them to take risks and incorporate new methods of teaching (Sebring & Bryk, 2000). To examine this phenomenon more closely, one may look at the involvement of parents from the perspective of race.

Spreitzer (1995) gave a definition of empowerment as it relates to four cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his/her role: competence, impact, meaning, and self-determination. First, *competence* is associated with self-efficacy or personal mastery and identifies those tasks which a person is capable of successfully performing. *Impact* points to the amount of difference an individual's work makes towards achieving the overall purpose. Basically, it gives fulfillment to the people involved who believe they had a large part in reaching a goal for the greater context. *Meaning* refers to the individual's assessment of how important his/her task is. *Self-determination* refers to the autonomy members have over the work. Leaders must help develop their followers' ability to view themselves as a vital part of a team that is able to accomplish more collectively than if each follower worked independently. In doing so, the team members are likely to have an increased sense of competence, which could encourage a higher level of engagement as members believe their jobs are important and viable. Many studies suggest that empowered employees are more likely to reciprocate by having higher levels of concentration, initiative to execute extra duties, and resiliency, thus enhancing their own level of organizational commitment (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Transformational leadership is among the popular ideas of today and is much more than developing a subordinate team that will support the leader by completing to-do lists and working hard to ensure the leader looks good among his colleagues and supervisors. A transformational leader will stimulate his followers by challenging their thoughts and imaginations, and recognizing their creativity, values, beliefs, and mindset (Bass & Avolio, 1994). This not only builds their individual confidence, but ensures their transformation from followers to leaders (Bass, 1985; Yukl, 1998).

While there is a need for greater attention to be paid to understanding all the various aspects of transformational leadership, it is believed to be positively associated with work attitudes and behaviors at both the individual and organizational level (Dumdadum, Lowe, & Avolio, 2002; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). A study conducted by Avolio et al. (2004) focused on part of the goal of the present study on this topic, which is to look at the psychological empowerment through which transformational leaders influence their followers' organizational commitment. Also, they looked at the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational commitment by exploring the moderating role of structural distance (i.e., direct versus indirect reporting relationship to the leader). According to Shamir and colleagues (1993, 1998), transformational leaders have the ability to influence the organizational commitment of their followers by promoting greater intrinsic values associated with accomplishing a goal, linking the group's achievement directly to their effort (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, & Popper, 1998). Collaboration is key in transformational leadership as the leader emphasizes the importance of each follower's job and encourages each to think critically and become involved in decision-making processes (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Yammarino, Spangler, & Bass, 1993). This can be seen in the large number of schools moving from top-down design of leadership to embarking on the journey of incorporating leadership teams, often chaired by teachers and including members from diverse groups within the school. The actual administrative team is actively engaged in the processes but holds no hierarchical power.

Very little research has been done on the effect of parental involvement on urban students' education. Instead, most have focused on students as a whole in various settings. Another complication in this area of study is that often the criteria for "parent involvement"

is not clearly defined. That, combined with the lack of research geared specifically at urban students, creates room for debate. Some studies on the link between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement has found no notable positive outcome (Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002), while others have found a positive correlation between the two (Fan & Chen, 2001). This conflicting comparison can be explained to some extent. There is a difference between parental involvement and parent programs. Parent programs are school-sponsored events in which parents are encouraged to be involved. Fan and Chen did not distinguish between the two in their research, which is problematic because any positive correlation between parent involvement and student achievement cannot with certainty be attributed to parent programs, but to the phenomenon of parental involvement. Parental involvement and parental involvement programs are two distinct ideas (Jeynes, 2007). Also, Mattingly et al. (2002) included many unpublished research studies in their synthesis. This is likely to have an effect on their findings, as unpublished research is often indicative of statically insignificant results.

Jeynes (2007) published a meta-analysis focusing on the link between parent involvement and urban student academic achievement. Among his parental involvement foci are parental expectations, parental style, communication, and homework. Each area was divided into sub-categories. When looking at the data as a whole, there was positive correlation; however, when the statistics were broken down by race, the findings were even more significant. The overall results show parental involvement has a positive effect on children's academic achievement. This is not only true of students in general without regard to demographics, but holds true for African-American students as well. In comparison,

overall parent involvement was studied examining two groups, one being 100% ethnic-American and the other being mostly ethnic-American. The effect size was .46 for the first group and the effect size of the second was .53, thus demonstrating the consistency of the impact of parental involvement (Jeynes, 2007).

Interestingly, the results of the parental involvement programs were slightly lower, with effect sizes ranging from .29 to .36. These results support the theory of parental involvement and parental involvement programs being two different things. Parents who are involved voluntarily are likely to be more effective in helping their student(s) academically. On the contrary, parents who are physically present in the school because of multiple invitations to a specific program are not as effective in bringing academic gains. However, it is noteworthy that while voluntary involvement is more effective, parental involvement programs do show a positive correlation with student academic achievement (Jeynes, 2007).

While looking at the specific components of parental involvement, it is interesting to find the effects varied widely depending on the aspects considered. For example, some of the more subtle aspects of parental involvement had a greater impact on student achievement. Among these were parental style and expectations. On the contrary, more demonstrative aspects of parental involvement, such as having household rules or parental attendance and participation at school functions, had a lesser impact. Not surprisingly, the effects for parental involvement were somewhat reduced with the inclusion of socioeconomic status. Jeynes (2007) claimed this effect to be expected because the correlation between the attributes which help make a parent supportive are those which are likely to produce a high socioeconomic status. Those who recognize the need for diligence in school are more likely educated and will hold their children to higher academic standards.

Likewise, if they have a supportive personality, they are more fitting for such jobs such as supervisor or boss as well as excelling as an involved parent.

The overall findings of this meta-analysis have great implications for parental involvement across the board. Regardless of race or socioeconomic status, parental involvement seems to increase academic achievement. This is important for a nation, which is becoming increasingly more diverse and is working diligently to close the achievement gap between the racial groups.

Summary

To adequately understand the historical context of parental involvement, one must consider various historical events. Phenomena such as enslavement, prejudice, and power must be assessed to gain a deeper understanding of the amount of involvement across racial borders. Involvement looks different when viewed through different perspectives and may have a varied definition as to whether or not it must entail the actual presence of a parent in the school building or on the school campus.

Relationships are vital for academic success. While it seems to remain in question as to which type of relationship will garner the greatest outcome, there is one consistency: relationships between home and school support student success. Among these relationships are student-parent, student-teacher, parent-teacher, teacher-teacher, parent-administrator, and teacher-administrator.

There are various reasons why parents may or may not choose to involve themselves in activities within the school. Various cultures foster beliefs regarding what constitutes parent involvement. Misconceptions about these beliefs can perpetuate the wedge between school and home, so relationships must be developed and an awareness of various cultures'

beliefs facilitated. The manner in which parents are perceived by teachers, administrators, and others in the school is likely to be correlated to the level of parental involvement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

One of the key components of student success, according to research, is parental involvement (Huss-Keeler, 1997). Parents of color are often perceived as not being involved in their children's education. Perhaps the problem is not the fact that parents are not involved in their children's education, but that there are varying definitions of parental involvement. Some consider parental involvement from more of a traditional approach and include such things as Parent-Teacher Association meetings, volunteering in the building, and other in-house activities (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 1995). Others have a different conceptual framework for parental involvement and might consider the act of providing time for their child to attend school or have time to study in the home as a means for them being involved (Clark, 1983; Desimone, 2001; Huss-Keeler, 1997; Menacker et al., 1988; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). There is some difference between parents' idea of parental involvement as compared to their children's idea. Menacker, Hurwitz, and Weldon (1988) performed a study of parent involvement in a large urban school district using both multiple choice and open-ended questions in a survey. The findings were 61% of parents reported that they were not involved in the school activities; however, 85% of low-income students of color reported their parents helped them with homework.

The purpose of this narratological case study was to explore the involvement of parents of color within a public school in a mid-size metropolitan area in the Midwest. Again, parental involvement was defined as any interaction the parents had with their children's education. This definition was used when considering the unit of analysis, which was the interactions between parents and me regarding parental involvement. To better

understand this phenomenon, I developed one central question. It was: *What are the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement in schools?* There were several sub-questions to help me better answer the central question. They were:

1. How do parents define involvement?
2. What are their experiences with parent involvement?
3. How do teachers involve parents with their child's school?

There is not a significant amount of research on the topic of parental involvement specifically focusing on parents of color. There is research that signifies a deficiency in the number of parents, overall, who are involved, as well as literature that demonstrates a high level of parental involvement. The significance of this study is to add to the body of literature on the topic of parents of color and their involvement in their children's education.

First, one must consider the multiple definitions of parental involvement. Parents' involvement in their children's education is considered a cornerstone of the children's success in school (Huss-Keeler, 1997). Traditional parental involvement such as participating at school and supporting children's learning at home contributes to student success in schooling (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 1995). In this chapter, the following subjects were addressed: the rationale for qualitative research, the design of the study, data analysis procedures, and limitations and ethical considerations. Through a thorough examination of this topic, using a variety of data sources, I planned to answer the research question and sub-questions to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of parents of color regarding parental involvement. Through the analysis of the data, I anticipated gaining thick, rich descriptions of parents' experiences and being able to add to the body of literature on this topic.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is a tool which measures the qualities of a given phenomenon versus the focus on numbers, statistics, and cause and effect, which is common in quantitative research. In a qualitative study, one must remember the “research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). There are various aspects of the study, including collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, refining or refocusing the preliminary research questions, and addressing the validity threats. The nature of qualitative research requires the researcher to remain open to any new concepts that emerge through each step of the research process.

The job of a qualitative researcher is to provide a framework through which people are allowed to openly and freely express their perspectives of the world as they experience it (Patton, 2002). This type of research allows the researcher to obtain a more complex understanding of a phenomenon and to understand the contexts and setting in which participants address an issue (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research takes place in the natural setting and does not confine its participants to labs or clinics, but allows the researcher to observe and analyze the phenomena naturally, as they occur without predetermined judgment or by taking an *a priori* stance. By recounting what has been observed and describing what occurred, the researcher attempts to better understand the topic and phenomenon. The open-ended, organic responses of the participants in qualitative research allow the researcher and the audience to understand the experiences, beliefs, and feelings of the participants (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative research utilizes lenses through which the researcher develops the focus of the study. Research questions are designed, a theoretical framework is developed, and

methodological procedures are followed. The traditions can be blended to better attend to the research topic and allow the researcher to maintain focus. For this study, the qualitative theoretical traditions of narratology and multi-case case study were utilized. The following section provides the history and background of the traditions, as well as the rationale.

Case Study

The major technique that I utilized for this study was case study. The tradition of case study requires the investigator to collect data from an individual or a group through multiple sources and then extrapolate the emerging themes or patterns on which they will report (Creswell, 2013). Case study is the theoretical tradition that informs this study because of the nature of the topic. Case study involves the study of an individual or a group over time. This research requires the investigator to collect data from multiple sources and then extrapolate the emerging themes or patterns (Creswell). The study is typically comprised of only one or a few individuals, and meaningful results depend on the ability of the researcher to classify the information. I utilized the intrinsic case study where I focused on the interest of my study and was guided by those influences.

Case study research is viewed differently by researchers. Stake (2005) stated that it is not a methodology but more of a choice of what is being studied, whereas Yin (2009) and Meriam (1998) argued it is a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy. Case studies can be single-case or multi-case from one setting or multi-site studies. In this study, I studied the phenomenon within one site. To gather information that is not lost due to the passage of time, most case study researchers study current, real-life cases that are in progress (Creswell, 2013). Another factor to consider is the intent of the case study. A case that is of unusual interest and needs to be described and detailed is

considered an *intrinsic case* (Stake, 1995). Alternatively, if the case is studied to better understand a specific issue, problem, or concern, it is called *instrumental*. Since this study addressed a problem and was used to better understand the phenomenon, I took an instrumental approach. Case studies can either be a single-case study that focuses on one study or a multi-case study where the cases may be compared to one another. While some may argue multi-case studies provide more opportunity to apply the findings to a larger group, Yin (2003) clarified that if the researcher is looking only at a specific thing or a single group, a single-case study is the best. While I collected data from five participants, this is considered a single-case study in which I looked at the data as a whole, not comparing between cases.

Narratology

The tradition of narratology uses narrative (spoken or written) to give an account of an event or events connected to the topic. In their groundbreaking work on narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explained: “[Narrative] studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places” (p. 50). In the terms of narrative, one must rely on the stories of the participants as the *truths* that they have experienced. Participants are able to tell their stories without fearing judgment of right or wrong, true or false, but as stories of their lived experiences. The world as described by the narrators constitutes the world as it is, whatever its correspondence with our own world (Prince & Noble, 1991).

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1990), narrative is both the phenomenon and the method. They refer to the phenomenon as the “story” and the inquiry “narrative.”

Therefore, they believe that people live storied lives and share those stories of their lives.

Narrative inquiry is a way of giving voice to others. By allowing one to reveal an experience through a written narrative, one is not placing limitations on that person, but on the contrary, opening up an opportunity for the person to share an experience so the reader can better know the writer and give voice to the writer (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990).

Clandinin (2006) described how as humans we have long used lived and told stories to create meaning in our lives and use them to help build our lives and communities. She cites Bruner, who goes further to describe how they are used to connect with others. “Telling stories is an astonishing thing. We are a species whose main purpose is to tell each other about the expected and the surprises that upset the expected, and we do that through the stories we tell.” (Bruner, 2002, cited in Clandinin, 2006, p. 36).

Design of the Study

The setting for this study was a semi-urban school in a mid-sized school district in the Midwest. For the purpose of this study, I used *semi-urban* to describe an area that was not located in the urban core, *per se*, but maintained a cultural and ethnic blend common to the urban core. Criteria beyond geographical location associated with this area were the number of students who qualify for free/reduced lunches, socio-economic status, and other factors such as Head Start eligibility.

I had developed a strong rapport with this district and believed I could gain access to participants as needed. Scheduling interviews, focus groups, and possibly conducting observations could be done easily at this location. This particular school was a prime site for this study as there was a diverse student population and data could be collected through a variety of means. My hope was to have a cross-section of several African-American parents

who would participate in the research study. This school received the “Accredited with Distinction” award for the 2013-2014 school year based on the criteria the state adopted to monitor schools’ performance as the transition was made to Common Core State Standards. It served a population that was made up of students from kindergarten to fifth grade. The demographics were approximately 60% Black, 17% White, and 23% Hispanic. There were approximately 400 students in the school, and 86% were considered economically disadvantaged. This school was located in a district of similar demographics. The district served over 4,000 students, and 78.9% of them were considered economically disadvantaged, qualifying for free or reduced lunches (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015) (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Demographics of the Semi-urban District, 2014-2017

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total	4,036	4,200	4,257	4,282
Asian	*	*	*	*
Black	53.6%	54.1%	52.5%	52.4%
Hispanic	16.5%	17.7%	19.4%	19.6%
Indian	*	*	*	*
White	23.4%	21.6%	20.7%	20.3%

Note. * denotes the percentage has been suppressed due to a small sample size

Maxwell (1997) defined purposeful sampling as a type of sampling in which “particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 87). I chose my participants by utilizing purposeful sampling, specifically criterion sampling. Since the study was focused on parents of color, I hoped to garner access to

African-American parents so I could gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of parent involvement as it was experienced within the African-American culture. For this reason, there were some criteria, such as color, that I used to narrow my participant list. Criterion sampling seemed to fit well with my study because criterion sampling can be useful for identifying and understanding cases that are information rich, providing a deeper understanding of the topic of parent involvement and the factors related therein. In selecting participants, I not only selected parents who were African-American, but looked further at student performance. I selected at least one parent whose child was low-performing, at least one parent whose child performed at a mid-level, and at least one parent whose student was considered high-performing. Another technique of sampling I used was snowball sampling. I believed that as I began to make connections to identify participants, someone would know someone else and could direct me to potential participants.

Utilizing both criterion sampling and snowball sampling, I identified seven participants who agreed to take part in my study. I chose that number because I wanted to target five or six participants to use their data in my study. I acknowledged there are many reasons why one would feel the need to remove oneself from the study, and I planned to be prepared to have two back-up participants from whom I would gather information to use in a case such as this. Patton (2002) urges qualitative researchers to focus on a small group of participants with whom one can develop a level of trust and partnership. For this reason, I kept my participant group no more than six.

Data Sources

I approached the data collection portion of this study with the intention of crystallizing the findings by reporting on three different sources of data (Creswell, 2007; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Qualitative research typically incorporates three different data sources to ensure the researcher has opportunity to reach data saturation and to crystallize the findings. Typically, researchers use in-depth, open-ended interviews, observations, and data analysis of written documents (Patton, 2002). For this study, I began with documents, which were the participants' narratives. I also used open-ended interviews and followed up with a focus group. The findings from all three sources of data helped derive the answer to the research question.

Narratives

The use of narratives as a way of learning about ourselves is becoming a more popular practice.

Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lived and told stories and the talk about the stories are one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities. What feels new is the emergence of narrative methodologies in the field of social science research. (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 35)

In efforts to gain insight to the perceptions of my participants, I asked them to tell their experiences in several different ways. First, I allowed them to express their own experiences with parent involvement through narrative writing (see Appendix A). They were allowed to describe how their parents were involved in their own education when they were students. They were given a prompt such as:

- As a form of narrative writing, please share your own experiences with parental involvement. In your writing, describe your own parents' involvement in your

education. This does not necessarily need to be any certain length, but is intended to encompass your experiences with parent involvement when you were a student.

These first narratives were analyzed by a procedure described later in this chapter and the participants were asked to write a second narrative. This time the writing had the intent of describing their own involvement with their children's education. This helped me to understand how similar or different their involvement with their children was compared to how their parents were involved in their education. The prompt was:

- Please describe the ways which you are involved in your child's education.
Please be as descriptive as possible. Again, this does not necessarily need to be any certain length, but is intended to demonstrate the ways in which you are involved in your child's education.

The final set of narratives were written in a future tense as I asked the participants two questions regarding parental involvement in the future. They were able to express what they would like to see in the future and what their own plans were for being involved with their children's education and changing this paradigm. I gave a prompt similar to the following to gather this information:

- Is there anything you would like to see change regarding parental involvement for the future? As you describe this, please detail what you feel to be necessary to make this change. Also, what is your own plan, moving forward, in regards to parental involvement with your own child?

Interviews

After receiving and analyzing the first two narratives from the participants, I conducted open-ended, in-depth interviews with each participant (see Appendix B). I anticipated the narratives would give me a great amount of information and allowed that analysis to guide the interview questions. Interviews are similar to other data sources in that they provide information one may not be able to directly observe. The question is not whether or not the information gleaned from observations is more desirable, valid, or meaningful than interviews; the fact is that we cannot observe everything (Patton, 2002). Therefore, one may conduct interviews to better understand the phenomenon.

Interviews are among the most familiar strategies for collecting qualitative data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). For the interviews, I used a preliminary interview guide which had a list of various questions that were utilized to maintain a focus during the duration of the interview. Initially, I planned to conduct one interview. After analyzing the data from it as well as the three narratives from each participant, I decided against conducting follow-up interviews. The interview guide was as follows:

1. How would you define *parental involvement*?
2. Did your child attend a Head Start program?
3. Suppose your child's teacher or administrator asked how you were involved in your child's education. How would you answer that?
4. What types of activities do you feel represent parent involvement?
5. How do the teachers/faculty at your child's school involve parents in their children's education?
6. Please explain how you have felt welcomed or have not felt welcomed in the school building in regards to parental involvement.

7. Please compare those feelings of being welcome or not being welcome to the expectation you've felt to be involved outside of the school building.
8. How does parental involvement outside of the school building look?
9. Please explain how your personal experience with parental involvement, either as a student yourself, or as a parent now, has been a positive or negative one, including details and examples.

While the purpose of the interview guide was to offer structure and to maintain a focus during the interview, it was still considered semi-structured and allowed for a conversation of sorts to form between the individual participants and me.

Focus Groups

The idea of a focus group is to be a culminating experience for all parties involved, for both the participants and me. The focus group took place after the narratives had all been written, read, and analyzed and after the interviews had been conducted and analyzed. Any areas that needed more clarification were addressed at this point. Further probing questions were asked in efforts to clear up the areas in question for me.

I continued to maintain a relationship of trust as I shared my findings with the participants and allowed them to weigh in on the statements I wrote regarding the findings of the interviews and documents (narratives). I also maintained anonymity through this process by having the participants use their pseudonyms during the focus group. This process was not for their identities to remain anonymous to each other, but because there was a transcript of this focus group and the transcription should maintain the protection of the participants.

During the focus group, I attempted to pose questions in an effort to clarify any data I believed needed more clarity. Again, the conversations that may have arisen in this process were allowed to flow naturally, as long as they remained on topic and acted as a means of

data saturation. My position in this group was to facilitate; therefore, I was not able to concurrently transcribe the focus group. I used the same recording tool as I did for the interviews. As I facilitated the group discussion, I maintained my own field notes that included body language, pauses in conversation, and so forth, noting what would not be found on the transcription.

Data Analysis Procedures

Although qualitative research generally maintains minimal numbers of participants, multiple data sets are produced. The numerous narratives written by the participants, the interviews, and the focus group were all analyzed and synthesized to fully understand the phenomenon and to answer the research question. Transcriptions of each data source were typed, completely documenting the words spoken as well as notations that described body language, social cues, or what was not seen or heard. This was particularly true for the interviews and focus group. The narratives served as their own transcription, and the participants' writing were analyzed. I used the transcriptions of each data source and synthesized the information by using thematic analysis to interpret the data (Grbich, 2007). According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), "Some researcher methodologists believe that coding is merely technical, preparatory work for higher level thinking about the study. But we believe that coding is deep reflection about and, thus, deep analysis and interpretation of the data's meanings" (p. 72). To clarify, coding *is* analysis. The coding process was incorporated for the in-depth interviews, the narratives written by the participants, and the focus group to develop descriptive codes and interpretive codes, as well as to develop themes from those interpretive codes.

Using an inductive coding process, I formulated a preliminary list of descriptive codes that were basic topics found within the data sets (Miles et al., 2014). The individual descriptive code lists formulated for each data source were then chunked by common interpretive codes. This process was repeated for each data source. I looked at each participant's data in a linear fashion, allowing the participant's story to come alive. I also took one data source and looked at each participant for that particular source. This helped me to recognize the similarities as I looked participant to participant. The descriptive codes remained on their own documents for each source, but the interpretive codes were combined to form a comprehensive list of codes from which the themes emerged. "The ultimate power of field research lies in the researcher's emerging map of what is happening and why" (p. 93).

In essence, this single-case study included within-case analysis. For each participant, there were: 1) a narrative describing his or her experiences with parental involvement when the participant was a student, 2) a narrative describing his or her own involvement with his or her child's education, 3) a narrative outlining the hopes of the participant regarding parental involvement in the future, and 4) an interview. In addition, there was the transcript of the focus group. The descriptive codes for each of the sources listed were used to formulate a common list of interpretive codes. From there, the themes emerged. Each participant's writing was compared to those of the other participants by use of the enumerative, thematic coding process. The themes were compared as within-case analysis.

The findings of the within-case analysis were shown to the corresponding participants, and they were given the opportunity to give their feedback of the process and

findings, individually. This correspondence happened in face-to-face meetings or via telephone conversation.

Throughout the data collection and analysis, which occurred simultaneously at times, I maintained electronic copies of the data. These data are stored in a secure location, UMKC Box, and are shared with my committee chair. I used the app, QuickVoice, to record the interviews. This allowed me to facilitate the interview as I utilized a Word document to keep notes on the body language and other aspects of the interview that were not noted on the audio recording. The recording was then transcribed, verbatim, to a document (see Appendix C). The interview transcriptions and narratives written by the participants were stored in a secure, electronic format, using UMKC Box. Next, each source was read and analyzed. As I read and analyzed each source of data, I began to use descriptive codes to describe the essence of each source. The descriptive codes from each source were combined to formulate the interpretive codes. The same was true for the focus group transcription. I stored the transcript on UMKC Box among the other data sources. All data will be kept at least three years after the dissertation process is complete, including the dissertation defense, unless otherwise stipulated by the IRB. Once I am cleared, I will remove the documents from UMKC Box.

The descriptive codes formulated from each document were organized on a spreadsheet and later used to formulate interpretive codes. The interpretive codes were recorded on the document, but were combined to form one list of interpretive codes. On that document, themes emerged. I did not purchase a software program, but proposed to be organized and protect access to the electronic documents.

Limitations

Creswell (2013) stated, “Researchers have a personal history that situates them as inquirers” (p. 51). Depending on one’s history, various assumptions and biases can be brought to the research study. It is important to identify them and plan which strategies will be used to address the biases so the findings are credible. A weakness I brought to my study is my own educational background and my family’s experience with parental involvement. I was raised in a White, middle-class family; attended a primarily all-White school; attended a primarily all-White church; and had supportive parents who were intentional with their support of my education both in the school and at home.

A challenge for me was to build a rapport with the participants in a short time, being transparent about my own background and experiences while creating a strong relationship with them. I tried to ease their concerns, so they were not fearful of disclosing information to me, even though their experiences may be different than mine. I fostered working relationships that did not include stereotyping or labeling that would shed a negative light on our connection (Creswell, 2013). Another challenge I faced was allowing the participants to speak through the data I collected and not allowing their responses to fall into preconceived structures based on my own experiences and biases about the phenomenon.

Validity and Reliability

Researchers disagree on the vocabulary necessary to describe the validity and reliability of a study. Since the terms *validity* and *reliability* are commonly linked to quantitative research, some (Eisner, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) argued the need for unique terms to describe the process for qualitative research, arguing that the use of the traditional terms “muddies the waters” and does not work well with qualitative work. To

validate my study, I utilized multiple data sources to support my interpretations of the essence of the participants' responses. Eisner (1991) called this process structural corroboration. Commonly, this process is referred to as triangulation; however, a more postmodern perspective likens this process to the image of a crystal. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) described this metaphor:

I propose that the central imaginary for "validation" for postmodern texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of response – not triangulation but rather crystallization. (p. 963)

Narratology requires the researcher to analyze the participants' stories by analyzing narratives, field notes, interview reports, and focus group responses. The stories (mostly through narratives) were coded to represent commonalities among them. The codes were grouped into larger themes representing similar ideas. The researcher found the essential invariant structure (or essence) as described by Creswell (2013) in those collective themes.

The validation of my findings was later solidified through the findings being classified by a coding process and the grouping of common codes together to formulate the themes from which I extracted meaning. I began analyzing the data immediately upon collection so that the *shape* of the study continued to take place naturally as the findings along the way brought to light the need for any additional questions for interviews or focus group discussions.

I kept careful record of interviews and focus group discussions through the use of not only an electronic source, such as an open document on a computer to record body language, but also by incorporating the use of an audio recording. The participants were made aware

of the recording and agreed to the use of the recording device to ensure proper reporting of the information. Lincoln and Guba (1985) warned of the intrusiveness of the recording device and the possibility of technical failure. However, it is important to note that the use of recording devices is more faithful in collecting data versus quickly-written notes and allows the researcher to better focus on the interview and not the hand recording of the participants' responses.

In addition, I made use of a research journal in which I kept a record of each step of the research. I planned to keep a record of my intended plan as well as each step as it actually took place. For example, I thought I would journal things such as "I will contact my participants on April 17, 2018 to request their first round of narratives. I will follow up with them on April 25 if I have not first heard from them." Then, if my actual contact date varied from my original plan, I would make note of that. I also planned to record my own feelings and/or concerns as I worked through the research phase of the study, keeping a record of every action taken to gather and analyze the data. I cannot say I was totally consistent with this process, but did record several steps of the journey, including journaling some of my feelings along the way.

Ethical Considerations

Ethically, I remained cognizant of the fact that my participants were people of color whose children attended a Title 1 school, which served many low socioeconomic families. As I was taught about racial diversity and how the public viewed people by their skin tones, I was taught of the injustices brought upon people because of their color, but I was not taught about the privilege equated with being White. I planned to make use of a critical

friend with whom I shared my experiences and findings, and asked if my personal experiences seem to shape what I perceived.

Another ethical consideration was the anonymity of the study. While I pursued personal connections with the participants, I ensured their identities were safe. My participants selected pseudonyms to use for themselves. The school from which I collected my data assumed a pseudo name as well and was described in vague terms so as not to indicate the exact location or allow a reader to locate the actual district. The manner in which I approached the study was important as well. In analyzing data, qualitative studies have such an open-ended approach it is important to allow the data to have a voice. Coding helped me to categorize the responses from the personal interviews; however, I could not force responses into any one theme, but allowed the data to speak for itself. Allowing new ideas and themes to emerge is part of the naturalistic approach and is vital to the validity and ethics of a study. I utilized a within-case analysis to ensure the data were saturated and the findings conclusive.

Institutional ethics committees have been established all over the world to provide oversight and approval for proposals of any studies involving human subjects (Brody, 1988; Vanderpool, 1996). This procedure is established to protect the participants and reduce the risks of the study. I followed the procedures outlined by the university's institutional review board (IRB) for obtaining permission to use human subjects (see Appendix D), maintaining the proper documentation of their consent agreement (see Appendix E), and providing them with written information about their ability to choose to withdraw themselves from the study throughout the course of the research. For the purpose of this study, I did not foresee this process being daunting as I used subjects who were all over the age of 18 and were parents.

In 1974 the National Research Act was signed into law, creating the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects. The commission focuses on four specific areas, of which three apply to this study. The three are: 1) the role of assessment of risk-benefit criteria in the determination of the appropriateness of research involving human subjects; 2) appropriate guidelines for the selection of human subjects for participation in such research; and 3) the nature and definition of informed consent in various research settings. This information is outlined in the Belmont Report, which can be found by utilizing a search engine on the internet, and outlines the basic ethical considerations the Commission identified throughout the course of its deliberations (Belmont Report, 1979).

In presenting the purpose, procedures, goals, and anticipated benefits from this study, I remained truthful with the participants. I anticipated no harm to the participants, including any economic hardship added to them due to their participation in this study. The participants were chosen using the criterion I established for the study and were treated respectfully. Their responses were anonymous and confidential. It was paramount in this study that I maintain a working relationship with them and value their input as I sought to better understand this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Overview of the Study

This case study incorporated narratology to better describe African-American parents' perception of parental involvement. The idea of parental involvement is narrowed to represent how it relates to students' academic learning. There is not a great deal of research on this topic, specifically African-American parents' perceptions. The goal is for the analysis of this study to be used to better define the term "parental involvement" among various ethnicities.

The problem addressed in this study is there is no set definition used when considering the concept of parental involvement, which seems to lead to assumptions, whether correct or incorrect. The phenomenon is viewed through the eyes of African-American parents. My purpose was to explore the lived experiences of African-American parents from both the historical context – when they were children, themselves – and as adults involved in their own children's education. It is hoped these experiences will guide in creating a better definition of the phenomenon. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated, "Narrative inquiry has a compelling, sometimes confounding, quality of merging overall life experiences with specific research experience" (p. 115). These lived stories of parental involvement can be viewed to better understand perceptions of the phenomenon and while they, collectively, can be used to gain a broad understanding, remain powerful in their individuality. Qualitative research was an appropriate vehicle to gather the experiences so one can better understand parent perceptions.

In this study, lived experiences were revealed through the use of narratives and interviews. Huss-Keeler (1997) stated that parents who are actively involved in school functions give the perception of being “interested.” This leads one to believe the opposite is true, as well – if parents are not participants in school functions, they are not interested. The preliminary research question was: What are the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement in schools? The sub-questions, which were used to help answer the central question were:

- How do parents define *involvement*?
- What are their experiences with parental involvement?
- How do teachers involve parents with their child’s school?

Case studies require one to observe and analyze a case in a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2013). While some argue case study to merely be a strategy of inquiry, Creswell (2013) viewed it as a methodology. Based on the specificity of the issue, instrumental case study was chosen for this research. Focusing on that one issue, the case was used to best to understand the problem (Stake, 2005).

While case study is the main theoretical tradition utilized in this study, a narratological approach was used as well, allowing participants to give their responses to three narrative prompts and to tell their lived stories through personal interviews. Both of these data points served as opportunity for participants to relive their previous experiences with parental involvement as children. Also, they were able to share the ways they are involved in their own children’s education and describe their own ideas of parental involvement and what would constitute the ideal concept of parental involvement.

This chapter is formatted using sections to better present the information. A detailed description of the participants and the study's setting are given first. Then, findings and commentary on each participant's lived stories are presented, including a bit of information for each participant. Near the end, a summary of the chapter is offered. Attention to confidentiality was given, as data were stored on the UMKC Box site and each participant selected a pseudonym that were used throughout the study to protect the identity of each of the participants.

Description of the Setting and Participant List

This case study consisted of five African-American parents. Demographic information of the participants is reflected in Table 4.1. Criterion sampling was utilized to identify participants. Since the study focused on African-American parents, race was used as an identifying factor. Also, the participants must have children who have attended school. Parents were not told upfront that they would receive anything for their participation but were given a small gift card to a local business as means of compensation for participating. Participation required each parent to write their responses to three narrative prompts. They also met for a private face-to-face interview. Finally, they were called back for a focus group to clarify findings and offer any additional information. The study took place in a semi-urban school in a mid-sized school district in the Midwest, given the pseudonym Johnson Elementary School. Table 4.2 represents additional information for each of the participants in the case study.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographics Summary

Parents (n=5)	
Education	
Graduate degrees	1
College degrees	1
High School diplomas	2
GED	1
Race	
African-American	5
Gender	
Female	4
Male	1
Employment Status	
Full-time	3
Part-time	1
Unemployed	1

Table 4.2

Pseudonym, Number of Children, Number of Siblings, and Educational Demographics

Pseudonym	Number of Children	Number of Siblings	Educational Demographic
Alice Cooper	1	6	High School Diploma
April Cunningham	3	3	Graduate Degree
Jennifer Kay	2	2	Graduate Degree
Grace Nimrod	3	4	GED
Sam Johnson	2	5	High School Diploma

For this narratological case study, the units of analyses were the interactions between the parents and me – interview, narratives, and a focus group. This qualitative study provided research on the perceptions of African-American parents regarding parental involvement in efforts to not only better understand the parents' perceptions, but to better define the term parental involvement as it relates to learning in the school. In order to explore this phenomenon, an elementary school in a semi-urban, mid-size district was selected as study location. Participation in the study was voluntary.

The intent of this study was to bring to light the perceptions of African-American parents related to parental involvement. In efforts to encapsulate those perceptions, information was collected from five participants who are African-American and who have children who have attended school. While each participant provided individual narratives and took part in an interview, the data were viewed in a more holistic way, as a single-case case study. The stories were analyzed in a way that brought the essence to life as a whole. Some researchers may feel that more detailed information may be derived from multi-case study; however, Yin (2003) would argue that a single-case study is the best option when the researcher is looking at only a specific thing or a single group. Within the single-case analysis, all documents were coded using descriptive codes, interpretive codes, and themes (Miles et al., 2014).

In efforts to reach data saturation, multiple sources of data were collected and analyzed to crystallize the data – providing adequate descriptions and validity. The three data sources were in-depth interviews and three narrative prompts per participant. Data collection culminated in a brief focus group. The data were coded, utilizing descriptive and

interpretive codes, and themes were formulated. The case included five African-American parents of children who have attended school.

Single-case Analysis of Case Study

While several pieces of data were collected for each participant, they were combined to formulate a single-case study. The data included transcripts of each participant's interview, responses to three narrative prompts, and a transcript of a brief focus group. Each data source was read multiple times to gain a better understanding of the essence of each source. The narratives of each participant were read along with each participant's interview transcript. The purpose of reading the data in this order was to make sense of each participant's experiences as his/her narrative story. All data were then read as a means to make one narrative to comprise the story of the group, collectively. Throughout the research, the focus remained on gaining a better understanding of the perception of African-American parents regarding parental involvement. Four themes emerged as a result of analysis through the inductive coding process. The themes are: definitions, experiential capital, social capital, and aspirations.

In this case study, each data source was analyzed as it was coded. The first cycle of coding is a way to initially summarize segments of data (Miles et al., 2014). In this study, I read each piece of data and wrote comments in the margin about the essence of each sentence or segment. While this provided a large number of descriptors, it allowed the multiple pages of data to be broken down into more condensed, focused bits of information. I read these descriptive codes multiple times and categorized them into smaller groups, identified as interpretive codes. Each of the descriptive codes seemed to reasonably fall within the category of one of the interpretive codes. Finally, the descriptive codes were

considered as I read the narratives, interview transcriptions, and focus group transcription once again. During this process, themes emerged that encompassed two or more interpretive codes for each. Table 4.3 illustrates the codes utilized to formulate themes and shows in what data sets each was found.

Table 4.3

Themes in Qualitative Data Sets

<i>Themes and Interpretive Codes</i>	Narrative Prompts	In-Depth Interviews	Focus Group
Definitions			
School Activities	X	X	X
Home Activities	X	X	
Experiential Capital			
Background	X	X	
Head Start		X	
Changes	X	X	X
Aspirations			
Parent	X	X	X
Responsibility	X	X	X
Goals	X	X	
Social Capital			
Relationships	X	X	
Feelings	X	X	
Challenges	X	X	

Table 4.4 demonstrates the frequencies for each interpretive code. Qualitative data does not deal significantly with numbers, as quantitative research commonly does; however, it is still interesting to note the frequencies. It is also interesting to note the frequency with which one interpretive code appears does not necessarily equate to its level of importance or priority.

The profiles for each of the five participants are included in the analysis of this case study, and the themes are mentioned, identifying how each theme lends itself to the participants' lived experiences. While this is a single-case study, each participant's section includes findings from the participant's three narrative responses, interviews, and their contribution to the focus group.

Findings and Discussion

Participant One: Grace Nimrod

Profile: Grace is a single, African-American mother who has three children. She was removed from her home and parents when she was a child and was placed in the custody of her grandmother. Her grandmother's failing health soon mandated her placement in foster care, and Grace was moved from foster family to foster family over the course of several years, sometimes landing in the home of an aunt or uncle. Encouraged by her foster family, Grace later took night courses to earn a GED.

Themes related to this participant. The first theme that emerged was **experiential capital**. In this study, I used **experiential capital** to identify experiences that one has lived and therefore have become assets in helping that person navigate toward a particular goal.

Throughout Grace's narratives, she seems to express how her lived experiences clearly play a defining role in how she perceives things today. Grace wrote:

Table 4.4

Interpretive Code Frequency

Source	Participant Data									
	Home Activities			Parent Responsibilities		School Activities			Interpretive Codes	
	Feelings	Background	Head Start	Goals	Challenges	Relationship	Changes			
G Nimrod Interview	3	8	8	13	1	11		2		
G Nimrod Narr 1			14	1		1				
G Nimrod Narr 2		1	1	3						
G Nimrod Narr 3		3		2			1			1
A Cooper Interview	3	7	13	5	1	6	2		1	2
A Cooper Narr 1		1	4	1						
A Cooper Narr 2		1	1	1		2				
A Cooper Narr 3		1					1			
Jennifer K Interview	3	5	9	6	1	9				
Jennifer K Narr 1		2	7			11		1		
Jennifer K Narr 2		3	4	2		9		1		
Jennifer K Narr 3	1	1				5	3			
A Cunningham Interview	5	3	1	2	1	5		2		
A Cunningham Narr 1			3			7				
A Cunningham Narr 2	2	1		1		1		1		
A Cunningham Narr 3	1	2		6						
S Johnson Interview	2	1	3	8	1	2		1		
S Johnson Narr 1			3							
S Johnson Narr 2	1	1		2		2				
S Johnson Narr 3				1			4		1	
Total Frequency:	21	41	71	54	5	71	11	2	8	3

I was with my mom in the beginning. When I was eight, we got taken from my mom and they put us in my grandmother's custody – until I was 10 or 11. She got sick. Me and my little sister were put in a group home...they moved us again. The foster lady did not like me at all. They moved us early in the morning – we weren't even clothed. We was in our pajamas.

Throughout her interview, several other statements led to the interpretive code *background*.

She said that she eventually found herself in the home of a foster mom who was determined. Grace had lost her grandmother by this time, and the foster mother knew how important the grandmother had been to Grace. She encouraged her to go back to school to earn her GED. She reminded Grace of the goals her grandmother would have for her.

Parent Responsibility is a common descriptive code that appeared in Grace's narrative responses multiple times. The experiences she lived as a youth, shuffled from home to home, lacking stability in many cases, has shaped her own aspirations for her children. While she expressed the struggle associated with being a single mom, she made clear how she defines her role as a mother.

She wrote, "...I'm still a stay-at-home mom, but am still very active with their school – whatever activity they want to be involve in." She expressed that she will "have their back" at all times. However, her goals are not only to protect them by being on their side, but to understand the importance of correction as well. She said, "When I find that they are wrong with it, I have to set them straight."

There were multiple interpretive codes that when grouped together formed the themes explained in this study. For example, another interpretive code that falls under *experiential capital* is *changes*. While it did not appear multiple times in Grace's interviews, I believe it is important to describe how her life has changed after having become a mother.

She declared she “did what she had to do.” She was young when she first became a mom and so she had to grow up. In her words, “...no more clubs...going out...”

The third narrative prompt asked about the participant’s ideas for change related to the phenomenon of parental involvement. The participants were asked to detail what they felt was necessary to see this change come about. Naturally, this led to the theme of **aspirations**, as participants expressed their wishes as parents; however, as Grace began to open up, her story also introduced another theme – **social capital**. The interpretive codes used here were *feelings* and *challenges*. Grace seemed to speak the truths of her own struggles as she explained:

It is a struggle to take care of your kids. Food...clothing...It would be kind of tight to do a lot of stuff for my kids. Like, especially when school starts, it seems not a lot of people understand that there are people who don’t have the money to get what everybody else has. If schools starts on Friday, they [my kids] will wait until the next week to wear their school clothes. It’s not the kids’ fault. Their parents may not have the time to do everything.

She stated her desire for her kids to succeed. This, too, speaks to the idea of **aspirations** in that she has plans for her children. She expressed her attitude towards trying in order to help them reach their goals, saying, “I encourage them to do their best, whatever grade they are going to. I want them to succeed. If it is too hard, they need to try again. ‘Can’t’ is not a word in my house. They can’t say ‘I can’t.’”

Grace was candid in expressing her ideas about *parent responsibility*, which is another interpretive code that fell under the theme of **aspirations**. She explained:

I want to teach them to be strong and different than I was for the world we in now is totally different than the world I grew up in. It’s like I have to keep them on their toes...I got to know what you all are doing, because it can happen. Anywhere, it doesn’t matter, so I try to keep them away from stuff – bullets have no name on it...You can be somewhere and they shooting somebody else, but you can get shot, too...My daughter, she’s 18. I’m really hard on her because she is a girl and I don’t

want anything to happen to her...dudes do...men will do anything. They'll snatch little girls...don't care about the age.

She continued:

When you ask me if you can go somewhere, I have to know where you are going. If I don't know the parents and I haven't met the parents, you can't go over there...I guess I'm harder on them because it's so different...everything that happened when I was little...so I try to keep them. I try to keep them out of the street and in a book. They don't like to read, but I make them read books...I try to keep them at home, occupied with something.

Throughout Grace's interview, she echoed many concepts found in her narrative responses; however, she gave more specific examples of her ideas of parental involvement – as a means of definition. She listed examples of activities, specific in many cases, which she feels fall in line with the definition of parental involvement. First, she describes some academic activities, such as attending summer school, urging students to work toward the goal of graduation, and identifying special learning needs of her students. These descriptions not only apply to the interpretive code *school activities*, but also under the umbrella of the interpretive code *home activities*. Both home and school activities were used to identify information revealed by the participants that directly related to either the central research question – What are the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement in schools? or one of the three sub-questions:

- How do parents define involvement?
- What are the participants' experiences with parent involvement?
- How do teachers involve parents with their child's school?

Grace further described activities that she believed define parental involvement. Among them were summer school, football, camp, (mentor) fishing, camping, skating, Main Event, and Chuck E. Cheese.

Grace also explained that her sons have some learning challenges and how those needs were identified as early as Head Start. She further described:

I'm always at the school. I do pop-up visits. I want to see everything that is going on...make sure everything is alright. If the school hasn't called me, I have to come up there to make sure everything is okay. I have to come up there, my son who has a disability, I have to come up there to make sure he takes his medicine, and give them to him, so I'm constantly in anything to comes to my kids.

Grace's own lived experiences seemed to solidify her *feelings* of how well her children's school welcome parents/families to the building. She said that during the enrollment period, she usually felt okay about coming to the school building and that a lot of her children's feelings of happiness or excitement were built upon which teachers they were assigned. This seemed understandable and common – students feeling partial to some teachers based on their own experiences. However, Grace went on to describe how she had not felt welcomed in the building beyond the beginning of the year:

I don't feel welcomed sometimes at the school. I kind of have, like, been really tense about stuff that happens at school with my son and the principal, so I don't have that kind of good relationship with the principal. With my high-schooler, she doesn't really have a whole lot of stuff that the parents can be involved in, but whatever she does have, I'm always there. For my boys, I used to get frustrated and say that I wasn't [going to be involved], but for the sake of my kids, I do anyway.

As Grace shared her feelings regarding feeling welcome, I considered her own story, lived and shared through her narratives regarding being moved from home to home and the lack of consistency she experienced as a student. I cannot help but think perhaps some of her own feelings regarding her comfort levels in the school building take into consideration her own interactions with school and the inconsistency she experienced. She never really felt a sense of community within a school because she rarely stayed at any individual building long enough to develop strong connections. As she finds herself in the school

setting today, no doubt, the images - memories of bad experiences - begin to play in her mind.

Participant Two: Alice Cooper

Profile. Alice is a single, African-American mother who has one daughter. She was extremely close to her father as a child, but he died when she was young. Her mother attempted to make up the difference but had several children and could not be as involved as she desired. Alice works part-time and has a high-school diploma.

Themes related to this participant. The theme that demonstrated the highest frequency of interpretive codes is *experiential capital*.

Alice told about her background, losing her father, and having her mother attempt to fill the void. Unfortunately, the demands of having several children made it nearly impossible for her mother to be as involved as she desired. In fact, even providing for the family was a struggle for Alice's mom. Alice said, "She [mother] was supportive by providing for us after my father passed. Sometimes it got rough with having seven kids, so I stepped up to help when I turned 14. I got a job..." She went on to say that she would spend a little money on herself, but the rest went to the family. She never minded helping. Alice compares herself to her mother because she says they both help others and both graduated early from high school.

When asked about whether or not her daughter attended a Head Start program, she was unable to answer with certainty. She knew she attended a daycare of sorts but could not remember if it was an actual Head Start. She proudly described how they asked her daughter

to stay in the program for an additional month or two, without charging her, so that her daughter could take part in the graduation activities.

Quaglia and Cobb (1996) described *aspiration* as “ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals” (p. 130). The theme, *aspirations*, was also viewed throughout Alice’s narratives and interview. She described what she considers to be *parent responsibility*, an interpretive code demonstrated through Alice’s story. Though Alice has health conditions, she aspires to connect her daughter to life experiences not only in the realm of educational learning, but in cultural and relational experiences. She talked about the necessity of helping her child with academics, but also how important she feels it is to share non-academic experiences:

I try to be involved as I can with [her]. I have participated in trips when I can, but I really try to be supportive of her dreams. She’s pretty smart so she doesn’t ask for much help with homework. I wish she would ask more often. I have to invite myself to help her.

Alice continued:

I try to take a lot of vacations with her. I want her to know that you should reward yourself for hard work because sometimes you won’t get the acknowledgement elsewhere. Also, I want her to experience this world – it’s way bigger than [our city]. A lot of people from here get too comfortable.

While she expressed her desire to take vacations, Alice did not describe the magnitude of those trips; however, she did express the desire for her daughter to be able to attend school trips to allow her daughter to experience life outside of the region in which they lived. Unfortunately, the expense of the trips often negated her daughter’s ability to attend. Her goal is to work toward becoming financially stable so she can offer her daughter those opportunities.

Alice also expressed a desire to see parents more involved with their kids across the board. She does not believe the parents really have a reason not to be involved. She can empathize with those who are struggling, being a single mom with limited resources herself, but thinks there has to be a way for parents to be involved. She expressed her desire to see the “government move minimum wage to an amount that can fully take care of a household and provide for at least a family of three.”

As for *social capital*, Alice shared her struggles being a single mother but demonstrated a passion for the importance of relationship. She wants to know what her daughter is studying and doing. She expressed the importance of helping with homework, setting goals for independence, and supporting her child. In describing how she helps with homework, she also noted that some parents are unable to help their children with homework because the parents lack the skill necessary to assist the child in the work. This sheds light on the interpretive code, *challenges*.

Alice revealed her feelings about being welcome at her daughter’s school:

I feel welcome every time I come here. They know me by name – we [office assistant and Alice] have the same name and so it’s easy. They are like, “Oh yeah...that’s her mom...” Yes, every time I’m feel welcome here. Everyone is real nice and I know she’s not a troubled child, so I really don’t get any negative feedback from anyone here.

Alice continued to describe how the teachers have involved her in her child’s education. This alludes to one of the sub-questions directing this study. The interpretive code is *home activities* and points to the theme of *definitions*.

“I believe her teacher was really...she communicated with me and let me know what’s going on and you know, like I said, we talked about her and you know, how she acts

and she's a very mature kid." She described an instance where her daughter was involved in a situation at school, involving other students:

I want to say it was third grade...and this is something typical. She was with a group of girls and they called a little boy out his name, which made...I kind of laughed at the situation and it made me very happy, but the name was "ugly stranger," which is totally appropriate for third grade. I thought it was going to be something really inappropriate. And that's the only time the teacher was like, "You know, I really don't think [your daughter] did it"...and I'm like, "You know, she probably did, you know, because they're...when you're with a group of girls that influence, it can come off on you, so...

This instance demonstrated that Alice has never claimed her daughter to be above making mistakes or needing redirection, but that Alice has a grasp on what she is capable of and is willing to communicate with the teacher to get to the bottom of the situation.

Finally, Alice's *definitions* of what she feels constitutes parental involvement range from helping with homework to offering opportunities for non-academic experiences. She emphasized that parental involvement was not merely attending school functions. She described taking her daughter to a theme park and learning a lot about her. She found her daughter was not as much of a thrill seeker as Alice had assumed. So, she offered other experiences, such as museums, or other activities that interest the individual child. This might be a task for a parent of several children, but Alice enjoys what she calls the "learning process."

Participant Three: Jennifer Kay

Profile. Jennifer is a married, African-American mother of two boys. She was raised in a seemingly good atmosphere with both parents. Each parent was involved in some aspect, though their roles varied. She graduated high school and went directly to college, earning a Bachelor's degree, and she currently works full-time.

Themes related to this participant. The theme that seems to shine most brightly through the analysis of Jennifer's interview transcript and written narratives is the idea of **aspirations**. One link to **aspirations** is the repetitive mention of what she considers to be *parent responsibility*, an interpretive code that was frequently identified during her story.

Unlike other participants who worked to change the trajectory of their own children compared to what they, themselves, had experienced, Jennifer seems to build upon what her parents established and, in some cases, even sees a keen resemblance when comparing the ways she is involved to that of her parents. For example, she said that her mother was very involved in her education experiences:

My mother volunteered by helping with school functions, going on field trips, attending meetings, assisting teachers by grading papers, and serving in the PTA. My mother assisted with our school's carnival by collecting money to get in and assisted in the clean-up...She would also help during field day by running a "station."

She described how her parents attended all the "Meet the Teacher" activities at the beginning of the year when she was in elementary school. They also participated in parent-teacher conferences; however, she said her mother took a more aggressive role during these meetings while her father was present physically but not actively engaged. During Jennifer's elementary years, her mother stayed at home with Jennifer and her brother, so it seemed easier for her, perhaps, to be involved in the various activities.

Her father attended the conferences and activities, but Jennifer felt more support from him when it came to performances – singing programs, plays, and talent shows. The **experiential capital** in her background experiences are of his involvement at a different level than her mother. He was the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid at a nearby college

and worked hard. While he made time for events, he was not always actively engaged. She is a self-proclaimed “daddy’s girl” and described his involvement:

My father played a different role when it came to parental involvement. He was involved by attending all of my performances...He was also involved by serving as a “guest” speaker for cultural days or whenever we talked about Africa in social studies. I remember being so excited to have my dad at my school and my friends loved it, too.

Both of Jennifer’s parents graduated college and pursued career paths – her mother did this later, after Jennifer went to middle school. Her mother eventually opened a daycare center and had another baby. Jennifer feels these are all indicative of the reasons her mother was not quite as involved in her middle- and high-school years. Her mother continued to attend PTA meetings, but no longer attended field trips or volunteered at the school during the day. Jennifer clarified, “Both parents attended parent-teacher conferences, every basketball game, and every choir and dance performance I was in.” Then, in high school, her mother no longer attended even PTA meetings.

As a parent, Jennifer saw much of the same trend with her own involvement in her boys’ schools. Her older child was in high school and Jennifer said that once he moved to middle school, she was not nearly as involved as she had been when he was in elementary school; nor was she as involved as she continued to be with her elementary-aged son. In reference to her *feelings*, an interpretive code used that falls under the umbrella of ***social capital***, Jennifer explained her own experiences with the middle school. “When my son began middle school, I attended all of the sixth-grade beginning-of-the-year activities and attended PTA meetings; however, I didn’t feel needed.” She went further:

I was used to feeling needed and very involved to just attending band performances and conferences. The only place I felt needed was from the band department, so that’s where I did most of my volunteering. Another thing that was different was the

awards assemblies. The only one that I attended was when he promoted from 8th grade.

Jennifer also revealed her experience of how the teachers responded to her. She described, “I did attend parent-teacher conferences and reached out to teachers, but I didn’t get much of a response.” The change was not only associated with how the school staff made her feel, but also her own son’s reaction to her involvement. He no longer wanted her to attend field trips or be involved in activities directly related to the school. He did not mind her attending performances, but he did not show desire for her to attend their out-of-town performances.

Jennifer maintained involvement in her elementary-aged son’s school – attending fieldtrips, helping in his classroom, and volunteering for classroom parties. Because of work, she was unable to attend every assembly. She missed two of the awards assemblies and described how it made her feel like a bad mother. Her *relationship* with her son was such that she prepared him for her absence, explaining how sorry she was. According to Jennifer, “...it didn’t faze him at all.”

Regarding a **definition** for parental involvement, Jennifer describes various *school activities* mentioned above – parent-teacher conference, meet-the-teacher events, awards assemblies, and PTA involvement – which seem to fall within the description of what she considers a definition for the phenomenon. She goes further to list a few ways in which any parent could be involved by addressing what might be *goals* for parental involvement.

Jennifer posited:

In a perfect world, every parent would do their part to be involved in their child’s lives. I believe that parent involvement can look different for different people...coming up for school activities, checking on their child by calling or sending an email, or volunteering to sponsor or do other service things in the school.

She also talked about the responsibilities of the school, which she listed as, “schools need to let the parents know on a regular basis how important they are and how we would have a better learning environment if we worked together.” She maintained that parents need to feel like they are partners with their child’s school.

Participant Four: April Cunningham

Profile. April is a single, African-American mother of three. She was raised by her mother, a single parent. The area in which she was raised affected the amount of involvement she experienced as a student in school. She finished high school, later attending college. As she worked and raised her own kids, she went back to school and earned a graduate degree.

Themes related to this participant. The first narrative highlights the ways in which teachers and schools involved parents, or in this case, did not involve parents. This coincides with the research questions chosen to guide this study, thus falling under the interpretive code of *home activities* and the theme of ***definitions***.

April grew up in a rural area far away from her current location. In reports of her own familial experiences, she revealed that her mother was not really involved in her education. April clarified:

During my elementary years, my mom was not actively involved. This was true for all of the students who attended my elementary school... Parental involvement was not something the principal or teachers encouraged; however, parents were in attendance whenever there was a program. I remember the auditorium being packed when we performed our plays for Christmas, Easter – or the spring concert.

April’s ***social capital*** can be described by looking at her *relationships* and *feelings* as she raised her own family and in looking at the ways she was involved in her children’s

educational pursuits. In contrast to her own lived childhood experiences, she was involved with her children and their learning associated with school.

Not only did I attend any performances, but attended PTA meetings and participated in several fundraisers. At my children's elementary school, parental involvement was highly encouraged so I tried to support the school by going on field trips, helping with fundraiser, and visiting the classroom.

She went further to describe the need for maintaining contact with the teachers, checking homework, and being actively engaged/physically present multiple times per year. When specifically asked what activities she believed represent parental involvement, she replied, "Parent-teacher conferences, volunteering for the arts activities at the school, and going on field trips." These comments help to solidify April's thinking about a definition for the phenomenon of parental involvement.

An interesting point made by April about prioritizing the various ways in which parents can be involved is how she viewed parent-teacher conferences. She declared:

Parent-teacher conference is a very critical component that demonstrates parents' interest in their child's education. Even if a parent never go on a field trip, participate in a fundraiser, or become a member of the PTA, parent-teacher conference is the best way parents can become involved in their child's education.

Other activities that April listed to describe parental involvement were checking homework, maintaining communication with the teacher, volunteering for field trips, or becoming a room parent.

With regard to *social capital*, April reinforced the need for relationship between parent and teacher. Not only did she mention the communication between the two numerous times, she alluded to specific ways in which teachers can maintain the interaction between school and home. She described how her children's school accomplished this:

They sent notes home – notes and letters. They informed us of the activities that were going on at the school, and invited parents to become a part of the school community or any of the activities that were going on. PTA/PTO – those types of organizations – They invited parents to become part of.

Again, contrasting with her own mother's experiences with feeling welcomed in the school for only seasonal performances, April felt her children's school to be very inviting. While expressing the difficulty of being new to the school, she posited, "...you kind of feel unwelcome because you think...I'm new and wasn't quite sure how everything went, but once I got involved, I was always welcomed." She never recalled having an unpleasant experience with the school.

One question posed in the interview was "How does parental involvement look outside of the [school] building?" April was slow to respond, appearing to have difficulty formulating an answer. She began with "That's an interesting question..." and then repeated the question allowing herself ample time to synthesize a response. Finally, she mentioned that perhaps it would mean conversations between teachers and parents, after hours. Or, if teachers saw kids in town, shopping, and the interactions they would have with their families outside of the school building, especially if the parents or students asked questions that pertained to the school or the child's performance.

Participant Five: Sam Johnson

Profile. Sam is a divorced, African-American father who has partial custody of his two daughters. He shares responsibility of rearing his children with his ex-wife, with whom he has an amiable relationship. Sam is a graduate of the district where his daughter attends. He carries his own ideas of the district from when he was a student as well as what he has

experienced with his child. He has a high-school diploma and is employed full-time as well as maintaining part-time employment.

Themes related to this participant. The theme found to be most deeply rooted in Sam's story is *aspirations*. This theme specifically relates to the interpretive codes *parent responsibility* and *goals*.

Sam made it clear that his expectations for parental involvement go beyond the scope of what happens within the walls of the school building. He claimed to be very involved with his daughter's education and explained the necessity of making sure he is available for parent-teacher conferences and knowing exactly how his daughter is progressing. He also expressed the importance of maintaining a relationship with the teachers. Specifically, he told about how he makes this work with his schedule:

...even though I have two jobs, I make sure I am heavily involved with homework every night, by calling, using FaceTime, so I can keep up with what she's learning every day and to help them when needed. Lastly, every Friday, we review over what was learned throughout the week to make sure she is able to maintain what she has learned.

He continued:

From the time she was able to walk, I was teaching her the alphabet, teaching her how to count. I actually was working for a school district, so I had kindergarten teachers give me like a work assignment – stuff like that, so I can show her how to do things so she can be prepared for kindergarten when she got there, because I didn't have that.

So, even prior to his daughter attending school, he dedicated himself to working with her to prepare her for what she could expect when she attended kindergarten.

Not only did he share his feelings about academic supports, but he proclaimed the importance of knowing "everything going on with the child" because as children develop and experience various opportunities, they are surrounded by many different people. Sam

expressed his concern for the influences children have – how they might pick up bad habits from others around them, even without being aware. Because of what he considered to be the power of influence, he is always observing and questioning to see who is the best teacher. He stated:

I want to know how the students progress in the class on to the next (and the next) grade level, and knowing that – it helps. [Repeated the question – How did the teachers or faculty at the school involve parents in the education?] They use email or call if there's anything different going on with the child that's not the norm.

He continued:

They call or they will email because I let them know at the beginning that I want to be involved in everything, and know everything that is going on. I don't want to *not* be called because like I said I have to be involved in everything. As a child, I didn't have it a lot and growing up, I see that it as needed and so I try to give everything that I feel that was needed.

This brings up the idea of ***experiential capital***, describing his own *background* and comparing it to how he raises his daughters.

Sam also said his father was more involved in his education, overall, than his mother. Even though his mother seemed to be perhaps a bit more involved in his elementary years, based on his comments during the focus group, his father still attended more events and seemed to be more present during his school years. This is particularly true for the events that his father attended, such as choir concerts and sporting events. While he described his experience as a child as neither *positive* or *negative*, he did recognize the difference between his mother's involvement as compared to his father's. However, he felt this perhaps helped him develop his own ***social capital*** because it set the course for his life as a father – not in repeating what he had experienced, but in setting the course for him to offer his child experience he was never afforded. He said the following about his lived childhood story:

I don't want to say positive or negative about...I guess it was in the middle. With my father, he came – I played sports, you know...I sang – he was there and both my parents were married – together, I mean – they were together for me and my brothers, and sisters, until we grew up, but you know my mother wasn't at everything that I needed her to be at. She...it is hard for me to remember anything that she was at so that was my bad experience.

He went further:

I feel that my experience with parenting became better as I became a parent because I knew, you know, what my children would need. I knew what would help because I knew what I needed and I know that now that I'm an adult it's easier for me to see what I needed and I like to give that to my children... They didn't talk to me like I needed to and I make sure that I talk to my children and I listen to them and not try to discipline them for everything single thing...

Sam shared several feelings he has toward parents and their involvement in their children's education. First, he stated that he felt a lot of parents were not involved – specifically African-American parents. He specified that he was not sure if this problem was more rampant among the African-American parents or if he just recognized among them because that is the community with whom he has the most interaction. Secondly, he said that parents should be more "into" their kids and less "into" themselves. They should know things about their kids. Finally, he posited that some parents use schools as merely a form of day care and believed that if parents did a better job being involved with their children, schools would have less trouble in dealing with behaviors.

Summary of the Study

Initially, the purpose of this study was to identify a definition for parental involvement that could be used when considering various ethnicities' involvement. This chapter provided the findings from the collection and analysis of the data for the case study to better aid in understanding the perceptions of African-American parents regarding parental involvement. The results are organized by participant and include how each

person's story relates to the overall themes of **definitions, experiential capital, social capital, and aspirations**. From this data, African-American parents are certainly involved in their children's education. They have worked within their own experiences, in some cases, mimicking what they consider to be their own parents' good practices.

For others, this meant learning from the mistakes their parents made. Parents expressed hardships and challenges that minimized some efforts to be involved in various ways, yet often set goals to overcome obstacles and have set aspirations to continue to serve their children throughout their educational endeavors. Feelings associated with being physically present in the school ranged from feeling "tense" to feeling welcome at all times. Activities used to define parental involvement also had a vast range, from academic learning supports, to learning one's children's preferred activities and providing opportunities for them to experience them – even outside of academics. Many times, parents expressed the importance of relationships, whether that be between the student and teacher, the parent(s) and teacher, or the parents and student. Instead of assuming African-American parents are not involved in their children's learning, perhaps one should consider the possible breadth of the definition, that encompasses much more than what might be considered traditional ways parents can be involved. This study represents the voice of the five participants. While the methods may be transferrable to another set of parents, one is not to assume that the findings are necessarily generalizable to any group of parents in another school or from another area (Maxwell, 2013).

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter five of this single-case study reviews the purpose of this research study. The methodology is included as well as a summary of the findings. The findings are discussed as they relate to the central research question as well as the sub-questions. This chapter concludes with sharing the implications of the findings for teachers, parents, and school leaders.

In light of limited definitions of the phenomenon of *parental involvement*, existing research shows a lack of participation among African-American parents at school functions. Many assume this lack of attendance/participation equates to a lack of interest in their children's education and/or learning that happens within the school. Ironically, African-American cultural heritage has placed an emphasis on the necessity of education, but due to the amount of bias and discrimination some African Americans have experienced in the schools, parents have developed a mistrust of both school and its teachers (Lareau, 1987; Ogbu, 1978).

To synthesize a better working definition for *parental involvement* that would apply to various ethnicities, qualitative methodology was utilized. To be more specific, a single-case approach was used for this study. Five African-American parents associated with a mid-size, Midwestern, semi-urban school district were participants in the study. Parents revealed their lived experiences by taking part in a face-to-face interview as well as contributing their responses to three narrative prompts. The first prompt asked about their experiences with parental involvement when they were students – how their parents were involved. Next, they were asked to describe how they were involved with their own children

when their children were students in school. Finally, they expressed their feelings toward change in the arena of parental involvement – how do they view what might be considered the utopia of parental involvement. In other words, in the perfect world, how might parental involvement look?

The perceptions of African-American parents on this topic are so vital because of the misconceptions associated with their involvement, or lack of involvement in school functions. John Ogbu (2013) believed that the measure by which other ethnicities are evaluated cannot be the White middle class. In other words, it is not advantageous to judge African-American parents' involvement based on a definition written by White parents. This practice is to evaluate their participation using a tool in which they had no part creating.

Participants expressed the various ways one can be involved in the school, and many talked about their commitments to building relationships that involved events/activities that did not fall under the context of academics, but proved to be integral to maintaining positive interactions. These interactions, in turn, positively affect parental involvement as investment was made in better understanding the child.

Research Questions

As previously stated, there was one central question and three sub-questions. Each will be addressed as to how they correspond with the findings. The central question was: *What are the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement in schools?* Since the sub-questions were used to drive the research, I begin with them. First, *how do parents define involvement?*

Participants in this case study identified a myriad of activities that could be used to define this term. I found it interesting that they associated so many *activities* with the

definition. In other words, their lived experiences with parental involvement had more to do with things they can do, versus a traditional definition for the phenomenon. The frequency was high for some activities while others were less frequently named. Most suggested activities were closely related to school or learning activities, while others ventured beyond what is typically considered academic to encompass events that had more to do with relationship-building and developing a stronger rapport between the parent and student. Some of these suggestions were participating in parent-teacher conferences, volunteering for school functions, attending performances, volunteering to assist teachers, becoming a room parent, and maintaining open communication with teachers. Those with a more vague connection with the school itself ranged from visiting museums to enjoying amusement parks.

Finding a definition that can help us better understand the lived experiences of all parents is vital. Parental involvement is lauded as being linked to academic achievement by many researchers (Christenson et al., 1992; Epstein, 1991; Singh et al., 1995). Perhaps there could be an even more significant link if the definition is broadened to encompass even more ideals of parental involvement.

The second sub-question used to help answer the preliminary question was “What are their experiences with parental involvement?” To break any suppositions associated with any one group of people, it is interesting to note that while all the participants were African-American and associated with the same school district, at least to some extent, their experiences varied widely. First their experiences as students interacting with their parents about their education had a vast breadth. One participant was raised in foster care and was shuffled from one family to another, rarely gaining footing before she was once again

moved. Another participant grew up in what she described as an incredibly stable home. Both parents had degrees and believed in the importance of being involved in their children's education in and out of the school building. Others varied in that one parent may have been highly involved, but not the other.

Secondly, their experiences as parents varied somewhat, too; however, there were many more similarities in the way they described their involvement. This is indicated in the frequency chart for interpretive codes identified during the data analysis. *Challenges* and *changes* were only mentioned two and three times, respectively. *Background* and *activities* both had frequencies of 71. Every participant mentioned the importance of events such as parent-teacher conferences and maintaining an open line of communication with the students. They also mentioned the idea of supporting the child at home with homework and providing adequate time and space for them to complete school work. Many of these supports were specifically listed as being beneficial for African-American students in a meta-analysis conducted on the effect of parental involvement on the students' academic achievement (Jeynes, 2003).

The third sub-question was "How do teachers involve parents with their child's school?" A similar question was posed in the interviews of the participants and elicited similar responses. Participants said that teachers often emailed or sent letters home to communicate upcoming events or activities at the school. They responded to parent inquiries and allowed parents to volunteer in the room, participating in class parties and being room parents. However, another common theme was how for all but one participant, the level of involvement began to wane as the students moved from elementary school into secondary, starting with middle school. In those cases, teachers were less responsive and parents did not

feel as welcomed into the building. In many cases, the feelings of not being wanted was enough to warrant the parent being uninterested in attending school functions, including such common events as parent-teacher conference or PTA meetings.

These sub-questions were used to help answer the central question, “*What are the perceptions of parents regarding their involvement in schools?*” While there was some variance in the beliefs of what events were most important or what the expectation outside of the school building was, parents in this study feel they ARE involved in their child’s education in the school. Whether they attend every event or have to miss some because of work or other conflicts, they support the learning process and are working with the tools they have been given. Their lived experiences shape their thinking and seem to be used to guide many of them in providing even better opportunities than they were afforded.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge of the perceptions of African-American parents regarding parental involvement. The experiences of the participants, given through written narratives and face-to-face interviews, were transcribed and analyzed using an inductive coding process through which descriptive and interpretive codes were used to form themes. These themes applied across the study to each of the data sources in an effort to bring clarity to how African-American parents perceive parental involvement, shedding light on this topic in relation to the research questions.

Implications for Practice and Theory Development

The findings of this case study have implications for educational partnerships in schools all over the nation and perhaps beyond. African-American parents have been labeled as uninvolved or not caring about the education of their child, when in many cases, the problem has likely been the tool used to measure the parental involvement. A study in

Chicago Public Schools uncovered a link between productive schools and principals having common leadership styles as well as their substantive focus. Keen attention was given to empowering parents, communities, and the professional staff to serve the students more efficiently (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, Bryk, 2001). By educating the stakeholders in schools of the misconceptions previously used to merit parent involvement, they become better equipped to make more appropriate judgments based on the parents' lived narratives.

This also provides a vehicle for schools – board members, principals, and teachers – to reflect on their practices. What is in place in each building to ensure parents not only are invited to events, but are encouraged to be participants in school functions, are included in the sharing of school-related news, and perhaps are supported in their quest to help their child in the child's educational endeavors? This enables them to learn from past failures, even their own, and provides context for the necessity of change and improvement. A growing challenge in schools is the ever-widening achievement gap. By analyzing the "why" behind the phenomenon, schools should be more effective in remedying the problem.

The implications of this study have the potential to be far-reaching. The findings from this study should be considered by multiple groups. Any organization or community that has relationships with parents of school-age children could benefit from this information. This may include, but is not limited to, various school organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, LINC (Local Investment Commission), or other before- and after-school programs. These findings can help teachers who interact with parents, and any community program that supports local education.

The tentacles of this study are far-reaching and should be disseminated. We are no longer in an age where studies sit on shelves in libraries that house dissertations and other

information. The possibilities for exposure to studies and findings today are endless. My hope is that studies such as this that have potential ramifications for the world of education as well as society, in general, can be accessible on the internet as well as through other online resources.

Future Research Possibilities

This qualitative study provided insight into the perceptions of African-American parents regarding parental involvement. Parents were transparent with their lived stories, shared through interviews and narratives and culminating in a brief focus group. Deep, rich understanding of their experiences helped develop an understanding of their perceptions and were used to uncover information that might otherwise have remained in the minds of the participants. I suggest additional research should continue for this topic, examining how varying tools must be used to evaluate parents' involvement, considering the social constructivists' idea of our own beliefs being constructed in the context of our own experiences. In other words, we are shaped by our experiences, and our perceptions become our reality (Kukla, 2013). An interesting study may be how parents' perceptions vary from district to district and even in various regions of the country.

Another consideration for future study is the shift from *parental involvement*, which is becoming an outdated term, to more of a community partnership, between the families and schools. Many districts have intentionally strengthened partnerships with community organizations in efforts to provide improved opportunities for its students (Weiss & Siddall, 2012). It could be beneficial to see how the communities are partnering with the schools to better prepare families to support their children in their educational endeavors.

Thoughts of a First-time Researcher

In the preface of this study, I revealed how my early years were filled with few interactions with people of different ethnic backgrounds. Throughout the course of my narrative, more opportunities were afforded as I moved to a different area and began working in a diverse educational setting. Going into this study, I did not have expectation of the findings as I was so unfamiliar with the research process. While preconceived ideas are almost impossible to avoid, I worked diligently to allow the data to speak for itself. The task of completing the research study and writing the dissertation was daunting, but it has allowed me to look at various avenues through a different lens. Once the data were collected and the coding process began, the study came to life and became so much more than just a task. Through this study, I have become aware of my own lived reality, my own story, and the importance of acknowledging those of others.

The findings can be applied to the study of the phenomenon at large and can hopefully assist others in their research of this topic even though in this study, there was a limitation of time and the sample of participants was small.

APPENDIX A

NARRATIVE PROMPTS

Prompt 1:

- As a form of narrative writing, please share your own experiences with parental involvement. In your writing, describe your own parents' involvement in your education. This does not necessarily need to be any certain length but is intended to encompass your experiences with parent involvement when you were a student.

Prompt 2:

- Please describe the ways which you are involved in your child's education. Please be as descriptive as possible. Again, this does not necessarily need to be any certain length, but is intended to demonstrate the ways in which you are involved in your child's education.

Prompt 3:

- Is there anything you would like to see change regarding parental involvement for the future? As you describe this, please detail what you feel to be necessary to make this change. Also, what is your own plan, moving forward, in regards to parental involvement with your own child?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

1. How would you define *parental involvement*?
2. Did your child attend a Head Start program?
3. Suppose your child's teacher or administrator asked how you were involved in your child's education. How would you answer that?
4. What types of activities do you feel represent parent involvement?
5. How do the teachers/faculty at your child's school involve parents in their children's education?
6. Please explain how you have felt welcomed or have not felt welcomed in the school building in regards to parental involvement.
7. Please compare those feelings of being welcome or not being welcome to the expectation you've felt to be involved outside of the school building.
8. How does parental involvement outside of the school building look?
9. Please explain how your personal experience with parental involvement, either as a student yourself, or as a parent now, has been a positive or negative one, including details and examples.

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPTS

Grace Nimrod Interview Transcription – transcribed August 31st.

Me: "All right I am here with Grace Nimrod and I have a couple of questions for you, Grace, as a part of my dissertation study - a qualitative study of African-American parents' perceptions of parental involvement. So my first question is - How would you define parental involvement?"

GN: "Define... What?"

Me: "Parental involvement...so what...what kind of things do you feel like that means?"

GN: "Well...um...I just had to make...I just tried to keep them occupied with whatever as much as I can so that they won't be like left ~~put~~ or they won't feel like they don't know it when they come back to school. They are going to ~~summer school~~ they that they can be ready for school when school starts and I feel like school is the number one thing...education is the number one thing for me. I want all of my kids to graduate...do the...uh..."

Microsoft Office User
occupied
Microsoft Office User
summer school
Microsoft Office User
importance of graduation – education is #1

Me: "Awesome. Did, uh...any of your kids attend a Head Start program?"

GN: "A what program?...."

Me: "A Head Start..."

Microsoft Office User
head start
Microsoft Office User
need "special...different education", slow learner

GN: "Uh...head start...head start...[two of my kids went to [another school]], my two boys...and they went to [another school] for head start...umm...and that's how we figured out that they both needed special...different education, towards each...[one of my sons has a disability and the other one...he just a little...slow learner.] So, I had to, uh, I had both of them...they were both in there. Matter of fact, one of them was in there for two years.

Me: "Alright...Nice. Suppose your child's teacher or the administrator asked how you were involved in your child's education. How would you answer that? You kind of alluded to that a little bit above..."

Microsoft Office User
pop-up visits
Microsoft Office User
make sure everything is okay
Microsoft Office User
come up to give meds

GN: "I've always been involved in their education. I'm always at the school. [do pop-up visits,] everything that is going on...make sure everything is alright...if the school hasn't called me. [I have to come up here to make sure everything is okay,] I have to come up here...[my son who has a disability, I have to come up here to make sure he takes his medicine...medicines and give them to him] so I'm constantly in anything that comes to my kids."

Me: "Alright...sorry, it takes me a minute to catch up with the typing. Alright, next question – What types of activities do you feel represent parent involvement? Like what types of things do you think are important?"

GN: "Well, whatever...it depends on what the school has...um...has coming up, or...that I involve myself in...like, uh...all three of my kids went to this school. And...I have one more left here, so they have field day and different things, uh...talent shows and stuff like that and I'm always at...I'm always at it regardless of if my kids are in it or not. I'm always at the school..."

Microsoft Office User
field day/talent shows
Microsoft Office User
there even if kids aren't a part

Me: "Alright...fifth question - How do the teachers or faculty at your school involve parents in their child's education?"

GN: "Umm...I feel like the teachers WILL...they do, umm...all of my kids' teachers have my number on file to call me if something's going on or if they are just being antsy in class to calm them down or if I had to...my daughter's in high school, so I had to go up there to talk to teachers because they be picking on her...or...she feel like they be yelling and screaming on her, so I gotta see what's goin on and then...ummm...the principal, I'm not really sure about...ummm...I've had a lot of altercations with the principal, so...uh...the principal is not someone that not really anything I could say as far as making me feel involved"

Microsoft Office User
teachers have number - antsy
Microsoft Office User
teachers picking on daughter
Microsoft Office User
altercations with principal

Me: "I just want to clarify...you said you have had a lot of altercations with the principal?"

GN: "uh-huh..."

Me: "Alright...alright, next question. Um...and if I move too quickly and you think of something else that you want to go and add on any of these, just tell me and we'll go back and add them, okay? Um...please explain how you have felt welcomed, or have not felt welcomed in the school building in regards to parental involvement."

GN: "Uh....I don't know...when school starts and it's enrollment time...I feel okay about it. My kids...it depends on what teacher they have - they have certain teachers at school they just love to be with, so...it...[they don't like being with certain teachers] Ummm...they...I...I feel like sometimes I am welcome [here] and sometimes I am not, but I try to be involved in whatever my kids are in, however they are having [here]. My daughter...uh...she does a lot of stuff, so I'm involved with everything that she does. So, I kind of...you know, involve myself regardless of what anyone else say. It's my kid...it's my child, so I involve myself in anything I can with my children.

Microsoft Office User
feel okay about new year
Microsoft Office User
partial to some teachers
Microsoft Office User
involvement, regardless of others

Me: "Are there certain things, to extend this question out...cause I know you said sometimes you feel welcome; sometimes you don't. Are there certain activities or certain things you feel welcome to and others that you don't? Is it just an overall feeling, or...?"

GN: "Um...no...I don't feel welcome sometimes at the school. I kind of have, like, be really tense...uh...about stuff that happens at school with my son and the principal...so I don't have that kind of good relationship with the principal...uh...with my high-schooler, she doesn't really have a whole, whole lot of stuff that the parents be involved in. But whatever she does have, I'm always there, involved in what she has and always involved in whatever the boys have...or with [blue] teachers. With my daughter, I walk around with her and talk to all of her teachers, so

Microsoft Office User
not welcomed
Microsoft Office User
tense
Microsoft Office User
not a good relationship w/principal
Microsoft Office User
met teachers

I have been welcomed with most of the teachers. At the high school, you don't really get to see the principal that much at all, so, but the high schoolers, you know, they, uh...I be involved in whatever they have. Especially [here] with my son. I was always involved. I used to get frustrated and say that I wasn't, but for the sake of my kids I do anyway.

Microsoft Office User
frustrated, but involved

Me: "Alright...thank you. Question seven - Please compare those feelings of either being welcome or not being welcome to what you had expected...uh...before you came in the building. Like, when you came in the building, were you expecting to feel welcomed and you were not welcomed, or did you expect not to feel welcomed, but you came in and you were welcomed...or did you come in and think you would not feel welcomed and you did not feel welcomed when you came in...did it usually match, or was it different from what you thought?"

GN: "I did...I usually...sometimes, when I walk in [here], I don't feel welcomed. [Do you expect to feel welcomed when you walk in?] Well, I used to. [Laughs] Yeah, I used to, like, feel very welcomed to come into the school and the atmosphere was okay, but like, right now...like, I don't feel that kind of...have that kind of expectation out of the school like I used to have before because I...before my kids...[we moved to (another district)...and then we came back over here] and even though I was hearing a lot of different stuff about the principal - how she was mean and a bunch of different stuff she were doing, I really didn't feel welcomed. I did a little bit at first, and then it was like...it kind of walked away."

Microsoft Office User
not feel welcomed
Microsoft Office User
used to feel welcomed
Microsoft Office User
moved from other district; back

Me: "Okay...alright... Eighth question - How does parental involvement, outside of the building, look?

Microsoft Office User
involved over summer
Microsoft Office User
summer school
Microsoft Office User
football, camp, (mentor) fishing/camping

GN: "Um...I try to keep them, uh, involved in something during the summer. Uh...while they are out of school. I try to do something educational that won't affect um...their grades...affect anything... a part of their learning. So, they are going to summer school this year, so they can be able to be ready for the next grade they are going to. Uh...this year. So, that's yeah...they...try to get the boys involved in what I can...uh...they like to do...football, and camp and something like that. They have a mentor, so sometimes in the mentor program, they take them out to camping and fishing, and stuff like that."

Microsoft Office User
push kids to do stuff
Microsoft Office User
didn't have it when she was young
Microsoft Office User
foster care
Microsoft Office User
group home
Microsoft Office User
school attendance, by choice

Me: "That sounds great. Alright...my last official question - if I can learn how to type [laugh], please explain how your personal experience with parental involvement, either as a kid with your parents, or as you are a parent, now, has been positive or negative, and be explicit with some details...like "I had positive experiences when I was a kid"... or "I've had negative experiences..." either when you were a kid, or when you had your own kids."

GN: "Well, uh...well, for me, uh...I kind of try to give my kids...I push them a lot to do stuff that they need to do for the simple fact that I didn't really have all of that when I was younger. I was in foster care. I was in foster care, so I grew up in...at first...they gave us...me and my little sister to my grandma. She did foster grandparent, but she got sick and she couldn't do it no more, so they put my sister and I in a group home. The group home didn't really care what we did most of the time, so it's like, I didn't...I just went to school whenever I wanted to. Then,

Alice Cooper Interview Transcription – transcribed August 31st.

Me: So I am here with Alice Cooper who has agreed to be a participant of the study. The title is a qualitative study of African-American parents' perceptions of parental involvement. I just have nine simple questions to ask. If they lead to other things that you want to share, you're welcome to do that. We're not on any, you know, tight script, but will just start with - How would you define parental involvement?"

AC: "It's [a little tricky] want to say... For the parents to be more involved in [what the child is studying... in what they're doing... to be involved in what they're doing as well. It doesn't mean that you have to come to parent teacher or what you have but to any and all activities and stuff like that because it's hard - especially being a single parent - it's hard to...to participate in everything that she's doing but I should be involved somewhat in everything that she's doing. I see... [helping with homework] Is it something that's good - but some parents don't know their information that needs to be...you know, it is hard for a parent to help a student but I have pretty good on that...in... on myself. So...let's see what else I think... I think that will be it."

Me: "Thank you. Alright, so I'm...I'm just kind of... I know that I'm recording this, but I'm kind of taking notes too, as we go, so it may take me a minute to catch up on messages. Don't read anything into that - that's just my slow typing. Also I'll pause a lot.... Okay, did your child attend a Head Start program?"

AC: "I do know she was in daycare... [think could be Head Start.... I know it was daycare...day care but she was only at...she only attended for probably a couple months. She was already five years old so when she started, because her birthday is late in the year, so she started school a little bit later than the children her age but she was there - yeah couple months - and she graduated. They actually kept her up for the graduation gift for a week longer to prepare for the graduation I didn't even have to pay - they just wanted her to come and participate in everything."

Me: "Alright... alright... Next question - Suppose your child's teacher or administrator asked how you were involved in your child's education. How would you answer that question?"

AC: "Well I [tried to help with homework] I ask her... I'll... I want her to be independent but I want her to know that she can come to me if she needs anything so sometimes I try to get in on it... a little activity on her homework and she's like 'Mom, I got it'... it felt like 'OK... [I kind of feel a little offended]... a little bit like you... but... you don't think I'm smart enough...' but she's [independent child and she...she tries to work stuff out on her own. I notice that... about her but she also is the type to not speak up if she's having a problem with something. I've spoken with the teacher about it... she'll say she'll raise her hand and said she'll see it and she'll...she'll say 'well I know your helping other students so I feel like you know it could wait', but you know the teacher's like 'Well, [you're] just important as the others. Your questions are just important so make sure you speak up', but I think she's...she's...she's really shy but she's a very smart kid."

- Microsoft Office User
PI is tricky
- Microsoft Office User
What the child is studying/doing
- Microsoft Office User
Not attendance
- Microsoft Office User
Single-parent - struggle
- Microsoft Office User
Involved in what she's doing
- Microsoft Office User
Homework help
- Microsoft Office User
Some parents don't know the work
- Microsoft Office User
Not sure it was HS, but daycare

- Microsoft Office User
Homework help
- Microsoft Office User
Independence is a goal
- Microsoft Office User
Wants to be supportive
- Microsoft Office User
Offended when daughter doesn't need help
- Microsoft Office User
Independent child
- Microsoft Office User
Doesn't want to bother teacher
- Microsoft Office User
Teacher is supportive/willing to help

Me: "What types of activities do you feel represent parental involvement?"

AC: "Any activity that interests your child. It doesn't have to be something that's directly school related. It could be something that they have interest in - art or something like that - and you take them to the museum and you know... I try to take Alice to a theme park...to Six Flags and when I was there I realize that she's not really the thrill type...so that's something that I'm still trying to learn with her is her interest...and, and see what she really likes so it's still a learning process."

Microsoft Office User
Activities of interest
Microsoft Office User
Not necessarily school-related
Microsoft Office User
Museum...theme park
Microsoft Office User
Learning her interest is a process

Me: "Alright ...ummm...next question - How do the teachers or the faculty at your child's school involve parents in their children's education?"

AC: "I believe...her teacher was really...communicated with me and let me know what's going on and you know like I said we talked about her and you know how she acts and she's very mature kid - she really is and it's only because I had recently gotten sick, so and she had to...she didn't have to...she did not have to step up, but she did and she would be like, 'Did you eat today' or you know her...she'll make me something to eat or you know she tries to be the mother sometimes and I will really want her to enjoy being a child."

Microsoft Office User
Teacher communicates
Microsoft Office User
Parent got sick
Microsoft Office User
Daughter stepped up - offer care

Me: "Alright, so please explain how you have felt welcomed or have not felt welcomed in the school building in regards to parental involvement and before you answer that I just want to clarify. This isn't any kind of feedback for our building so...our, like our principal, or our leadership team...no one like that's going to see this information so when you answer, if you haven't felt welcome, be really open about that. If you have felt welcomed, certainly share that, too."

Microsoft Office User
Feels welcome in the school.
Microsoft Office User
Office staff welcoming

AC: "I feel welcome every time I come here. They know me by name - we have the same name and...so it's easy...they are like, 'Oh yeah...that's her...that's her mom...' Yes every time I feel welcome here. Everyone is real nice here and I know she's not a troubled child so I really don't get any negative feedback from anyone here."

Me: "Have you ever received a call of concern or anything?"

AC: "Yes, I did... I wanna say this was the third grade and then... this is something typical. She was with a group of girls and they called a little boy out his name out of his name and which made...I kind of laughed at the situation and it made me very happy, but the name that she called him was ugly stranger, which is totally appropriate for third grade. I thought it was going to be really inappropriate. And that's the only time and her teacher was like 'You know I really don't think Alicia did it...' and I'm like you know she probably did you know cause they're...when you're with a group of girls that influence, it can come off on you so, and she did... she did admit to a teacher that they did called him a name and stuff like that... so and I was like that's really good that you tell the truth...and that's one thing, she used to lie a lot when she was really, really little and we will... and I'll... we just kept tell her that, she have to tell the truth because this is building a relationship for us now, so if something happens in later and

Microsoft Office User
Girls calling boy name
Microsoft Office User
Grade-appropriate behavior
Microsoft Office User
Student used to lie
Microsoft Office User
Truth will help build relationships

you tell me 'Mom I'm telling you the truth' then I'm going to believe you because that's the track that we have right now. But she really understood then she got out of that stage... [That's good.] which it really didn't help anyway because she's the only child in the house so if something [laughs], if there is a drawing on the wall, she did [it]."

Me: "Okay, well... would you please compare those feelings of being welcome we're not being welcome to the expectation that you felt before you came to the school building...so like you know your expectation...Okay, when I go to school I expect this... was it close or was it far from what you got when you got there?"

AC: "It was close...it was close. We are really laid-back... we really are laid-back.. we kind of... kind of go-with-the-flow type of people. she does adapt... people love her but she's still really shy though that's the only thing about her.. but I did... everyone was very friendly and I expected that because I bring positivity wherever I go. I don't like negative stuff...it drains me and my mom said 'It makes... it makes you look old' [laughs] and here I am, 31, I look like a little kid. [You do look very young.]

Microsoft Office User
Laid-back people

Microsoft Office User
She adapts

Microsoft Office User
Parent's positivity

Me: "I'm having to write that in - that's a wise saying from mom. [laughs] How does parental involvement outside of the school building look and you've kind of alluded to that a little – just in general?"

Microsoft Office User
Attempted to be involved

AC: "With her I tried to be more involved but like I said I do get sick and when I get sick I really get sick and I just I think the most important thing with parental involvement is to let them know that you're there for them and that they can come to you for anything... not necessarily that you have to sit there and you have to do every problem with them with you know homework and stuff like that but you should have some type of relationship where you guys are communicating back-and-forth about how you're feeling about certain things as well."

Microsoft Office User
Parent gets sick

Microsoft Office User
Must know that you are there for them

Me: "Thank you. Alright, last question - Please explain how your personal experiences with parental involvement either as a student yourself, when you were a child, or as a parent now has been positive or negative including details or examples. You might want to share..."

Microsoft Office User
Mother lost her father

AC: "With me...my dad was more into the school work and helping and he passed away when I was 12 years old. So after that...my mom had seven kids, so it was hard you know for her to be involved with everything and...but she always was positive about, you know, about everything...you know, 'You can do it.' you should, you know, if you...if you feel like that's something that you should do, you should do it...and she really wasn't that involved but her strength to carry the family is I guess... what it was...was peace to me that I knew that she was doing what she could do for our family and my sisters you know there feel a little different. They, you know, they feel like they should have the latest clothes and this and that and When I was 14 years old I got a job and I help pay bills in the house because I feel like if I'm living here... if my mom you know can't afford to pay the water bill, I like hot water to take a bath... if there something that I can do to help her I'm going to do it. So I would... I would... I was more involved in helping her financially sometimes or I'm taking care of my little brothers and sisters

Microsoft Office User
Mom was busy, but did what she could

Microsoft Office User
Encouraged her to do her best

Microsoft Office User
Job at 14 to help pay bills

while she work, you know. And I was very bright like my daughter is and I received stuff for going out of town and in pageants and stuff like that and I could never be involved because I was too busy doing something else or we couldn't afford it... and that's one thing that I do want to change with Alice. I want to be able to... she was actually invited to go to Washington DC this year but she couldn't...only Because I was sick [and I wasn't able to afford to travel there]. My uncle was going to pay for...for her to be down there, which is about \$1600, but I'm like, 'I don't have a car right now, so...' My priorities was to make sure that we have transportation before... and she understood that, but I wanna be like... [Next year, we're going to go...] and we're going to. I want...I want her to have that support and to get those relationships that I didn't have because I graduated from school whole year early and I went straight to UMKC but really didn't have anyone on my side saying, 'Hey, you know about scholarships? You know about this? You know about that?' I just knew I was... I just knew I was going to be... they weren't going to tell me now... I'm like, 'I graduated a whole year early... there's no way they're gonna tell me...' but I want to...I would... I do want to be more involved with Alice on certain stuff like that. I want her to have that support and I want her to network more than I did so she can have those...those certain things on her side that she might need later on in the future. So, I think that's important as well."

Microsoft Office User
Mother and daughter are bright

Microsoft Office User
Can't afford travel

Microsoft Office User
Plans to change - go on trips

Me: "So, I'm just curious - your sisters that felt like they had to have the latest and greatest are they older or younger than you?"

AC: "Both...both. I'm the middle child which is probably why I'm so responsible. Yep, I am the middle child. Between the girls and with that with my two older brothers and my two younger brothers so...I am the more responsible out of all of them."

Me: "Okay, so there were several of you."

AC: "Yes it was...[laughs]."

Me: "Okay, awesome. Alright... I'm gonna stop this recording then and we can talk further about the narratives, okay?"

Me: I am here with Jennifer Kay to interview her for my qualitative case study which is a qualitative study of African-American parents' perceptions of parental involvement. That's a mouthful. So, I only have nine questions, Jennifer, and you can be as detailed or as brief as you want to be and at the end, I'll give you an opportunity to add anything that you want to add or not - either way. So the first question is - How would you define parental involvement in your own words?"

JK: "Parental involvement means to me just how parents are involved [in the school] and that can be coming up for parent teacher conferences, making phone calls to check on your child, umm...volunteering in the classroom or for afterschool activities or anything like that. It could also mean just partnering with the school by like helping their student with their homework, um... reprimanding them when they're in trouble."

Microsoft Office User
involvement = in the school

Microsoft Office User
pt conf, making calls to check, volunteering in no after-school activity

Microsoft Office User
homework and reprimanding

Me: "Awesome... and if I'm a little bit behind, I'm... I'm kind of taking notes as I work... so I'm not making any judgments. I'm just trying to keep everything down that I see and hear. Okay, second question. Did your child attend a Head Start program?"

JK: "No but both my children [attended at preschool]"

Microsoft Office User
children attended preschool, not HS

Me: "Thank you . Suppose that your child's teacher or the administrator of the school asked how you were involved in your child's education. How would you answer that?"

JK: "Okay, like for my oldest son...I'm not [as] involved...and because he's at the high school he's at...he will be a sophomore. I'm not as involved when it comes to like all the academic like helping them with different activities and things like that but I'm involved as being a band parent, and so I help w[th] all the competitions and things like that so I say I'm not as involved as I think I should be maybe at the high school level, but at the elementary level I am very involved. I serve as the PTA president [] I also help in the classroom whenever the teacher needs it and help with classroom party. Things like that."

Microsoft Office User
not as involved with HS student

Microsoft Office User
band parent - competitions

Microsoft Office User
more involved at elementary

Microsoft Office User
PTA president

Microsoft Office User
Help in classroom - volunteer - parties

Microsoft Office User
conferences

Microsoft Office User
partnering with child

Microsoft Office User
being present = in the school

Me: "Awesome...[we have a squeaky table] For a fourth question - What types of activities do you feel represent parent involvement? Some of these you may feel like you're kind of repeating and that's OK."

JK: "Okay, so like coming up for conferences [] I think everything is because you're partnering with your child in their education...ummm... just being present I think it's a lot - just coming up here to see what needs to be done."

Me: "Thank you and if we move on - at any time - and you think of something that you feel like 'I should've said this or that', you tell me and it's no big deal. We will just go back. If you don't, that's fine, too. How do teachers or faculty at your child's school involve parents in their children's education?"

JK: "So it's like different - elementary and high school... elementary, [they encourage it all the time...they want you to be at conferences.] They will call and remind you. They will send out notes and letters. They have a lot of activities and they personally invite you to those things but on the other hand in high school, umm... I didn't have any knowledge about the PTA and all the different activities because of course he's in high school he doesn't tell me everything and he was like no real communication. Umm... through that so a lot of things I think I didn't attend or I found out at the last minute because I don't think the communication was there."

Microsoft Office User
elementary encourages PI - communicates

Microsoft Office User
less communication for HS

Me: "Alright... and the sixth question is - Please explain how you have felt welcomed or have not felt welcomed in the school building in regards to parental involvement.

Microsoft Office User
feel welcome in elementary school

JK: "Okay, in the [elementary level...I feel like you know they want me here] In high school, well... I really haven't had too many, like experiences, other than with, you know, going to, like, their sports activities [and things like that but I remember in... when my oldest was in middle school [I didn't feel welcome... and it was like I wanted to check on my son because he was having problems with this particular teacher and [I just couldn't do it when I wanted to. I had to like set up an appointment, and... so I just felt like they don't want anyone up here.]

Microsoft Office User
sporting activities for HS

Microsoft Office User
not welcome in MS

Microsoft Office User
schedule to meet with teacher

Me: "Great! Seven – See, we're just flying through these... Please compare those feelings of being welcomed or not being welcomed to the expectation you had before you entered like when you went in at the middle school or when you contacted them, did you expect to be welcomed...or...?"

Microsoft Office User
expected HS to be like Elementary S regarding PI

JK: "I did...I did. I expected more I think I expected it to be somewhere like the elementary experience. But it wasn't...ummm... of course they had like the beginning of the year to welcome the sixth-graders, you know those activities, and I attended those but after the six grade it was just like 'OK we know you by now so...' [laughing]. that's it. They didn't like encourage... I don't remember receiving [one PTA letter in middle school or in high school about joining the PTA and I called and asked about the PTA in middle school and so then I wouldn't do... you know try to attend those meetings, but I felt like some of it was pointless because a lot of people went there, we didn't accomplish anything, and feel like, you know, I kind of dropped the ball and stopped going."

Microsoft Office User
activities – welcome for 6th graders

Microsoft Office User
no PTA invite for MS or HS

Microsoft Office User
felt PTA to be pointless and dropped out

Me: "Okay...so you got little communication [yes] starting in middle school.
Okay...Ummm...how does parental involvement outside of the school look to you?"

Microsoft Office User
encourage your child to succeed

JK: "Okay, so that would probably be like encouraging your child to do well - to do their best in the school and helping them with homework and if they are lacking a skill you know talking to them about that...and umm...working with them on those skills."

Microsoft Office User
help with homework

Microsoft Office User
seeing where they lack a skill

Me: "Alright I think ...I'm... I don't know what... I'm just making all kinds of errors while I'm typing.... Okay, the last formal question is - Please explain how your personal experience with

parental involvement either as a student yourself or as a parent now has overall been a positive or negative one including details and examples."

JK: "I think it's been positive because like my parents [they were they were pretty much involved with things...but then, I'm like I'm going at the same trend of them because when I was in middle school or high school they weren't as involved, [laughs]... so I would say because my mom didn't work when I was in elementary, but I am I was a working mom in elementary and I was as involved as she...uh....but middle school and high school and then like a field trip to things like that to my son when he got to middle school he was like 'No mom... please don't go...' I don't think he wanted me to be involved as he got older...of course I had to attend like every activity or program that he was involved in but I don't think he really cared. I don't know... I don't think he really cared, but my son that's in elementary school - he wants me to be there all the time. [He want me to eat lunch with him and go to all the classroom parties and field trips and everything like that.]"

Microsoft Office User
positive experience as a kid – parents involved

Microsoft Office User
parents weren't as involved in MS and HS

Microsoft Office User
HS son wants her to be at functions, but not fieldtrips

Microsoft Office User
elementary son wants her there

Me: "So, you're older son you would say wanted you to be there for like performances and things he's involved in but not like the extra ...like he didn't want you to volunteer to go out field trips..."

JK: "Yeah, not like the extra stuff...because like uh...for me, like the band would go everywhere and so like every weekend they would go somewhere and I would travel but he was like 'Mom, you don't have to take the bus...' so I would just follow."

Me: "Alright... Okay, well I know you have written your narratives for me and have already given me those, so you probably feel like you said everything that you need to say but if you have anything additional I will be happy to record that."

JK: "I don't think..."

Me: "So, alright... alright. I'm going to stop the recording.

April Cunningham Interview Transcription – transcribed August 30th.

Me: I'm here with April Cunningham to interview for a qualitative study of African-American parents' perceptions of parental involvement. The first question is "How would you define parental involvement in your own words?"

AC: "Parental involvement mean parents are actively engaged with their child's education and physically present numerous times of the year."

Microsoft Office User
Actively engaged and present numerous times per year

Me: "All right I'm doing my best to type things as we go but if I keep typing just pause. If you if you want to say more you keep going because the recording will get it all, so don't feel like you have to wait on me. I'm trying to get the gist. So, question two – "Did your child attend a Headstart program?"

AC: "Yes, it was certainly Headstart not just early childhood."

Microsoft Office User
Yes, child attended HS

Me: "Okay, third question – "Suppose your child's teacher or administrator would've asked you how you were involved in your child's education. How would you answer that?"

AC: "I was involved with looking at and Checking the homework and that they brought it home or if they got homework...in contact with the classroom teacher] went on numerous field trips and was asked to be a like a parent room mother - room parent."

Microsoft Office User
Checking homework

Microsoft Office User
Contact teacher

Microsoft Office User
Field trip...room parent

Microsoft Office User
P/T conf.

Microsoft Office User
Volunteering for arts activities

Microsoft Office User
Field trips

Microsoft Office User
Staying in contact with teacher

Microsoft Office User
Sent home notes and letters

Microsoft Office User
Informed of activities

Microsoft Office User
Invited to PTA/PTO

Microsoft Office User
Felt welcome going in to the school

Microsoft Office User
Feel unwelcome because you're new to school – not sure how everything goes

Me: "Alright... so what types of activities do you feel represents parental involvement?"

AC: "parent/teacher conferences... volunteering for the arts activities at the school for the classroom and going on field trips. And staying in contact with that with their child's teacher."

Me: "Fifth question - just flying everybody's how do the teachers or faculty how to do it if that's the case of the teachers and faculty at your child's school involved parents in your child children's education?"

AC: "They sent notes home notes and letters home. They informed us of the activities that were going on at the school, invited parents to become a part of the school community or any of the activities that were going on – PTA/PTO those types of organizations. They invited parents to become part of.

Me: "Number Six – Explain how you have...how you feel welcome or not welcomed in the school building in regards to parental involvement."

AC: "I think I always felt welcome inside once I started going in, becoming involved in it... in knowing more about what's going on in the school building... but the initial...initially going to the building, you kind of feel unwelcome because I think only because she wouldn't do that for

me it was only because I was new and wasn't quite sure how everything went but once I got involved, I was always welcome."

Me: "So then, that feeling of being welcome - how does that compare to what you expected whenever you were thinking about going to the school?"

AC: "Well I'm trying to think back of what my expectations were... I don't know if I have a set of expectations other than just initially being there. I mostly was just to see what the activity was - some involvement was that... about a parent meeting and so I don't know if I really have a set of expectations of it - just expectation for feeling welcome I should say."

Microsoft Office User
No expectation - there for a meeting

Microsoft Office User
Hoped to feel welcome

Me: "Alright. I wish I could type as fast as I thought... I think we all wish that. Alright, next to the last question already - How does parental involvement look outside of the building?"

AC: "Interesting question... I'm thinking it would look like "help" but it will look like outside... Maybe, maybe this could be in as I had a parent call, call me when I'm at home like after school hours - on the weekend - about things that are going on with their... with their child. Or if I see kids outside of the school building in shopping in the store... shopping in stores or something like that parents recognize... the kids recognize and they may ask questions about things pertaining to the school or the child, how are they doing or you have any problems..."

Microsoft Office User
After-hours call to parent

Microsoft Office User
Seeing people from school in town/shopping

Microsoft Office User
Conversations about school, in town

Me: "OK and this is in regards to your position as a school leader like they're asking you questions about maybe 'What happened Tuesday', right?"

AC: "Yes."

Me: "OK... OK"

AC: "But sometimes I may say if we get to talking about something I'll let me know how I can help."

Me: "Awesome and the last one - Please explain your personal experience with parental involvement - either when you were a student and your parents were the parents or you being the parent has been positive or negative and describe why."

AC: "I think most of my experience as a parent - parental involvement at my child's school being fairly positive. I don't remember an incident where it was negative. I don't, I don't remember that type of incident. Whenever I had questions, the teacher or the person - personnel person - that was talking to always take the time to answer them. They were inviting - I mean they wasn't standoffish or anything like that, so I don't ever remember a negative experience. I've always been pretty much OK."

Microsoft Office User
PI was positive in her school

Microsoft Office User
School personnel took time to answer

Me: "Okay, so as you know I'm asking that you also share narratives with me and I'll get those from you some other time but I know that you may have more that you want to say or

you may not so if you have anything you wanna add right now I can just add that on. If you don't and then you think of something maybe when you're ready to submit your narrative summary and you can throw it all in there. Okay?"

AC: "Yeah, I may think of something as I'm doing something else. May pop up, but right now I don't really have anything."

Me: "All right... well, April, thank you."

Sam Johnson Interview Transcription – transcribed August 30th.

Me: All right I'm here with Sam Johnson and I'm going to interview him for the qualitative study of African-American parents' perceptions of parental involvement. So the first question, Sam, is - How would you define parental involvement in your own words?"

SJ: "In my own words involves both parents. I feel that example as me growing up as a child. My father was more involved than my mother and I love that, but I also need my mother to be there- out there - like I was missing something in there. So, I still have it in both areas."

Microsoft Office User
PI involved both parents

Microsoft Office User
Father was involved

Microsoft Office User
Mother wasn't as involved - missing something

Microsoft Office User
Daughter attended HS from 3-5

Me: Alright next question - Did your child attend a Head Start program?"

SJ: "Yes my daughter age 3 to 5."

Me: "Now, I know that's probably part of the early childhood center here in our district, but it was an actual Head Start program?"

SJ: "Yes but it was a Head Start program."

Me: "Okay, awesome. Suppose your child's teacher or administrator asked how you were involved in your child's education. How would you answer that?"

Microsoft Office User
Teaching alphabet/counting from early age

Microsoft Office User
K teachers provided resources to help prepare

SJ: "From the time that she was able to walk, uh, I was teaching her the alphabet, teaching her how to count. I actually was working for a school district so I had kindergarten teachers give me like a work assignment stuff like that so I can show her how to do things so she can be prepared for kindergarten when she got there, because I didn't have that."

Me: "Awesome. Thank you. I am typing little bit and so it may take me a second to catch up... Number four - What types of activities do you feel represent parent involvement?"

Microsoft Office User
Everything going on with kids is PI

Microsoft Office User
Involved in it all to understand everything going on

Microsoft Office User
Tagging in about what they did/learned

SJ: "With that question really means everything going on with the child because growing up they can be...they can see didn't kind of things from different people because they're around different...different folks, so usually... A parent should be involved in everything so they know everything is going on with the child every day of their learning. They might pick up on something that is bad, but by you not being involved Think that's the right way to go but you know talking to them every day and asking about classwork or anything yet I think that anything having to do with education... anything having to do with education."

Me: "Okay, thank you. Next question - if I can learn how to type it would even be better, but... How did the teachers or faculty at your child's school involve parents in their children's education?"

Microsoft Office User
Knowing the teachers and how kids perform

SJ: "Well I when I enroll my daughter in school I wanted to know who was the best teacher - every, every year I wanna know who's the best teacher. I want to know how the students

progress in the class on to the next and the next grade and knowing that - it helps. How did the teachers and faculty at that school involved parents in the education? - They also all by email or call if there's any anything different going on with the child that's not the norm. They call or they will email because I know at the beginning they know that I want to be involved in everything! And know everything is going on. I don't want to not be called because like I said I haven't... I had to be involved in everything. As a child I didn't have it a lot and growing up I see that it was needed and so I try to give everything that I feel that was needed!"

Microsoft Office User

Email or call if anything is "off"

Microsoft Office User
Teachers know he wants to be involved

Microsoft Office User
Didn't have that involvement growing up

Me: "Awesome, alright. Question number six - were just plowing through... Please explain how you have felt welcomed or have not felt welcomed in the school building in regards to parent involvement."

Microsoft Office User
Worked at inner-city school - not the same

Microsoft Office User
Parents' attitudes rub off on kids

Microsoft Office User
More hands-on - make you feel welcomed

SJ: "Well I can say I used to work for another school district and parent involvement down in the city schools was not the same as out here. There's more of the parents - have more attitude than there is more problems out of that. They got... they never got what they needed as they... when they were children and they don't know how to give it to their's, so coming here, which is where I graduate high school, it seem like they are more of... [more help more and more and more hands-on] they wanted to help so you feel welcomed. I feel I feel very welcome and I can't think of any school around that I would rather go to - the review says a lot."

Me: "Alright. Question seven - Please compare those feelings of being welcome or not welcome (which in your case is 'welcome') to the expectation you had coming in - so maybe after your experience with [the other district], what did you expect for it to be like here when you came, compared to what it was there."

SJ: "I don't think that I expect you to be like [the other district] and while I know that there's a lot of families that transfer from there and come out here and I feel they bring some of what they had there, which is bad. I don't like that because of me working there I know with those students are like and I know what the parents are like. So, I already knew how it was going to be here, with me going to school here for so many years. I always wanted my children to go here because I knew... I knew they were going to be welcomed and I knew they were going to help because they help me."

Microsoft Office User
Want students to go here - welcomed

Me: "Awesome, alright. Next-to-the-last question - How does parental involvement outside of the school building look to you?"

Microsoft Office User

Talk with kids - daily

Microsoft Office User
Have students show him what they learned

Microsoft Office User
Checking how the school is doing - teachers teaching?

Microsoft Office User

Kids will mimic poor behavior

Microsoft Office User
Involved EVERY single day in some way

Me: "Great, and the last question – official question - Please explain how your personal experiences with parental involvement either when you were a kid and your parents were the parents or you as a parent now has been positive or negative...Maybe those are two different things. Maybe you had a negative experience not positive, but then positive..."

SJ: "My experience, as a child, I don't want to say positive or negative about...but I guess in the middle. With my father -he came play sports - you know I sang he was there and both my parents were married - together I mean - they were together for me and my brothers and sisters until we grew up, but you know my mother wasn't at everything that I need her to be at. She uh, she uh...it's hard for me to remember anything that she was at so that was my bad experience. Uh, I feel that my experience with parenting became better as I became a parent because I knew you know what my children would need. I knew what would help because I knew What I needed and I know that now that I'm an adult it's easier for me to see what I needed and I like to give that to my children and I didn't have a lot of conversation with my parents as a child. They didn't talk to me like I needed to and I make sure that they know I talk to my children and I listen to them you know and not try to discipline them for every single thing that you have to talk to them and see what's in their head – what's in their mind – what they're thinking - that way you're able to umm.... That way, you able to help them succeed."

Me: "awesome OK well, officially those are the questions that I have but I want to give you an opportunity if there's anything else. Do you want to add or you know insert as just additional information and if you don't have anything that's completely fine, too.

SJ: "Well I do... I have to have something."

Me: "OK."

SJ: "I feel that parents or a lot of parents are not involved with their children. They're just sitting in the school and they're not looking after them the way that they should and that's why lotta things are happening. That's why a lot of children are coming to school with attitudes because of what is going on at home and everything...and what they're, what they're experience at home - which is bad - and a lot of our - a lot of the African-American parents need to do a lot better...they need to do a lot better. They need to be more and more into their children than themselves - meaning, what they wear, what they're driving, ummm...anything of that sort - how they are living, what kind of furniture they have...I mean anything. They need to put in more that focus into their kids and if they do that, our teachers and schools wouldn't have this hard times because our...our parents are taking control that situation. There is too many calls home to parents. [There's too many kids being suspended out of school and everything... everything is happening at home and now is being brought to the schools. Our parents must pay attention to what's going on.]"

Me: "So you mentioned specifically African-American Parents. I'm...I just want to ask for the record, do you feel like that applies across the board - parents in general?"

Microsoft Office User
Father was there for sports/choir

Microsoft Office User
Mom not at function – bad for him

Microsoft Office User
His experience is better – learned from parents

Microsoft Office User
Parents didn't talk to him as much

Microsoft Office User
He wants to KNOW what's in his kids' heads

Microsoft Office User
He feels that a lot of parents are not involved

Microsoft Office User
Uses school as child care

Microsoft Office User
Parents need to be into their kids, not just into themselves

Microsoft Office User
Know things about them

Microsoft Office User
Teachers and schools wouldn't be so hard if parents did better

Microsoft Office User
Suspension is usually because things are brought from home

SJ: "It does, it does in general. But I go off of who I'm around more and what I am what I see from who I'm around so I just ...and I'm not saying that all...all African-Americans are that way, but there's...there's a lot there that ARE that way. Working...working in school I see that working at [another district], I really saw that you know and it's...it's bad. You know, how I was security officer in [another district] and all I could do is try to help the kids...all I could do. They all... they always came to me. They didn't feel like I was any kind of threat or I didn't try to make myself seem to be no bigger than them because I had a badge or anything like that. We were... I wanted to be equal with the children because I know for a fact if there's things that go on at home because I dealt with that as a child so I know there's things that go on at home and I want them to come to school as their getaway. So being able to talk to them and give them positive advice is to keep their heads in the right direction."

Microsoft Office User
Not all African-Americans are like this, but his experience

Microsoft Office User
Try to partner, not be a threat

Me: "If you don't have anything else to add I'm going to stop the recording and then we can talk more about the narrative piece that I was talking about."

**Narrative Writing Prompt 1 Proposed for Justin Larmie's
Qualitative Case Study**

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 1:

- As a form of narrative writing, please share your own experiences with parental involvement. In your writing, describe your own parents' involvement in your education. This does not necessarily need to be any certain length but is intended to encompass your experiences with parent involvement when you were a student.

I was with my mom at the beginning, when I was 8, we got taken from my mom and they put us in my grandmother's custody. Until I was 10 or 11. She got sick. Me and my little sister were put in a group home, we stayed 2-3 years and they moved us again. The foster lady did not like me at all. AT the time, I was very large – breast-heavy. They moved us, early in the morning – we weren't even clothed, we was in our pajamas. She kept making it sound like everything was my fault. I started running away. The state decided to put me in my aunty and uncles custody.

Microsoft Office User

Taken from mom at 8

Microsoft Office User

w/grandmother until 10 or 11

Microsoft Office User

group home for 2-3 years

Microsoft Office User

trouble with foster mom – began running away

Microsoft Office User

put with auntie and uncle

Microsoft Office User

back to group home

Microsoft Office User

foster mom encouraged her to graduate

Microsoft Office User

encouraged her to go to night school to catch up credits

They put me in a program. Independent living. My own apt, keeping up bills, going to school for give or take maybe a year and they took me out and put me in a group home. I had just got there, maybe a month, hadn't had me enrolled in school yet. I found out my grandmother passed away. My aunty got me and my sister from the group homes where we lived. I was maybe a Jr. in high school, I decided I didn't want to go to school anymore. The foster lady I was with, was determined, her and another family member, and they said, you know your grandmother would want you to graduate. So, I went back to school. I was short a credit so I went to night school. So I graduated. I have my high school diploma. The foster mother after the program adopted me

legally and before that, I was 18, so I was still in custody. They was trying to keep me until I was 21. She adopted me to get me out of custody. So, I lived with her, but I wasn't in foster care ~~any~~, ~~more~~. I went to live with my aunty and uncle but me and my uncle did not get along.

Microsoft Office User
foster mom adopted her

My foster mother was VERY involved. If I decided I wasn't going back to school, she told me if that's what your mama wanted, you need to do it. To graduate, night school, for credits, she really pushed me to do everything I needed to do to grow up. My mother, she was

Microsoft Office User
foster mom involved

not really involved in my education, my biological mother, was not involved in education as far as school, but I had talent in doing hair. She supported me through that by watching my daughter while I was going through to get resumes, and everything until I got her enrolled in daycare. She was involved when I had to go get resumes or something like that, so I could get things done without carrying my daughter around. My aunty and uncle were very involved in all three of our education, there was me and there was three boys. I lived with them so long and dealt with them so long that we call each other brother and sister. They were military. They had come out of the military. It was strict for all of us, in graduating and everything. They made sure we did our

Microsoft Office User
birth mom was not involved in education

homework and were very involved in getting my education. They help out with my children. My biological father helps me with my son who has a disability. He helps me out with him a lot, but the rest is on me. It comes from me – nothing comes before my kids. If I don't have enough

Microsoft Office User
supported her job of hairdressing

food to feed everybody. If I don't have enough food.

Microsoft Office User
Auntie and Uncle were involved in education

Microsoft Office User
Auntie and Uncle were military

Microsoft Office User
Checked homework

Microsoft Office User
Sacrifice for kids

**Narrative Writing Prompt 2 Proposed for Justin Larmie's
Qualitative Case Study**

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 2:

- Please describe the ways which you are involved in your child's education. Please be as descriptive as possible. Again, this does not necessarily need to be any certain length, but is intended to demonstrate the ways in which you are involved in your child's education.

I was Watching TV, a job corp commercial came on. My foster mother said That's what we are going to do. When she enrolled me in Job corp, I went to springfield Mo to job corp. I would sometimes come home on weekends, but not always. I got my own place. Stayed there for probably a year/year and a half, then moved back with foster mother for a little while. Then, moved back out near her – me and one of the girls got into an altercation so I decided I didn't want to be there – moved in with a boyfriend who had a house. I graduated from job corp, had CNA license – and had beauty school license. Then, I moved out and moved to KS – that's when I found out I was pregnant with daughter. After her, I was stay at home mom for a little while. My biological mother used to keep her so I could do temp jobs. I was still doing CNA license and job. Even when I lived with my boyfriend, he did it too. My sister, I was visiting, and she was pregnant. Mom thought I was pregnant, too. I went to the doctor and I was.

I moved from [previous state], back to inner-city and had my own place for approximately five years (uh...about five years). Stayed at home with her – met the boys' dad, and I had him and after that, went to get tubes tied, but couldn't because I was pregnant, again. I am still a stay at

Microsoft Office User
Stay-at-home mom – involved in school

home mom, but am still very active with their school – whatever activity they want to be involved in – try to keep them, regardless of the fact, mama's going to have their back, come and help.

Microsoft Office User
Mama's going to support her kids

When she finds that they are wrong with it, then she has to set them straight. I'm not a parent that is not involved. I am very so involved with my kids. I am very much involved. Daughter is a dancer – I try my best. Boys' dad is back in their life – doing things, trying to help them. It's a struggle and it's hard, but I had to do what I had to do – with my daughter (1st child), I had to do what I had to do – 22? 23? When I had her – once I had her, I had to grow up – no more clubs,

Microsoft Office User
Has to reprimand them sometimes

Microsoft Office User
Very involved.

going out. |

Microsoft Office User
Struggle, but makes sacrifices

Microsoft Office User
Changed life for kids.

**Narrative Writing Prompt 3 Proposed for Justin Larmie's
Qualitative Case Study**

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 3:

- Is there anything you would like to see change regarding parental involvement for the future? As you describe this, please detail what you feel to be necessary to make this change. Also, what is your own plan, moving forward, in regards to parental involvement with your own child?

Struggling to take care of your kids. Food, clothing. It would be kind of tight to do a lot

Microsoft Office User
Wishes providing for kids was easier

of stuff for my kids. Like, especially, when school starts, it seems not a lot of people

Microsoft Office User
Hard to do a lot for kids

understand that there are people who don't have the money to get what everybody else

Microsoft Office User
No money to get things others have

has. If school starts on Friday, they will wait until the next week to wear their school

Microsoft Office User
Work around payday to buy new clothes/shoes

clothes. It seems like it's a label for kids – what kind of clothes, shoes, etc. It is not the

Microsoft Office User
Not the kids' fault – hard on parents

kids' fault. Their parents may not have time to do everything.

I have a child going to sixth grade – kind of nervous/scared about it. I have a fifth-grader and I have a sophomore. As a parent, I kind of encourage them to do their best in

Microsoft Office User
Want kids to succeed

whatever grade they are going. I want them to succeed. If it is too hard, they need try

Microsoft Office User
Does not allow "I can't"

again. Can't is not a word in my house. They can't say "I can't" ...no, that's not a word in my house.

Alisha Carter parent
Alisha Carter Nash child

My father passed away when I was 12 years old. But he was a big influence in my life. I was a daddy's girl. He supported all the things I was interested in, and he taught me to go into business for myself cause if I'm not working towards my dreams.... I'm working to complete someone else's. He was a real father he was there every day he was able to until he got really sick. My mother passed at the end of 2013. She was supportive by providing for us after my father passed. Sometimes it got rough with having 7 kids, so I stepped up to help when I turned 14. I got a job at worlds of fun. After I bought a few things for myself, I gave the rest to her for bills. I didn't mind I'm a lot like her. She was always helping family out. She was also smart she graduated a semester early and I graduated a year early. I was 16 most of my senior year in high school.

With my health conditions I try to be involved as much as I can with Alisha. I have participated in trips when I can. But I really try to be supportive in her dreams. She's pretty smart so she doesn't ask for much help with homework... I wish she would ask more often I have to invite myself to help her... I try to take a lot of vacations with her. I want her to know you should reward yourself for hard work because sometimes you won't get the acknowledgment else where. Also I want her experience this world (its way bigger than [our city]) lots of ppl from here get too comfortable.

Things I would like to see for future parental involvement is more parents to try to get a lil more involved, I am a working single parent and we have a lot of stress to do everything for the family... and sometimes we are occupied with work, where we are limited in the time we have with our children. Honestly our government need to move the minimum wage to an amount that can fully take care of a household and provide for at least a single family of 3.

Microsoft Office User
Father passed when she was 12

Microsoft Office User
He was a big influence

Microsoft Office User
Encouraged her to work for her dreams

Microsoft Office User
He supported her until he got very sick

Microsoft Office User
Mom provided, but had 7 kids

Microsoft Office User
Stepped up to help support Mom and siblings

Microsoft Office User
Has health conditions, but tries to be involved

Microsoft Office User
Participated in trips, when possible

Microsoft Office User
Daughter is independent – wish she needed her more

Microsoft Office User
Takes vacations with her

Microsoft Office User
Reward for hard work

Microsoft Office User
Wishes parents were more involved

Microsoft Office User
Stressful, especially for single parents

Microsoft Office User
Believes govt should help by raising minimum wage

**Narrative Writing Prompt 1 Proposed for Justin Larmie's
Qualitative Case Study**

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 1:

- As a form of narrative writing, please share your own experiences with parental involvement. In your writing, describe your own parents' involvement in your education. This does not necessarily need to be any certain length but is intended to encompass your experiences with parent involvement when you were a student.

My parents were very involved in my life when I was a student. While I was in elementary school, my mother volunteered by helping with school functions, going on field trips, attending meetings, assisting teachers by grading papers, and serving in the PTA. My mother assisted with our school's carnival by collecting money to get in and assisted in the clean-up. I remember being upset and having an "attitude" because I had to help too. She would also help during field day by running a "station." My mother went on almost all of my field trips from going to the Capitol to walking to Central Dairy for an ice cream cone. She would attend all of my "Meet the Teacher" nights and Parent-Teacher conferences. Almost daily, I was sent home with an envelope filled with papers for mother to grade and I would have to return them to school the following day. However, it was fairly easy for my mother to assist while I was in elementary because she was a stay-at-home mother and went to school in the evenings. My father played a different role when it came to parental involvement. He was involved by attending all of my performances. He attended every singing program, play, and talent show. He also was involved by serving as a "guest" speaker for cultural days or whenever we talked about Africa in social studies. He did this each year from fourth to sixth grade. I remember being so excited to have my dad at the school and my friends loved it too. I have to admit it, I am definitely a "daddy's girl." My dad would come up to the school for parent-teacher conferences but wasn't as active and present as my mother. However, it didn't bother me. I understood my dad worked hard as a Director of Admissions and Financial Aid and he would teach business classes some evenings. When I was in middle school, my parents weren't as involved. My mother graduated from college and started her own daycare center and was pregnant with my brother, so she wasn't at the school as much. She didn't attend any of my field trips or volunteered throughout the day. She continued to attend PTA meetings. Both of my

Microsoft Office User
Her parents were very involved

Microsoft Office User
Mother volunteers - functions, field trips, grading, PTA

Microsoft Office User
Mom helped at school carnival

Microsoft Office User
Mom helped at field day - stations

Microsoft Office User
Meet the teacher and P/T conferences

Microsoft Office User
Mom was a stay-at-home mom

Microsoft Office User
Father attended performances

Microsoft Office User
Father was guest speaker for cultural days

Microsoft Office User
Father came to P/T, but wasn't as "present" as Mother

Microsoft Office User
Father worked hard

Microsoft Office User
In MS, parents weren't as involved

Microsoft Office User
Still attended PTA

parents attended parent-teacher conferences, [every basketball game, choir, and dance performance I was in]. In high school, my parents weren't as much involved. I don't remember my mother attending PTA meetings or volunteering. I don't think we had any conferences any high school. However, they were [involved by going to the football and basketball games. In [my home town], we love our [team] and have school spirit! They did attend all of my choir and dance performances and competitions. Since my dad worked at a university, he attended [our college evenings by sharing information about the various degrees and scholarship information.]

Microsoft Office User
Still attended games and performances

Microsoft Office User
Not much involvement in HS

Microsoft Office User
Still attended football/basketball games

Microsoft Office User
Father involved in college/career events, sharing info from his college (where he worked)

Narrative Writing Prompt 2 Proposed for Justin Larmie's Qualitative Case Study

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 2:

- Please describe the ways which you are involved in your child's education. Please be as descriptive as possible. Again, this does not necessarily need to be any certain length, but is intended to demonstrate the ways in which you are involved in your child's education.

As a parent, I try to be involved as much as I can and I am invested in my children's schools and education. My oldest son is 15, so when he was in elementary school, I attended every field trip from Kindergarten to fifth grade. As a working mother, I would take off of work to make sure I was there. I attended all of his conferences even though I worked at his school and talked to his teachers on a daily basis. I would volunteer to make copies for his teacher when needed before or after school and bring in treats and supplies. I attended all of his performances and every after-school activity. I also served as a "room mother" and organized all of the holiday parties. When my son began middle school, I attended all of the sixth grade beginning of the year activities and attended PTA meetings. However, I didn't feel needed. I was used to feeling needed and very involved to just attending band performances and conferences. The only place I felt needed was from the band department, so that's where I did most of my volunteering. Another thing that was different were the award assemblies. The only one that I attended was when he was promoted from 8th grade. Every quarter, he would come home with an honor roll award and I would be upset because I wasn't there. He did have field trips in middle school, but he didn't want me to attend. My son just finished his freshman year in high school. I wasn't a part of the PTA, but I served as a Band Booster. I attended every out of town and state performances and assisted in competitions and football games. I was so active because the band director reached out to all the parents in marching band, the jazz ensemble, and symphonic bands. I felt needed. I did attend parent-teacher conferences and reached out to teachers, but I didn't get much of a response. My youngest son is 8 and I am doing almost everything that I had done with my oldest. I attend all of his field trips, help in his classroom teacher, and volunteer for classroom parties. This school year, I wasn't able to attend two of his award assemblies due to meetings I had scheduled at work. I was so crushed! I actually felt like a bad mother. However, I prepared my son that I wasn't going to be there and apologized, and it didn't faze him at all. This year I decided that I want more

- Microsoft Office User Try to be involved and am invested in child's education
- Microsoft Office User Attended field trips, K-5
- Microsoft Office User Take off of work to help
- Microsoft Office User Attended all conferences
- Microsoft Office User Volunteer to help teachers - copies, treats, supplies
- Microsoft Office User Attended all performances and after school activities
- Microsoft Office User Beginning of year activity - 6th gr
- Microsoft Office User Did not feel needed in MS
- Microsoft Office User Still needed in band - did volunteer
- Microsoft Office User Only attended promotion from 8th grade
- Microsoft Office User Son didn't want her to attend MS field trips
- Microsoft Office User Attended out of town performances/assisted
- Microsoft Office User Attended P/T conf - reached out - little response from Ts
- Microsoft Office User Attend field trips, help teacher, and volunteer for son
- Microsoft Office User Felt bad when had to miss assemblies b/c of work

parents to participate and volunteer, so now I serve as the PTA president. I believe that I am so involved because I had great role models and I always want to be visible in my children's lives.

- Microsoft Office User Serve as PTA president
- Microsoft Office User Had great role models - wants to be visible

**Narrative Writing Prompt 3 Proposed for Justin Larmie's
Qualitative Case Study**

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 3:

- Is there anything you would like to see change regarding parental involvement for the future? As you describe this, please detail what you feel to be necessary to make this change. Also, what is your own plan, moving forward, in regards to parental involvement with your own child?

In a perfect world, every parent would do their part to be involved in their child's lives. I believe that parent involvement can look different for different people. This could mean coming up for school for activities, checking on their child by calling or sending an email, or volunteering to sponsor or do other service things in the school. But, for parents to be involved, they have to feel needed and feel like they are partners with their child's school. Schools need to let parents know on a regular basis how important they are and how we would have a better learning environment if we work together.

Microsoft Office User
In a utopia = everyone would do their part

Microsoft Office User
Can look different for different people

Microsoft Office User
Coming up to school - activities

Microsoft Office User
Checking in = calling/sending email

Microsoft Office User
Volunteer to sponsor or other service

Microsoft Office User
Parents must feel needed and like they are partners

Microsoft Office User
Schools should communicate parents' importance.

Microsoft Office User
Work together

**Narrative Writing Prompt 1 Proposed for Justin Larmie's
Qualitative Case Study**

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 1:

- As a form of narrative writing, please share your own experiences with parental involvement. In your writing, describe your own parents' involvement in your education. This does not necessarily need to be any certain length but is intended to encompass your experiences with parent involvement when you were a student.

During my elementary years my [mom was not actively involved] This was true for all of the students who attended [my elementary school in Arkansas]. Parental involvement was not something the Principal or teachers encouraged. However, parents were in attendance whenever there was a program. I remember the auditorium being packed when we performed our plays for Christmas, or Easter or spring concert. That is the only time I remember seeing parents on the school campus.

However, when my children attended school I tried to be as involved as I possibly could. Not only did I attend [any performances, but attendance PTA meetings and participated in several fundraisers.] At my children elementary school [parental involvement was highly encouraged] so I tried to support the school by going on [field trips, helping with fundraisers and visits to the classroom.

Microsoft Office User
Mom not involved - Arkansas

Microsoft Office User
PI not encouraged

Microsoft Office User
Parents attended programs

Microsoft Office User
Christmas/Easter play or Spring Concert

Microsoft Office User
Attended performances, PTA meetings and fundraising activities

Microsoft Office User
PI was highly encouraged

Microsoft Office User
Field trips and classroom visits

Narrative Writing Prompt 2 Proposed for Justin Larmie's Qualitative Case Study

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 2:

- Please describe the ways which you are involved in your child's education. Please be as descriptive as possible. Again, this does not necessarily need to be any certain length, but is intended to demonstrate the ways in which you are involved in your child's education.

For me the most important way I was involved in my child's education was by having an open line of communication between myself and my child's teachers. I tried to establish this at the very beginning of the school year. I believe it is important for parents to reach out to their child's teacher. This encourages the teacher and let them know they have your support. Back in the day during my children elementary years, fundraisers were big. Schools encouraged parents to participate and help the school with various ways to raise money for student activities. I also tried to attend every parent teacher conference. Parent teacher conference is a very critical component that demonstrates parents interest in their child's education. Even if a parent never go on a field trip, participate in a fundraiser or become a member of the PTA, parent teacher conference is the best way parents can become involved in their child's education.

Microsoft Office User	Communicated with teachers
Microsoft Office User	Develop relationship with teacher early
Microsoft Office User	Communicate they have your support
Microsoft Office User	Parents encouraged to participate in fund raising
Microsoft Office User	Attend P/T conferences
Microsoft Office User	P/T and is vital - more than field trips, fundraising, PTA

Narrative Writing Prompt 3 Proposed for Justin Larmie's Qualitative Case Study

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Prompt 3:

- Is there anything you would like to see change regarding parental involvement for the future? As you describe this, please detail what you feel to be necessary to make this change. Also, what is your own plan, moving forward, in regards to parental involvement with your own child?

I am not sure parents fully understand the impact they have on their child's education. Parental involvement is vital to the level of success a student experience in school. For most parents their child's education is something that happens only at school. I believe that when we can get parents to see that education is not just about getting an A or B but it is about knowing how to build positive relationship with others, making responsible decisions, showing empathy for others, managing emotions and set and achieve positive goals. It is teaching kids to be caring, respectful and courageous. The social and emotional stability children need to be successful in school begins at home before they grace the school's doors. Parents are a child's first teacher. This need to be emphasized to parents over and over. Parents need to know the impact they have.

Microsoft Office User	Are parents aware of their impact?
Microsoft Office User	PI is vital
Microsoft Office User	For some, PI is only at school
Microsoft Office User	Build positive relationships Making responsible decisions Showing empathy for others Managing emotions Set/Achieve positive goals
Microsoft Office User	Social/Emotional stability begins at home

Sam Johnson's Narratives
First Narrative

My Mother and Father weren't as involved in my education as I feel they should have been. It didn't affect me as much because I knew what their expectations of me were, being the oldest of 6 children. As the oldest child it was kind of left up to me to help my siblings with homework and feeding them getting them prepared daily due to the fact that my parents were both working.

Second Narrative

I am very involved with my children's education in many ways. One way is I make sure I'm available for every parent teacher conference so I know exactly how my children are progressing or lack of in class. I feel it is very important to have that relationship with the teacher which I feel helps benefit the child. Secondly, even though I have 2 jobs I make sure I'm heavily involved with homework every night by calling using FaceTime so I can keep up with what they're learning every day and to help them when needed. Lastly, every Friday we review over what was learned throughout the week to make sure they were able to maintain what they learned.

Final Narrative

There are some things I would like to see more of regarding parental involvement. One thing I would like to see is more parents coming to the child's parent teacher conferences so that they know how their child is learning, knowing the type of behavior there showing, things of that sort. I feel we can make that happen by making it so that there has to be some kind of mandatory conferences like twice a month to keep up with the teacher and the child. Another way would be to make a few Saturdays tutor days not for only students but for the parents to join as well, which would show more involvement and at the same time build that relation between all 3. I feel that there are lots of ways to be involved with the children's education and if I could think of more I would put them. The children are our future and we must show them and treat them as such by being more involved as parents.

- Microsoft Office User**
Parents not as involved as he'd have liked
- Microsoft Office User**
He knew their expectations – oldest of 6
- Microsoft Office User**
Helped with homework, feeding them, and preparing for school
- Microsoft Office User**
Very involved with his kids
- Microsoft Office User**
P/T conf.
- Microsoft Office User**
Knows how his kids are doing in class
- Microsoft Office User**
Important to have relationship w/teacher
- Microsoft Office User**
Involved w/homework, even through FaceTime
- Microsoft Office User**
Friday reviews of what they learned – maintain what they learned
- Microsoft Office User**
Wishes for better attendance to P/T conf.
- Microsoft Office User**
Wishes parents knew their kids' behavior
- Microsoft Office User**
Would like to see mandatory, bi-weekly conf.
- Microsoft Office User**
Suggests Sat tutor days for students AND parents
- Microsoft Office User**
Teacher/Student/Parent relationship important
- Microsoft Office User**
We must invest in our kids

Transcript of Focus Group

Me: OK, so at this point I am here with my participants and... to do a little focus group - a follow up - after the narratives and the interviews and I, umm, I have found that in looking at all the writing - that in the transcriptions of the interviews - that it seems that I am seeing a common thread with many of the participants and that is that parental involvement was maybe a bigger deal for the elementary school versus middle school and high school. Is that is a fair statement? Do you feel that was the case for you that maybe your parents were more involved in the elementary setting versus the middle or high? Anyone can respond to that.

Sam: Well in my... in my experience as a child, High school for me...uhh... my father was more involved. With elementary school, my mother was more involved. When I... now that I'm an adult and I worked elementary setting and also high school setting I see, I DO see more parents involved in an elementary than in high school.

Me: And with your story I feel like probably it would lend itself probably due to your dad being there like for sporting events and what not. So do you feel like it is that fair to say?

Sam: Yes, I think that is the case.

Me: Anyone else?

April: Well I think that's true, personally in my case, with my mom, 'cause my mom was a single mom. So she was worried... she was involved in more of an elementary and I think him umm, during... in my generation it was more less like by the time you get to middle school and high school you're a little bit more mature, growner, so you can kind of get yourself around him and you don't need as much as, you know, Mom being there and Dad being there because they consider you get all mature and grown - almost grown. But in my case with myself personally, with my children, I know it was Elementary that I was involved in just a tad bit more but I was also involved with my kids in high school as well because I have a couple of daughters that were a part of a band and I travel with them to various places and become a part of that - helped with the cheerleading team and fund raisers and things of that nature so kind of, with me personally is kind a like almost even more so when they were able to because they were younger feel like I needed to be there to kind a help them and let them in but it in high school and middle school was involved in it with them.

Me: OK...

Alice: OK, I, I do believe people are more involved in elementary school in as they get older you know the parents kind of feel like well they're developing a little bit more, they need me less and.... but I feel like, especially since I've been feeling a lot better, I've been helping Alice (daughter) a lot more on her assignments and stuff like that so that's... that's where we are but I do believe people tend to slow down as they get older.

Me: All right anyone else?... OK, well the next thing I was going to ask is simply... I feel like I've got a lot of information from the narratives that I've read and from the interviews that I did and I have had a chance to go through and transcribe and kind of you know really analyze and look more deeply at, and I just want to open the floor for any additional comments that you may feel like "man, I wish I would've said this" or "if I had added this in..." and it could be that you have nothing and that's completely fine too. I just want to give you the opportunity before I, you know, take the meat of what I have and run with it, so...

Sam: I think I, uh, touched on everything.

Alice: I think I touched on everything as well.

April: All right all right I concur yeah I think we covered a lot.

Me: And you?... yeah? OK. And you?... great. OK, thank you so much for your time. Thank you.

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL



UMKC
5319 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO 64110
TEL: (816) 235-5927
FAX: (816) 235-5602

NOTICE OF EXEMPT DETERMINATION

Principal Investigator: Dr. Shirley McCarther
5100 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO 64110

Protocol Number: 18-116

Protocol Title: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Type of Review: Panel Manager Review

Exempt Category #2

Date of Determination: 05/18/2018

Dear Dr. McCarther,

The above referenced study was reviewed and determined to be exempt from IRB review and approval in accordance with the Federal Regulations 45 CFR Part 46.101(b).

This study was determined to qualify under Exempt Category #2 as follows:

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability or reputation.

This determination includes the following documents:

Attachments

- JL EdD Committee Approval and Compa Approval
- Chapter 3 Methodology - A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN
- JL IRB Participant Consent Form 2018 - May 3
- Narrative Writing Prompt 1 Proposed for Justin Lammie's Case Study
- Narrative Writing Prompt 2 Proposed for Justin Lammie's Case Study
- Narrative Writing Prompt 3 Proposed for Justin Lammie's Case Study
- Lammie Justin approval of thesis from L DeAnda 2018
- Interview Questions Proposed for Justin Lammie's Case Study

You are required to submit an amendment request for all changes to the study, to prevent withdrawal of the exempt determination for your study. When the study is complete, you are required to submit a Final Report.

Please contact the Research Compliance Office (email: umkirb@umkc.edu; phone: (816)235-5927) if you have questions or require further information.

Thank you,



UMKC
5319 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO 64110
TEL: (816) 235-5927
FAX: (816) 235-5602

RML

Rebekah Lee
UMKC IRB

APPENDIX E

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

UMKC IRB # [18-116](#)

Consent for Participation in a Research Study

**A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS
OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Principal Investigator: Shirley ~~McCarther~~, EdD
Co-Investigator: Justin ~~Larmie~~, EdS; EdD candidate

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The study team is asking you to take part in this research study because you have met the criteria associated with this study. For the sake of this study, the perceptions of African-American parents regarding parental involvement will be evaluated.

Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to share a series of narratives (short, descriptive writings as a response to a prompt). You will also be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview. This interview will have only nine questions and should take no more than 30 minutes. Finally, you will be asked to take part in a focus group which will involve all five participants meeting with the co-investigator to answer any clarifying questions to help clear up any questions he may still have.

You should contact the Office of UMKC's Institutional Review Board at 816-235-5927 if you have any questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research subject. You may call the co-researcher, Justin ~~Larmie~~, at 816-810-0006 if you have any questions about this study. You may also call him if any problems should arise.

Taking part in this research study is voluntary. If you choose to be in the study, you are free to stop participating at any time and for any reason. If you choose not to be in the study or decide to stop participating, your decision will not affect any care or benefits you are entitled to.

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VITA

Justin Larmie was born in Poplar Bluff, Missouri and attended the public high school there. He received an Associate's Degree from the local community college and then transferred to Southeast Missouri State University, where he continued his work towards his Bachelor's degree. At that time, he and his wife relocated to Kansas City and he transferred to the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where he earned his Bachelor's degree in 2004. After teaching for two years, he returned to school, graduating with a Master's degree in Teacher Leadership from University of Illinois-Springfield in 2009. Realizing he desired an administrative certificate, he returned to University of Missouri-Kansas City in the Urban Leadership program and graduated with a Specialist's degree in 2013. Mr. Larmie began his teaching career in a rural setting, teaching seventh- and eighth-grade Communication Arts in Grain Valley, Missouri. Two years later, he transferred to a semi-urban district where he had student taught and continued to teach what was then called English Language Arts to seventh- and eighth-graders in Grandview, Missouri. He taught there for ten years and accepted a position at Butcher-Greene Elementary School as Instructional Coach in the same district. He is currently serving in that position and has plans to serve as an administrator in the future.