Title
African American Fathers' Involvement in Home and Schools: An Interpretive Analysis of their Beliefs and Experiences

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African American Fathers’ Involvement in Home and Schools: An Interpretive
Analysis of their Beliefs and Experiences

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Tomashu Jones

2012
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

African American Fathers’ Involvement in Home and Schools: An Interpretive Analysis of their Beliefs and Experiences

by

Tomashu Jones

Doctor of Philosophy in Education
University of California, Los Angeles, 2012
Professor Tyrone Howard, Chair

The lack of research about Black fathers and their involvement with schools was the primary motivation for this mixed method dissertation study. This discourse provides a much-needed account of what the nature is of Black father's involvement with schools, why and how they do it, and how student performance is influenced by Black fathers' engagement with schools. Stakeholders in the education of youth, parents, administrators, teachers, and the community whose work is concerned with Black education may learn from the results and not repeat past errors of prevailing notions that portray Black fathers as absent and uninvolved in their children's educational endeavors. One of the goals of the present study was to address current ideology by demystifying the notion of African American fathers and their participation in homes and educational settings from uninvolved and non-concerned to active, engaged, and involved.
The dissertation of Tomashu Jones is approved.

Robert Cooper
Rose Borunda
Kris Gutierrez

Tyrone Howard, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles
2012
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On October 12, 2008, the “DARKEST DAY EVER” in my life happened. My mother, Yvonne O’Dell Penrice decided to terminate her life. It did not seem fair or possible, this binary of attempting to advance with additional higher educational degrees and the shocking and awful death of a mother who struggled with an addictive life. In the midst of preparing for a Ph.D. qualifying exam, on a NFL Sunday Night Football weekend, I could not believe she left me on this earth, to tackle a comprehensive exam without giving me her blessings; in addition to not seeing me graduate to become a Ph.D. in education.

She gave me three years of inspiration and motivation while completing the Ph.D. coursework but I could not accept it as true. God took my best friend, the lady who would pan-handle for cash on the street corners so I could eat when I was a teenager. The woman I so dearly loved autonomously departed this earth without saying good bye to me. I was devastated during this upcoming exam week.

Unequivocally, I miss Yvonne O’Dell Penrice. I have always shared with others who ask how I am doing with my loss. Even now, I share that she is resting in peace and visits me even now in my dreams to tell me how proud she is!

Throughout this Ph.D. journey, with the inspiration of family and friends like Drs. Luke and Idara Wood and Stanley Johnson I have learned that God places barriers in your life and then bestows amazing boons in order for one to endure all things, even when you lose a love one. I never thought I would come out of the qualifying exam to be ABD but I must say my Lord and my angel Yvonne who protect me in all I do have allowed me to come out of darkness and into the light!

To my father, Eddie L. Jones, a wonderful hard working father that raised me. Even when I would be in and out of your house as a young black teen, attending school in Watts, CA, I thank you for providing me that space to check on my mother and trusting me as a young adolescent who had so much to learn. I thank you for allowing me to pursue education in all capacities from boarding school at Dunn Preparatory to CSU Sacramento, to UCLA. All these degrees and acronyms are because of your resilience and belief in education but, I still don’t forget what you taught me and how to serve my community first!

To all of my seven sisters, the world would not be the same without growing up with you. This is for you as well!

Aunt Cat and my Uncle Cookie, thanks for being supportive and proud when I was a young man. I appreciate the time you invested in me.

As a young 20 year old Black father, the system was not kind to me. As an undergraduate father of a three month old infant to be exact who was abandoned by his maternal mother; purposefully,
left on the front steps of my apartment to care for. Having a father raise me, I was able to navigate a college education system and support my infant son through tons of loans, the support from family, and working different jobs part time. I learned from the BEST, my father. I am pleased to say that through all my bumps in the road, Ken Jr. and I have been through an undergraduate, masters, and Ph.D. degree in almost all of the social sciences together. There were times that we had to figure out childcare, how we were going to eat, but we kept pressing on and WE made it son!

Working in the field of education as a counselor, educator, instructor, and community leader is both a dream and a vision for me. All of my mentors were allies for social justice and education reform---and I am a product of their time, energy, and investment. Dr. Howard my inspiration for this dissertation work, always told me since being a Pre-Doctoral Scholar of his, “as I have helped you make sure you help others.”

Dr. Rose Borunda my spiritual mentor, advisor, thesis and dissertation committee member. I first came to know Drs. Borunda when I was a Masters student in the School Counseling program at Sacramento State University in one of the foundational graduate courses at CSU Sacramento in the fall of 2004. Dr. “B”, thank you for the confidence you had in me through the counselor education program and as my field advisor, the “micro skills” that I continue to use in the field as I advocate for families and children’s behalf. Now as a dissertation committee member your perspective I would never leave out---you inspire the interdisciplinary research that I strive for.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades there has been much discussion about how parent involvement and social support may contribute to higher academic outcomes in children’s educational performance (Barnard, 2004; Cohen & Sekino, 2004; Fan & Chen, 2001). Parent involvement has emerged as one of the most essential topics in education circles (Jenkes, 2003) yet, the meaning of parental involvement can shift in meaning (Ascher, 1998), as it is often correlated with social class influence and cognitive associations (Bempechat, 1992). Whether involved or uninvolved, educators, social scientists, and researchers have documented the importance of parent involvement, if children are to do well in school, along with identifying specific strategies of parental involvement is most important in enhancing children’s educational outcomes (Christian et al., 1998; Jenkes, 2003; Mau, 1997; McBride & Lin, 1996). The objective of the following mixed methods dissertation is to explore the role of African American fathers in their children’s education.

Adding to the complexity of parental involvement is what role, if any, race and gender play in parental involvement. For example, Black fathers’ involvement with schools is an area where there is little research that has informed the general literature about the roles, beliefs, practices, and strategies of African American fathers’ parenting practices. Since parental involvement leads to increased academic performance and Black students perennially underperform, it is vital to examine the parental involvement levels and characteristics of Black fathers. One of the pressing questions that should be considered when examining parental involvement is how is it possible that, at a time when countless numbers of Black fathers are actively involved with their children’s education, their experiences are rarely heard in social science research or in the popular press at large (Polite & Davis, 1999). How do researchers
examine African American fathers, their family and school involvement, if it does not fall within traditional definitions of parenting? How do researchers construct new paradigms that validate the experiences and stories of Black fathers and their engagement with their children’s educational endeavors? It is my intent in this study to examine the practices of Black fathers and offer a new paradigm on Black fathers’ parental engagement in schools and identify new practices that are not a part of existing frameworks.

Answers to the previously posed questions specifically related to Black fathers and their involvement with schools has not been as evident as parental involvement for the broader population. A study examining Black fathers and parental involvement was conducted by Ahmeduzzaman and Roopnarine (1992) who provided a platform for examining African American fathers’ involvement with their preschool age children, offered some insight into this population. Their study of 45 African American fathers who were involved with their preschool age children, found that African American fathers spent an average of 2.7 hours each day with their preschool children compared to the 6.7 hours a day that their wives spent each day. The difference of the 4 hours that Black fathers spent with their preschool age children (24 to 48 months) when compared to that of their wives, suggested that Black fathers are competent and sharing equally in child care responsibilities and educational decisions with their partners in the home (Ahmeduzzaman & Roopnarine, 1992; H. McAdoo, 1988). Ahmeduzzaman and Roopnarine concluded that Black fathers support learning at home, communicating with teachers, and supervising homework. Conversely, Hofferth (2001) and Yeung et al. (2001) reached conclusions that contribute to a prevailing belief that African American fathers are significantly less engaged than are White children’s fathers in paternal involvement and “Black children’s father spend marginally less time eating meals with them and also spend less time
reading to them, 12.76 hours compared with 15.35 for white children’s father” (Yeung et al., 2001 in Hofferth, 2001, p. 17). The research is inconclusive about the role of Black fathers as some research results show they are involved and some results show they are less involved, or absent. There is also contradictory evidence that points to meaningful involvement and attachment that Black fathers have with their children (Johnson, 1995; Wattenberg, 1995). The aforementioned findings reject the notion that questions African American fathers’ parental involvement and suggests that these men are passive and exhibit non-normative behaviors that is generational and pathological.

This study is guided by several hypotheses. I contend that Black fathers are involved in their children’s public, private and home schooling regardless of grade level. Second, I contend that Black fathers’ types of parental involvement are manifested in multiple types of behavior as an intervention to aid their children. Specifically, when Black fathers set rules about homework (i.e. deciding when and where to do homework) and communicating with school officials, there are positive academic outcomes that reinforce good study habits over time. Third, I contend that schools unknowingly disinvite Black fathers to be involved in formal school events, and as a result, fathers are less likely to be as engaged in formal school meetings.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to examine the type of parental involvement practices that Black fathers use to serve as advocates for their sons and daughters and to explore the meaning of their engagement in their children’s educational endeavors. In addition, specific approaches and practices that African American fathers use in their attempts to develop authentic relationships with school personnel to improve their children’s chances for academic success will be identified. The following qualitative and quantitative research questions, based on the purpose of the study and the review of literature, will drive the methodological approach.
**Qualitative Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the specific practices and strategies that African American fathers employ in the home and in their children’s school to support their academic development?

RQ2: What are the experiences of Black fathers with school officials?

RQ3: What obstacles, if any, do Black fathers identify as factors that hinder them from being involved in their children’s school and how do they overcome these obstacles?

RQ4: What recommendations do involved Black fathers offer to other Black fathers who are not actively involved that would be helpful in enhancing their involvement with their child’s school?

**Quantitative Research Questions and Related Hypotheses**

RQ1: What is the relationship between background variable and school-based activities of Black fathers?

Ho1: Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between background variables and school-based activities.

Ha1. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between background variables and school-based activities.

RQ2: What is the relationship between background variable and home-based activities?

Ho2: Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between background variables and home-based activities.

Ha2: Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between background variables and home-based activities.

RQ3: What is the difference between response types by the gender of the focus child?
Rationale for the Study

Black Fathers and their Involvement with Schools

The lack of research about Black fathers and their involvement with schools was the primary motivation for this dissertation study. This discourse provides a much needed account of what the nature is of Black father’s involvement with schools, why and how they do it and how student performance is influenced by Black fathers’ engagement with schools. Stakeholders in the education of youth, parents, administrators, teachers and the community, whose work is concerned with Black education, may learn from the results and not repeat past errors of prevailing notions that portray Black fathers as absent and uninvolved in their children’s educational endeavors. One of the goals of the present study was to address current ideology by demystifying the notion of African American fathers and their participation in homes and educational settings from uninvolved and non-concerned to active, engaged, and involved.

Meaning of Parent Involvement and Academic Achievement

The term parent involvement has become a vague term that has multiple interpretations (Asher, 1988), and is often referred to as advocacy, which connotatively suggests parents sitting on school councils and committees, participating in decisions and operations, classroom aides, assisting teachers in a variety of ways, or volunteering for low or no wages (Ascher, 1988). Lee and Bowen (2006) concluded “parent involvement has been defined and measured in numerous ways in the literature” (p. 194). Barnard (2004) and McWayne et al. (2004) combined various aspects of activities into one variable measure of parent involvement at home and school. Epstein (1989) noted six structure models for Educational Socialization Scale (ESS) and several overlapping definitions that reflect parents’ academic and socialization practices: parenting, communication, volunteering, teaching at home, decision making, and collaborating with community.
Parental involvement is used broadly to include the various ways that home life socializes children. A variety of techniques recommended to parents who seek to be involved in their children’s education ranging from: (a) reading activities; (b) learning through discussion; (c) home-based learning activities; (d) the use of contracts between parents and teachers; and (e) techniques that foster parents’ tutoring skills (Barth, 1979; Becker & Epstein, 1982; Moles, 1982). What could possibly explain why educators and researchers use parent-school involvement and techniques interchangeably?

Presenting readers and stakeholders with the challenge of determining what makes the most sense, has contributed to an aggregate number of theories, models, and strategies on parental education, but has failed to provide a disaggregated synthesis and variation around ethnic and class group differences (Davis & Perkins, 1996). One generalized common result and centralized theme that is constant in all explorations in parent-school involvement of children, is irrespective of the many ways described and the variety of approaches in parenting styles, what has been controversially advocated by concerned educators is “continuity between the home and school” (Ascher, 1988, p. 109), which yields positive academic outcomes in students (Taylor, Hinton, & Wilson, 1995). More specifically, what is controversial is the fact that Black fathers parental involvement at home and school is not as transparent to education stakeholders. Therefore, Black fathers need to be validated if their parental involvement falls outside non-mainstream tradition.

**Black Family Involvement and Academic Achievement**

Barnard (2004), Jeynes (2003), McWayne et al. (2004), and McNeal (1999) research findings acknowledged the relationship between parental involvement and achievement. Overwhelmingly, their work suggests that academic achievement is significantly higher among children from all racial/ethnic and income groups when their parents are involved. When
education researchers and social scientists have been concerned about the schooling and the academic achievement of Black students, often, the Black mother (Phillips, Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebenov, & Crane, 1998) is given attention; yet, few studies have examined the paternal side of parental involvement and student performance (Hooferth, 2001).

Research examining the effects of Black family configuration and its importance on the development and achievement of students has been significantly investigated (Baurimind, 1989; Brody & Flor, 1997; Coates, 1985; Schenieder & Coleman, 1993). The Moynihan (1965) report was one of the first studies to document the precarious nature of Black families, when Moynihan stated that Black families were dysfunctional, pathological, and matriarchal. Similarly, sociologist Frazier (1939), in the early 20th century, described the Black family as a familial system with “disorganized family norms” (Battle & Coates, 2004) due to the prevalence of out-of-wedlock births. Moynihan and Frazier’s conclusions are well documented and have left widespread notions, even decades later, that Black families are both female headed and dysfunctional (Battle & Coates, 2004).

Equally important is the fact that some Black fathers are absent due to a number of societal forces that have undermined the instrumental roles they play as economic providers. For example, negative stereotypes, educational and residential circumstances “hamper fathers’ involvement, rather than their commitment to their children” (Adams, Pittman, & O’Brien, 1993; Elster & Lamb 1986 in Leadbeater & Way, 1996; Sander & Rosen, 1987, p. 195). In addition, increases in the number of incarcerated African American men within the past two decades have increased “the vulnerability of their children, families, and neighborhoods” (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Mumola, 2000, in Gadsen et al., p. 383), which has shifted parenting responsibilities to Black women as heads of their households (Davis & Perkins, 1996; Gadsen et
al., 2003; McAdoo, 1993 in Hrbowskiet al.). Mincy and Pouncy (1997, 2005) contended that in Black modern families “African American wives at all educational levels have contributed 50% or more of family earnings since the mid-1990s” (p. 61). The available research has painted a picture that may be partially accurate; thus, there is a need to engage in a more comprehensive account of Black families where fathers are present.

In fact, the whole notion of unwed motherhood has been considered a major social problem in the United States (U.S.). For example, the 1990 U.S. census reported that one in three Black children in the U.S. is living at home with both parents, but more notably during the past decade, over 90% of Black children have lived with families headed by a female at some point in their lives (Hill, 1999). Trying to reframe an issue that has raised questions about absent fathers and considering race, our society is conditioned to stereotype Black families as consisting of the symbol of the sole Black mother, while Black men are symbols of fatherlessness.

This image has shaped the debate regarding “dead beat dads” in the African American community. To illuminate the politics of this debate is often risky, emotional, and raises more questions than answers. The 2000 U.S. census data reported that from 1970 to 2000, single Black mother families increased by triple digits, 3 million to 10 million, and nationally Black single father households remained statistically constant at 15% between 1995 and 2000 (Census, 1990, 2000). These statistics on disintegrating Black families are startling and raise concerns about the educational outcomes of African American children. Importantly, national data also reported that Black fathers have maintained single parent households with their children in more than 335,000 homes across the country (U.S. Census, 2000), which quantitatively and implicitly suggests that many Black fathers are involved in Black families and their children’s education,
yet this account of Black fathers is rarely part of the Black family narrative. My study seeks to insert this perspective into that narrative.

Underwood (1988) posited that there are social, structural, and cultural dimensions of American society that may have a profound influence on Black educational attainment. Underwood further stated that “the issue of black educational achievement and eligibility is deeply rooted in historical conditions that have shaped the structure of American society” (p. 7). Achievement researchers often observe that Black students have perennially underperformed (Howard & Reynolds, 2008) when compared to their European and some Asian American counterparts.

Ogbu (1992) suggested that this is due to family and cultural factors and to the experience of racism. Despite the many studies on academic achievement and family processes in other populations, the structural and process variables that lead to academic success need exploration (Baca Zinn, 1989; Barbarin & Soler, 1993; Biblarz & Raferty, 1987; Billingslingly, 1968; Brewer, 1995; Collins, 1993). Further, few studies focus on Black fathers and their involvement with schools.

**Academic Achievement of African American Students**

Policymakers and educators agree that parent involvement and academic achievement of Black students has been a growing area of interest in academia (Henderson & Berla, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Observed patterns of parent involvement in Black families often reveal that Black children are often from families who experience disproportionate discrimination in housing, education and employment (Battles & Coates, 2004). In general, the discourse on the academic achievement of African American students in contemporary educational institutions is usually a “discourse of deficiency” (Stinson, 2006, p. 995) focused on the perceived delimitation of culture, schooling, and life experiences of Black children in the
U.S. Ogbu (1978, 2003) provided the education community with a binary notion of voluntary and involuntary immigrants to illustrate the lack of motivation and lower academic achievement of Black students in relation to the Black and White achievement gap (Stinson, 2006).

What Ogbu only minimally addressed in his research were some of the societal ills within the Black community that have been the catalysts for the lower educational attainment of some African American students. For example, the U.S. has the “highest incidence of single-parent families in African American history, the greatest concentration of young men incarcerated” (Lee, 2005, p. 52) and, according to the Justice Policy Institute (2005) between 1980 and 2000, African American males were three times more likely to be added to the nation’s prison system as were added to college. In addition, when concentrated poverty is evaluated in chronically low-income neighborhoods that have large numbers of people who lack access to good jobs, good quality schools and essential services, it is apparent why African American students are disproportionately underachieving. As a nation, we must think about how these issues illustrate social, political, and economic hardships that African American students and their families face in this country.

**Fatherhood and Involvement in Schools**

Since the early-to-mid 1980s, the role of fathers has been scant in parent research on children’s well-being and academic development. A review of the literature revealed an unbalanced and incomplete record about fathers’ attitude toward caring for their children (Davis & Perkins, 1996; Hooferth, 2001; Mandara, 2006). Currently, national estimates are of 27 million children who live apart from their fathers (Matthews, 2003). In a typical year, more than one-third of all children will not see their fathers (Matthews, 2003). Children of color have an increased likelihood of growing up without a father (Hernandez, 1993). Concerns over children’s well-being, the expectations of fathers involved, and the availability of affordable and
quality childcare (Benokraititis, 1985; Lamb, 1995) have resulted in an increase in many federal agencies and programs dealing with family and social issues. The focus has been on mediating the fathers’ relationship with the mother of the children in an attempt to foster a more positive relationship between fathers and their children (Nord, 1998). Two rationales that can be postulated about this are that the cost and consequence of absent fathers (European or African American) is high (Matthews, 2003) and what social and psychological problems will persist through a child’s formative years and perhaps throughout his or her schooling years when fathers are absent.

In response to these realities, President Clinton in 1995 executed an executive memorandum requesting that all departments include fathers in their programs, policies, and research programs where necessary (Nord, 1998; Clinton, 1995). Many of these requests have been cross-disciplinary in areas such as psychology, family studies, Black studies, sociology, and gender studies (Barnett & Baruch, 1987; Palkkovitz, 1984) in which research has documented fathers’ participation. Nord, Brimhall, and West (1997) suggested that “research stimulated by the new interest in fathers suggests that fathers’ involvement in their children’s school does make a difference in their education” (p. 1). In addition, there has been an increase in research examining fathers and fathering, and research still concentrated on the majority, not minority, families (McAdoo, 1988).

References to father involvement and student achievement are most often focused on children in highly-educated families, White middle-class, and intact (Davis & Perkins, 1996; Nord, 1988) familial systems. When examining the extent that fathers are involved in school activities by family composition (i.e. single head of household, two family households, etc.), almost 50% of children in two-parent families have fathers who participated in none or only one
of four activities since the beginning of the school year (Nord, 1988). This could be attributed to fathers who are full time students, have professional careers and obligations, or the school is disinventing to fathers (Reynolds, Jones & Howard, in press).

Alternatively, Nord’s (1998) study revealed that children who live in father-only households do better in school, are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities, enjoy school more, and are less likely to be suspended or expelled if their fathers are involved in their schools compared to no involvement. This finding indicates that a father’s involvement in his sons’ or daughters’ education has a direct impact on their achievement, more so than mothers; also, the finding suggests that when fathers are involved in their child’s education, their children will more likely do better in school and have fewer behavioral problems (Nord, Brimhall, & West, 1997).

Nature of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine Black fathers’ involvement in their sons’ and daughters’ educational endeavors. Data was collected from face-to-face individual interviews with 10 fathers. Data was also collected through a focus group of fathers who were randomly selected from a group of 99 participants who also responded to a survey questionnaire. Collecting data with counter narrative participant story-telling and a quantitative survey, this study was an effort to explore thoroughly how African American fathers describe and display involvement with their children in home and school settings. It is my hope that the results may explain why education researchers need to conduct more studies on Black fathers if stakeholders wish to understand parental factors as key variables in improving academic outcomes for Black children. An analysis of academic supports (i.e. help with homework, volunteering in classrooms, etc) provided in the home and outside of school activities that influence academic
achievement was conducted to identify factors that may be of concern to the various stakeholders.

Collected data was intended to support an investigation of the father’s levels of engagement in their sons’ and daughters’ schooling. Variables merged three social constructs: race, class and gender. The study explored the “intellectual resources” (Civil et al., 2002) of African American fathers to help conceptualize their roles in their children’s education. School officials were not engaged in the study because of the traditionally accepted vantage point of school officials which has been deficit based.

**Assumptions and Limitations**

Research assumptions are self-evident truths, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2005). It was assumed that the African American fathers participating in the mixed methods study would answer truthfully and accurately to the survey questionnaire and interview questions based on their “personal experience” (Bruyn, 1966, p. 91). It was assumed that the lived experiences of the participants in the study could contribute new knowledge to the issue of Black fathers’ parental involvement with their school-aged children. It was assumed that all participants would respond to the best of their individual abilities. The study was about individual fathers and their experiences as they contemplated the factors they deemed important in guiding their children from school to adulthood. The assumption was made that audio recordings of the interviews would be a consistent and accurate representation of each participant’s point of view.

One of the limitations of this study was the number of participants. The size of the sample population may not fully represent the views of all African American fathers, therefore this dissertation study will confine itself to interviewing Black fathers who identify themselves
as being involved in their children’s education. In addition, the study did not address issues of Black mother’s support and involvement with schools such that the findings of this dissertation “could be subject to other interpretations” (Creswell, 2010, p. 111; Kunes, 1991). With a racially and culturally diverse state like California, inferences cannot be made about other racial and ethnic groups, therefore, there will be no comparative insights.

**Justification**

It is my intention that the results of the study would help to fill a gap in the education research literature as well as other social science disciplines by identifying and examining the strategies employed by African American fathers in their homes and in their sons’ or daughters’ schools, which may contribute towards eliminating the gap in the knowledge. An outcome of this research is to provide evidence of African American fathers who are involved in home life and school. Results will potentially serve as a reference point for African American fathers who are interested in being involved with their child’s education.

This study may also provide practical implications for the African American population. Other young, adult, surrogate, and non-custodial African American fathers may be able to learn about individuals who are similar to them and are making considerable progress in their families. The expansion in the numbers of African American fathers who are pursuing full-time paternal duties will contribute to a generational cycle of African American men who are heads of their household. Results have the potential to impact policies and procedures in education, social work, family studies, and legal studies by adding to the body of knowledge that informs staff and administrators who work with African American fathers and their children.

The results from this study may also serve as a catalyst for additional studies of African American men using an asset-based approach and become a part of the contribution to a needed
body of research on the experiences of African American fathers. To conclude, the perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences of African American fathers are spotlighted because they are the most silenced and the most invalidated in discussions in the literature of fathering and family involvement. Participants provided a critical view that significantly augments knowledge about the crisis in African American families.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are presented for clarification of usage in the following discussion.

**African American/Black Fathers**

A person of African American/Black descent identified as such in the U.S.

**Father Presence**

An active process that involves three functions: engagement, availability, and responsibility in relationship to their children.

**Care-giving**

Providing nurturance and performing routine tasks necessary to maintain children’s emotional well being, physical health, and appearance.

**Design of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 contains the statement of the problem and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 is a summary of the literature relevant to the importance of Black fathers’ involvement with their children’s educational endeavors. An overview of the important relationship between parent involvement and academic achievement (Jimerson, Egeland, & Teo, 1999) will be provided. Though some studies have investigated the ways Black parents engage in schools (Datnow & Copper, 1996; Howard & Reynolds, 2009; Sanders, 1997), there is a need for more literature that suggests parent involvement has a positive impact on African American students.
Chapter 3 of this mixed methods study will be a summary of the methodologies that were implemented to examine Black fathers’ parental involvement strategies. Chapter 4 contains the results of the quantitative data collection, and Chapter 5 contains the results of the qualitative data collection. Chapter 6 is a discussion of the results and contains a response to the research questions cited in the following section.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to address the body of knowledge about Black fathers and their engagement with schools. The goal of the study was to explore the perceptions, attitudes and lived experiences of involved fathers. This literature review was focused on the perceptions of Black fathers within U.S. school’s purview.

The review was intended to explore three major themes that explain the lack of attention to the role of Black fathers and their engagement in their children’s education, as shown in Chapter 1: (a) societal factors, which consist of social structures, and cultural dimensions, (b) historical analysis of parental involvement and (c) Black parental involvement, specifically Black fathers’ involvement in their children’s education. The search strategy was to find if there was an incomplete or unbalanced body of empirical literature about critical issues involving Black fathers. The purpose of the literature review is not to determine whether or not a balanced body of work exists but rather, the goal of the review is to determine what exists and to offer a critique. Insights into what researchers have documented as some of the challenges Black fathers encounter as they seek to be advocates on behalf of their children in U.S. schools were pursued. By expanding the traditional discourse of “Black males as victims,” (Polite & Davis, 1999, p. 5), the literature review was intended to provide an examination of African American fathers’ experiences in schools, family, and society.

Documentation

Scholarly books, seminal journal articles, and research documents were reviewed through the University of California at Berkeley library. Additional databases searched included EBSCOhost for journal articles, ProQuest for books or reports, and ProQuest Digital
Dissertations, policy briefs, pilot studies, and conference papers. The online databases of Google also provided information for the search of the pertinent literature. Bibliographic and reference listings were accessed from appropriate titles discovered within the review process. Approximately 125 current scholarly articles pertaining to African American/Black father’s involvement, schools (P-20), engagement, parenting, parental strategies, practices, communication, behavioral, cognitive, fatherhood agencies, fathering, student achievement, student outcomes, homework, urban Black fathers, and parent-teacher communications were reviewed.

Absence of Research Literature about Black Fathers’ Parenting and School Involvement

Scholarly research on Black fathers is necessary because the voices and stories of Black fathers and the educational impact of parental interactions with institutional agents and school personnel are rarely found in social science literature or in the popular press (Polite & Davis, 1999). Because their family and school involvement do not fall within traditional definitions, the positive efforts of Black fathers often are not acknowledged; thus, many Black fathers accept their exclusion from the general discourse on parenting and their roles within schools. Nonetheless, Black fathers define familial and academic success for themselves and their families.

The literature on parenting related to ethnic minority fathers has been inundated with reports about the behavioral, cognitive, and socioeconomic effects of absenteeism for children and adolescents (Lerman & Sorensen, 2000; Mincy & Pouncy, 1997). Other examples of phenomenological inquiries have focused on the role of fathers in two-parent households and their financial contributions to children and families (Gadsen & Hall, 1996, in Lamb, 1998), and low-income urban fathers’ perceptions of their involvement in child rearing (Bright, 1995;
Williams, 1996). In addition, there is a growing body of literature on situated identities of Black fathers (Gadsen, Wotham, & Turner III, 2003) and their experiences of fatherhood (Roy, 2006). There exists, however, many gaps in the research literature on African American fathers. Only recently have education and social science scholars begun to examine the role of African American fathers and fatherlessness (Bowman, 1993; Bright & Williams, 1996; Gonsalves & Virginia, 1999).

McAdoo (1993) writes that traditionally, African American men have been evaluated differently from the way other ethnic groups have been evaluated. Overwhelmingly, when studying other American families they are recognized for having a family system, two-parent household incomes, and parents play critical and moral roles in the lives of their sons’ and daughters’ social and cultural development. Research that specifically examines African American father-son/daughter relationships in academic settings is virtually absent from the literature. The present study lends support to a new way of documenting the experiences of Black fathers and their children, and does not deem them as “marginal and inconsequential” (Bright & Williams, 1996, p. 258) in families, but as active and vital in son’s and daughter’s academic development.

Studies that have focused on African American parenting typically consist of cross-cultural studies (Graham, 1992; McLoyd & Randolph, 1985; Wyche, 1993). However, it is not enough to compare African American father-son/daughter relationships with their White counterparts. Such research seldom assesses and gives full consideration to the distinct experiences of African American fathers.

For many years, most traditional accounts of the African American family have focused on mother-only, female-centered, and single-parent families (Franklin, 1997; Rainwater, &
Yancey, 1967; Roy, 1999a, 199b; Williams & Bright, 1996). It also should be noted that issues around fatherhood have intersected with welfare reform (Gadsen, Wortham, & Turner III, 2003) in hopes that illegitimate pregnancies would decline since fathers have been the “culprits in the rise of welfare-dependent families” (Gadsen, Wortham & Turner, p. 382).

When fathers have been studied, Cazenave (1979) reported more concern with their “absence rather than his presence” (p. 583). This negative chronicling “deflects attention away from the many fathers who are present in the home and actively involved on all fronts of their family’s lives” (Bright & Williams, 1996, p. 257). Although some researchers have examined middle-class adolescent girls’ perceptions of their fathers (Younis & Smollar, 1985), there still remains a dearth of studies that examine how low-income or ethnic minority adolescent boys and girls experience this relationship. Rationales for this shortcoming may lie with the seemingly implicit notion in the research literature that those fathers who do not live with their sons or daughters have no relationship with their children; therefore, Black fathers play no role in their education.

Empirical studies do exist, however, that show that fathers from low-income and middle class communities who do not live with their children often continue to have an active presence in their children’s lives (Jarrett & Burton, 2002). Other studies show that fathers have warm, nurturing relationships with their children and share equally with their wives in child-rearing decisions (Bright & Williams, 1996). Mirande (1991) found that an overwhelming majority (99%) of African American fathers see child care as a responsibility of both parents, and 87% believe that their children have needs “only they, as fathers could meet” (p. 85).

Keltner (1990) noted African American fathers in general, and fathers in Head Start Preschool in particular, have been given scant, if any, attention in the psychological literature.
The U.S. Census Bureau (1991) reported one of every five African American preschoolers was cared for by his/her father while the mother worked outside the home. This data represented a 15% increase since 1985. The importance of these findings regarding the impact of fathers’ involvement in their child’s early academic commitments was reinforced by Thomas (1996) who demonstrated that new initiatives are certainly needed nationwide to increase involvement and to assist families in strengthening their parenting skills.

Ford (1993) provided evidence that family support and “family achievement orientation” (p. 48) was a factor that strongly affects how well fathers and their children adapt in an academic environment. Ford defined family achievement orientations as the “parental beliefs regarding education, as perceived by early adolescent children in an urban school district, and how students’ perceptions affect their achievement orientation” (p. 48). Yet, support and family orientation are difficult to measure because it can take on various forms (financial, emotional, task oriented, and mentoring). In addition, support can come from many different people such as the adolescent’s parents, maternal and paternal grandparents, siblings, uncles, and others. Family support is not a simple, unitary concept, specifically for fathers. Additional components should be considered when studying this population. For instance, researchers could include source, type, and amount, as well as the degree of reciprocity between the fathers and those who provide support (Ford, 1993; Nathaniel et al., 1991).

Research on Black Fathers’ Involvement and Academic Outcomes

Cooley and Unger (1991) in literature review of Black father involvement found conclusions that greater overall cognitive stimulation in the children, which resulted in fewer behavior problems and better academic achievement in young children. In particular, Furstenberg and Harris (1993) stated that when Black fathers have an active presence and established long-term relationships with their son or daughter, they are more likely to enter
college or to have found stable employment after high school, were less likely to be teenage parents or to have been in jail, and were less likely to report depressive symptoms.

Boyd-Franklin (1989), Clark (1983), Ford (1993), and McAdoo (1988) noted that previous studies on achievement orientation told “little about what happens educationally in the homes of Black children” (p. 59), which makes it difficult for some policy makers and educators to understand how to nurture and teach Black children. Scholars have underscored, however, that by experiencing continued familial emphasis on school, Black children may develop a greater sense and appreciation for school achievement such that it becomes a “natural pursuit” (Ford, 1993). This problem is especially pronounced because research literature indicates there is a common perception that African American adolescents, particularly males, are the most likely to turn away from school and form peer groups that discourage them from working hard and succeeding (Roderick, 1993).

The works of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) argue, “Black males are more likely to form peer groups and identities that reject performance and the kinds of behaviors that academic success requires” (Roderick, 2005, p. 185). The topic of Black fathers’ responsible involvement and “being there” (Allen & Conner, 1997; Newman, 1997) have been the focus of much of the extant critical literature on Black families. Roy (2006) concluded that low-income African American men related their own parenting experiences to the degree of involvement and “quality of interactions with their own fathers” (p. 32). Roy further noted that, “cycles of engagement and disengagement, access to good jobs, personal choices reflect patterns and influences on whether consistent involvement will overlap into the next generation and ‘life course’” (p. 50). Thus, any interpretation of the role that fathers play in the home for their children is substantially critical, especially for their African American sons.
Lamb (2003) found that a general trend is that African American children who live in father-present homes do better in school and have more supportive home environments than those from father-absent homes. For example, African American children in two-parent households have better mathematics and reading scores (Teachman et al., 1998), were exposed to more positive attitudes about school, had more resources to pursue educational opportunities (Savage, Adair, & Friedman, 1978), and judged that their homes were more achievement oriented (Mandara & Murray, 2000). Conversely, those from father absent homes were significantly more likely to repeat a grade, to have poorer grades than other children in the class, to be suspended from school, and cut classes more than were children from father-present homes (Rodney & Mupier, 1999). The Meyerhoff Project (1998) in Baltimore found high achieving African American boys who lived with their fathers were strongly encouraged to achieve through education. In addition, the fathers who participated in the project set clear goals for grades, were demanding, but supportive, and were more involved in monitoring their children’s homework and setting expectations and rules that were clear (Grief et al., 1998).

Ongoing studies at various levels have revealed that African American male models of academic success are relatively scarce. Green (1991) confirmed that a crucial barrier to the success of African American male students is the lack of educated African American male role models. Most African American males are brought up in disadvantaged circumstances with limited access and opportunities to change their predicament (Hacker, 1992) and do not have visible role models. Parham and McDavis (1987) sought to paint a more positive and realistic picture of African American males, characterizing them as having intact self-concepts (Banks & Grams, 1972; Baughman, 1971), and as being strong role models and good husbands, providers, and fathers (Hill, 1972). Observers have also noted that with involvement from African
American fathers who are nurturing and satisfied with their parenting roles, their children have better cognitive and receptive language scores (Black, 1999; Dubowitz et al. 2001).

**New Constructive Paradigm on Black Fathers in Education Research**

Gibbs (2001), Comer and Hill (1985), Myers (1989), and Wilson (1987) concluded the social and economic characteristics of inner-city neighborhoods generate chronic levels of stress for African American youth and their families. Despite the statistics available regarding the rate at which African American males fail in the educational system, and the marginalization by institutional practices in the economy and society (Morrison & Epps, 2002), many African American males do succeed. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of literature highlighting Black fathers’ role in these cases of educational success. Studies do exist on Black parents and educational attainment (Enix, 1988; Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 1982) that show most Black professionals come from families where a high priority was placed on academic achievement.

A search of the literature failed to reveal descriptive research about how Black fathers from diverse socio-economic backgrounds maintain strength and resiliency (Bright & Williams, 1996; Staples, 1996) when social factors plague this population. Jarrett, Roy, and Burton (1999) noted that many Black men socialize their children to the realities of racism and discrimination, and many men send implicit messages to their children to persevere despite educational and employment obstacles. Bright and Williams’ (1996) ethnographic work reported that racial socialization is an important factor for Black fathers as they help develop positive attitudes and ethnic identities for their children. Bright and Williams most significant finding was that fathers were candid about expressing their thoughts about education, and that their thoughts about education could help their children achieve in uncomfortable environments.

Conduct of this literature review followed a related concern that parent involvement is not just synonymous with Black mothers and school success, but should construct new
paradigms about engaged Black fathers who have an active presence in their sons’ or daughters’ schools. Future research should allow African American fathers and their children to articulate their experience in an educational system typically defined by the values of White America.

The literature on Black fathers shows that many African American fathers and their children have been able to overcome a multitude of challenges in society (Casenave, 1979; McAdoo, 1993, 1983; Taylor, Leashore, & Toliver, 1988; Williams, 1992), but in terms of longitudinal research, across disciplines, both qualitative and quantitative studies lack documentation of how fathers overcome the challenges in today’s public schools. As Gadsen et al. (2003) argued “reaching these fathers and documenting their attitudes and perceptions of fatherhood, we can begin to understand the breadth and scope of motivating factors and impediments to father involvement” (p. 397). As stated previously, researchers should be encouraged to explore issues related to men’s development in the social context that produces these fathers, their work, family, and neighborhood.

In reviewing the various studies on Black fathers and engagement within schools, the strength of these works showed that Black fathers had high expectations for their children and the schools that they attended; the fathers who were involved expected their children to perform at high levels (Bright & Williams, 1996; Gadsen, Wortham, & Turner III, 2003; Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002; Roy, 2006). The authors of these studies who conducted and constructed new discourses on Black fathers and their children, highlighted normative family structures and school involvement activities (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, Jr., 1999; Davis & Perkins, 1996; Gonsalves-Domond, 1999). Black fathers in the cited studies possessed an inner self-confidence that could not be taken away from them (Bright & Williams, 1996; Gonsalves-Domond, 1999; Jarrett, Roy, & Burton, 2002; Roy, 2006).
To conclude, this literature review was an exploration of the most relevant literature on African American fathers and their engagement with schools. The review addressed strengths and weaknesses of some of the complex issues faced by this population. Debunking stereotypes and constructing new knowledge was one of the goals of this study due to the gaps in the education literature that addresses Black fathers and their academic successes with their children. The fathers who are engaged deserve to be recognized because they have the potential to change negative perceptions of Black fathers. The findings from this work need to be made public. The following section pertains to Critical Race Theory, which was the framework within which the study was conducted.

**Racial Frameworks and Social Justice**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) was the framework within which Black fathers’ involvement with schools was examined. CRT provides synthesis of how race, class, and gender are merged in various educational processes, programs, and policies (Solorzano, 1998). This study was an effort to explore Black fathers’ involvement in schools and their experiences, if any, that race, class, and gender overlap their attempts to be involved in their sons’ and daughters’ schooling. The tenets of CRT allow for the centrality of race and racism as the focal point (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yasso, 2000). The unique characteristic of CRT is that it allows for the interpenetration of race, class, and gender to be examined conjointly (Solorzano et al., 2000). This overlapping (Figure 1) and the resulting holistic approach may give some sense of power to distressed marginalized group members’ voices who have not been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights and affirmative action policies. In addition, CRT also allows for the construction of a laboratory and transformative method of understanding experiences convoluted by race, gender, and class discrimination in a contemporary society. Outside of CRT studies, class status is made to be the sole focus for examination; and race, gender, sexual orientation, and religious orientation are
completely omitted from socially constructed identities. Figure 1 is a visual representation of intersected areas, which is a graphical illustration of race, class, and gender. It illustrates how CRT for education is different from other CRT research (Solorazano et al., 2000) by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact communities of color.

![Figure 1. Process of the interpenetration of social construction of race, class, and gender within CRT.](image)

Categories of race must be considered in relation to the lived experiences of individuals. The goal of the present study was to look specifically at how race, class, and gender are salient aspects of this research. CRT will be used to expose, define, and humanize (Aguirre, 2000; Billings, 1998) the experiences of African American fathers and address the educational involvement issues they face in schools.

**Background of CRT**

CRT originated as part of a grassroots legal studies movement by progressive scholars of color (Billings, 1998) who felt that, after the 1960s Civil Rights movement, there still needed to be an explanation of the continuing presence of racism in this country (Aguirre, 2000). Similarly, there was deepening concern that when race and racism was discussed there was a caustic apprehension about the hypocrisy of honest discussion of race and social justice (Crenshaw, 1988). Scholars have provided varied interpretations when defining and explaining
its theoretical underpinnings. Crenshaw et al. (1995) indicated there is no “canonical set of doctrines or methodologies to which (CRT Scholars) all subscribe (p. xiii). However, CRT theorists are in consensus as to how it can be used as an “intellectual tool” (Billings, 1998, p. 8). Overwhelmingly, they share similar theoretical and methodological goals to debunk, demystify, construct, and reconstruct praxis to explain binary notions of race.

CRT studies also advocate social justice and challenges prevailing hegemonic ideologies of American culture by taking other forms of subordination, like religion, gender, and class discrimination into consideration (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Pellerm, & Thomas, 1995). Gordon (1990) defined CRT as a leftist legalese movement that challenged traditional legal scholarship that focused on “doctrinal and policy analysis” (Billings, 1998, p. 10). In addition, this work was also described as an extension of Grassmalian notion of “Hegemony” which describes the hierarchal structures that are in place to maintain the subordination of people of color in American society (Billings, 1998).

The critique of CRT is that it does not construct a new social order or an innovative legal constitutional reform that is practical for new policy (West, 1993). Rather, in theory, it “attacks and assaults” silences, and results in inconsistencies in the law (West, 1993). CRT can be a discussion of meritocratic systems, but fails to address racism in its many forms (Billings, 1998). CRT researchers interested in unpacking and deconstructing have used CRT for storytelling as a qualitative methodological practice to give voice to marginalized and oppressed groups (Bell, 1995; Billings, 1998). Additionally, Bell (1995) contended that CRT is “characterized by frequent use of the first person, storytelling, narrative, allegory, interdisciplinary treatment of law, and the unapologetic use of creativity” (p. 899). Increasingly, CRT has been used in education (Solorzano, 1997, 1998; Tate, 1997; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and other social
science disciplines such as sociology (Aguirre, 2000) and women’s studies (Wing, 1996) to provide better understandings of racism and discrimination (Solorzano et al., 2000).

**CRT Theorists in Education**

Delgado (1995) asserted that CRT begins with the notion that racism is “normal, not aberrant, in American society” (p. xiv), and that stories and voices of all forms of racism need to be uncovered. Scholars like Matsuda (1991) describe CRT as the work of progressive scholars. CRT is an effort to work toward the eradication of any “isms” in American society. Tate (1997) helped initiate the CRT application in education. CRT in education provides the following:

1. It unmask[s] racist policies and practices.

2. It contests the hegemonic educational definitions of meritocracy, objectivity, and equal opportunity (Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998; Tate, 1997). Tate purports that “raced” education cannot solely or entirely explain fully integrated theories based on gender and/or class alone.

Solorzano, Ceja, and Yasso’s (2000) work contributed to the discourse on CRT by operationalizing the term *Racial Microaggressions* (RMA). In the broadest sense, RMA is any form of subtle racist and sexist behavior that injures an individual or a group of people. Solorzano (1998), Pierce (1978) and Carew (1978) defined RMA as the “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’ of Black offenders” (Solorzano, 2000, p. 60). Too often, African American fathers’ involvement in schools is influenced by the amount of subtle and offensive mechanisms they have to endure. These fathers experience a cowardice and cumulative assault (Steele & Aronson, 1995) of microaggressions of racism that is pervasive and goes unreported or seldom investigated (Delgado & Stefancic, 1992; Johnson, 1988; Lawrence, 1987; Solorzano, 1988). RMA elicits a personal and psychological impact that can oppress and lead to alienation (Fanon, 1952, 1961), and, in turn, can stifle tolerance and
social reform. RMA exists in education institutions, social spaces, policies, and practices, and most pervasively, in the media. To defeat racial microaggression, assaultive behavior cannot be ignored or downplayed (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yasso, 2001). Note that intentional actions are necessary to combat deeply held institutional practices and values.

The authors cited in the previous paragraph theorized that these traditional definitions are constructed by those who are in dominant positions of power. As a result, these definitions suggest that Whites have been the beneficiaries of affirmative action policies. For example, actual numbers suggest that the major recipients of affirmative action policies, in respect to hiring practices, have benefitted White women (Guy-Sheftall, 1993) more than anyone else. CRT serves as the framework within which educational involvement of African American fathers was examined and explored in the present study. Using their world view perspective and experiences, the application of CRT to this research is in alignment with Freire (1970) who believed that such a perspective was vital to obtain critical consciousness and spark praxis.

**Summary**

As a result of the review of the literature about the absence of African American fathers and their involvement with schools, a paucity of research was found about the positive examples and/or models of successful African American fathers. This is unfortunate as African American fathers who are struggling with school officials need to see examples of Black fathers who are impacting their children’s academic achievement by being involved. The review of literature also found a dearth of educational research on Black fathers. This may stem from African American fathers’ distrust in educational research and/or the lack of trained Black researchers or researchers in general who are interested in research applicable to this population.

The research undertaken in the current dissertation provides access to subjects that are often excluded from research analysis and/or interpretation. To conclude, these voices are
explored because they are the most silenced and invalidated in discussions of parenting and school involvement. They provide a critical view that significantly augments knowledge about the contemporary crisis in parental involvement in education.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

The following chapter is a presentation of the mixed methods approach used for the design of the study. Included is a description of the purposive selection of participants, the interview protocol used for the individual interviews, the process of assembling a focus group and method analysis for both forms of qualitative data. The procedure for the collection of data with the survey questionnaire is described, as is the manner of analysis of the collected numerical data. Ethical considerations relevant to the inclusion of participants are cited. The qualitative data is presented in Chapter 4, and the quantitative data is presented in Chapter 5.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the study was to explore the experience of Black fathers’ involvement in schools and to understand how they have interpreted their experiences. Through a series of individual interviews, a focus group, and a quantitative survey questionnaire following research questions were addressed.

Mixed Method Research Designs

Research that includes of both qualitative data (text and/or images) and quantitative data (numerical data) is termed mixed methods. Mixed methodology employs both types of data in the same study often in different phases of data collection (Creswell, 2010). The challenge in mixed methods is deciding the priority of each of the two methods of data collection and whether the data will be gathered sequentially or concurrently. A mixed methods approach was appropriate for this study because exploratory interview questions for both the individual interviews and the focus group were used to focus on the “common experiences of a group of people” (Moutstakas, 1994, in Harper, p. 131), and quantitative results from a large group of
respondents balanced the equation of human experience. Experiences of the chosen subjects have been largely unexamined in previous studies (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). The purpose of the study was not to make sweeping generalizations about African American fathers as a homogenous group, but to make possible a better understanding of the particularity of the experiences of Black fathers involved in their sons’ and daughters’ schools.

Mixed methods studies entail a search for a more definitive understanding of the study problem than employing only one form as the sole methodology. Mixed methodology employs both quantitative and qualitative data in the same study, often in different phases of the research (Creswell, 2005). The challenge in the study design is deciding the priority, emphasis of each of the two methods, and at which point the data will be gathered (i.e. sequentially or concurrently). With this design, the decision to apply numerical data to a research phase presupposes an outcome to a qualitative stage that is readily accomplished in time for the quantitative portion. No such decision was made in this study. The extent of qualitative analysis and the development of the themes and the discussion of trait-characteristics were not predictable. The anticipation of a conclusion that would present a comprehensive overview of the analyses of interview data fits the criteria for a qualitative study, according to Creswell, but would not be appropriate for this study.

Qualitative and quantitative approaches “attempt to see how society works and describe social realities” (Becker, 1996, p. 107) and both have distinct differences in social science research. Quantitative researchers are more concerned with numeric descriptions of a population (Babbie, 2001; Becker, 1996; Creswell, 2010) seeking ways to explain differences between variant groups. Qualitative field researchers are more concerned with observing and describing phenomena from having immersed themselves in particular settings. The phenomenological
approach in qualitative data analysis is a process of eclecticism (Maxwell, 2005); “there is no right way” (Tesch, 1990, p. 153), or a “systematic way” (Becker, 1993, p. 219) to interpret data. Becker (1993) argued that when quantitative research is “precise and impersonal, there is a humanistic element of social behavior” (p. 219) that is left out but included in qualitative research. As researchers use both approaches they rely upon “different skills and procedures” (Babbie, 2001, p. 37). The remainder of Chapter 3 is divided into two sections. Part A contains the methodological details of the qualitative design, and Part B contains the methodological details of the quantitative design.

**Part A: Qualitative Design of the Study**

Qualitative researchers seek out particular settings to study because they are anxious to learn about the context (Bogden & Bilken, 2006). Researcher observation can best capture this when action can be examined in the setting. Qualitative research is *naturalistic*, suggesting that there are actual settings, whereby the researcher enters and spends considerable time in “schools, families, neighborhoods and other locales” (Bogden & Bilken, 2006, p. 4). In addition, naturalism is an old tradition of qualitative research (Babbie, 2001) with the intent of the researcher to naturally observe and report by the researcher “what really is” happening (Gubrium & Hostein, 1997, p. 81). Similarly, Best and Kahn (1998) define naturalistic inquiry as “studying the real world as they unfold naturally; non-manipulative, unobtrusive, and non-controlling; openness to whatever emerges with a lack of predetermined constraints and outcomes” (p. 241).

In-depth interviews are highly personal, probing, and self-reflective iterative processes by which the interviewer and the informant can explore deeper issues to make sense of truths (Johnson, 2001). Qualitative research frequently relies on personal contact and semi-structured
interviews with open-ended interview questions (Ibarra, 1996). In-depth interviews for this study offered a distinctive way of gathering data essential to understanding the lives of Black fathers, which was needed to provide in-depth information that might be missing from quantitative research alone (Etter-Lewis, 1991; Ibarra, 1996). The phenomenological approach was implemented to explore the lived experiences, attitudes and perceptions of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

A qualitative design was used for both the face-to-face interviews and the focus group’s to ascertain salient themes as to “explore” (Creswell, 2010, p. 146) and “process” (p. 146) and find “meaning” (p. 146) in the fathers’ reporting of their experiences with public school officials, their perspectives regarding involvement in school spaces, and to seek a deeper insight into their overall experiences with their children’s schooling (Greenbaugh & Taylor, 1997). Qualitative inquiry “begins with the assumption that human behavior is made up of thoughtful, meaningful responses to stimuli in the world. What something means to someone affects how the person will respond to the thing” (Taylor, 1992, p. 3). Qualitative methods in the broadest sense are descriptive research (Creswell, 2010; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) because the researcher is interested in “people’s own written history or spoken word and observable behavior” (Creswell, 2010; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 5). In addition, Creswell (2010) contended that descriptive research is “interested in meaning, processes, and understanding gained through words and pictures” (p. 145).

Philosophically and methodologically, this study of African American fathers’ involvement with schools was influenced by phenomenology. The primary objective of phenomenological philosophy “is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible
from unexplained preconceptions and presuppositions” (Bogden & Bilken, 1987, p. 43). Bogden and Bilken (1992) explained that researchers in the phenomenological mode “attempt to understand meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations” (p. 43). As a research methodology, phenomenology is both descriptive and qualitative (Polkinghorne, 1989). The focus is on subjective experiences, instead of descriptors of covert actions or behaviors (Polkinghorne, 1989). Phenomenological research consists of “reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be ambiguous, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life” (Van Manen, 1984, p. 41).

Phenomenological analysis reported by Van Manen (1984) may be seen as a dynamic interplay of six research activities:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world.
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it.
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomena.
4. Describing the phenomena through the art of writing and rewriting.
5. Maintaining a strong, oriented relation to the phenomena.
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole.

(p. 30)

**Qualitative Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the specific practices and strategies African American fathers employ in the home and in their children’s school to support their academic development?

RQ2: What are the experiences of Black fathers with school officials?

RQ3: What obstacles, if any, do Black fathers identify as factors that hinder them from being involved in their children’s school, and how do they overcome these obstacles?
RQ4: What recommendations do involved Black fathers offer to other Black fathers who are not actively involved that would be helpful in enhancing their involvement with their child’s school?

The following section describes the geographical setting of the study from which participants were drawn. The parameters used to select participants for the individual interviews, focus group, and survey questionnaire are summarized.

**Setting**

All of the fathers were from the regionally diverse areas of Los Angeles in Southern California or Sacramento in Northern California. These two areas were chosen based on the researcher’s familiarity with Black men in these cities. The city of Los Angeles covers 368 square miles and is the second largest city in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Population within city limits was 17.8 million in 2000. The economy is driven by international trade, aerospace, technology, petroleum, and tourism. Racial distribution of the population in 2000 was 46.9% White, 46.5% Hispanic or Latino, 11.23% African American, and the remainder was comprised of smaller ethnic groups.

The city of Sacramento, the state capitol, has a population of 466,488 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010); however, seven closely adjacent counties add 2.9 million total population to the Sacramento region. The economy is driven by agriculture, international trade (the city is a major port), state government, and tourism (the city is the gateway to the High Sierra Mountain Range). Racial distribution of the population is 45% White, 14.6% African American, 18.3% Native American, 26.9% Hispanic or Latino, and the remainder is comprised of smaller ethnic groups.

**Participant Selection**

Approval from the University of California at Los Angeles Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought and received before any part of the study was conducted. The study was
deemed to be one of minimal risk to participants as determined by the U.S. Federal Government Department of Health and Human Services (2009) regulation 45 CFR § 46.10, which states the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research should not be greater in and of themselves than any ordinarily encountered in daily life, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Eligibility for this study was determined based on participants’ self-identification as African American or Black.

The goal of sample selection was to sample the “entire range of the population and capture the representativeness of the individuals, settings, and activities selected” (Creswell, 2010, p. 89). Patton (1990) contended purposeful sampling allows the researcher to engage in “information-rich cases for in depth study” (p.169). Patton asserted that these “cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p.169). The purposeful selection of African American fathers was determined by multiple considerations to create a diverse pool. For participation in this study, 10 participants who were selected for individual interviews received $25.00 in cash upon completion of interview. Participants did not receive any payment or other compensation for participating in the focus group.

The participants were male and 18 years old or older, given that the study was designed for African American fathers, but with differing parenting arrangements. All fathers were required to be involved in their child’s personal life and school, whether in the home or outside the home, regardless of relationship status; single parenthood, married, or in or out of joint custody. Involvement may have entailed helping with homework, volunteering at the school, inquiring about their studies, creating learning activities at home, or any other type of practice that participants deem as a level of involvement in their children’s life which is concerned with
their academic, social, and psychological development. Black fathers who were primary caregivers, such as, single fathers, stepfathers, divorced, married, or legal guardians were included. Their children could attend public, private charter, catholic school, or be home schooled. The child’s age could range from 5 to 19 years old. Fathers were sought from a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Black fathers could be very involved, somewhat involved, or a minimally involved in their children’s schooling based on the criterion of this study. Participants who did not meet gender, race, and age criterion were excluded from the study. Selection criteria excluded Black mother’s opinions, support, and involvement with schools such that the findings of this dissertation “could be subject to other interpretations” (Creswell, 2010, p. 111; Kunes, 1991) and generate mixed analysis as to why Black mothers were excluded from this study. Involvement could entail helping with homework, volunteering at the school, inquiring about their children’s studies, creating learning activities at home, or any other type of practice that participants deemed as a level of involvement in their children’s life concerned with their academic, social, and psychological development.

African American fathers were sought for the study from both churches and civic organizations that had direct or personal involvement with African American communities. Telephone calls were made to the leaders of 10 churches (Baptist, African American Episcopal (AME, and Pentecostal congregations). Two community organizations, the Los Angeles Urban League and 100 Black Men of Los Angeles and Sacramento, were also contacted.

All contacts were for the purpose of explaining that the researcher is a Ph.D. student in the Education Department of the University of California at Los Angeles conducting a dissertation study to identify African American fathers involved in their sons’/daughters’ pre-
school (age 1-4), elementary, middle, or, high school educations. A follow-up letter soliciting support was sent to the aforementioned churches and agencies asking them to assist in identifying African American fathers who met the following four criteria for the study: African American, male, over 18 and either in the area of Los Angeles or Sacramento California (Appendix A).

Interview and survey participants were also recruited by posting fliers at a variety of sites including local schools, fatherhood agencies, churches, and barbershops. Fliers and recruitment material used were approved by the IRB. Relationships with peers of the author were solicited through social networks (Facebook or LinkedIn). K-12 principals, teachers, and school counselors with approximately 300-1,200 students from elementary, middle, and high schools in the Los Angeles and Sacramento public school districts were contacted. Colleagues attending the University of California were asked to distribute the flier via email. Contact was made by the author with prospective participants during bus rides and community events. A large response that exceeded the number of participants required for the study, all of whom met all the criteria (race, class, gender, and geographic location), was narrowed with the following procedure:

1. Each participant willing to volunteer was assigned a number ranging between 1 and 100 applicants.
2. African American fathers’ were assigned pseudonyms that corresponded with their assigned number
3. Three by five index cards were prepared with the name of each participant and were placed in a container and randomly selected as follows: 10 participants for the face-to-face interviews, and 10 participants for the focus group.
4. All remaining applicants for participation were included in the quantitative survey.

From Step 1 and Step 2 above, selected participants were randomly selected to include a range of education experiences and backgrounds, from those with a high school diploma to those with a Ph.D. degree. Random selection proceeded until the desired 100 sampled participants resulted. Participants who were asked to participate by responding to the survey questionnaire were entirely a function of random selection.

**Qualitative Procedures**

Following are the procedures used to collect data from the face-to-face interviews with 10 individuals and the focus group comprised of 10 individuals. No individual was in both face-to-face interviews and the focus group. The goal of the interviews and the focus group was to capture an in-depth account of Black fathers’ experiences with regards to their involvement in schools. Open-ended questions in a semi-structured format allowed the author to probe and understand the social and cultural realities of life experiences, attitudes, and perspectives of the participants from an ecological perspective. Qualitative methodology provides an advantage over a survey questionnaire in that it allows an exploration of a situation from the worldview and experiences of those in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Not only does a qualitative method incorporate the worldview and experiences of those who are studied, it uses their vocabulary and vernacular (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Stanfield, 1994). Interviews provided valuable insight into the practices, attitudes, strategies, and other information from Black fathers missed by the quantitative survey.

**Qualitative interviews with individuals.** All interviews with individuals were conducted according to the following procedure:
1. Purposively selected participants were sent a brief description of the study (Appendix B).

2. Participants were asked to complete the informed consent form (Appendix C) in which they agreed to serve as volunteers and to expect no compensation at the completion of the study.

3. A place of convenience for both the author and the participant was chosen by the participant for the interviews.

4. The purpose of the study and the consent form were reviewed prior to the questioning, as were the ethical considerations found in a later section of this chapter. Confidentiality was assured.

5. A short demographic survey was administered as part of the selection process to capture a snapshot of participant’s backgrounds. The same demographic items were used as a preface to the quantitative survey, which will be discussed in a following section.

6. A semi-structured Interview Protocol (Appendix E) with open-ended questions was administered. Participants were allowed to answer the semi-structured open-ended questions in a manner that was comfortable for them, and also allowed to address subjects of their own choosing as might occur during the conversation (Creswell, 2010).

The conversations were scheduled to last 60 or more minutes, and were audio-taped. Participants were asked whether audio recordings without identifying personal information could be used in presentations (scholarly or professional). This was not a requirement for participation in this study. Communication and dialogue norms were broken
during interviews to provide African American fathers with opportunities to have comfortable
dialogues with their own familiar vernaculars which ensured the comfort level of the
participants. Using Black vernacular was necessary for “building a relationship, getting to know
each other” (Bogden & Bilken, 2007, p. 103), and providing an authentic dialogue to take place
while interviewing. Fathers were encouraged to speak candidly. During interviews,
conversations were casual and informal to help the participants feel at ease so they would be
more willing to share their experiences.

**Qualitative session with the focus group.** The focus group proceedings were conducted
according to the following procedure:

1. Purposively selected participants were sent a brief description of the study
   (Appendix B).

2. Participants were asked to complete the consent form (Appendix C) in which they
   agreed to serve as volunteers and to expect no compensation at the completion of the
   study.

3. A place of convenience for both the author and the participants was chosen after
   conferring with all participants.

4. The purpose of the study and the consent form were reviewed prior to the
   proceedings, as were the ethical considerations found in a later section of this chapter.
   Confidentiality was assured.

5. Participants were allowed to answer the same semi-structured open-ended questions
   used for the individual interviews in a manner that was comfortable for them, and
   were also allowed to address subjects of their own choosing as might occur during the
   conversation (Creswell, 2010).
The focus group was scheduled to last 60 minutes, and it was audio-taped. Participants were asked whether audio recordings without identifying personal information could be used in presentations (scholarly or professional). This was not a requirement for participation in this study.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative and quantitative data analysis are the “two analytical tools abstracted into summary statistics, but allowed to speak for themselves as manifestations of different aspects of the problem” (Park, 1996, p. 14) one descriptively and the other numerically. Interview recordings were transferred onto two CDs. Digital files were downloaded to the researcher’s computer and transcribed using ExpressScribe audio transcriber. ExpressScribe is an audio software program that aids in the transcription process by allowing the transcriber to control the speed of the audio recording. Each transcript recorded was coded for themes with software NVivo 9.0. NVivo 9.0 allows the researcher to upload documents (audio, video, text, and websites) into a program and code documents for themes.

Due to the length and complexity of interviews, each interaction was audio-taped and listened to, which is also a process of data analysis, and then transcribed into text (Maxwell, 2005). Transcriptions were returned to the participant to re-read for accuracy. Erickson (2005) noted “audio recording allows the researcher the opportunity to revisit events vicariously through playback at later times” (p. 72). Reflective notes were taken during interviewing and tape-recording. Issues, concerns or discoveries were documented. Bogden and Bilken (1992) contend that reflective notes “provide an opportunity for the researcher to record personal thoughts, speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches impressions and prejudices” (p. 12) as well as to stimulate analytic insights. Similarly, Erikson (1986) reported the importance of anticipating spending time on reflective notes:
Write-up stimulates recall and enables the researcher to add information to that contained in the unelaborated, raw notes. Write-up stimulates analytic induction and reflection on relevant theories and bodies of research literature. There is no substitute for the reflection during fieldwork that comes from time spent with the original field notes, writing them up in a more complete form, with analytic insights recorded in them. (p. 72)

Qualitative research seeks deep analysis and gives validation to participants. Thus, an analysis of participants as a whole could be made through comparison and contrast. Common themes will be analyzed that may be utilized to develop best practices for Black fathers wishing to participate in schools and related to the successes of these African American fathers. The strength of combining tape-recording, transcription of data, and the use of written reflective notes is that they will provide validity, omit any potential biases, anecdotal stories, and allow for “repeated observations” (Maxwell, p. 145).

The data analysis method was theme discovery, which was appropriate to respond to the questions: “who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect” (Babbie, 2003, p. 309). To search for themes and patterns, participant responses were separated into categories. Patton (2002) argued data collection should be followed by inductive reasoning, a process for developing conclusions and generalizations. Farber (2006) suggested phenomenological data needs to be interpreted and organized into categories to enable construction of a picture by using coding into themes, patterns, concepts, jokes, or similar features.

After the first five interviews were completed and transcribed, the text was analyzed and the data was coded to identify a preliminary list of core topics. Coding involved looking for common words or phrases mentioned by the interviewees based on the questions posed. The audio recordings were transcribed and replayed and compared to the transcript to verify
accuracy. The transcripts were read a second time and additional topics identified. An
electronic file containing a merge of all coded passages succinct to each topic for all
respondents ensured that all respondents’ views on each topic were incorporated.

Face-to-face interview enhanced the researcher’s ability to cover complex issues (Jobber,
1991; Singleton & Straits in Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Singleton and Straits determined that
face-to-face surveys (a) allow a maximum degree of probing, (b) yield a higher and more valid
response rate than interviews conducted through virtual mediums, (c) provide flexibility, and (d)
facilitate clarification of questions and terminology. Face-to-face interviews are useful when a
significant amount of information is required. Questions can develop internal to the interview
and can become complex. Weick (1995) provided support for storytelling with the following
comment:

If accuracy is nice but not necessary in sensemaking, then what is necessary? The
answer is, something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is
reasonable and memorable that embodies past experience and expectations,
something that resonates with other people, something that can be constructed
retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both
feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current
oddities, something that is fun to construct. In short, what is necessary in
sensemaking is a good story. (p. 60)

The design of the Interview Protocol (Appendix E) ensured that participants were not rushed in
their responses to allow depth and breadth of the required information during the interview.
Ethical Considerations

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) indicate concerns relative to protecting research participants from harm, guaranteeing rights to privacy, obtaining informed consent, and adherence to professional codes of ethics. Care was taken to ensure that respondents understood the nature of the study and that participation was voluntary. No sanctions were used to encourage participation, nor were any applied if the participants declined or withdrew from the study. No information regarding individual or collective participation was or will be communicated to any organization in perpetuity.

To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to the participants in both the individual interviews and the focus group for purposes of writing the dissertation, but participants were spoken to by their given names in the interviews and focus group. No first names or surnames of any participant were used in the dissertation results or discussion. Fathers were informed that no identifiable information would be used in any publications or presentation based on the study. Fathers were informed that the study would be used only for purposes of a dissertation, and might be used for other publication types such as journals and books or for presentations (scholarly and professional). Fathers were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. These conditions were communicated to all participants at the start of the research. All materials relevant to data collection and analysis will be retained in a locked cabinet for 3 years after publication of the dissertation, after which all will be destroyed.

Part B: Quantitative Design of the Study

Quantitative research is intended to gather data with exacting measurements and provide conclusions about how many, who, and when (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). Cooper and Schindler suggested that a common instrument employed in quantitative studies is the survey
questionnaire. The researcher selects what to study, then presents questions designed to provide narrow numerical results that can be analyzed statistically to offer explanations that can be offered without bias and couched in objectivity (Creswell, 2010). A quantitative survey questionnaire was deemed appropriate for the quantitative portion of this mixed methods study of African American fathers and their efforts to follow and promote the educational needs of their children.

Interests in the roles and strategies that Black fathers utilize in their children’s lives have drawn wide criticism (Lerman & Sorensen, 2000; Mincy & Pouncy, 1997; Lamb, 1998; Gonsalves & Virginia, 1999; Bright & Williams, 1996; Bowman, 1990). In general, media attention has focused on Black fathers’ inability to provide support for their families. This study employs a different lens, focusing on the nature of Black fathers’ involvement in education. To address the research questions and hypotheses that guided the quantitative portion of the study the following null and alternative hypotheses were employed. The first two hypotheses examined relationships between background variables with a focus on school and home based activities. The third hypothesis examines group differences.

RQ1: What is the relationship between background variable and school-based activities of Black fathers?

Ho1: Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between background variables and school based activities.

Ha1. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between background variables and school-based activities.

RQ2: What is the relationship between background variable and home-based activities?

Ho2: Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between background variables and home-based activities.
Ha2: Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between background variables and home-based activities.

RQ3: What is the difference between response types by the gender of the focus child?

**Participant Selection and Implementation Procedure**

See the previous heading “Participant Selection” in this chapter for a complete description how participants were solicited. After 10 participants were selected for the individual interviews, another 10 were selected for the focus group from the base group of those expressing a willingness to participate in the study after receiving the recruitment letter (Appendix B). An additional 100 participants who responded positively to the recruitment letter were selected to electronically receive the survey questionnaire. Participants reflected the setting of the survey in the cities of Los Angeles and Sacramento, California, as described in a previous section.

**Instrumentation**

Electronic Web-based surveys are acceptable for data collection in the social sciences (Couper, Traugatt, & Lameias, 2001; Kaplowitz, Haddock, & Levine, 2004). A Web-based survey questionnaire was chosen because such instruments are user friendly and cost-effective for a large electronic distribution over a wide geographic area. Web-based surveys are easy for participants to use. Participants can participate at their convenience and in a setting of their choosing without the possibility of biasing factors that can occur with live or telephone surveys (Kaplowitz et al., 2004; Couper et al., 2001).

Web-based surveys can be influenced by issues such as bias related to the participant’s familiarity with Web-based surveys or knowledge of computers (Schonlau & Welch, 2006). Couper et al. (2001) suggested some researchers may question the validity of a Web-based survey, but argued that a consistent use of radio buttons and Likert scales, or dichotomous
variables, limits such problems. Multiple questions per screen and radio buttons also increase the likelihood of participants completing the survey (Couper et al., 2001; Dillman, 2007).

**Survey questionnaire.** A short author-designed demographic survey was used to obtain background characteristics of each participant that was used for participants in both the focus group and interview; and incorporated at the beginning the survey questionnaire (Appendix G). Participants were asked to respond to the following items: (a) number of children, (b) grade level of the focus child, (c) gender of the focus child, (d) conjugal relationship with the mother, (e) education level, (f) employment status, (g) age, and (h) income level. Since the possibility existed that research participants would have multiple children, questions were modified to include the phrase “focus child” to help participants remember to answer the survey items in relation to one child who fit the research criteria.

A survey questionnaire was designed based on previous parental involvement research from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005). The Hoover-Dempsey Sandler Parental Involvement scale was designed for parents to focus on one focus child and not all of the children in the home; therefore, fathers were forced by design of the survey to respond to Likert-scale items based on their level of involvement with their children’s home and school based activities. The survey instrument consists of 20 Likert-scale response-type statements (Appendix G). Each statement was measured on a 6 point Likert scale comprised of *Disagree Very Strongly* (1) to *Agree Very Strongly* (6). The survey contained three instrument subscales.

**Parents’ Motivational Beliefs Scales.** The Parental Role Construction for Involvement in the Child’s Education scale examined a parent’s beliefs about what they should do (i.e. strategies) in relation to involvement in their child’s education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; 1997; 2005). This version of the parental role construction scale had two subscales: Role
Activity Beliefs with ten items and Attitude Toward School with six items (Appendix G). The alpha reliabilities for the two subscales were .80 and .85 respectively. The Role Activity Beliefs subscale was a Likert-type response format and the Attitude School subscale was a forced choice format. The Parental Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School scale had seven items about parents’ beliefs about their personal ability to make a difference in their child’s educational outcomes. This scale was a Likert-type response format, and had an alpha reliability of .78. Parents’ perception of invitations for involvement scales address requests for participation that are made of the parent and opportunities that are afforded for involvement.

Parents’ Perceptions of Invitations for Involvement Scales. The Parents’ Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School scale has six items with an alpha reliability of .88. This scale examines parental perceptions that school staff and the school environment or climate in general makes the parent feel valued in the child’s education and welcome in the school (alpha reliability = .81). All scales in this domain used a Likert response format and all influence a parent’s desire and his parental role construction to be involved in their children’s education.

Parents’ Perceived Life Context Scales. The third Hoover-Dempsey Sandler domain, Parents’ Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills scale had nine items with alpha reliability .83. This scale used a Likert-response format. This construct assumed that parents would be motivated to engage in involvement activities if they believed they had the skills and knowledge to be of help in particular subject content areas (Hoover-Dempsey Sandler, 1997, 1995, 2005). Parents’ perceptions of “Time and Energy” scale included six items related to their perceptions of demands on their time, especially those related to employment and other family needs that might influence possibilities of involvement in their child’s education (Appendix G). This
subscale used a Likert-type response format and had an alpha reliability of .84. This section was a discussion of the instruments used for data collection.

**Data Collection Procedure**

The survey questionnaires were distributed and collected via SurveyMonkey (2008). SurveyMonkey is online web-based software that allows the creation and distribution of surveys through virtual mechanisms. Electronic Web-based surveys are becoming an increasingly acceptable for data collection in social science research (Couper, Traugatt, & Laneias, 2001; Kaplowitz, Haddock, & Levine, 2004). This approach was chosen because it was user friendly and cost-effective for a large distribution over a wide geographic area. Web based surveys are easy for the respondent to use, as well as for the researcher to apply, who receives the data ready for analysis. Respondents have the opportunity to participate at their convenience without possible biasing factors that might be extant in live or telephone surveys (Kaplowitz et al., 2004; Couper et al., 2001).

Web-based surveys are not immune from issues such as bias related to the respondent’s familiarity with Web-based surveys or access to and knowledge of computers (Schonlau & Welch, 2006). Couper et al. (2001) noted some researchers question the validity of Web surveys, but suggested that a uniform use of radio buttons and Likert scales, or dichotomous variables, limits these problems. The use of multiple questions per screen and radio buttons also serves to increase the likelihood of survey completion (Couper et al., 2001; Dillman, 2007).

**Pilot Test of the Survey**

The survey questionnaire was pilot tested with five people who were selected based on availability and whose results were not included in the data analysis. The pilot study was implemented to identify any issues with the clarity of the questions, to determine the
applicability of the questions to the primary research questions of the study, and to test the efficacy of the procedure (Creswell, 2010). Five participants were drawn from the list of respondents to the letter of invitation and consent form. Because no amount of intellectual application can substitute for testing a procedure or the questions contained within that procedure (Creswell, 2010), pilot testing of the content and procedure is required. The pilot study was used to ensure the clarity, user-friendliness, wording, and meaning of the prompting questions. Administration of the pilot study had two major objectives: to refine the questions, and to determine the effectiveness of the data analysis.

**Analysis of Quantitative Data**

This section will discuss the analytical procedures used in this investigation. I will discuss the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the independent t-test.

**Pearson Correlation.** Data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (hereafter referred to as the Pearson Correlation). The Pearson Correlation is a statistical procedure that allows researchers to determine the extent of an association or relationship between two variables. Background variables were examined in relationship to school based and home based activities. Home and school based activities were questions that addressed parent’s self-efficacy for involvement in their child’s education. Background variables included educational level, income, conjugal relationship with the mother, grade level of the focus child, and age. School based activities included volunteering at the child’s school, regularly communicating with the child’s teacher, ensuring that the school has the resources that it needs, supporting teacher’s decisions, staying on top of things, talking with other parents, and making school better. Home based activities included knowing how to help child with homework, believing that they can explain tough assignments, believing it is important to talk with child about the school day, knowing how to help child do well in school, feeling that they
could help the child learn, and believing that they can make a difference in child’s performance. The significance level for the Pearson correlation was set at p<.05. Using the guidelines set by Green and Salkind (2008), correlation coefficients of “.10, .30, and .50, irrespective of sign…[were] interpreted as small, medium, and large coefficients, respectively” (p. 259).

**Independent t-test.** Data were also analyzed to determine if there were differences in response types by the gender of the focus child. Since there exist many gaps in the research literature on fathers’ involvement with their children in home and school based activities, one significant concern was the quantitative and qualitative accounts of male and female relationships with their fathers (Apner, 1993; Way & Satuaber, 1996; Younis & Smollar, 1985). Given the dichotomous relationship for the focus child response category (e.g., male, female), an independent t-test was used. An independent t-test is a statistical measure that accounts for means differences between groups when there are no more than two groups and one independent variable. The significance level for the t-test was set at p<.05. Effect sizes are reported using Cohen’s D. Effect sizes represent the relationship between one group and another. Cohen’s D is an effect size scale; it categorizes effect sizes into three categories, small, medium, and large. As reported by Green and Salkind (2011), effect size scales (including Cohen’s D) interpret effect ranges from 0.0 to 0.2 as small, 0.2 to 0.5 as medium, and 0.5 and above as large.

**Triangulation**

Triangulation is the use of multiple methods since the strengths of one method offset the weaknesses of the other methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Triangulation is the extent to which research findings can be confirmed by the simultaneous application of multiple methods, multiple investigators, multiple data sets or multiple theories. The qualitative face-to-face interviews with individuals, the focus group session, and the quantitative survey questionnaire
results ensured that data triangulation was achieved by asking a different set of questions.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) contended a way of validating insights gathered from different sources of data and participants is triangulation. Hale, Treharne, and Kitas, (2008) and Jonsen and Jehn (2009) advised when an issue is explored from several perspectives, triangulation enhances the methodology and validity of the study. Shank (2006) concluded that when different strands are woven together, a stronger evidence of validity of the findings achieves higher confidence. Thus, the use of different strands in the present study involved mixing methods and sources of data (Shank, 2006).

**Validity and Reliability**

In qualitative research different terms are used to describe validity in qualitative research. Krefting (1990) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) described validity in terms of trustworthiness. Maxwell (2005) described validity as a “goal rather than a product; it’s some that can never be proven” (p. 105). Lincoln and Guba (1989) contended each piece of information in the study should be expanded by at least one other source, such as a second interview or second method. Therefore, after the initial interview, member checking was conducted where each participant received a copy of the transcript. After each participant reviewed their transcript, they were given an opportunity to discuss results of the first interview with integrity of the results that were reported therein. Member checking as a technique decreased the chance of any misrepresentation by the researcher.

**Summary**

Chapter 3 was a discussion of the construct of the qualitative study, and the quantitative constructs of the study. Chapter 4 contains the qualitative results from the study divided into two
parts: Part A contains the results of individual interviews, and Part B contains the results of the focus group session. Chapter 5 contains the results of the quantitative portion of the study.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

A qualitative design was used for both the face-to-face interviews and the focus group to ascertain salient themes with which to “explore” (Creswell, 2010, p. 146), “process” (p. 146), and find “meaning” (p. 146) in the fathers’ reporting of their experiences with public school officials, their perspectives regarding involvement in school spaces, and to seek a deeper insight into their overall experiences with their children’s schooling (Greenbaugh & Taylor, 1997). Qualitative inquiry “begins with the assumption that human behavior is made up of thoughtful, meaningful responses to stimuli in the world. What something means to someone affects how the person will respond to the thing” (Taylor, 1992, p. 3). Qualitative methods in the broadest sense are descriptive research (Creswell, 2010; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) because the researcher is interested in “people’s own written history or spoken word and observable behavior” (Creswell, 2010; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 5). In addition, Creswell (2010) contended that descriptive research is “interested in meaning, processes, and understanding gained through words and pictures” (p. 145).

Part A: Individual Interviews

Data derived from the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded to identify common themes through an iterative process. As interview data began to accumulate, inductive analyses of recurring themes across individuals and groups materialized (Moustakas, 1994). Using a phenomenological approach to analyze data allowed for the construction of themes that could be utilized to derive best practices for Black fathers wishing to participate in schools for the educational success of their Black students. The fathers who participated in this study represented a wide range of educational attainment from high school graduates to those who hold
a Doctorate degree. Regardless of education level, all identified themselves as Black and mostly middle-class. The participant profiles are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Socio-Economic Status</th>
<th>Number of Children and/or gender</th>
<th>Ages and/or grade levels of school-aged Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hayes</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>2 girls</td>
<td>11th and 7th grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. James</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>1 boy, 2 girls</td>
<td>10 and 11 years old, 5th and 6th grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hughes</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>1 boy, 1 girl</td>
<td>12 and 9 years old, 6th and 3rd grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Ripley</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>2 boys</td>
<td>College Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Baker</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>1 boy, 2 girls</td>
<td>10, 8, 6 years old, 5th, 4th, and 1st grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Garrison</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>1 boy</td>
<td>15 years old, 10th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Michaels</td>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>2 boys</td>
<td>4 and 6 years old, Pre-K and 1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Anderson</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5, 7, 10, and 14 years old, K, 2nd, 5th, and 10th grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Cooper</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>3 boys</td>
<td>13 years old, 8th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Watson</td>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>3 girls, 1 boy</td>
<td>16, 14, 12, 10 years old, 11th, 7th, 6th, and 4th grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Jefferson</td>
<td>No diploma</td>
<td>Middle Class</td>
<td>2 boys</td>
<td>12 and 6 years old, 7th and 1st grades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative data from this study centered on three key themes that was derived from the data: Mediums of Communication, Father’s Reflection on Communiqué with Teachers, and
Racialization of Communication that Marginalizes Black fathers Involvement. These themes are important because they descriptively respond to research questions 2 and 3.

**Mediums of Communication**

The medium of communication between home and school based activities can be varied with the increased use of computer technology. Schools have been active in trying to find efficient and effective ways to provide valuable and ongoing correspondence with parents (i.e. report cards, sending notes homes, and parent teacher conferences) between the home and the school (Graham-Clay, n.d.). Chambers (1998) argued a “customer-friendly school environment reflects how highly communication is with parents is valued by the school staff” (p. 118). Some scholars have focused on communicating with parents via the internet-web.

Nelms (n.d) interviewed and surveyed 10 participants and examined the barriers to parental involvement; more specifically, Nelms wanted to know parent’s experience with teacher-created web activities as a viable way for teachers to communicate with parents. Fathers reported email via the internet was another easy way to dialogue with the teacher. They asserted that it “helps with the lack of communication.”

Dr. Jones, a father who earned his Ph.D, has three children in middle school, one boy and two girls. With a busy work schedule as a professor as well as traveling across the country on business, he credited the use of teachers emailing him to keep him informed on what was happening at the school (PTA meeting and open house). He stated:

I’m a pretty involved parent, so all of his teachers have my email address. If there’s a problem they send me an email and I can handle it that day, so I have pretty regular correspondence with the teachers. I try to go to the open houses and
stuff like that, so that I would say that my experience with the school is average to above average.

Dr. Jones also stated that, because of the teacher’s willingness to take the time to email him, the one-to-one correspondence provided trust between the home and the school.

Another father, Mr. Baker, indicated that when teachers included information on the webpage it was relevant and beneficial. In addition, Mr. Baker believed that teachers respected him more because he responded to the emails that they sent. Teachers held him accountable for responding to emails; as such, Mr. Baker held the teachers accountable. He said:

For the most part, you had to let the school know you have a visible presence….

Once they know you were engaged they would be respectful….as long as I held

Them accountable and communicated there was not much a problem with the school system…Jim (older son) at that time, they tried to medicate him (ADHD)

We did not allow it…being consistent, involved in open house…it’s easy to communicate via email, made things cool! Mark (younger son) we had to do weekly progress points to keep his behavior on track….teachers watching and I’m

Watching it was good…some teacher care and demand respect, so that made it easier to work with teachers.

Mr. Baker never mentioned school-sponsored workshops for parents about how to access the Internet and the school website. The fathers in their statements suggested that computer and Internet use in the home was highly used and an effective way to communicate with teachers and the school. In the event that other fathers had a lack of access to email or Internet, they talked about other forms of communication such as telephone hotlines, sending notes home, and making phone calls. These are all viable options for fathers.
Reflections about Communication with Teachers

Black fathers in this study experienced an exhibition of ‘approach me first stance’ from teachers wherein fathers had to prove their interest, commitment, and engagement in their child’s education (usually by approaching the teacher first to establish a connection) before the teacher would reciprocate or show interest in the student or communicating with the parent. Graham-Clay (n.d.) suggested that one way communication occurs only happens when there is interactive two-way dialogue between the teacher and the parents (p. 118). The form of communication may be telephone calls, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, open-houses, or various school based activities (p. 118).

Faced with this reality, fathers talked about their merciless desire in the first person of what they had to do to communicate with teachers, which suggested that they made the first initial contact with teachers, not the teachers contacting them. The interviewer probed their thoughts about the lack of communication with teachers that was highly problematic for them; nevertheless, fathers believed that when it came to their child’s academics they were going to be there and nothing could stop them!

Mr. George offered this sentiment discussing how communication exists when his child does something wrong. George has a Master’s degree and one son in the tenth grade. Mr. George has had some bad experiences and communications with his son’s school. Because of this, Mr. George was a bit angry and defensive because of his son’s previous school. Mr. George is pleased with the positive attitude and willingness of the new school and the way they call him for the smallest incident. He asserted:

In the past I would, I don’t know, I guess I would go on site and talk to the teachers and explain who I was and who my son was and give them my cell phone number and let
them know if they had any questions or if they needs anything to call me. That’s was another way I did that here, at Ross and at the current school, or I never received a call from Ross other than the one to come and get him; not on how to problem solve or how to figure out to deal with the situation. But at his current school, if there’s a problem or conflict or if there’s a question or anything I’m given a call.

Emmanuel, a father of five children with no college education, offered this:

You know, back in the days it seemed like if your child was doing bad they would let you know, instead of just, you know, he’s given an F, and there’s nothing to be said, nothing to be done. That’s my experience from what I’m seeing….I want to talk to the teacher and ask him what’s going on, you know, like I ask him…you guys let know before it got to this? You know that his grade was dropping? You know? And he was like “Well, you know….look at it” That was, basically his answer that he needs to get in there and re-take tests and stuff like that. That was it.

Another father talked about his experience with a particular school, specifically, his unconventional approach to initiating communication with teachers by saying:

I’m constantly at the school, not for reasons that my parents had to come to the school, but just to kind of put the school on notice that the kids have both parents and they care. And we had a parent teacher conference four weeks into the school year—not the school, but me and my wife called our own parent teacher conference, and the teachers were a little set back by that. They kept telling us, “well everything is fine, it’s going great’. I was like, “well, we know it, but we told the kids, listen, we’re going to have a parent teacher conference but it’s not so much to check on you. We’re here to check on the teachers and let them know what’s going on’. So we do that on a regular basis, and I’m
constantly up there volunteering, I was in the PTA, just letting them know, so as far as the school, it’s going pretty well, as expected.

These fathers highlight a major problem with communication between parents and teachers in the failure of either the parent or teacher making the first move. Overwhelmingly, these fathers reported that problems in communication are due to teachers failing to begin the process of communication with them. Thematically, fathers suggested that good communication is the responsibility of both parents and teachers. Further, fathers should not feel that teachers should make the first contact. This is even more important as teachers have behavioral issues with a child.

**Racialization of Communication Marginalizes Black Fathers’ Involvement**

One salient theme that intersects with survey and interview data was the negative or uncomfortable school experiences that fathers’ experience. Overwhelmingly, fathers seemed somewhat divided about the positive relationships they may experience with the school or teachers, or tersely articulated cluelessness as to how to effectively communicate with the educational system. Fathers in this study resisted direct contact with teachers unless it was absolutely necessary. It could be posited that they are avoiding deficit stereotypes due to their race as two different fathers spoke to the racialized experiences they felt they encountered. They shared:

She [Counselor] was very confrontational. She wasn’t necessarily a listener, and I don’t feel that that they handled issues with Black men or Black young men and Brown young men very well; I felt like they were always on the defensive, I don’t feel like they were inviting to figure out how to solve problems. I felt like sometimes they created problems.
There is some surprise when they (teachers) see you, a little shock, a little kind of just, you know, a sense of not really expecting to see a Black male involved in the school. . . I think there was a little bit of apprehension.

The fathers’ comments are consistent with studies that show that minorities, specifically Black males, receive marginalized treatment in institutions and experience subtle forms of racist behavior. The researcher attributes some merit in this assertion as apprehension and a psychological protective mechanism resulting from perceived and actual messages of inferiority may have been communicated in prior or current academic settings (Fischer, 2009; Major & Schmader, 1998; Steele, 1997). One father spoke of the reverse psychology he uses with teachers:

I want to be treated as if I’m any other parent, and so when there’s issues and concerns, I think I’m talked down to until I start, like, no, this is what you have to do, this what the law says and so forth, and so when they find out what I do, then it’s a whole different treatment, in the sense of, ‘Ok, we can’t say XY&Z to this person because he knows what’s going on’. I think that’s one. And then my ethnic race plays a factor. My son is very light, so many may think he’s Caucasian or half and half, and so they see this black man coming up here, they don’t have that same demeanor, and so I think I’m treated as just another person who doesn’t know anything until I start opening my mouth and let them know that I do know what I’m talking about.

This father’s sentiment suggests that follow-through with what is said can only work if both the teachers and fathers cooperate in communicating. Fathers reported that a major hurdle to communication was doing what was agreed upon. Fathers offered that if fathers’ told their child’s teacher they would communicate in a certain way or do a specific school or homework
related task, fathers should do their best to follow through on that specific task to show responsibility.

In the next section, Part B, five themes will be discussed in detail with supporting data from the participants. Actual quotes derived from the participants capture the spirit of the themes presented. These quotes are used to provide context and subtext for the themes presented in each subsection.

**Part B: Focus Group Session**

Why do African American fathers choose to be involved in their children’s education? What strategies and practices do these fathers use in their involvement? In the focus group fathers described how their own father’s were involved in their lives. Participant’s reflections were at times all too familiar as they mentioned (a) the absences of their fathers, (b) the nurturing God-fearing mother that raised them, and (c) the father that challenged them to be better than other generations of Black men. The following sections explain these dilemmas more specifically through the voices of the participants.

**Generational Black Father Parental Engagement**

Black fathers in the focus group session described how they experienced their father’s involvement in their lives. For example, one father seemed to typify the aforementioned sentiment by noting that, during his upbringing, it was typical for Black fathers in inner city communities to have a varied in-home presence. Fathers were often in and out of the home. He attributed this transience as a sign of times. He told the group:

My father was not involved. He’d pop up in every now and then, right. As a matter of fact, one of the regrets I think he’ll never know about---he passed away at 42. My sister and I were stayin’ in the projects, but I don’ recall at all my father ever pickin up (my) sister and spendin’ the time with her like I spend with my daughter. He was connected to
that lifestyle. His whole lifestyle was about Pappa being a Rollin’ Stone which was a reflection of our time. They were singin songs that were a reflection of their time, and poppa was a Rollin’ Stone. Where ever he laid his head was home. I got four or five brothers out there, I don’t even know.

The next quote illustrates the cycle of generational disengagement another father experienced in his childhood, Mr. Doby, who discussed how his father was never around. While his father was absent from his upbringing, the participant noted that he still earned A’s and B’s in school until high school. Mr. Doby expressed his anger and frustration by being hurt by his father. Mr. Doby implied what his schooling experience “might” have been like if his father was around. Mr. Doby remembered that on the day when his single mother threw his father out of the house, he thought his would life would be difficult, especially considering that he lived in the housing projects. Nevertheless, Mr. Doby’s mother taught him respect, how to work hard in school, and not be lazy. Mr. Doby commented that there was a liquor store on every corner in his predominantly Black neighborhood. He further noted that with the onset of gangs, there was much pressure to live a ‘rough life.’ Mr. Doby declared:

I used to get A’s and B’s until I got to high school, and they wanted me to play basketball. I didn’t have to try out for the team and all that, but me being in that environment around gangs, it drew me the other way. But I’ll never forget what my mom taught me and what she taught me, it made me realize younger—earlier than what some people realize until they’re like 40 years old. They still try gang bang or they’re dead, and they can’t change it or nothing. I tried to change for what—for my mom, and I always remember what she told me so that kind of got like a little bit to do with it too.
Because you can look at some people that’s raised with their grandma, and they don’t have a mother or a dad, but they come out to be positive people in the world.

Studies have demonstrated that fathers with limited involvement and/or absence in the home have a negative effect on their child’s cognitive, social, and emotional functioning and development. Such children are more likely to have adjustment problems in schools (Biller, 1993). Another father who was raised by his mother (but presently a single Black father) described his father’s absence. Mr. Davis noted that his father’s absence motivated him to play a critical role in his son’s life and education. Mr. Davis noted that his commitment to supporting his son’s education is made later in this section is the generational cycle of poverty and dysfunctionalism in home and school life that exists in many Black families). Most importantly, Mr. Davis observed that all the teachers recognize him when he arrives on campus. Mr. Davis proudly presented his story to the group. After a deep sigh he remarked:

As far as my father, my mother was my father, you know what I mean? She raised me but I—I swore from not havin’ no father in my life, when I had my kids, I made sure I’ve stayed in their life. And, as a matter of fact, raisin’ ‘em as a single parent, you know. My oldest son is right now. From when they first move with me, all the teachers know me, you know what I mean? They know me as far as when I walk up. They recognize me. Know my name all they stay, and they—and all that you know, but as far as like he was sayin’ when they get older, that—the peer pressure and all the gangs that come around, you know that they end up havin’ a fight in school and stuff. So my son got transferred around in school to school. Get kicked out of this school, had to go to that school. I try to stay involved with them, but it’s like you know now the work is like home study pretty much, you know what I mean? Yeah so, just hopin’ they make a go.
In this interaction, Mr. Butler briefly commented on how pleased he was to have met his mother before she passed away. He had very few memories of his mother. His widowed father, Mr. Butler Sr., raised him beginning from seven years old, and the emotional and social challenge of being a young man without a mother gave him confidence in his dad to raise him. He had faith and trust in his father. Mr. Butler Jr. proclaimed that his father was active and present in his life. Therefore, even though Mr. Butler Jr. struggled with school, he respected his father enough to *keep pushing* for the love, respect, honor, and mentoring his only parent gave him. He stated:

My father was in my life for a while. My mother passed when I was at—I think my mother passed when I was seven years old, so it was kinda hard for me for a short period of time to really learn and get the aspects of life; the wrongs and rights of what to do, what not to do. Don’t get in trouble, you know and just say focused on—stay focused on life in general. I did pretty bad at school for the first beginning of school, but then I had to start learning myself. I had to start teachin’ myself how to do this and how to do that. It kinda went kinda rough for a while, but it roll kinda school got as it went. So you know like it was pretty, pretty rough okay. My father he was there for me.

Throughout the session, participants spoke credibly about the roles, strategies of involvement, and what influenced their current parenting style that they learned by trial and error. Participants in this study noted that they learned from the relationships that their fathers had with their mothers and vowed to not emulate destructive behaviors that damaged their families such as drugs and alcohol. Understanding plights and social conditions, these men wanted to be involved in their children’s education.
Feeling Unwelcomed and Not Knowing How to Contribute

“Who really cares?” is becoming a classic phrase that depicts tragic realities of African Americans in our school communities. These feelings of exasperation originate from parents, children, and community members alike. Howard (2008) raised this question in his work, “Who really care?” The Disenfranchisement of African American males in pre-K-12 schools: A Critical Race Theory Perspective, to warn against hierarchical and exclusionary practices at school sites that drive parents to feel alienated (Howard, 2010). Some researchers have documented how schools can disinvite or exclude parents from playing active roles in schools (Howard, 2010; Reynolds, 2009). Howard (2010) underscored the criticality and significance of school officials (teachers, staff, administration) being proactive in their efforts to solicit parent involvement, engagement, and entering into an “authenticated partnership” (p. 148). Authenticated partnership suggests that parents and teachers work together in collaboration for the best interest of the student. When I asked fathers about whether their child’s school had invited their participation, they all seemed excited to respond with similar chuckled responses such as “never,” “they don’t invite me,” or “maybe once or twice per year.” Their responses indicated a clear lack of engagement by school officials with Black fathers.

The fathers in the focus group session noted that they expected that schools would be welcoming and inviting to them, especially since they were interested in the schooling experiences and performance of their children. One of the challenges these fathers faced in schools was that they were disinvited from formal school activities. These fathers learned early on in their children’s education that they were sometimes marginalized for unknown reasons. Half of the participants reported that they were disinvited or not invited at all to participate in
formalized school activities. When asked why they believed this occurred, they were unsure of the rationale. The ability to have experienced education helped these fathers navigate a system that they reported is not defined for them as Black fathers and may not serve their children. These fathers came from a variety of parenting experiences that prepared them for the overall developmental and cognitive experience needed to aid their children, as well as interact with teachers, counselors, and principals. Respondents such as Mr. C. J. had a unique experience as he was willing to volunteer at his son’s high school in Watts, California, a high school located in a community known for gangs and high levels of poverty. Mr. C.J. shared:

Locke High School, I just got him out there because he was going through a lot, but so he got into this school—I got him in this little private school. I had been going up to their school meetings once a month. They were like having problems security issues and stuff. Then they had other problems with other things, but they needed people to volunteer for inside. So I volunteered to do my part, and they told me to secure the perimeter.

[Laugh] You understand what I’m sayin’? I’m sayin they tellin me to secure the perimeter.

For some respondents, being invited to school programs such as PTA or athletic events was typical for them. They received notes at home for what was described as informal activities. At all the schools these father’s children attended, they experienced the same procedure regarding invitations to school events. However, the higher these father’s children went in grade level, the less the school asked them to engage in school activities unless the child requested their father to come to an event. Mr. Romero offered an analysis of his situation:

It seem like, more like, I don’t know first in like elementary school, they want you to participate more than like when the older the kids get, the less they want you at all. Yeah.
Yeah because your child they think is a problem child. [Laugh] And wherever a problem child, there’s a problem father. We don’t want to bring him up here and start you know work all this hocus pocus. You know what I’m sayin’? So they try to—they I mean I have had instances when they call and when I answer the phone, if somethin’s goin’ on with my son, they hear my voice, hello. Is Ms. Jackson there? They ask for the wife, you understand, and they feel like they can explain it better to the wife than—well what did he do now? You know that’s where I’m at. That’s where I’m at you know, I’m ready to go up to the school, and you know what I mean?

In a way, as the students become more independent in their education, it requires self-actualization on the father’s behalf with which to advocate for their child and respond to the requests that they make. Another south central Los Angeles father, Mr. Bettis, explained how he experienced events, but they were non-meaningful to him. He put into words:

Oh they invited me to, for I mean other than the PTA, but I’m gettin’ JV, but other than that, it was like I was just there to be—just be a fixture in other words. What they were talkin’ about wasn’t too relevant to what was really goin’ on. It was like just be here.

In the following sample, Mr. Eddie expressed concern about how his son was always informing him of events, but not the school. Having a strong relationship with his son and spending time at home with him on a variety of activities is what motivated Mr. Eddie to remain actively involved. Nonetheless, despite what information he receives from the school, Mr. Eddie relied on his son to inform him about what’s was relevant at the school. This quote suggests that, based on his experience, Mr. Eddie has diminutive trust and determination in involving himself in school activities if his son does not ask:
I don’t care—I don’t receive any calls about we’re havin’ this program and stuff like that. I don’t—usually you get like flyers of activities goin’ on in school and stuff like that you know. My son, he’s into a lot after school programs, but I been failed to be notified from the school for many of the stuff. My son come home and tell me, hey I’m in soccer now and all this, you know what I mean? I be like, well really show me some—bring me a schedule with your game here or somethin’. You know what I mean; I mean they don’t send me nothin’. I don’t get no information on nothin’.

All ten fathers believed that the school did not involve them in the traditional way (e.g. helping in the classroom) that other parents or mothers are involved in schools. They wanted them to assist in other school activities such as sports and behavioral problems. Fathers could only recall general invitations to be involved in school activities. Mr. Barnard recalled requests for cultural days or events like Black history month, or Martin Luther King’s birthday. He added:

Take me. My wife’s directly—she’s at the school, so I’m invited all the time. I take my kids to school every day. Pick ‘em up every day. I’m invited constantly. I was only called once, and this was when Martin King history week. My son was gettin’ loud talkin’ through a center. He thought he knew more than he knew. I was called. I went up there, and participated in the whole program cause it was the whole week. I’m not with the school; I’m with ‘em all the time. I don’t go that much bein’ as she’s there. We not—our relationship is not good at all because the kids—we good. I brought ‘em home with me.
The participants recognized that they have the talents to contribute, but do not know how to contribute to the school. One important component is fathers being able to impact overall attitude and academic performance in the home and out-of-the school setting.

In The Home Practices and Academic Performance

This section presents the findings of father’s specific practices and strategies in the home environment that is the catalyst for academic excellence in three areas. The first area is degree of presence. Another area of concern is how fathers experience race, class, and gender issues in the attempt to be involved in their child’s education. The final area is the role of religiosity and spirituality when they navigate life’s nuances.

A salient aspect of this study was the respondent’s interest in their children’s attitude and academic performance. Most of the fathers attributed much of their success to their desire to challenge negative stereotypes about Black men. Many of the fathers discussed peers who were biological fathers that they personally knew who had been uninvolved at some point, made bad choices as fathers, or dropped out of their children’s lives. They talked about their desire to not follow a similar pattern of absenteeism. The researcher probed their thoughts about the choices Black fathers made, and why they felt it was critical not to reinforce negative stereotypes. They responded to the question, how does your involvement impact your child’s overall academic progress?

For me, I feel---It only helps them out you know to a point, instead because if you let them know you care about them by helping them out with school work, asking them when they come back from school, how was your school day? How did it go? They assume that you care the about them just going to school and coming back. Like you said, do they have good grades, you gotta reward ‘em for it. You gotta let ‘em know that
you’re there for ‘em for they know, they always got somebody to even if they got a problem at school, they can come to you and have a talk, you know to sit down and talk with ‘em.

Fathers in this study provoked guidance and pushed achievement within reasonable boundaries to get successful outcomes. Fathers were very specific about some of the strategies they used to ensure that their son’s or daughter’s self-concept was intact. A second theme of this group was being present even through rough times. Two fathers offered different perspectives of getting through to their child. Mr. Warren was quite vocal in regard to having an active presence seven days a week and at all hours. He stated:

One thing I’ve really come to grab that I just wanna encourage all my brothers with is the fact that the main thing I’ve learned about dealing with my daughter from the moment she was born to this very day. The main difference is just our presence. It doesn’t mean we don’t get right. It doesn’t mean we gonna be perfect. Doesn’t mean we ain’t gonna struggle. Ain’t mean we ain’t gonna miss something, but I’ve learned that just being there gives her the most stability to focus on school because she know dad gonna pick her up tomorrow. Dad’s gonna put her to sleep tonight. Dad’s gonna get her up tomorrow morning again. She’s gonna hear that first voice from dad and that last voice last night. That counts consistency is what gives them the most stability to say I can focus on my—no matter what happen, I know dad’s gonna pick me up here.

Mr. Warren’s statement demonstrates admiration for his daughter since birth. He explained that he “will not always get it right and that life is challenging.” Mr. Warren was a little stern when discussing consistency because it provides stability in the home and school.
Mr. Todd had a different perspective than Mr. Warren. He felt that fathers’ had to take parenting one day at a time and do the best to their abilities. Ultimately, Mr. Warren suggested that, when they leave the home as adults, children have to self-actualize and decide what kind of citizen they want to be,

I believe I’m gettin’ through to my child, but like I said earlier, all we can do as parents is raise them the best that we know how and do the best that we can, because once they get out the door, it’s just up to them. You know what I mean? The rules have been playin’ so it’s like to me, it’s like different levels, you know what I mean? It’s all kinda levels of the world. So it depends where they wanna be, but you bein’ the best parent and showin’ ‘em how to make it in life.

One of the most common, yet complex themes that emerged from the study, involved the manner in which each of the fathers discussed the emergence of race, class, and gender as they described their experiences and the impact of being involved in schools as a Black (poor, middle class, or upper class) father. The construct of religion is often overlooked, though there are a handful of studies on this topic. The prevailing research sheds only a glimpse of light on the often marginalized voices of Black fathers who view spirituality as an emancipatory force for academic empowerment for themselves and their children. The next two categories will address the nexus of race, class, gender, and spirituality as a new social construct to be considered in the CRT model that is the theoretical framework that guides this study.

**Black Fathers and the Intersectionality of Race, Class, and Gender**

What is intriguing about this finding is the manner in which most of the participants were unable to separate each of these identities from the other. The intersectionality of race, class, and gender is not a new concept in the African American experience. CRT speaks to the nexus of race, class, and gender and calls for a more detailed analysis of how each of these areas
influences the other and contributes to various forms of oppression (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Yosso, 2005). However, religion is not a part of the social construction that also shapes identity development. In many ways race, class, and gender serve as mutually competing shapers of identity and experience, each rooted with its own historical pretext. Ferguson (2001) contended “the concept of intersecting social categories is a useful analytical device for formulating this convergence, in reality we presume to know each other instantly in a coherent, apparently seamless way” (p. 22). Overwhelmingly, fathers in the focus group emphatically believed that class mattered most before race. Below are their responses:

I believe it does. I ain’t sure you know. I think that it plays a big part, especially as far as class. What class like if you—your family raised in class A, B or C, you know what I’m sayin’ because you got better opportunities. You got better libraries. You got better institutions and more positive things for kids to be around and to keep them surrounded by. You keep them surrounded by stuff that’s gonna keep ‘em—their focus interested in doing positive things, you know what I’m sayin’? That’s gonna make ‘em be—I feel like that will be a big impact, basically.

The moderator had to rephrase this question because the fathers went off tangentially because of the excitement of the discourse. After providing more contexts to the question, fathers continued to talk about how they have to expend extra energies just to compete with class status and issues as compared to other non-minority parents (i.e. lack of education resources) in schools. They mentioned how they had to fight twice as hard and had to play catch-up because of the low expectations that school officials have of them.

Oh for me I think—from being from low income, well as far as our kids growing up, it don’t matter as long as we got strong parents and we raise ‘em right, they can be
successful in life. I think, with the schools being, you know coming’ from a low income,
it does play a part because they figure we don’t have the education or we don’t got
nothing to offer them. I mean that’s how they look at us. That’s what I think.

Mr. Pendergrass was more concerned about black and white residential class segregation,
specifically, how residential neighborhoods have higher incomes and better school resources. He
implied there is a black, white, and class binary that continues to perpetuate unequal schooling
opportunities for Black students. He offered a hypothetical scenario and posed a question:

What if I’m a black male parent with a child at Audubon, and the majority of the time
I’m spending trying to get adequate materials for my child to learn from? As opposed to
I don’t have to spend that time over at Hickory Middle School where my daughter went
in Torrance. We never had to discuss that the materials are fallin’ apart, that they’re
inadequate, that they’re unrelated, the teacher doesn’t teach for nothin’. Tell me what
I’m going to be preoccupied with if I’m dealing with my child and not having materials
adequate enough to teach them, as opposed to going to a school where that’s not even an
issue?

As they elaborated on their encounters with school officials, and attempts to advocate on their
sons’ and daughters’ behalf, race continued to emerge as a critical factor in their experience. For
example, Mr. Cooper stated emphatically that he believed race was not a factor in his
experiences with his son’s school, but when asked about some of his bigger concerns interacting
with school officials he replied:

They [school officials] stereotype…for instance, if I walk into the school. . .you
know, the principal is White, and his White female vice principal or whoever it is
they look at me a certain way. So they’ll stereotype unfortunately.
Another participant, Mr. Gordon contended that race was a non-factor but stated that:

The stigma or the stereotype is that Black fathers aren’t there for their kids. That stigma being with teachers, administrators, and probably kids too…and then they see a Black man my size (6’3”. 220 lbs.). I don’t know.

Mr. Hayes, who stated that he felt race was not an issue initially, offered a similar sentiment:

There is some surprise when they (teachers) see you, a little shock, a little kind of just, you know, a sense of not really expecting to see a Black male involved in the school. . .I think there was a little bit of apprehension.

Mr. Hughes stated that, for the school officials in his daughters’ school, seeing a Black student was quickly associated with having a father at the nearby military base, but that part of his role was to challenge the notion that all Black men in the community were in the military:

I had to let them [school officials] know that I live in the community, so when they find out that I actually live there, I am not in the military, and I own a home in the community, there is a little shock there. That changes the assumption

Other participants in the study were quite emphatic in the denial of race as a factor, but still seemed to allude to it as an important role within the statements they offered. For example, one father stated:

No, it [race] does not play a factor. . .it does not! This is not 20 years ago…don’t get me wrong, people sometimes perceive you a certain way based on how you talk…So race plays a role once they hear you speak. . .then it can create an obstacle for how you are treated.”
The manner in which race, class, and gender are manifested is never a simple and straightforward reality for non-dominant populations in the U.S. The accounts reported by the fathers in this study bear out the complexities in the process when Black men attempt to negotiate on multiple levels that go beyond their roles as parents, but are also present in their pursuits. What is critical to note about the intersectionality of race of employment, housing, and educational opportunities, class, and gender as explored in this study is that each of these markers play important roles that are not always transparent to all parties involved in the interaction. The need to provide a deliberative space for diverse parents to discuss their experiences in schools is desperately needed if the social science community is to develop a more comprehensive and critical understanding of the varied realities they negotiate.

**Fathers Speak about Religion, Church, and Spirituality**

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul writes, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” While the concept of African American spirituality has been investigated in the psychological (Brome, Owens, Allen, & Vevaina, 2000; Potts, 1996) and healthcare literature (Dessio et al., 2004), Black father involvement and the impact on their children’s education, research about this topic is near silent. This is particularly interesting given the historical importance of spirituality in the African American community. As a religious and cultural ethic, Black spirituality “has served as a personal and communal source of liberation, solace, hope, meaning, and forgiveness, particularly in relationship to social, political, and economic injustices” (Newlin, Knafl, & Melkus, 2002, p. 58).

Spirituality is interrelated with two relevant concepts, religion, and religiosity. Religion refers to a shared belief system typified by principles, customs, practices, and rites in adherence to God or multiple deities. In contrast, religiosity is the performance of these principles,
customs, practices and rites (Mattis & Jagers, 2001). Further, religiosity does not necessarily suggest, though it may be, a belief in religion. As such, an individual may exude religiosity as part of a cultural practice without an actual belief in religion. With this in mind, spirituality and religiosity are differing concepts (Mattis, 2000); while both suggest the enactment of belief systems, spirituality connotes an actual belief that may fall outside an organized religion.

Fathers in this study were pleased to hear the moderator pose this question. All ten of the fathers mentioned a close religious belief and connection with a higher power (namely God), or Black Church, whom they felt gave them validation and autonomy to be involved in their child’s education. Mr. Gibson articulated religion and the connection that his son has made with his pastor:

Okay. Havin’ a solid base and solid structure of as far as church and whatever you know, well your preface is. I think that my son—when I can’t related to him and when he just some things that he don’t wanna tell me. You know what I’m sayin’? He go to his preacher and his pastor, you understand what I’m sayin’ and he relates to him. They do a lot of things together as far as activities and stuff like that. He got a—I think that it’s also just an opportunity for black people to be able to let their kids go somewhere, and they feel safe with ‘em, in that, and they know that they gonna be teached. They’re not here to be out in the streets and stuff like that. I mean they give ‘em some type of role model to—cause it’s so many people, so many families without fathers in the house. So a lot of people use that church as a base foundation to—you understand—as a father hood.

Mr. Jones, a Muslim father, stated that he felt religion increases academic achievement:

Oh it absolutely does, because you see the connection. If you see a disconnect between wherever you are, from home presently. If home never read the site of the scripture,
right? And Sunday morning they droppin’ ‘em off, right? There’s going to be a disconnect from home to church. So everything they did at church, they’re gonna undo at home because a person at home, but they don’t view the words of at church. And if there’s school, right. I’m goin’ to church and it not only teaches me words and the Word, but it also teaches me how to acquire vocabulary and how to comprehend.

Mr. Benson a 36 year old father intelligently shared why it is so important to have a church experience and how he learns in both institutions:

I’m learning in both institutions that my education is poor. You know I don’t disconnect from one. Say God’s over here, but he ain’t in school. I got to be taught that there’s a connection there. I gotta know there’s a connection there because it’s gonna influence the whole outcome of what I do at school.

These important benefits of spirituality illustrate the importance of affirming the father and their children spiritually. Further research should be conducted to determine whether findings from this small sample are transferrable as a theoretical frame for understanding Black male spirituality and academic success in other education contexts.

Summary

The preceding chapter was a summary of the results of the individual qualitative interviews and the focus group session. The following chapter is a summary of the quantitative results from a survey questionnaire. Discussion of all results is in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 5

RESULTS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

In this chapter, a summary of the findings from the questionnaire distributed to Black fathers is presented. Data from the survey questionnaire was examined quantitatively using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies). Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Independent T-Tests were used to analyze data. The chapter begins with a reiteration of the hypotheses used to guide this analysis as found in Chapter 1. The instrument used in this study and its reliability will be discussed. The intent of the work was not to simply present findings that could be generalized to larger populations of Black fathers, but to highlight findings from the study that was intended to explore the voices, perspectives, and involvement practices that Black fathers use to build relationships with school personnel in an effort to advocate on behalf of their sons and daughters. The analytical procedures used to examine the hypotheses are discussed. With respect to findings from this analysis, general background characteristics of the participants will be investigated, followed by descriptions of findings from the Pearson and t-Tests. Finally, descriptive data of select subscale scores will be presented. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of salient findings identified through the analyses described herein.

Salient Hypotheses

Interests in the roles and strategies that Black fathers use in their children’s lives have drawn wide criticism (Bright & Williams, 1996; Bowman, 1990; Gonsalves & Virginia, 1999; Lamb, 1998; Lerman & Sorensen, 2000; Mincy & Pouncy, 1997). In general, media attention has focused on Black father’s inability to provide support for their families. This study employs a different lens, focusing on the nature of Black father’s involvement in education. To address the research questions that guided this study, the following null and alternative hypotheses were
employed. The first two hypotheses were intended to explore relationships between background variables with a focus on school and home based activities. The third hypothesis was intended to explore group differences.

RQ1: What is the relationship between background variable and school-based activities of Black fathers?

Ho1: Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between background variables and school based activities.

Ha1. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between background variables and school based activities.

RQ2: What is the relationship between background variable and home-based activities?

Ho2: Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between background variables and home based activities.

Ha2: Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between background variables and home based activities.

RQ3: What is the difference between response types by the gender of the focus child?

Ho3: Null Hypothesis: There is no difference between response types by the gender of the focus child.

Ha3: Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference between response types by the gender of the focus child.

**Instrumentation**

The survey protocol included three instrument subscales and a demographic section used to obtain background characteristics on each participant. First, information examined in the demographic section is discussed. Then, an overview of the three instrument subscales is provided. Prior to examining these areas, the process by which data was collected is recapped.
Data Collection

Data in this study were collected from a statewide survey of Black fathers. An online questionnaire was developed using previous parental involvement research from Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995, 1997, 2005) Model of Parental Involvement Process. The survey was developed, distributed, and collected via SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is a web-based online software program that allows the creation and distribution of surveys through virtual mechanisms (e.g., email, facebook). After the development of the survey, data were collected via convenience sampling. Using this technique, participants were recruited through direct solicitation efforts. In this manner, the researcher distributed a survey link via email to a wide range of social network individuals, colleagues, and through organizational affiliations and snowballing.

The eligibility for this study was determined based on a total of 100 volunteer participants’ self-identification as African American or Black with a child enrolled in a K-12 school. The geographic area where the participants were pooled was African American fathers in the State of California. The participants were required to be male given that this study was designed for African American fathers. More specifically, the following criteria for each candidate included income level, education background, type of employment, relationship to the child, sex of child, grade level of the child, type of schools, and geographic location of where the father resided. This purposive sample included Black fathers who were primary caregivers such as fathers, step fathers, or legal guardians. They could be very involved, somewhat involved, or a little involved in their children’s schooling. Their child could attend public, private, charter, or catholic school. Home schooled children were also eligible for this study.
Data were also collected via snowball sampling. Using this approach, survey participants were informed of criteria and asked to forward the survey to friends or colleagues within the State to increase participation in the survey, but also to remind their peers of the fit for criteria for the study. Given that the collection techniques used were non-probabilistic, findings from this study are restricted to representing the survey sample itself, as opposed to the population of Black fathers in California.

**Demographic Form**

The demographic form was created and field tested during the pilot phase of this dissertation study. Since the possibility existed that research participants would have multiple children, questions were modified to include the phrase “focus child” to help participants remember to answer the survey items in relation to one child who fit the research criteria. Purposefully and exclusively this study interviewed and surveyed African American fathers 18 years and above. Participants who did not meet gender, race, and age criterion were excluded from this study.

This dissertation study was confined to interviewing Black fathers who identified themselves as being involved in their children’s education. The research effort did not address issues of Black mothers’ support and involvement with schools such that the findings of this dissertation “could be subject to other interpretations” (Creswell, 2010, p. 111; Kunes, 1991). The research was an effort to understand how fathers interpret their ability to talk with their children about school, help out at school, talk with teachers, attend special events, supervise homework, or engage in school-based parent involvement activities such as participating on school committees, the PTA, or visiting the classroom.

Data collected included information such as participant age, number of children, income range, level of education, type of relationship with the mother of the focus child, employment
status, and grade level of the focus child. The Hoover-Dempsey Sandler Parental Involvement scale (1995; 1997; 2005) was designed for parents to focus on one focus child and not all of the children in the home; therefore, fathers were forced by design of the survey to respond to Likert-scale items based on their level of involvement with their children’s home and school activities.

**Parents’ Motivational Beliefs Scale**

The Parental Role Construction for Involvement in the Child’s Education scale explored parent’s beliefs about what they should do (i.e. strategies) in relation to involvement in their child’s education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; 1997; 2005). This version of the parental role construction scale had two subscales: Role Activity Beliefs (10 items), and Attitude Toward School (6 items). The alpha reliabilities for the two subscales were .80 and .85 respectively. The Role Activity Beliefs subscale was a Likert-type response format and the Attitude School subscale was a forced choice format. The Parental Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School scale had seven items about parents’ beliefs about their personal ability to make a difference in their child’s educational outcomes. This scale was a Likert-type response format, and has an alpha reliability of .78. Parents’ Perception of invitations for involvement scales addressed requests for participation that were made of the parent and opportunities that were afforded for involvement.

**Parents’ Perceptions of Invitations for Involvement Scale**

The Parents’ Perceptions of General Invitations for Involvement from the School scale had six items with an alpha reliability of .88. This scale examined parental perceptions that school staff and the school environment or climate in general made the parent feel valued in the child’s education and welcome in the school (alpha reliability = .81). All scales in this domain
used a Likert response format and all influenced a parent’s desire and parental role construction to be involved in their children’s education.

**Parent’s Perceived Life Context Scale**

The third Hoover-Dempssey Sandler domain, Parents’ Perceptions of Personal Knowledge and Skills scale had nine items with alpha reliability .83. This scale used a Likert-response format. This construct assumed that parents would be motivated to engage in involvement activities if they believed they had the skills and knowledge to be of help in particular subject content areas (Hoover-Dempsey Sandler, 1997, 1995, 2005). Parents’ perceptions of “Time and Energy” scale included six items related to perceptions of demands on fathers’ time, especially those related to employment and other family needs that might influence possibilities of involvement in their child’s education. This subscale used a Likert-type response format and had an alpha reliability of .84. This section was a discussion of the instruments used in this study; the next section is an examination of the analytical procedure employed.

**Analytical Procedure**

This section is a discussion of the analytical procedures used in this investigation, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the independent t-test.

**Pearson Correlation**

Data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (hereafter referred to as the Pearson Correlation). The Pearson Correlation is a statistical procedure that allows researchers to determine the extent of an association or relationship between two variables. Background variables were examined in relationship to school based and home based activities. Home and school based activities were questions that addressed parent’s self-efficacy for involvement in their child’s education. Background variables included educational level, income, and conjugal relationship with the mother, grade level of the focus child, and age.
School based activities included volunteering at the child’s school, regularly communicating with the child’s teacher, ensuring that the school had the resources that it needed, supporting teacher’s decisions, staying on top of things, talking with other parents, and making school better. Home based activities included knowing how to help child with homework, believing that they can explain tough assignments, believing it is important to talk with child about the school day, knowing how to help child do well in school, feeling that they could help the child learn, and believing that they could make a difference in child’s performance. The significance level for the Pearson correlation was set at $p<.05$. Using the guidelines set by Green and Salkind (2008), correlation coefficients of “.10, .30, and .50, irrespective of sign…[were] interpreted as small, medium, and large coefficients, respectively” (p. 259).

**Independent T-Test**

Data were also analyzed to determine if there were differences in response types by the gender of the focus child. Since there exist many gaps in the research literature on fathers’ involvement with their children in home and school based activities, one significant concern was the quantitative and qualitative accounts of male and female relationships with their fathers (Apner, 1993; Younis & Smollar, 1985; Way & Satuaber, 1996). Given the dichotomous relationship for the focus child response category (e.g., male, female), an independent t-test was used. An independent t-test is a statistical measure that accounts for means differences between groups when there are no more than two groups and one independent variable. The significance level for the t-test was set at $p<.05$. Effect sizes were reported using Cohen’s D. Effect sizes represent the relationship between one group and another. Cohen’s D is an effect size scale; it categorizes effect sizes into three categories, small, medium, and large. As reported by Green
and Salkind (2011), effect size scales (including Cohen’s D) interpret effect ranges from 0.0 to .2 as small, .2 to .5 as medium, and .5 and above as large.

Overview of Findings

In contrast to most ethnographic studies that rarely use mixed methods analysis, the triangulation of data in this study included interviews, surveys, and focus groups. The quantitative data offered insight into Black father’s involvement in their children’s home and school life that can potentially be considered for new practices that are not part of existing parenting frameworks. For example, Black fathers in this study revealed that they are providing formal and informal engagement that may look different from traditional family support in addition to, or instead of, economic support.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis yields new ways of understanding the unique contributions that Black fathers provide to their child’s academic development. Descriptive data about the background characteristics of Black fathers follows. Regardless of race class, gender, education level, or socio-economic status, all identified themselves as Black or African American with children in grades K-12.

Demographics

The sample in this study comprised 100 African American fathers ranging in age 18 to 70 years old. Average family size was two. The children ranged in age from 5 years to 18 years. All the participants were the biological father of the focus child.

Table 2 displays the gender of the focus child as male 56.6%, and female 43.4%. Data indicated notable differences in age cohorts amongst Black fathers who were involved in their child’s lives and education. Among those Black fathers who reported being within the age range of 18 to 26 who were not fathers of children was less than 2%. This statistic is much lower than
Table 2

**Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

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<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Currently working</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable/Levels</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship with Mother</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Conjugal Relationship</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanently Separated</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable/Levels</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender of Focus Child</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable/Levels</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grade Level of Focus Child</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable/Levels</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # of Father’s Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
those reported by other researchers who have found that young Black fathers are irresponsible in their relationships (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Kaplan et al., 1994; Lamb, 1988). Further, there has been a decline in the number of teenage pregnancies since the 1980s and 1990s, although the number of out-of-wedlock births continues to soar. Twenty four percent (N=24) of the participants were single, but had a frequent relationship in the home or outside of the home (monthly, daily, or weekly) with the child’s mother, while 18% (N=18) were permanently separated from their child’s mother, but had contact if they were going to be involved (e.g. anywhere from once or twice a month to two or three times a year). Eight percent of the fathers in the study responded with the category “other.” Conceivably, it is reasonable to propose that the fathers were divorcees or had entered a new relationship with additional children where they assumed the role as stepfather, or were in a fictive kin relationship where they took on the responsibility of a family member’s child, but were profoundly involved in the child’s academic development. Fathers from the focus session talked about different types of conjugal relationships with the mothers.

More often than not in the research literature, parenting and involvement are synonymous with mothers. To illustrate this, Howard, Reynolds, and Jones (2009) discussed the concept of how “parents” are usually synonymous with “mothers,” implicating mothers without a partner. As shown in Table 1, more than half of the fathers, 48% (N=48) were married to their child’s mother and had been extremely involved in their child’s education. Only two had been widowed. Overall, this data suggest that these mothers and fathers have formed stable, nurturing, and long-lasting marriages where some of the data suggest conjugal relationships as being transient. For example, the focus group participants in this study spoke proudly about the
marriages with their wives, specifically, the nurturing and stable relationships they have with their wives.

Most of the fathers classified their incomes as mostly working class with incomes ranging from $20,000-$60,000 per year annually. It should be noted that socio-economic status and age were a major determinant in this study to survey a wider sample. Scholars have argued that the stressors of limited economic (e.g. two incomes in a household) opportunity and lack of education make it difficult for families to ‘make ends meet’ (McBride et al., 2005, pg. 202; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). As a result, with some Black fathers who are poor (<$10,000 to $20,000) and experience residential instability, life stressors hamper involvement and diminish their willingness to be involved in their child’s lives; thus, support and aptitude of how to parent is difficult to measure because it can be illustrated through many forms: financial, task oriented, mentoring, emotional, and other factors.

**Examining School Based Activities**

H1a: Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between background variables and school based activities

H2b. Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between background variables and school based activities.

The first analysis conducted focused on school based activities. These activities were examined to determine whether or not there was a relationship between these activities and background variables. The first background variable examined was respondent’s highest level of education. Only one of the seven school based variables was significantly related to parental education. The correlation between parental education and the item “It is my responsibility to make school better” was significant, \( r (90) = .324, p< .01 \). This represents a medium correlation.
coefficient. Income was significantly correlated with most of the items examined (four of the seven).

The correlation between income and the item “I believe it is my responsibility to volunteer at school,” was significant, $r (90) = .255$, $p < .05$. This correlation coefficient can be interpreted as approaching medium. The correlation between income and the item “I believe it is important to stay on top of things,” was significant, $r (89) = .208$, $p < .05$. This correlation coefficient can be interpreted as between small-to-medium. The correlation between income and the item “I believe it is important to talk with other parent’s in my child’s school” was significant, $r (90) = .259$, $p < .05$. This represents a medium size correlation coefficient. The correlation between income and the item is approaching a large correlation coefficient.

This study was also intended to examine whether the background variable and the grade level of the focus child was related to parent’s involvement in school based activities. Results did not show a significant relationship between the grade level of the respondent’s child and involvement in school based activities, $p = n.s$. This is an interesting finding, considering that research data suggests that parents have a greater level of involvement in their child’s school at earlier grade levels. However, this study had an alternative finding, suggesting that grade level has no bearing on parental involvement.

The final background variable examined was the respondent’s age. Three of the seven questions regarding involvement in school based activities were significant. The correlation between parent’s age and the item, “I believe it is my responsibility to volunteer at school” was significant, $r (92) = .213$, $p < .05$. This represents a correlation coefficient between small and medium. The correlation between parent’s age and the item “I believe it is important to talk with other parent’s in my child’s school” was significant, $r (90) = .259$, $p < .05$. This correlation
coefficient was medium. The correlation between parents age and the item “I believe it is my responsibility to make school better” was significant \( r(90) = .222, p<.05 \). This correlation coefficient is between small and medium.

Table 3

*Selected Descriptive Statistics for Background Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Volunteer and School</th>
<th>Communicate with teacher</th>
<th>Ensure school has what it needs</th>
<th>Support teacher decisions</th>
<th>Stay on top of things</th>
<th>Talk with other parents</th>
<th>Make School Better</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Level</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.324**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.255*</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.208*</td>
<td>.259*</td>
<td>.430**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Child</td>
<td>.213*</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.259*</td>
<td>.222*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Based on results, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted that there is a relationship between background variables and school based activities.

**Examining Home Based Activities**

H2a: Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between background variables and home based activities.

H2b: Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between background variables and home based activities.

The second analysis conducted examined background factors to determine if there was a relationship between these variables and home based activities. Educational level was the first background variable examined. Most of the variables examined (four of six) were significant. The correlation between educational level and the question “I believe it is my responsibility to
explain tough assignments to my child” was significant, \( r(90) = .290, \ p<.01 \). This represented a moderate correlation coefficient.

The correlation between educational level and the question “I know how to help my child do well in school” was significant, \( r(90) = .293, \ p<.01 \). This also represented a moderate correlation coefficient. The correlation between parental education and the item “I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn” was significant, \( r(89) = .212, \ p<.05 \). This item was between a small and moderate correlation coefficient. The correlation between parental education and the question “I make a significant difference in my child's school performance” was significant, \( r(89) = .258, \ p<.05 \). This was approaching a moderate correlation coefficient.

The second background variable examined in the second analysis was the respondent’s income. This background variable also identified four of six items as having a significant relationship with parent’s income. The correlation between income and the question “I believe it is my responsibility to explain tough assignments to my child” was significant, \( r (90) = .257, \ p<.05 \). This was approaching a moderate correlation coefficient.

The correlation between income and the question “I believe it’s important to talk with my child about their school day” was significant, \( r(90) = .216, \ p<.01 \). This correlation coefficient was between small and medium. The correlation between income and the question “I know how to help my child do well in school” was significant, \( r(90) = .261, \ p<.05 \). This was approaching a moderate correlation coefficient. The correlation between income and the question “I make a significant difference in my child's school performance” was significant, \( r(89) = .268, \ p<.05 \). This was approaching a moderate correlation coefficient.

The next background variable examined was whether the grade level of the focus child was significantly related to home based activities. No items were found to have a significant
relationship, p=n.s. The final background variable examined in the second analysis was the respondent’s age. Only one item was found to have a significant relationship. The correlation between respondent’s age and the question “I believe it is my responsibility to explain tough assignments to my child” was significant, \( r(90) = .230, p<.05. \) This was approaching a moderate correlation coefficient.

Based on results, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted that there is a relationship between background variables and home based activities.

Table 4

*Additional Selected Descriptive Statistics for Background Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Help child was homework</th>
<th>Explain tough assignments</th>
<th>Talk with child about school day</th>
<th>Know how to help child do well</th>
<th>Is successful in helping child learn</th>
<th>Can make a difference in child’s performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Level</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.290*</td>
<td>.156</td>
<td>.293**</td>
<td>.212*</td>
<td>.258*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>.257*</td>
<td>.216*</td>
<td>.261*</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.268*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level of Child</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>-.018</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>-.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.230*</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.146</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Examining Differences by Gender of the Focus Child

H3a: Null Hypothesis: There is no difference between response types by the gender of the focus child.

H3b: Alternative Hypothesis: There is a difference between response types by the gender of the focus child.

This study was also intended to examine potential differences among respondents on questions posed by the gender of the focus child. During this analytical process, an independent t-test was performed that generated an important finding. On the question, “My child asked me
to explain something about his or her homework” results showed a significant difference concerning the gender of the focus child. The test for equal variance was significant, \( t(85) = 2.723, p<.01 \). As such, male students (\( M = 4.48, SD =1.58 \)) on average requested help from their fathers on their homework more often than female students (\( M = 3.51, SD= 1.70 \)) as reported by the respondents. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means was from .26 to 1.67. Cohen’s d indicated an effect size of .86. Follow-up tests were conducted using Pearson Correlation to determine if there was a significant relationship by male respondents on income, age, and educational level in relationship to asking for help on homework. None were found to be significant, \( p= n.s. \). Based on results, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted that there is a difference between response types by the gender of the focus child.

**Descriptive Statistics**

The means and standard deviations among variables are shown in Table 2. Mean scores represents responses on a scale ranging from 1- 6. On a normal scale, the mean score was interpreted at 5.00 or above as high, and 4.99 and below as moderate. On an inverted scale, mean scores at 2.00 or below were interpreted as high, and 2.01 and above as moderate. While these classifications represent rough characterizations of the data, they are useful for general understanding of fathers’ responses on the questionnaire.

African American fathers reported very strong valuation of taking responsibility for communicating regularly with teachers (\( M=5.23, SD =1.13 \)), helping with homework (\( M=5.42, SD = 1.05 \)), staying on top of things at school (\( M=5.20, SD = 1.10 \)), and talking regularly with their child about the school day (\( M=5.53, SD = .91 \)). In addition, fathers reported accountability for volunteering at school and having the grade level skills to explain tough assignments to their
child. However, responses for the remaining variables (father’s responsibility) indicated moderate mean scores. For example, on average, some fathers responses on questionnaire items seemed to illustrate a hesitancy in taking responsibility to make schools better for their child (M=4.17, SD = 1.38) support the decisions of teachers (M = 4.60, SD = 1.02), make certain the school has what it needs (M= 4.47, SD =1.32), as parents who reside in the same neighborhood with other similar parental background, for example, social economic status, talk with other parents from their child’s school (M= 4.19, SD = 1.29) (e.g. teachers, behavior problems, home strategies, etc.).

According to the respondents, there may be skepticism and a level of mistrust in educational settings as a space of learning for their child. Results revealed that there are moderate levels of concern by fathers that they desire to be “treated as equal partners working in collaboration with school officials to create optimal learning environments for students at school and home” (Howard, 2010, p. 146). This notion of collaborative relationships highlights three primary points: (1) Experiences are autonomous because most parents know their child BEST, so strategies applied in the home and schools are varied. Also, the notion that “what happens in the home stays in the home; (2) all Black fathers’ experiences with home and school strategies cannot be generalized -- in addition, the fathers do feel valued and believe that stakeholders have a commitment to help their child be academically successful as long as they stay on top of things at the school; and (3) the data in this study also correlates with other researchers like Beacher’s (1986) research who revealed that there is “substantial evidence” indicative of students whose parents are involved in their schooling have increased academic performance and overall cognitive development. Barnard (2004) and Fan & Chen (2001) concluded that parental involvement has a significant influence on student achievement.
As shown in Table 4, fathers’ presence in the home and school significantly revealed that they have the “know how” to facilitate their children’s healthy academic, social, and emotional development prospectively (from birth to 12th grade). What is increasingly apparent from this data is that these Black fathers believe they should be involved and are confident that they are improving the educational outcomes for their children. A possible explanation for the association between fathers strategies of having the “know” vs. “not having the know” relates to asserting their roles as actively engaged, structuring parenting dynamics, limit-setting, consistent discipline, and effective parenting skills. For example, fathers overwhelming felt that they made a significant difference in their child’s school performance (M = 5.09, SD = .98) and they acknowledged the success they were experiencing about their efforts to help their child learn (M = 5.09, SD = .93). This may be indicative of a sense of mentoring, empowerment, in fact, a reinforcement of two-way positive messages that create a positive home environment and academic support for the father and the child.

Table 5

$Means$ and Standard Deviations of Parental Self-Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Items 10-10, Parents Self-Efficacy Variables</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I know how to help my child do well in school</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I don’t know if I’m getting through to my child</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I don’t know how to help my child make good grades in school</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other children have more influence on my child’s grade than I do</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I don’t know how to help my child learn</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I make a significant difference in my child’s school performance</td>
<td>5.09</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. The number of cases for each value differs because of missing data, 2. Data when also be analyzed for themes in qualitative section of chapter
A second brief strand of insight into these fathers behavior was that they did not allow school officials to marginalize their roles, nor do they allow stressors to impede their responsibility. Fathers’ response to survey items like: *teachers at this school keep me informed about my child’s progress* and *I know effective ways to contact my child’s teacher in school* suggest that teachers and fathers are communicating, providing strategies, (i.e. homework routine) and developing mutual goals for their child’s learning.

**Homework**

Studies demonstrate the positive connections between homework and achievement (Chen & Steven, 1989; Cooper, 2001, 1989; Hagborg, 1991). The task of teachers assigning homework to students, students completing assigned homework tasks, and parents having to monitor homework without their child complaining about it or doing it has drawn media attention. The headlines have been centered on whether students spend too much time on homework. For example, a New York Times article titled “*As homework Load Grows, One District Says ‘Enough’*” highlighted how parents were irate because the New Jersey School Board, in Piscataway, New Jersey, limited elementary students school homework time to 30 minutes per night (Zernitke, 2000). In Conejo Valley, California the school trustees were instructed by the Board of Trustees to entertain the complaints of parents that suggested that their children were being overworked (Ragaland, 2002); the proposal that was put forth limited homework time to 20 minutes per night for first and second graders and 50 minutes for third and fourth graders.

In the present study, the fathers reported on their role and their beliefs about the strategic involvement decisions and the outcomes of their involvement. The relevance between Black fathers and their roles with homework is that these fathers are spending a significant amount of time on homework with their children. This could be attributed to fathers having a strong work ethic, having a good home environment, or the way in which fathers are monitoring homework.
For example, results showed significantly greater emphasis on time spent on explaining things about homework at home. Roughly 84% percent of the fathers agreed or strongly agreed that they could explain their child’s homework as compared to 7% of the fathers who reported difficulty explaining things as they related to homework. Moreover, consistent with the literature and other investigations, is father’s beliefs that involvement in their child’s academic development is not monolithic; thus, it is a responsibility of parenting that they value (Hoover-Demsey, Bassler, & Burow, 1995). In addition, the data also illustrated a higher percentage of Black fathers who can be the motivator and supervisor for their child’s homework and assist with homework and with a reasonable amount of confidence in their skills to help out at their child’s school. The percent of fathers not being able to supervise homework or help out at school was less than 5% for both survey item responses. One of the most commonly recognized obstacles parents face when parenting is having the education level and resources to help with their child’s homework. Further, they are challenged in having the time and energy to supervise homework and making certain that their child is meeting the teacher and schools expectations. Ninety-four of the 100 fathers reported that they at least had a GED or a graduate level degree. In addition, they had jobs that were comparable with their education levels. Careful consideration should be given to this finding, specifically as a unique contribution because these fathers continue their involvement in their children’s homework despite concerns about their personal limitations (education level or social economic status) or any learning difficulties their child may have.

Parental involvement approaches were nuanced and diverse. For any parent to operationalize homework tasks as it relates to strategy is difficult to pinpoint. For instance not much is known about how parents design a best “fit” between their child’s skill levels, scaffolding techniques to bridge gaps in student’s knowledge, or problem solving techniques
while at home. Again, parents must have some required understanding of homework assignments to see improvement (Hoover-Dempsey Battiato et al., 2001). Results illustrate that parent’s involvement in their child’s homework suggest that child rearing strategies and understanding the purpose of homework is taking priority in these fathers’ homes. In addition, the children are asking fathers to explain assignments in which they are reaping the harvest of the fathers’ efforts in their improved student performance and the time that students devote to time on task at home on homework. The maximized effort from the father and the child is very well connected to the research literature that students have an increased likelihood of homework completion and better homework performance (Balli et al., 1998; Callahan et al., 1998; Dempsey et al., 2001).
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was three-fold. First, it was to examine the degree of parental involvement Black fathers practice when serving as advocates for their children in educational settings. Second, the purpose was to explore the meaning of Black father’s engagement in their children’s educational endeavors. Third, the effort was intended to articulate specific approaches and practices that African American father’s use in their attempts to develop authentic relationships with school personnel with which to improve their children’s chances for academic success.

Conclusions

Following are the foundational research questions and the answers as revealed by the results cited in Chapters 4 and 5.

Part A: Qualitative Research Questions

RQ1: What are the specific practices and strategies African American fathers employ in the home and in their children’s school to support their academic development?

A search of the literature failed to reveal descriptive research about how Black fathers from diverse socio-economic backgrounds maintain strength and resiliency (Bright & Williams, 1996; Staples, 1996) when social factors plague this population. Literature on resiliency has dominated studies of African American men as well as young men. Indeed, a great deal of research has pointed to resiliency (Gayles, 2005; Hawkins & Randolph, 1992; Odone, 2002; Zimmerman et al., 1999) as a generative factor involved in the success of men and women who overcome insurmountable obstacles (i.e. economic or familial stressors). Similarly, Brody and Flor (1998) used a phrase in their study on Black mothers as “no non sense parenting” (p. 805). The phrase, “no non sense parenting” characterizes a high level of authoritarian parenting in
single mother homes as well as two-parent Black families in which parenting practices consist of corporal punishment and physical restraint that is aligned with “affectionate behavior” (p. 805). As such, what was discovered in this dissertation research was unprecedented: Black fathers are involved in home and schools; therefore, a new definition of Black father’s parental involvement is needed to capture their practices and strategies.

Based on the findings of this study, there is new evidence that creates new language to describe Black fathers parenting support practices and strategies employed in the home and school to support their children’s academic development. This researcher offers, Parental Self-Habitus, which describes the ability of Black fathers to provide natural provisions (i.e. stable environment conducive to learning and academic development) in the face of complexities and unpromising circumstance. Some researchers have written about resiliency (Gayles, 2005; Zimmerman et al., 1999) and others about authoritative and no non sense parenting (Brody & Flor, 1998).

Similarly, when education researchers discuss habitus, there is an immediate connection to the Bourdieu and Passeron (1973) work on habitus and multiple forms of capital, namely, cultural and social forms of capital which are terms first used by Bourdieu and Paseron (1973) in Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction in which they define it as forms of knowledge, skill, education, or, any advantages a person has that give them higher status in society, including high expectations. Social capital can be accumulated when people interact with other families’ workplaces, neighborhoods, local associations, and a range of informal meeting places (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). Parents provide children with cultural and social capital and the attitudes and knowledge that make education systems a comfortable place in which they succeed easily.
RQ #1 asked the question of what practices and strategies Black fathers employ in the home and school. Defining Parental Self-Habitus as a concept, practice, and strategy just for Black fathers is a beginning because research has rarely documented specific strategies and practices. For example, Boyd and Franklin (1989), Clark (1983), Ford (1993), and McAdoo (1988) noted that previous studies on achievement orientation told “little about what happens educationally in the homes of Black children” (p. 59), which makes it difficult for some policy makers and educators to understand how to nurture and teach Black children.

Contrarily, results of this research offer more precise definitions and information about what is happening in the homes of Black children when Black fathers are involved and helping to parent their children and support their academic development. These fathers’ personal choices of engaging in a cultural or generational transformation are highlighted as a parental practice as they confirmed in this study. More specifically, they are breaking the “cycles of engagement and disengagement” (Roy, 2006, p. 50), negative expectations (Zimmerman et al., 1999) and learned helplessness that has gripped some of their families in the past, in hopes that their behaviors will overlap with previous generations (Roy, 2006). Thus, any interpretation of the role that fathers play in the home for their children is substantially critical, especially for their African American sons; results in this study found fathers spend extra time with their sons in the home and on academic achievement. Parental Self-Habitus, or self-actualizing behavior, if Black fathers should be of great interest to educators, researchers, practitioners (Reis, Colbert, & Herbert, 2005). This result should serve as a reminder that fathers are adapting to more adverse contexts and conditions than are challenging families of other races, genders, and class backgrounds.

Secondly, some of the Parental Self-habitus employed: (a) Differentiated meta-strategies in helping with problem solving strategies (i.e. culturally relevant homework strategies); (b)
avoidance of past generational mistakes, thus fathers are highly skilled and interactive because of increased education attainment vs. previous paternal education attainment and parenting practices; and (c) fathers articulated love, care, and personal responsibility. To illustrate this new phenomenology in education research, Black fathers’ voices suggested that there were several protective factors to help them maintain parental self-habitus. Listen to three responses as they offer words of empowerment for other Black fathers about the schooling practices of Black fathers’ with the requirement of being highly present and active.

Just stay involved. Just your presence and them, your kids, knowing that you
Takin’ a part in what they doing and it make a big difference to---a big even willing and trying to do it, you know, learn and do the work. Stay involved with your kids that’s it.

All I say is what he said, just stay involved. Keep a part of your mind, because you know what that can be hard some time, but stay informed. Help them with their work, ask them how their day was once a week at lest. I try to get them into some school---after school programs, and I try to find programs in the community, just get them involved.

I just got to say that for every father---be a role model for your child, you know what I’m saying. Because you see your child is the very thing you doing and they wanna take after their daddy and stuff like that. So what they see you do, it represents a lot on what they do. So you know better role you be, the more you gonna be involved and it’s gonna be a positive influence on how to impact what they see. Give them something positive. Kids gonna just be recognized.
Bright and Williams (1996) as cited in the review of literature in this dissertation confirms that fathers have warm, nurturing relationships with their children and share equally with their wives in child-rearing decisions. Fathers expressed the need for other fathers to take a keen interest in what their children were doing and to be “role models for your child because ultimately they will emulate someone’s behavior if it is not yours.”

This study confirms Mirande’s (1991) study that found 87% of parents believe that their children have needs “only they, as fathers could meet” (p. 85). To hear and read such powerful quotes from young and old Black fathers is influential and promising in the parenting literature. The positive stories of how these Black fathers succeeded through their child’s Pre-K to 12th grade demonstrated how they have developed a predisposition for parental engagement and being involved in their children’s education. Finally the purpose of this dissertation was to highlight positive aspects of mental conditioning that might be used for future generations, and to understand the parental and psychological well-being among Black fathers. Having an active presence in their child’s education was a holistic process for these fathers. Studies have consistently shown that active parent involvement is more beneficial than passive (Cotton & Wikeslund, 2000; Epstein, 2001).

RQ2: What are the experiences of Black fathers with school officials? (a) What obstacles, if any, do Black fathers identify as factors that hinder them from being involved in their children’s school, and how do they overcome these obstacles?

Research question two asked about the experiences of Black fathers in schools and the obstacles that hinder their involvement. Results identified volunteering opportunities and communication deficits to be the catalyst that limits and hinders Black fathers’ experiences to be involved in schools. Fathers noted that depending on the type of invitation received from
teachers, the school, and their child strongly influenced their decision to be involved in parent activities. When the father’s child asked him to volunteer at a special event or speak to a teacher, time and energy, knowledge and skill were not factors to be involved or volunteer. Paternal obligation would be fulfilled. A welcoming school environment and timing of events would also influence a father’s involvement in activities. However, fathers reported that they had the time and energy, and knowledge and skill to volunteer even if they were not welcomed by the school.

Schools could systematically involve all fathers but specifically Black fathers to be more involved by examining their current policies and procedures. One father from Sacramento, California suggested there are policies and procedures that are problematic or systemic that do not encourage or reach out to fathers. He shared, “the social norm is 95% of teachers are female,…it’s the perception and a social norm that discourages fathers from the root---I think this is because schools have the you don’t ask [we] won’t tell policy.” Moreover, schools could provide information directly to fathers at focused events. This same interviewee recommended policies that could help with engagement and volunteering events that might be:

1:1 activities for engagement---education relationship with their children, a father son-daughter after school program. Schools could provide information directly to fathers about ways to volunteer through the website and notes home, if fathers are involved with mothers and schools are maternal spaces, their advocacy and support would reinforce policies as well.

Black fathers identified specific factors that hindered them from being involved in their children’s school, how they overcame obstacles, and more importantly, the social capital that they brought to their families and schools. Several studies highlight how teacher attitudes and other school factors can limit parental involvement. For example, Bermudez (1996) identified
barriers that prevent parents and teachers from communicating openly and effectively. Some of these are: (a) Parent’s limited English skills; (b) teacher’s lack of understanding of home-school partnerships; (c) lack of the school system support; and (d) parents’ negative past experiences with schools. These fathers confirmed in this study that such barriers lead to the view that schools are inaccessible, insensitive, and hostile. Joshi, Eberly, and Konzal (2005) conducted a multiphase research project to help teachers understand family values, beliefs, and practices to create more positive learning environments for students. The project was conducted based on the premise that to be effective, teachers must initiate good relations and create space for open communication with all parents including those with different cultural backgrounds. The study found that teachers and parents who have different backgrounds may have difficulty communicating with each other effectively.

Findings validated the aforementioned study. Fathers reported that they knew how to communicate effectively with the child about school and with the child’s teacher about school performance and homework. For example, findings revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated that they either agreed very strongly (36%) or agreed (50%) with their ability to communicate effectively with their child about the school day. Over half (56.3%) of the respondents indicated that their child initiated a conversation about the school.

The study was also highlighted by findings about the ability of fathers to meet the demands and requests of schools in participating in school sponsored events. These fathers did not need to be encouraged to contact the teacher if they had questions. In addition, time and energy to talk to teachers about their child was not always a problem for them. Through the use of the email fathers could respond to requests to help out at school or attend special events. However, fathers reported that teachers rarely initiated contact or created a space for positive
communication. These findings suggest that there may be important gaps across social class, race and ethnicity between black fathers and teachers. Future studies need to examine if the lack of initiation on the part of teachers is consistent with other groups as well. To make sense of some of the contradictions, Critical Race Theory (CRT) can assist with explaining the racial reality gap that exists.

As I have described, parental involvement is varied and tightly linked to parent’s self-habitus and self-efficacy, operationalized to be context-specific that represents a fathers ability to produce desired outcomes for his son or daughter; A multidimensional approach to examining Black fathers involvement in schools is necessary. I sought to develop an analytic framework using CRT domains that conceptualize the variety of actions and decisions that go into Black fathers involvement practices and roles, especially when race, class, and gender are at the forefront of all of their involvement experiences. Black fathers in this dissertation revealed that they are not locked into an old education system where school personnel have sole authority over their children’s education like other minority groups. The patriarchal structure below preserves the cultural and social tradition of the black family which brings power and respect in parenting, communication, volunteering, decision making, and collaboration as it relates to the Black fathers involvement in schools.

RQ#3: What recommendations do involved Black fathers offer to other Black fathers who are not actively involved that would be helpful in enhancing their involvement with their child’s school?

Each of the fathers in this study posited that if they were offering advice to new fathers about ways to be involved in their sons’ and daughters’ education they would stress the fact that presence at school was crucial. The fathers discussed how being present to pick up and drop off
their children each day, volunteering at schools, and taking leadership positions on decision making bodies such as the School Site Council and Parent-Teacher Organizations were invaluable. These experiences positioned Black fathers as viable partners with educators. Given that every father in this study discussed how he was persistently present at his children’s schools, the idea of Black fathers being uninvolved and unconcerned about their children’s education is disputed. Though a number of the fathers stated that they believed schools should play a more active role in soliciting fathers’ involvement, they also stated that fathers should not wait for such invitations and should assert their presence at schools even without being asked to participate.

**Part B: Quantitative Research Questions**

Following is a summary of the findings of the quantitative portion of the mixed methods study.

1. Income was significantly correlated with most of the items examined (four of the seven). (RQ1)

2. This research did not find a significant relationship between the grade level of the respondent’s child and involvement in school based activities. This is an interesting finding, considering that research data suggests that parents have a greater level of involvement in their child’s school at earlier grade levels. (RQ1)

3. The correlation between parent’s age and the item “I believe it is important to talk with other parent’s in my child’s school” was significant, $r (90) = .259$, $p<.05$. (Esptein & Salinas, 1993). (RQ1).
4. The correlation between educational level and the question “I believe it is my responsibility to explain tough assignments to my child” was significant, \(r(90) = .290, p<.01\). (RQ2).

5. The correlation between parental education and the question “I make a significant difference in my child's school performance” was significant, \(r(89) = .258, p<.05\). This was approaching a moderate correlation coefficient. (RQ2).

6. The correlation between income and the question “I know how to help my child do well in school” was significant, \(r(90) = .261, p<.05\). (RQ2).

7. The correlation between income and the question “I make a significant difference in my child's school performance” was significant, \(r(89) = .268, p<.05\). This was approaching a moderate correlation coefficient.

8. The next background variable examined was whether the grade level of the focus child was significantly related to home based activities. No items were found to have a significant relationship, \(p=n.s.\) (RQ2).

9. The final background variable examined in the second analysis was the respondent’s age. Only one item was found to have a significant relationship. The correlation between respondent’s age and the question “I believe it is my responsibility to explain tough assignments to my child” was significant, \(r(90) = .230, p<.05\). (RQ2).

10. African American fathers reported very strong valuation of taking responsibility for communicating regularly with teachers (\(M=5.23, SD =1.13\)). (RQ3)

11. Helping with homework (\(M=5.42, SD = 1.05\)). (RQ3)

12. Staying on top of things at school (\(M=5.20, SD = 1.10\)). (RQ3)
13. Talking regularly with their child about the school day (M=5.53, SD = .91); Helping with homework (M=5.42, SD = 1.05). (RQ3).

14. Staying on top of things at school (M=5.20, SD = 1.10), (RQ3).

15. Talking regularly with their child about the school day (M=5.53, SD = .91), (RQ3).

**Discussion**

Few studies have addressed the effect of Black father’s involvement in home and schools. In the present study, I attempted to address this void by identifying the attitudes and behaviors that influence Black fathers’ decision to be involved in their children’s school. Domains from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler revised (2005; 1997; 1995) Model of the Parent Involvement Process were used to examine the attitudes and behaviors that influence African American fathers’ decision to be involved in their children’s school based lives. The scales on the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler domains were (a) Parent’s Motivational Beliefs, using the scales Parent Attitude toward School and (b) Parental Role Beliefs. The other scale in this domain was Parental-Self-Efficacy. The second Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler domain, Invitations from Others, was comprised of General School invitations, Teacher Invitations, and Specific Child Invitations. The Third domain was Parent’s Life Context and it was composed of Perceived Knowledge and Skills and Perceived Time and Energy.

Research questions yielded satisfactory results in this study about African American fathers who participated in the research. The present analyses supported the hypothesized variables to father’s involvement to the involvement of home and school activities. Consistent with the literature review, greater responsibility for helping with homework, talking regularly with teachers, and staying in communication with child, teacher, and school was directly linked
with paternal use of self-actualization, which was redefined in this study as Parental Self-Habitus.

Indirect effects emerged with grade level of child and involvement in school activities. Fathers who had a high school diploma or some college rated items higher than fathers who had no high school Diploma or GED; specifically, fathers with more education reported more involvement and levels of self confidence in their children’s education. Invitations from others and Parents Life Context significantly validated in the interviews, focus groups, and Surveys Epstein and Salinas Home-based Parent Involvement Type. Invitations from others contributed significantly to the Epstein and Salinas Communication Parent Involvement Type.

The results of this study supported the tenets of Critical Race theory, which speaks to the nexus of race, class, and gender and calls for more detailed analysis of how each of these areas influences the other, and contributes to various forms of oppression (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Yosso, 2005). Fathers reported links between involvement and religiosity was of particular interest. Religiosity was related more to Parental-Self Habitus, cognitive awareness, active presence, social support, higher-father child relationships, and more involvement in the child’s school.

**Recommendations for Future Policy and Research**

From this study of Black father’s involvement in schools, several policy recommendations are offered based on the responses of fathers. One recommendation is the development of a Black Father and Child Education Task Force the purpose of which would be to seek to identify faculty members and other community stakeholders with relevant knowledge and expertise to serve, whose scholarship is in alignment with the task force goals and objectives. In doing so, the Black Father and Child Education Task Force would be charged with
developing recommendations and theoretical frameworks that would include a series of action-oriented projects to help Black fathers overcome some of the barriers they face to being involved with schools, how to network with other parents and fathers, and how to identify more specific study habit practices that could lead to increased academic performance in the home and school. This assumes that fathers would be supported in school with necessary funding and support services.

There is dearth of research and literature regarding Black fathers and their engagement with schools that this study has made efforts to address. The successes of Black father’s involvement in schools in California and throughout the nation vary greatly, but the factors involving their continued success for involvement in school have not been examined. Studies should also examine the impact of family composition of fathers who have been primary caretakers by ad hoc volunteerism. Currently, there are no data available that address unstudied group of fathers, specifically Black fathers. The researcher suggests that longitudinal studies be developed and conducted that follows Black fathers and their children over several years to reveal trends in Pre-12 grade education.

President Obama started the federal Responsible Fatherhood Initiative to address father’s involvement in education. Federal monies should be allocated for states to develop more policies, scalable pilot programs, and research/evaluation to help more families to become more families and Black fathers become more involved in education and be supported in their efforts when the attempt to be involved in formal schooling activities. In addition, more research should focus on fathers of color, lower income fathers, and working class fathers in order to better understand the differences and commonalities that exist among the various groups. In addition, communities, churches, and non-profit organizations have a responsibility to get involved and
provide enrichment and educational programs to strengthen families even more. Programs can partner or collaborate with county, state, and school district programs to leverage support and funding.

University institutions who have a cadre of staff and professional doctoral students who have a keen interest in Black fathers and their involvement in schools could develop an academic space that is committed to long term dissemination of research, scholarship, and best practices around Black fathers. Individuals, organizations, and private donors could come together to provide key financial support for long-term research projects to increase Black fathers engagement in schools. Arguably, school districts would have to be stakeholders in these endeavors to help identify practical interventions, reliable research, and responsible policy innovations that are supported by informed trans-disciplinary practices to improve the involvement of Black fathers in their children’s education. Finally, many fathers also emphasized how communication needs are not being met; and, how schools are unwelcoming. Policies holding districts accountable for the services they must provide under Education Code may help schools better serve Black fathers and may decrease communication deficits and foster nurturing and welcoming school environments.

Limitations

This study had limitations regarding the population surveyed and interviewed. Note there was some missing data, but it did not affect the response rate. The geographic area where fathers were pooled could be more representative of Black fathers in other high concentrated Black neighborhoods. There is a need for other perspectives including teachers, students, parents, and district administrators. Finally, there was a limited sample size, Los Angeles and Sacramento; therefore, generalizations may not hold for other Pan-Ethnic groups.
Summary

Schools are implicitly and explicitly conceptualized and operate as female-dominated spaces and places. Consequently, fathers can often be silenced or rendered invisible. A number of the fathers from this study stated that schools consciously and subconsciously construct the term “parent” to be synonymous with mother. The result of this construction and its application within schools as educators structure policy and conduct practices aimed at including parents veritably exclude fathers. The pertinent roles fathers could serve in facilitating their children’s healthy academic, social, and emotional development, then, are often impeded.

Part of this work sought to problematize the manner in which school officials viewed the participation of Black fathers in schools and expand their views of the roles men may serve as advocates for their sons and daughters in schools. What became apparent from the narratives offered by the fathers in this study was that, as they made efforts to engage with school personnel, their presence was frequently questioned, challenged, and viewed with suspicion.

Through this study I sought to challenge the idea of Black fathers as being absent, disconnected, and not part of their children’s educational experiences, but to document the ways that they seek to become engage with school personnel. New constructivist models should be constructed positioning engaged Black fathers as engaged, having an active presence in their sons’ or daughters’ educational endeavors. The literature shows that many Black fathers and their children have been able to overcome a myriad of societal challenges (Casenave, 1979; McAdoo, 1993; Taylor, Leashore, & Toliver, 1988; Williams, 1992), but in terms of longitudinal research, across disciplines, both qualitative and quantitative studies lack documentation of how fathers participate in public schools. As Gadsen et al. (2003) reminds us, “reaching these fathers
and documenting their attitudes and perceptions of fatherhood, we can begin to understand the breadth and scope of motivating factors and impediments to father involvement” (p. 397). As stated previously, researchers should be encouraged to explore issues related to Black fathers’ development within the social contexts that influence, their work, family, schools, and communities.

It is my hope that dissertation will add to the research literature that speaks to Black fathers and the roles they play within education spaces on behalf of their sons and daughters. One of the primary goals of this research was to give Black fathers a deliberative space to author their own experiences, to name the challenges that they have interacting with school officials, and to hear the steps that they take to be active participants in their children’s educational endeavors. Within this study Black fathers were given a space to articulate their voice and to authentically capture their perspectives of the relationships they experience with school officials. The importance of centering Black fathers voices within this analysis was critical. School officials and researchers may not know the experiences of Black fathers in schools if more spaces are not provided that allows them voice. Only fathers can inform schools about how, when, and why they are willing to participate in school business. If they are not consulted, if we continue to ignore the perceptions of Black fathers, they will never fully recognize the potential of their participation to the detriment of the students who are counting on them to engage. Challenging deficit views of Black fathers and constructing new knowledge of their varied roles within the lives of their children should be a goal for researchers concerned about the educational outcomes for Black students.
Appendix A: Flyer Soliciting Participants

FATHER INVOLVEMENT STUDY

I am looking for African American father participants to take part in a research study on African American fathers’ involvement in schools. This dissertation study, seeks to better understand how and why African American fathers choose to be involved in their children’s school to support their academic development.

At a prearranged day and time you will complete a brief 30-45 minute two-part survey about the ways you support your child’s learning and/or interact with his or her school. This study is looking to survey 100 African American fathers, who have children who attend school in California (K-12), and then interview a subset of 10 to gain more in-depth knowledge to better interpret the survey results.

Interview respondents will be randomly selected from the larger pool of father participants. Each father who completes the 1-2 hour interview will receive $25 in cash as a compensation for his time. Please note interested fathers responding to this flyer must initiate first contact, which will therefore implicitly give their permission to be contacted by this researcher. You will not receive any additional payment or other compensation for participating in either the survey or the interview.

To be eligible for this study, you need to be an African American father aged between 18 to 65+ years who is one of the primary caregivers of the child such as the father, stepfather, or legal guardian. To qualify, you can be very involved, somewhat involved, or a little involved, I need to hear from you all! Your child can attend (i) public, private, charter, parochial or special day program school, and (ii) reside in a suburban, urban, or rural community.

It is my intent for this study to make African American fathers feel good for having aided other fathers, schools, teachers, and community leaders in their children’s education.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Tomasha “Kenyatta” Jones, Ph.D. Candidate
Phone: (310)936-6027
Email: tskj06@ucla.edu or jaameonline@gmail.com

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)
Graduate School of Education & Information Studies (GSE&IS)
Moore Hall
405 Hilgard Ave.
Los Angeles CA, 90095

Recruitment Flyer: Version 1 African American Father’s Involvement in their Child’s Education October 2010

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Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Recruitment Letter  African American Father’s Study  October 2010

October 2010

{Name, Title}

{Address}

Dear __________________:

It was wonderful speaking with you earlier. Per our conversation enclosed is a copy of the research packet. For all intents and purposes, more information about my dissertation and me is also included. Currently, I am enrolled as a fifth year doctoral candidate at University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, Urban Schooling Division. This is a request for permission to recruit African American fathers who have children in Kindergarten thru 12th grades in the state of California. I will be examining how and why African American fathers choose to be involved in their children’s lives.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between African American fathers’ definition of their parental role, their perceived levels school-based of self-efficacy to help their children succeed in school, the types of parental involvement requests received from their children’s school and/or their children, and their reported involvement activities. Surveys are one the primary methods being employed in this study.

This study is looking to survey 100 African American fathers, who have children who attend school in California (K-12), and then interview a subset of 10 to gain more in-depth knowledge to better interpret the survey results. Interview respondents will be randomly selected from the larger pool of father participants. Each father who completes the 1-1.5 hour sidelineview will receive $25 in cash as a compensation for his time. Interested fathers responding to the flyer must initiate first contact, which will therefore implicitly give their permission to be contacted by this researcher.

I wish to advertise this research opportunity with a flyer, approved by you, to be posted at your facility or given to each participant. If possible, I would like to come to your school or agency and explain the study and recruit participants. If possible, might I attend: (Date and Place). I would love the opportunity to speak about my project with parents and hopefully spread the word. This project is not asking your staff to do any additional work on its behalf. No direct child data will be assessed nor will children be interviewed or surveyed.

I am available to meet with you in person to discuss this project in further detail. My cell number is 310-956-6027 and my email is jauneonline@gmail.com or tkj66@ucla.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you and establishing a relationship with your school, business, or organization.

Sincerely,

Tomashu “Kenyatta” Jones
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title: African American Fathers’ Involvement in Homes & Schools: An Interpretative Analysis of their Experiences

Principal Investigator: Tomashu “Kenyatta” Jones, Ph.D. (Candidate)

University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Graduate School of Education & Information Studies

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

The purpose of this dissertation study is to better understand why and how fathers in K-12 school systems are involved in their children’s school-based lives. Results will increase understanding of African American fathers’ involvement in their children’s schooling, identify areas of high and low involvement, as well as provide insights into how educators can promote greater involvement among African American fathers. I anticipate that approximately 100 people will participate in this study. Ten of the participants will be selected for face-to-face interviews. Information from these interviews will help interpret survey data.

PROCEDURES:

You are being asked to complete two surveys. One survey will measure how you feel about your role as a parent, your ability to help your children succeed in school, and the types of requests for involvement you receive from your children and school. The second survey will measure types of parental involvement that you are currently engaged. They will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

The surveys have no names on them, just an ID number in order to protect your privacy. Your consent form will be immediately collected and stored in a locked file cabinet. No one will see it other than my dissertation advisor.

For your participation in the study, you will be contributing to a research dissertation that has been under-examined and funded. Thus, I thank you and appreciate you for participating. You will also be asked to fill out an interest form if you are willing to participate in a one-hour face-to-face interview about these issues. The interview will last approximately sixty minutes.
RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:

The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical and psychological examinations or tests. In the unlikely event that keeping information confidential puts you or someone else, especially a child, in serious danger such as from suspected child abuse or neglect, then I will notify the appropriate authorities.

BENEFITS:

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study.

This study may benefit society if the results lead to a better understanding of how and why African American fathers choose to be involved in their children’s education. This information may improve schools’ efforts to involve fathers.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You choose whether to participate. If you decide not to participate, there are no penalties, and you will not lose any benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled during the normal course of your life.

If you choose to participate in the study, you can stop your participation at any time, without penalty or loss of benefits for the normal course of your life. If you want to withdraw from the study, please give your survey back to me.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Records that identify you will be available only to this investigator and my doctoral advisor, Tyrone Howard, Ph.D. Study records will be created, stored and maintained to protect confidential information. Each survey will have a code number on it for the purposes of identification. No subject names will be used on the survey documents. Surveys, consents forms, and other research related materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

In the unlikely event that keeping your information confidential puts you or someone else, especially a child, in serious danger such as suspected child abuse or neglect, then I will notify the appropriate authorities.

COMPENSATION:

If you satisfactorily complete the study and selected for an interview you will receive $25.00 in cash at the end of the interview. You will not receive any additional payment or other compensation for participating in the survey or the interview.
IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS:

You can ask questions about this research study now or at any time during the study, by talking to me the researcher, Tomashi “Kenyatta” Jones, Ph.D. (Candidate) at jaameonline@gmail.com or 310 936 6027 or my advisor Tyrone Howard, Ph.D. at University of California Los Angeles, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at thoward@gseis.ucla.edu, Moore Hall 405, Hilgard Ave, Los Angeles CA, 90095.

If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please call the Office of the Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122 or write to Office of the Human Research Protection Program, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

__________________________________________  ______________________
Subject’s Signature                               Date

__________________________________________  ______________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent        Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

__________________________________________  ______________________
Name of Person Obtaining Consent                     Contact Number

__________________________________________  ______________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent                     Date
INTEREST FORM

If you take the self-administered survey you may be randomly chosen to be a participant in this study.

To indicate your interest in being randomly selected as one of 10 volunteers for a 1-2 hour face-to-face interview for this study on African American fathers involvement with schools, please fill out the information below. If you are selected, I will contact you to schedule a face-to-face interview.

Contact Information:

Name: [Last, First]: ____________________________

Telephone Number: ____________________________

Email Address: ________________________________

How did you hear about this study? ____________________

Have you participated in a similar study? ________________

The Best Day and Time to Contact:

☐ Mornings: 7am-11am

☐ Afternoons: 1pm-5pm

☐ Evenings: 6pm-8:00pm

☐ Weekends (Please Specify Day and Time): ____________________

If you have any questions I can be contacted at (310) 936-6027 or jaameonline@gmail.com or tkj06@ucla.edu.

FOR SUBJECTS CAPABLE OF GIVING CONSENT

Subject’s Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________
Appendix D: Demographic Survey

This survey was designed to collect information pertaining Black father’s demographics. Data collected from this survey will be used for dissertation research purposes only.

Please review and complete all questions listed on the survey

1. How many children do you have? _____________________________________________
2. What is the grade level of the child to be discussed in the study? ________________
3. What is the gender of the child to be discussed in the study? _____________________
4. What is the conjugal relationship with the child’s mother? _______________________
5. What is your education level? _______________________________________________
6. What is your employment status? _____________________________________________
7. What is your age? _________________________________________________________
8. What is your income? ______________________________________________________
Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Part I: Notes for the Interviewer

Overview

1. Tape-record the interviews if permission is granted
2. Interview in a neutral setting.
3. Each interview lasted 60 to 120 minutes.

Interview Methodology

Interviews were implemented with a customized approach allowing for an in-depth investigation. Follow-up questions were used to stimulate interviewee memory. The interviewer used a semi-structured question design (Part III). Interview contained:

1. A predetermined set of 10-15 questions
2. All predetermined questions were the same for respondents

Designation of Interviewee: __________________________________________________________

Location of Interview: ______________________________________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Start Time: __________________________

Finish Time: _________________________
Part II: Components of the Interview

1. **Components of the Interview**
   
a. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

b. Review confidentiality and consent form.

c. Create a relaxed environment

d. Dialogue

*Question:* Have you received my introductory correspondence explaining my research and the format that will be used?

*Question:* Are there any questions?

2. **Explain the purpose of the interview**

The purpose of this interview is to explore factors that influence your decisions. During the time we have together I would like to get an understanding of your experiences and observations pertinent to the subject matter of the study.

3. **Ask permission to record interview**

With your authorization, I would like to tape-record our discussion to get an inclusive record of what is said, since the notes I take will not be as comprehensive as I will require. No one other than I will listen to anything you say to me. Only I will have access to the records. The research results will describe what you and others have said predominantly in summation. No responses will be ascribed to you by name.

The open-ended questions are intended to obtain your personal experience and perceptions. The interview time may take about 2 hours. If you agree to volunteer and participate in the research process, please sign the informed consent page and confidentially agreement.
Would you give me permission to tape the interview?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

---

### Part III: Interview Questions

The primary research questions and associated interview questions guiding the interviews follow.

**Qualitative Research Questions**

- **RQ1**: What are the specific practices and strategies African American fathers employ in the home and in their children’s school to support their academic development?
- **RQ2**: What are the experiences of Black fathers with school officials?
- **RQ3**: What obstacles, if any, do Black fathers identify as factors that hinder them from being involved in their children’s school, and how do they overcome these obstacles?
- **RQ4**: What recommendations do involved Black fathers offer to other Black fathers who are not actively involved that would be helpful in enhancing their involvement with their child’s school?

**Questions for Individual Interviews**

1. Could you tell me about your experiences within the schools of your kids?

2. Can you share some times when the school has invited your participation to be involved in the school?

   1. Can you give me some examples where the school has solicited your involvement?
   
   2. How do schools dis-invite involvement?
   
   3. What do you think are the impediments to your engagement?
4. Do you think there are any policies that are problematic in encouraging your engagement? What about fathers in general?

5. Have you found any policies that are useful or inviting that try to help get father’s engaged?

6. Do you work collectively with other parents to make your child’s school better?

7. Are there any resources, source of advocates you refer to or work with in helping you navigate the system of your child?

8. If a father wanted to best advocate for his child, what advice would you give him?

9. How do you think your engagement affects your student’s achievement?

10. How does your involvement impact your student’s progress?

11. How do you think your race affects your engagement at your student’s school?

12. So you think your social or economic status effects your engagement at your student’s school?

13. Do you think your sex or gender affects your engagement at your student’s school?

14. Of the three social constructs race, class and gender, which do you feel influence your engagement practices and experiences?

**Questions for Focus Group Sessions**

Please state your name for the record?

1.) Where were you raised?

2.) How do you identify racially or ethnically?

3.) Where were you raised and school?

4.) What’s your highest educational degree or diploma?
5.) What are the ages of your kids; and where do they attend school; and their grade levels.

6.) *What has changed in the Black family and the black community?

7.) What has kept you involved in your child’s education?

8.) *How was your father involved in your life and education?

9.) *Please describe your father’s involvement if he was involved? What did that involvement look like?

10.)  *How did he help you with school work?

11.)  *How much has really changed in terms of Black fathers being involved in their child’s academics?

12.)  What does parental involvement look like to you? Please describe your involvement?

13.)  Tell me when the school actually invited you to be involved?

14.)  What did they ask you to be involved with?

15.)  Describe what involvement looks like to you?

16.)  What do you think are some impediments for you to be involved? Or does the school welcome you to be involved? Have they invited you to be involved?

17.)  How does school disinvite you to be involved in school activities?

18.)  Do you believe it is your responsibility to be stay involved at your child’s school?

19.)  Can you provide concrete examples of when the schools have asked you to volunteer?

20.)  How do you think your involvement impacts your child’s education?

21.)  Do you believe you are getting through to your child when it comes to academics?

22.)  *Do race, class, and gender matter when you choose to be involved?

23.)  **How does church, religion, or spirituality shape home practices and child’s academic identity?

24.)  Is there anything at all, which you recommend to black fathers about the schooling of their black children and their experiences? Is there anything that you would tell them?

25.)  Is there anything that I did not touch on you want to discuss?
*Denotes question was added and not part of survey questionnaire.

** Denotes questions that were not part of the survey. Question was generated by context of authentic dialogue or all 10 of the fathers made a reference.
Appendix F: Survey Questionnaire

The Parent Perspective: Survey of Parent in K-12 Grades.

Dear Parent or Guardian:

This information is for descriptive purposes only. You will not be identified.

Demographic Form

Number of children:

Number of children within each age range:

_____ 0 months- 3 years old
_____ 4-7 years old
_____ 8-11 years old
_____ 11-13 years old
_____ 14-16 years old
_____ 17-18 years of age

Grade level of focus child? ________

Gender of focus child?  □ Male
□ female

Current conjugal relationship with mother

□ Single  □ Married  □ Widowed  □ Permanently Separated  □ Other
Your Education Level:

- No High School Diploma or Equivalency Degree
- GED
- High School Graduate
- Some College/No Degree
- College Graduate (2 Yrs)
- College Graduate (4 Yrs)
- Tech School/License
- Graduate Degree

Your Employment Status:  

- Full-Time
- Part-Time
- Temporary
- Self-employed
- Not Currently working

Your Age:__________

Your Income: Please select the range that best describes your annual household income.

- < 10,000
- $10,000 to $20,000
- $20,000 to $40,000
- $40,000 to $60,000
- $60,000 and above
The Parent Perspective
Parental Role Construction for Involvement in the Child's Education Scale

Part 1: Role Activity Beliefs

Instructions:
Please indicate how much your AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement.

Response Format:
All items in the scale use a six-point format (disagree very strongly to agree very strongly):

1=Disagree very strongly 4= Agree just a little
2=Disagree 5= Agree
3=Disagree just a little 6= Agree very strongly

I believe it is my responsibility . . .

1. to volunteer at the school . 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. to communicate with my child’s teacher regularly. 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. to help my child with homework 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. make sure the school has what it needs 1 2 3 4 5 6

5. support decisions made by the teacher 1 2 3 4 5 6

6. stay on top of things at school 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. explain tough assignments to my child 1 2 3 4 5 6
8. talk with other parents from my child’s school
   1  2  3  4  5  6

9. make the school better
   1  2  3  4  5  6

10. talk with my child about the school day
    1  2  3  4  5  6
Parental Self-Efficacy for Helping the Child Succeed in School Scale

Instructions

Please indicate how much you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement.

Response Format:

All items in the scale use a six-point format (disagree very strongly to agree very strongly):

1=Disagree very strongly
2=Disagree
3=Disagree just a little
4=Agree just a little
5=Agree
6=Agree very strongly

Items

1. I know how to help my child do well in school.

2. I don’t know if I’m getting through to my child.

3. I don’t know how to help my child make good grades in school.

4. I feel successful about my efforts to help my child learn.

5. Other children have more influence on my child’s grades than I do.
6. I don’t know how to help my child learn. 1 2 3 4 5 6

7. I make a significance difference in my child’s school performance 1 2 3 4 5 6

Parent’s Perception of General Invitation for Involvement from the School Scale

**Instructions**

Please indicate how much you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement.

**Response Format:**

All items in the scale use a six-point format (disagree very strongly to agree very strongly):

1=Disagree very strongly 4= Agree just a little
2=Disagree 5= Agree
3=Disagree just a little 6= Agree very strongly

**Items**

1. Teachers at this school are interested and cooperative when they discuss my child. 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I feel welcome at this school. 1 2 3 4 5 6

3. Parent activities are scheduled at this school So I can attend. 1 2 3 4 5 6

4. This school lets me know about meeting and special school events. 1 2 3 4 5 6
5. This school’s staff contacts me promptly 1 2 3 4 5 6
   About any problems involving my child.

6. The teachers at this school keep me informed 1 2 3 4 5 6
   About my child’s progress in school.

Parents’ Perspective of Personal Knowledge and Skills Scale

Instructions

Please indicate how much you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement.

Response Format:

All items in the scale use a six-point format (disagree very strongly to agree very strongly):

1=Disagree very strongly 4= Agree just a little
2=Disagree 5= Agree
3=Disagree just a little 6= Agree very strongly

Items

1. I know about volunteering opportunities 1 2 3 4 5 6
   at my child’s school.

2. I know about special events at my child’s 1 2 3 4 5 6
   school.

3. I know effective ways to contact my child’s 1 2 3 4 5 6
   teacher.
4. I know how to communicate effectively with my child about the school day.

5. I know how to explain things to my child about his or her homework.

6. I know enough about the subjects of my child’s homework to help him or her.

7. I know how to communicate effectively with my child’s teacher.

8. I know how to supervise my child’s homework.

9. I have the skills to help out at my child’s school.

Parent’s Perception of Personal Time and Energy Scale

Instructions

Please indicate how much you AGREE OR DISAGREE with each of the following statements. Please think about the current school year as you consider each statement.

Response Format:

All items in the scale use a six-point format (disagree very strongly to agree very strongly):

1=Disagree very strongly  4= Agree just a little
2=Disagree  5= Agree
3=Disagree just a little  6= Agree very strongly
Items

I have enough energy to...

1. communicate effectively with my child about the school day.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

2. help out at my child’s school.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

3. communicate effectively with my child’s teacher.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

4. Attend special events at school.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

5. Help my child with homework.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

6. Supervise my child’s homework.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

Parent’s Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Teacher Scale Instructions

Please indicate HOW OFTEN the following have happened SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.

Response Format

All items in the scale use a six-point format (never to daily):

1= never       2= 1 or 2 times       3= 4 or 5 times
4= once a week 5= a few times a week  6= daily

Items:

1. My child’s teachers asked me or expected me to help with homework.
   1  2  3  4  5  6

2. My child’s teacher asked me or expected me to supervise my child’s homework.
   1  2  3  4  5  6

3. My child’s teacher asked me to talk with my child about the school day.
   1  2  3  4  5  6
4. My child’s teacher asked me to attend a special event at the school.
   1  2  3  4  5  6

5. My child’s teacher asked me to help out at school.
   1  2  3  4  5  6

6. My child’s teacher contacted me (for example, sent a note, phoned, e-mailed).
   1  2  3  4  5  6

Parent’s Perceptions of Specific Invitations for Involvement from the Child Scale

Instructions
Please indicate HOW OFTEN the following have happened SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS SCHOOL YEAR.

Response Format
All items in the scale use a six-point format (never to daily):

1= never  2= 1 or 2 times  3= 4 or 5 times
4= once a week  5= a few times a week  6= daily

1. My child asked me to explain something about his or her homework.
   1  2  3  4  5  6

2. My child asked me to supervise his or her homework
   1  2  3  4  5  6

3. My child talked with me about the school day.
   1  2  3  4  5  6

4. My child asked me to attend a special event at the school.
   1  2  3  4  5  6

5. My child asked me to help out at the school.
   1  2  3  4  5  6
6. My child asked me to talk with his or her teacher.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Thanks! TURN THE PAGE. BEGIN THE NEXT SURVEY.
FOOTNOTES

Footnote 1: In this article, I use racial descriptors *African American* and *Black* interchangeably.

Footnote 2: The term Involvement used in this work refers to school-sanctioned, school authored activities in which parents participate.

Footnote 3: School officials refers to personnel with decision-making power in schools such as administrators, counselors, psychologists, teachers, and program coordinators, and any other District personnel with whom parents might interact.
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