UNIVERSITY OF REDLANDS

Cultivating Parental Involvement Through the Lens
of Perceived Success and Engagement

A dissertation presented in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Leadership for Educational Justice

By
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ABSTRACT
Cultivating Parental Involvement Through the Lens
of Perceived Success and Engagement
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This narrative study used theoretical frameworks of Epstein's overlapping sphere of influence and parental framework to evaluate parental perceptions of success held by a parents and guardians of African American males in a southern California public school and to determine whether those perceptions influenced school- and district-based involvement and engagement. The research investigated how parents defined academic success by their children, which instructional measures used by the site and district were most appreciated, and which forms of engagement they were most likely to utilize throughout the school year. The research secured thoughts and desires of parents who are often overlooked as community members and provided an opportunity to give feedback on the instructional integrity and academic attainment of their children.

The research was designed to increase parental involvement by identifying the needs and desires of the participants. In California, district-based funding is predicated on integration of parental involvement, so most schools offer parental engagement activities. However, it is not clear whether parents and guardians of African American males consider those activities as relevant and participate in them.

This research addresses achievement disparities between African American males and their grade-level peers in one urban southern California school district and parents' concepts of student success measures. Therefore, this research has the capacity to build a strategic collaboration among all members of the learning community through their overlapping spheres of influence.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to instructional leaders who serve as academic cheerleaders to students and their families during their educational journey. Although they may never see all of the fruits of their labor, the educational system is dependent on their work every day. They make a difference!

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I take this opportunity to express appreciation and gratitude to the cadre of significant individuals who made this dissertation journey possible. First, I thank my family. The love and support provided by my family is unmeasurable. Their love and continuous sacrifices provided opportunity to complete my coursework and writing to complete the degree. During this journey, my husband provided constant encouragement, even when I thought the journey was impossible. I hope that my children use my journey as their own personal catalyst for continued individual success. My mother and aunt took great care of my children during my evening classes and extended weekend seminars. Their direct support allowed me to attend classes and write. I remain forever indebted to them for their support and love.

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My extraordinary friend, [REDACTED] and I started this doctoral journey together and we defended on the same day. She supported me and motivated me. Her dedication and years of friendship encouraged instructional tenacity within me as an instructional leader.

Finally, I thank the students, parents, and staff members whom I have had the privilege of serving over more than 20 years at every instructional level. At each level, both the students and the parents inspired me as an instructional leader to be my best self and the best educator I could be. Because of them, I can and I will!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

For years, educators, researchers, and politicians have grappled with various techniques to improve the achievement rates for African American students enrolled in the K–12 instructional setting in the United States and neighboring nations (Banks, 2009; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009). As a result, many school-based leaders have taken a direct interest in the achievement rates of African American males (Koppie, 2017; Kosol, 1991; Pakter & Chen, 2013).

The achievement disparity between African American students and their grade-level peers has been attributed to a range of instructional and societal factors, including but not limited to teacher expectations, teacher quality, culturally relevant curriculum, instructional access, poverty, nutrition, parent education, and parental engagement (Allen, 2015; Howard, 2010; U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2010; USDOE, 2019; H. E. White & Cotton, 2009).

J. Lee and Orfield (2006) affirmed that the nation observed a significant narrowing of achievement disparity among African American students in the 1970s due to a host of educational and social policies. These achievement disparities mandated collaborative programs, “which guaranteed a minimally adequate level of achievement for minorities through compensatory education, minimum competency testing, school desegregation, equalization of school funding, the war on poverty, and affirmative action” (p. 12). In other words, African American student achievement sustained significant growth with direct support from federal programs. Each federal program’s initiation created opportunities and instructional avenues to decrease the educational disparity margins for all students, but especially for African American students. However, by the early 1980s, these achievement gains by African American students as

a whole decreased dramatically, as identified in *A Nation at Risk* (J. Lee & Orfield, 2006; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

In the past 20 years, the federal government has instituted a plethora of reform measures to decrease achievement disparities between African American students and their grade-level peers (McGuinn, 2006). With each reform measure, parents' role and involvement has become imperative in reducing achievement disparities. Hence, the need to increase parental involvement resonated in each federal educational measure (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006; McGuinn, 2006).

Background of the Study

Prior to implementation of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) under the leadership of President Lyndon B. Johnson, the direct role of the federal government and its responsibility for public education were limited (Kantor, 1991; McGuinn, 2006). During the 1980s, conservative lawmakers questioned the federal government's role and pushed for more limited responsibility in mandating educational change (McGuinn, 2006). Both conservative and liberal politicians had personal opinions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the federal government. Whereas some governmental leaders contended that it was the federal government's duty to reconcile achievement disparities between cohorts of public school students, others maintained that the federal government held no culpability for inequitable achievement (McGuinn, 2006).

According to Paul (2016), ESEA mandated direct funding to improve primary and secondary education, focusing on accountability through several extensive Title I mandates. ESEA also mandated parental involvement at the site and district levels to secure distribution of Title I federal funding (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). Although ESEA provided direct guidance on the requirements for parental involvement, the document provided limited or no direction on the

methods to be implemented to meet such requests (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). ESEA identified the “authorization for professional development, instructional materials, and resources to support educational programs” (Paul, 2016, para. 1).

In the past 20 years, the role of the federal government in public education has expanded (McGuinn, 2006). The ESEA has provided a significant level of funding for education (Kantor, 1991). The federal government reauthorizes ESEA every 5 years. The required authorization provides Presidents and their administrations an opportunity to influence the federal government’s education role. Nevertheless, two major themes persist in each reauthorization of ESEA: (a) the need to address achievement disparities among various at-risk subgroups, especially African American students, and (b) the need to increase parental involvement.

Goals 2000

As a means to address the achievement disparities in public schools observed across the nation, former President Bill Clinton reauthorized the 1965 ESEA (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2001). “At the time of its signing, Goals 2000 represented one of the greatest intrusions of the federal government into education policy, an area traditionally reserved to the states” (Superfine, 2005, p. 10). According to McGuinn (2006), implementation of Goals 2000 provided a more significant “federal role” in public education (p. 87). During the first 3 years of President Clinton’s administration, the federal government earmarked more than 800 million dollars for implementation of Goals 2000 (McGuinn, 2006). The main objective of Goals 2000 legislation included aligning “clear and rigorous” standards in all states to improve instructional outcomes for all students (USDOE, 2001, para. 1).

The reauthorized ESEA amendments encompassed several significant components. Two notable features of Goals 2000 were a proposal of national educational standards based on

nationally defined goals and establishment of an assessment accountability system (McGuinn, 2006). Although Goals 2000 provided flexibility for individual state standards for instruction, the mandate required states to submit their standards for approval to the federal government in order to secure funding (McGuinn, 2006; Superfine, 2005). Moreover, the accountability mandates under Goals 2000 instituted a series of annual tests in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics in specified grade levels for students to document their proficiency (USDOE, 2001).

By the 1996 presidential election, high expectations and support for the reauthorized ESEA legislation through Goals 2000 dissipated (McGuinn, 2006). The enthusiasm once held for reauthorization of ESEA under President Clinton's administration dramatically declined. Nevertheless, the federal government's role in public education intensified between conservatives and liberals (Superfine, 2005). More important, legislative leaders questioned the increased role of the federal government in public education. However, both legislative sides noted a need to improve the education of the public's youth. Both schools and districts became responsible for initiating parental voice and involvement opportunities. More important, Goals 2000 increased opportunities for parental involvement through various Title I parental involvement parameters and ushered in a new wave of educational reforms (McGuinn, 2006).

No Child Left Behind

In March 2001, President George W. Bush reauthorized ESEA with implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The NCLB legislation replaced the established expectations assigned under Goals 2000 implemented in the Clinton presidency (McGuinn, 2006). NCLB established new instructional standards for public school students, with a focus to ensure student proficiency by the 2014 school year (McGuinn, 2006). According to J. Lee and

Orfield (2006), through this NCLB legislation, the federal government ushered in a new focus on “academic excellence and equity” and closing achievement disparities among significant subgroups (Lee, 2006, p. 12) by ensuring that all students received access to superior instructional opportunities to reach proficiency. NCLB established a focus on accountability to measure the level of instruction received by students.

The NCLB legislation implemented four pillars for instruction: (a) accountability for at-risk students, (b) district flexibility in spending, (c) research-based instructional measures, and (d) parental options at Title I school sites (McGuinn, 2006). According to Gaille (2017), the authority given to states to establish identified instructional standards also instituted a focus on yearly assessments, monitoring student progress, and specific teacher qualifications. Ultimately, the goal of NCLB was to improve academic achievement by all students in U.S. public schools (Birman et al., 2007). Although NCLB was passed with bipartisan approval, the legislation had multiple advantages and disadvantages, with long-lasting implications for public education (J. Lee & Orfield, 2006).

According to Gaille (2017), NCLB’s significant positive outcome was that it provided an immediate instructional structure for school districts and school sites. Both teachers and site-level administrators were assigned a higher level of accountability due to the state instructional standards required within each discipline. According to Williams (2012), NCLB held all instructional leaders accountable for direct achievement by “high achievers, low achievers, students with disabilities, and students from culturally diverse and low-socioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 4). In states such as California, teachers must teach the required state standards in each content area (USDOE, 2006). The high-stakes testing and annual reporting placed an immediate toll on schools and district officials to ensure student proficiency (Williams, 2015).

Like previous legislation, NCLB was an attempt to close the achievement gap for the country's most significant subgroups and to increase parental engagement (McGuinn, 2006).

ESSA

In 2015, the federal government, under the leadership of President Barack Obama, unveiled new education legislation to increase student achievement in the United States. The Obama Administration introduced the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to replace NCLB. The ESSA reform documented rigorous accountability measures for the states, school districts, and students (USDOE, 2018). ESSA established guidelines to guarantee academic achievement by all students. Highlights of the ESSA legislation include a direct focus on equity, access to exceptional instructional standards for all students, systems of assessments and monitoring, local support for instructional growth, access to early education, and accountability.

In California, additional instructional measures were included to measure student success in districts. Measures such as state annual testing, English Learner proficiency, instructional attainment by subgroups, and student-based measures such as student engagement, safety, graduation rates, and postsecondary readiness define student success in California (California Department of Education [CDE], 2020). Moreover, the state of California identified significant measures that denoted academic success by students in the state.

Similar to previous legislation, the ultimate goal of each instructional measure in ESSA was to decrease past instructional disparities among significant subgroups such as African American students (Gaille, 2017). ESSA also included extensive parental engagement opportunities through the school-parent compact. Unlike other legislative measures, ESSA incorporated various student-based measures that directly measure student overall success in the

school building (Houston et al., 2020). Moreover, ESSA included a gauge to analyze success of individual students.

California

In California, the instructional shift from State Instructional Standards to Common Core Standards intensified the need for counties and local educational agencies (LEAs) to establish measures to quantify student success (Rikoon et al., 2016). California identified three themes—conditions of learning, student outcomes, and engagement—with several substandards for each category (CDE, 2020b). California identified several state priorities to address instructional disparities and the need for parental engagement in all public school districts. The identified state priorities were basic services, state standards, course access, expelled youth, foster youth, parent involvement, pupil engagement, pupil achievement, school climate, course access, and student achievement (CDE, 2020b).

Under ESSA requirements, California noted instructional gains for various subgroups. Nevertheless, achievement disparities between African American students and their grade-level peers remained on most state assessments, especially for African American males (CDE, 2020b). With each measure, county and district agencies received additional funding to improve the instructional trajectory of students (USDOE, 2017). Additional funding allocations provided opportunities for school districts to offer new learning opportunities in addition to alternative achievement measures (USDOE, 2017).

Under all three legislative measures—Goals 2000, NCLB, and ESSA—the various presidents and their administrations accelerated efforts to increase student achievement and decrease historical disparities among public school students. In order to identify the markers for success, each measure required various forms of assessments. A plethora of site and state

assessment measures was established to measure student growth and identify at-risk students (McGuinn, 2006). Another resonating factor of each legislative measure was the immediate and direct need for parental involvement and engagement as a support mechanism to ensure academic achievement by students (McGuinn, 2006).

When parents are engaged at the site and district levels to satisfy federal engagement mandates, they are rarely consulted regarding how they define academic success for their students (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Nor are the parents or guardians consulted regarding which instructional measures they deem most significant in determining their students' academic achievement or proficiency level. "Currently, parents' role and involvement in schools have been understood in terms of 'what they do' and how that fits or does not fit with the goals of the school" (Howard & Reynolds, 2008, p. 84). If parents and guardians are required to engage with their local public school through federal mandates to support student achievement, what role do they play to ensure their students' success? Do the parents' and guardians' perceptions of success by their students influence their willingness to engage in involvement opportunities at the school site and in the district?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative research was threefold. First, the study was designed to attain the authentic voice of parents and guardians of African American males to evaluate how they define academic success for their students. What systems and metrics do parents and guardians of African American males use to define their students' academic success? Second, the study was designed to assess parents' opinions on which instructional measures are most significant in determining their students' success. Do parents and guardians of African American males value the end-of-year assessments required by most state and federal

administrative measures at the same level as school officials? Third, the study was designed to determine whether perceptions of success held by a selected group of parents influenced their engagement levels.

Significance of the Study

The 1965 ESEA legislation dramatically changed the federal government's role in education by establishing expectations for students in elementary through high school (McGuinn, 2006). The pivotal ESEA legislation marked the government's direct involvement in education by providing funding to states to improve public education for all students in Grades K–12. ESEA set forth a goal to address directly achievement disparities in significant subgroups such as African American students, as did the preceding educational-based legislation. The reauthorization of ESEA through Goals 2000, NCLB, and ESSA called for decreasing the achievement gap and increasing parental involvement at school sites in district-level decision making. Therefore, this research has the potential to influence educational change.

This study has significance for the field of education. The research may forge new collaborative conversations regarding academic disparities among African American males with families and members of the school community. By establishing positive discussions, family members and school officials have the potential to redefine success measures by evaluating the various assessments and tasks required to identify student proficiency. Another significant potential of this research is the impetus to establish meaningful engagement opportunities for parents and guardians of African American males. "Research shows that parents and family engagement in early education is connected to excellent academic achievement gains and is a significant factor in improving K-12 schooling" (University of Chicago, 203, p. 1). Through this research, the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American males and members

of the school community can produce a supportive environment to reevaluate the best methods to address academic disparities among African American males.

This study holds significant value due to the need to improve the level of culturally responsive pedagogy, decrease the level of academic disparities among African American males, and increase meaningful parental involvement opportunities for their parents. In the past 10 years, instructional researchers and educators have suggested a direct correlation between culturally responsive pedagogy and instructional achievement by minority students (Banks, 2002; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lareau, 2002; D. D. Williams, 2012). According to Howard (2010), by guaranteeing culturally relevant pedagogy, school officials safeguard their students' values and cultural dynamics. D. D. Williams (2012) asserted the significance of culturally relevant instruction for students through a tiered model using social and emotional learning (SEL). When the instructional setting, including teachers, meets students' emotional needs, the students have a better chance of achieving academically, especially African American males. Hence, this research could have dramatic implications for instructional leaders and the families that they serve.

This research holds significance because it may secure opportunities for new collaborative conversations between families and school officials. The research may encourage families and school officials to redefine how success and proficiency are defined for African American students, especially African American male students. This research has unique value due to the need to improve the level of culturally responsive pedagogy for all students, especially African American male students.

Research Questions

The research questions posed for this research study provide an opportunity to secure the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American males. Each question supports the goal to elicit a key narrative from each research participant. Seven research questions guided this study:

1. How do parents and guardians of African American males define success for their sons?
2. Which instructional measures used by the school and district are most significant to the parents to signify their students' proficiency and academic success.
3. Does the engagement level of participating parents fluctuate based on their perception of their male students' success?
4. The Advance Success Unified School District (ASUSD) has a multitude of instructional measures to define academic success by their students; of those measures, which instructional measures do parents and guardians of African American males signify as most significant to evaluating their student's success?
5. Do parents and guardians of African American males have a higher appreciation for nonacademic measures such as extracurricular sports, clubs, and organizations when defining academic success for their students?
6. Do parents and guardians of African American males agree that current site/district engagement opportunities are relevant to their needs as parents and to the long-term instructional success of their sons?
7. Do parents of African American males agree that their voices and needs have a level of influence at the site and in the school district?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions are used to provide clarification on research content.

Academic achievement: A level of success based on school site measures, including grades and quarterly benchmarks, as well as district-based indicators such as state end-of-year summative assessments (CDE, 2017-2018).

Achievement disparities: The achievement gaps among significant subgroups on a variety of assessment measures and school-based achievement indicators (Howard, 2010).

African American: Any student who personally classifies himself as African American, Black, or of two or more races (including Black) on the district's home demographic questionnaire upon enrolling in the district.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965): Federal legislation focused on improving instructional outcomes for at-risk students by providing additional state funding through various Title I programs (USDOE, 2020).

Every Student Succeeds Act: Federal legislation that reauthorized the ESEA of 1965 under the presidency of Barack Obama (McGuinn, 2006), replacing the NCLB legislation established during the George Bush presidency.

Goals 2000: Federal legislation that reauthorized the ESEA of 1965 during the Clinton presidency (McGuinn, 2006).

California Dashboard: Reports that provides members of the school community and instructional stakeholders access to various state-based measures used to monitor academic progress in California schools (CDE, 2019).

No Child Left Behind: Federal legislation that reauthorized the ESEA of 1965 under the presidency of George Bush (McGuinn, 2006).

Parents and guardians of African American males: Persons who are raising and supporting African American male students in the role of adult caregivers; may also include extended family members, adoptive parents, stepparents, foster families, or persons who may not self-identify as African American.

Socioeconomic status (SES): Status of students and families who qualify for the district's free/reduced-price lunch program, based on the family's total income (Howard, 2010).

Research Design

The qualitative narrative methods research model used in this study provided an opportunity to gather the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American males through their individual stories. Stories contain within them multiple voices including inherent paradoxes, moral dilemmas, search for meanings and values and the subjects' more or less reflexive explorations of the material and discursive possibilities for being one or another (Jørgensen & Klee, 2014). Coulter et al. (2007) examined the intersection between narrative inquiry and storytelling as pedagogy. The qualitative method of narrative inquiry leads to in-depth and descriptive collection of informative stories and subject matter (Mason, 2017). A narrative inquiry framework guided this qualitative methodological approach to explore an array of dimensions in the social world, including the texture and fabric of everyday life, along with the understanding, experiences, and images of research participants (Mason, 2017).

Spardley's (1979) ethnographic interviewing process was used to understand how parents and guardians of African American males defined academic success in accordance with the various assessment measures used by a particular southern California public school district, as

well as to analyze the parents' experience with the district. By using the narrative inquiry qualitative method, this research allowed the researcher to observe and meticulously evaluate the perceptions of parents and guardians of African American males regarding their sons' academic success.

This study consisted of five components for all research participants: (a) receipt of the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) and interest letter (Appendix B), (b) receipt of the consent to participate form (Appendix C), (c) completion of the one-on-one interview or telephone interview, (d) receipt of a thank you card at the end of the interview (Appendix D), and (e) receipt of an email documenting the conclusion of the study and debriefing the participants regarding the research findings (Appendix E).

Assumptions

The purpose of this narrative qualitative research study was to provide insight into the hopes and desires of parents and guardians of African American male students as they defined academic success by their students. This research synthesized two major theoretical assumptions proposed by parental involvement scholars.

The first theoretical assumption was that parent involvement has a positive direct impact on academic achievement by all students. Parental involvement scholars attribute immediate instructional gains to direct participation and engagement by parents. Scholars such as Epstein and Connors (1992), Henderson and Mapp (2002) and Mapp (2002) have suggested that students have a significant likelihood of performing successfully if they have a parent or other adult in the home who is actively engaging in home-to-school opportunities. Parental involvement scholars have also suggested that minority parents may engage in parental involvement opportunities differently from their peers (Epstein, 1987).

The second theoretical assumption was that numerous outside factors influence engagement by parents and guardians of minority students. According to Trotman (2001), factors such as parental schedules, education levels, and expectations held by teachers and school site administrators exert an impact on the level of engagement by minority parents. The work schedules of parents may prevent them from engaging in school-based activities that occur during the instructional day. School officials' expectations about parental engagement may prevent minority parents from engaging actively in the school building (Boro, 2015). Some parental involvement scholars have suggested that the family's socioeconomic status, as well as financial burdens, may negatively impact the parent's or guardian's ability to participate in the school building (Foley, 2015).

Thus, this research took into consideration the following assumptions to evaluate the authentic voices of parents and guardians. First, parent involvement affects students and results in intrinsic and extrinsic benefits for students. Second, multiple outside factors directly influence some parents and guardians in their level of engagement with their student's school setting. Based on these two established theoretical assumptions proposed by prominent parental involvement scholars, this research will advance the literature on parental involvement.

Limitations

This research study has two identified limitations. The first limitation relates to the researcher's affiliation with the study's target district, where the researcher served in various instructional capacities in the district for more than 15 years. Thus, some participant parents may have known the researcher personally. The researcher may have related with the participant as a parent or guardian in the past. Research participants may have had knowledge of the researcher

due to past engagement in district-level committees. The researcher has significant relationships in the school district.

Another significant limitation of the study is the sample size: 10 parents or guardians of African American male students. Therefore, the data may not reflect the thoughts, feelings, and desires of all parents and guardians of African American males in the district. The study included only parents who volunteered to participate. Hence, the ontology represents only a particular viewpoint of a small cross-section of the district.

Delimitations

The major delimitation is that the researcher did not examine the cause of academic disparities between African American male students and their peers. There is significant research that defines this historical achievement gap, especially among male African American students. Past research has documented causes and potential effects of the achievement gap. This current study focused on the parents and guardians of African American male students and their perceptions of success for their students, focusing on how the parents and guardians defined academic success.

Chapter Summary

This study examined the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American male students regarding their perceptions of academic success and the engagement opportunities that are afforded to them at their student's school site in a specified urban southern California school district. The qualitative research method used in this research identified how parents and guardians of African American male students defined success for their sons, which instructional measures they valued most, and whether their level of engagement with the school was

influenced by their direct perception of their student's success. This research may influence new collaborative conversations and relationships between families and school officials.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the study, the study's background, the significance of the study, and the research questions. Chapter 1 identifies the research assumptions and potential research limitations. Chapter 2 presents the review of relevant literature and the theoretical framework. Chapter 3 describes the relevant research design measures, including participant selection, research design, and data collection methods. Results of data collection are reported in Chapter 4, along with a direct analysis of the research participants' views and authentic voices. Chapter 5 presents the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Methods of Searching

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature from a variety of scholarly sources. Each resource provided opportunities to expand the theories regarding how parental involvement influences families and the school community and the significance of parental involvement as a research topic. The reviewed literature included 28 articles, seven books, two conference papers, nine dissertations, 28 journals, and five periodicals, for a total of 79 sources. Each literary resource included direct references regarding parental involvement, African American achievement, leadership, and school culture.

Critique of Previous Research

The field of parental involvement and its impact on student achievement has been studied by a cadre of parental involvement scholars (Clark & Pillion, 2002; Epstein, 1987, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mapp, 2002). Each scholar focused on various nuances of the parental involvement phenomenon, building on the research of their colleagues (Yamauchi et al., 2017). One significant scholar often cited when researchers evaluate parental involvement is Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner (1974) is credited with introducing the ecological theory, which focuses on the foundational relationship between the social, community, and political pillars of individual development (Yamauchi et al., 2017). According to Odom (2013), Bronfenbrenner emphasized home and school as the two most significant parent involvement parameters. Within his research, Bronfenbrenner (1974, 1976, 1979, 1994, 2001) alluded to the various ways in which the relationships among home, family, and peers are essential to students' and children's growth and development (Yamauchi et al., 2017).

Although application of the Bronfenbrenner theory increased over the years, Tudge et al. (2009) suggested that the theory is often misused or misinterpreted by parental involvement researchers. Tudge et al. (2009) evaluated 25 research studies that had used Bronfenbrenner's bioecology theory and found that only four used the theory's elements in its intended framework. Yamauchi et al. (2017) and Munhall and Fitzsimons (2001) suggested that Bronfenbrenner's ecology theory fails to consider the intricate differences between families. Hence, Bronfenbrenner's theory does not include all of the nuances that define family structures.

Another theoretical framework that is often used to evaluate the relationship between parental engagement and student success is Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory. Various scholars have used social capital theory to measure the relationships between schools and families (Yamauchi et al., 2017). According to French sociologist Bourdieu (1986), social capital describes the capital held by an individual in a group or organization. Bourdieu identified capital maintained by an individual as the capital based on the organization and the group's connections. Individuals have the opportunity to gain social capital in the various social networks in which they participate actively. Social capital may include both tangible and intangible resources that are respected among members of the organization or group (Perez, 2009). Bourdieu (1986) divided capital into three genres: economic, cultural, and social. According to Harker (1984), social capital provides a significant lens for evaluating schools' and families' relationships. According to Yamauchi et al. (2017), one major limitation of social capital theory is that parental involvement scholars tend to "oversimplify the role of capital and the experience of families" (p. 22). The meaningful bonds and relationships that are developed and cultivated in the home are not valued at the same level as those relationships outside of the home.

Funds of Knowledge (FOK) provides a comprehensive framework for researchers to evaluate the conceptual relationship between students' home and school relationships. FOK describes and defines the cultural experiences and/or individual nuances within the family unit (Gonzalez et al., 2005). According to Rios-Aguilar et al. (2011), the “greatest strength” of FOK is its ability to accentuate the historical resources within families and community circles that promote the move away from a deficit mindset. In other words, the FOK theory identifies what families and students bring to the instructional landscape. Moreover, FOK lends significance to the experiences in the homes of students and their families. In the home, FOK offers an opportunity to support and celebrate the cultural foundations that are often discredited in minority and culturally diverse families. Once used only to identify the social dynamics in Latino families, FOK has been used to evaluate the sophisticated home culture that serves as the means of knowledge and skill sets that are essential to the family and the culture as a whole (Gonzalez et al., 2005). As a theoretical model, FOK has research limits. According to Oughton (2010), the FOK theory has the potential to be overextended, resulting in the use of deficit models.

Theoretical Framework

Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influences

For the purpose of this study, Epstein's (1987) and Epstein and Conners's (1992) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, as well as Epstein's parental involvement framework model (1987, 1995) provide context to evaluate the direct correlation between the perceptions of academic success held by a selected group of parents and guardians of African American male students and their level of site- and district-based parental engagement based on those perceptions. Epstein's (1987) and Epstein and Conners's (1992) theory of overlapping spheres of influence is based work on Bronfenbrenner's 1970 theory of ecology, which focused on the

foundational relationships among the social, community, and political pillars of individual development (Yamauchi et al., 2017). The overlapping sphere of influence refers to the complex relationships among families, schools, and the community as they all attempt to encourage academic achievement by students. Each entity plays a vital role in providing a supportive mechanism that fosters student achievement. With various levels of support, students have the potential to benefit from the spheres' positive influence and levels of support.

Epstein's (1987) and Epstein and Connors's (1992) theory of overlapping spheres of influence emphasizes the importance of partnerships among families, schools, and communities. The role of the family in the partnerships includes various roles to support students in the home. According to Epstein (1991), families within the overlapping sphere of influence provide their students with support mechanisms to work productively at school. Schools, on the other hand, provide various levels of support for students and their parents to support the students. In the school building, both teachers and administrators play a role in creating productive environments that are inclusive of all families and supportive of their needs. According to Epstein (1995), schools must be supportive environments to ensure that students learn at the highest level. In the theory of overlapping spheres of influence, the community plays a significant role in the partnership. Members of the community provide support and resources to families. Each member of the partnership has a distinct desire to support students and ensure their academic achievement.

To solidify the significance and direct impact of parental involvement on student achievement, Epstein's six types of family involvement were used to provide context to the various ways in which parents and guardians interact with their students' school sites and their district as a whole. Epstein's (1987, 1995) family involvement framework model provides an

outline to evaluate the various ways in which parents positively engage with their students' learning and personally participate at the school building. Epstein's family involvement framework identifies how parents and families form productive partnerships to support all students' instructional outcomes. According to Yamauchi et al. (2017), Epstein's (1987, 1995) and Epstein and Sanders's (2000) six types of family involvement are the most frequently used "family-school partnership frameworks" (p. 23). Epstein's six types of family involvement framework defines all members' various roles in the family-school partnership. Each level of involvement provides parents an opportunity to engage productively with their students' learning. Epstein's (1987, 1995) parental involvement framework offers a structure to encapsulate the various support mechanisms that work together to support all students in their learning process (Epstein, 1991).

Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement

Type 1 (Parenting)

The concept of parenting in Epstein's (1987, 1995) six types of parent involvement can best be described as the learning interactions in the home between the student and parents or guardians. Some scholars have summarized Epstein's parental involvement framework's parenting field as the critical provisions and support that parents establish in the home, including but not limited to implementing routines for homework, chorus, academic expectations, and behavioral norms (Yamauchi et al., 2017).

According to Epstein (1995), the activities that take place in the home, such as setting expectations and supervision of activities, influence students' direct achievement. Bloir (1997) explored the impact of parenting styles on the accomplishments of successful urban students. The participants in Bloir's (1997) study identified their parents as neither authoritarian nor

authoritative; instead, the students identified their parents as highly involved, very warm, and supportive. The expectations set in the home provided norms that students transferred to their academic expectations for themselves.

Type 2 (Communication)

Communication in Epstein's family involvement framework refers to the level of communication used between the home and school to ensure positive outcomes for all students (Epstein, 1987, 1995). Both families and school officials play a critical role in ensuring that the communication is clear and concise to support students' academic achievement. Pakter and Chen (2013) completed a study using quantitative and qualitative data points to analyze the effectiveness of text messaging as a means of communication to increase student achievement. The researchers found little to no direct effectiveness of the use of text messaging as a communication tool to improve student achievement. According to Pakter and Chen (2013), text messaging as communication requires a healthy "comprehensive plan to connect with parents and increase parent involvement" (p. 364). Direct communication with the home of students and their families has a significant impact on student achievement. Nevertheless, the success of communication measures varies.

Type 3 (Volunteering)

According to Epstein's family involvement model, volunteering refers to any action taken on the parents' part to support the school in its mission to educate students. Volunteering actions may include parents volunteering in the student's classroom, serving as a chaperon on a field trip, assisting with campus fundraisers, or providing clerical support in a classroom (Epstein, 1991). According to Yamauchi et al. (2017), volunteering may also refer to parents participating

in school-based functions as spectators or “audience members” at school-based events, such as sports and school performances (p. 23).

Although volunteering may take on various forms at the elementary or secondary level, parents are more likely to volunteer if they feel welcomed and supported in the school community. Mapp (2002) evaluated why low-income parents participate in parental involvement opportunities on campus. According to study participants, feeling welcomed on campus strongly influenced their desire to participate actively in parental involvement opportunities. Epstein and Sanders (2000) evaluated the levels of engagements by poor and affluent parents who were given the same opportunity to participate. The findings suggested that, regardless of the parents’ socioeconomic status, all appreciated opportunities to participate if they felt welcomed on campus.

Type 4 (Learning at Home)

According to Snell et al. (2009), parental engagement is essential, and the level of involvement influenced student success differently. For example, involvement in the home influenced positive individual student self-efficacy regarding school. At the elementary level, learning in the home may include actions such as monitoring a student’s homework or providing outside enrichment activities that encourage positive academic achievement (Epstein, 1987). At the secondary level, learning in the home may include family opportunities shared between the student and parent or guardian. For example, opportunities such as reviewing and analyzing academic courses and higher education options affect learning in the home (Yamauchi et al., 2017). Various groups engaged in parental involvement activities in different ways. Learning in the home includes opportunities that may influence students’ achievement. Moreover, measures such as grades and test scores relate directly to learning in the home.

Type 5 (Decision Making)

Decision making in Epstein's parental involvement model includes opportunities in which parents have access to collaboration with school officials to make instructional and fiscal decisions on campus. For example, a parent may participate as a school site council member, where budgetary matters are discussed and approved. Yamauchi et al. (2017) referred to Epstein's decision making as an opportunity for families to engage in the "policy and management of the school" (p. 24). However, Howard and Reynolds (2008) suggested that parents are not always given involvement opportunities to facilitate academic change. "It is quite rare for parents, particularly those who are informed about educational processes of teaching and learning, to offer recommendations, strategies, or interventions critical to the learning of students" (p. 85). According to Epstein and Sanders (2000), school sites with collaborative relationships between the site and their students' families are more likely to realize higher student achievement levels. They suggested that campus procedural expectations influence the rate of involvement by parents.

Type 6 (Community Collaboration)

The community collaboration component of Epstein's family involvement framework refers to community resources that are provided to families to support their students' academic achievement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Connors, 1992). Community collaboration may include resources provided to families both in the school building and in the community. According to Howard and Reynolds (2008), community resources may include organizations such as school-based parent-teacher associations, which provide resources for students. Another potential community resource includes the public library and community centers that offer opportunities in a school's neighborhood (Yamauchi et al., 2017). Community collaboration provides direct

resources to students and their families and encourages healthful learning environments for students.

Chrispeels and Rivero (2000) analyzed the impact of parental perceptions, both pre and post participation in targeted parental involvement programs. In the study, 198 Latino immigrant families participated in a series of parenting workshops that provided meaningful support to the parents and increased their participation level. As a result of the meaningful workshops, the immigrant parents observed the need to participate actively in their children's educational experience. Ultimately, the community outreach provided to the parents in that study led to the parents increasing their involvement at school.

As a whole, Epstein's parent involvement framework provides a critical lens to evaluate the various ways in which parents and guardians interact and enter into partnerships with their students' school and community to increase student achievement opportunities. Spencer et al. (2015) alluded to the positive impact of parental involvement on overall student achievement. Mapp (2002) evaluated the reasons low-income parents participated in parental involvement opportunities on campus. According to the majority of the related studies, feeling welcomed on campus strongly influenced the desire to participate in parental involvement opportunities. Figure 1 illustrates Epstein's theoretical model of overlapping spheres and Table 1 summarizes Epstein's six types of parental involvement.

Review of the Literature

Benefits of Parental Involvement

The direct benefit of parental involvement is documented at great length by parent involvement scholars and educational researchers in evaluating methods to increase student achievement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Epstein, 1987, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002;

Figure 1

Epstein's Theoretical Model of Overlapping Spheres

Table 1

Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement

Type	Description
1. Parenting Skills and Knowledge	Families learn about parenting skills, child development, and home conditions that support learning and development; schools learn about families.
2. Communicating Between Home and School	Effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.
3. Encouraging Volunteering at School	Recruitment, training, and schedules to involve parents as volunteers and audiences to support school programs.
4. Supporting Student Learning at Home	Family involvement with children in learning activities in the home.
5. Involvement in Decision Making and Advocacy	Family involvement in school decision making, governance, and advocacy in committees and organizations.
6. Collaboration With the Community	Coordination of schools', families', and students' needs for resources and services with businesses, agencies, and other groups who may address these needs.

Mapp, 2011). Various research studies in the past 10 years have documented benefits not only to students but to all members of the learning community. All stakeholders benefit from parental involvement as it encourages student achievement (Rolland, 2011). One of the most beneficial impacts of parental involvement is seen in the positive relationships and partnerships established between families and members of the school community. According to Epstein and Dauber (1991), these partnerships increase opportunities for two-way communication between families and the school site. Epstein and Sheldon (2016) stated that the high-level partnerships gained during parental involvement support not only intrinsic outcomes but also extrinsic methods.

Another direct benefit of parental involvement is seen in the potential long term relationships between families and school officials. Parental involvement provides opportunities to engage actively with the school in matters such as school-based decision making, school site councils, parent-teacher associations, and school-based committees (Epstein, 1995). As parents engage with the school site as active partners, they are likely to be informed and knowledgeable about school-based functions and events that may affect their students' achievement (Epstein, 1995). However, some parental involvement theorists suggest that the level of involvement that is solicited from parents is often based on the needs of the school site rather than the needs of the individual families (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). The opportunities that are provided to parents and guardians to engage in school-based opportunities must be relevant and meaningful to both the families and the school's mission.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Parental involvement scholars agree that numerous extenuating factors affect parents' opportunities to engage or participate fully in school-based activities (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Hiatt-Michael, 2010). Factors such as family structure, socioeconomic status, schedules, and site-

based expectations may prevent some parents and guardians from participating in site-based engagement opportunities. For low-income parents, the daily struggles of life, including but not limited to providing the necessities of shelter and food for their families, may affect family members' opportunities to engage with school-based activities (Trotman, 2001). Moreover, the structure of a student's family may also affect the level of engagement by parents or guardians. If a student lives in a single-family home with limited resources, those circumstances may directly affect the parents' ability to engage or actively participate beyond primary opportunities for engagement as a partner in their students' learning (Epstein, 1987). Most school-based activities are scheduled in the morning or during hours when the school building is open. Such hours may be difficult for working parents to engage in school-based activities. Hours to engage in school-based involvement often depend on the school community's schedules or the hours of building operation (Epstein, 1987).

Expectations of school officials, such as teachers and administrators, have a strong impact on parent involvement. According to Auerbach (2009), efforts by school officials, primarily the school principal and leadership team members, set the tone for parent involvement in on-site opportunities. School administrators often establish school-based policies for parent engagement activities and parent events. If they fail to engage parents in planning, classroom opportunities for parents may be nonexistent.

Eccles and Harold (1993) identified several characteristics of families that relate directly to the level of involvement of parents with schools. Of the eight characteristics, three may serve as parental barriers due to the school leadership. Parental beliefs related to (a) their perceptions of their child, (b) their attitude toward the school, (c) and their history of involvement in their children's education may all be influenced by school officials (Eccles & Harold, 1993).

Therefore, school officials' actions directly influence parents' potential involvement opportunities.

Barriers Faced by Parents and Guardians of African Americans

Several factors can exert an impact on the level of involvement displayed by parents. The experiences of African American parents and guardians with the school and school system can significantly affect their parental involvement level. According to Trotman (2001), school officials are often "territorial" and unwilling to share the role of curriculum planning and academic expertise with parents. They may exclude parents from the most significant part of parental involvement and limit their access to essential engagement opportunities such as informative communication based on student actions. Eccles and Harold (1993) emphasized the various ways in which experiences with the school may influence a parent's involvement level. The parent who receives only negative interactions with teachers or school administrators may question the school's level of commitment to them as a parent. Parents and guardians of African American male students who do not feel welcome at the school are less likely to participate in school-based events and activities.

Parents and guardians of African American male students desire to ensure that their students succeed academically (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006) noted the significance of parental involvement in achievement by their sons, as well as behavioral implication for students. They suggested three major themes to increase involvement by parents and guardians of African American male students beyond the federal mandates included in Title I parental engagement opportunity requirements. According to Abdul-Adil and Farmer (2006), the strategies of empowerment, outreach, and indigenous resources display potential success for increasing involvement by parents and guardians of African American students.

The strategy of empowering parents to increase their involvement may take on an intrinsic and extrinsic role for parents and their school partners (Abdul & Farmer, 2006). Strategies that emphasize collaboration to enhance parental skills and support of parents are beneficial. Simoni and Adelman (1993) attested to the significance of school-based support groups not only to garner support for parents but also to improve academic achievement by students from economically depressed communities. Providing outreach support to families can encourage involvement by parents whose students are identified as at risk. “Inner-city parental involvement interventions that have an outreach component may increase engagement and effectiveness by linking specific home-based activities with active school-based interventions increase specified scholastic objectives” (Abdul-Adil & Farmer, 2006, p. 7). Providing access to indigenous family resources such as community-based groups can support families beyond the school building hours. Grass-root organizations, as well as churches, can provide resources to fortify involvement of parents and sustain achievement by their students.

Attributes of Parental Involvement

The parental involvement attributes that positively influence African American males’ achievement have been well documented by parental involvement research scholars. According to Spera et al. (2008), how parents engage in opportunities for involvement differ among families. Nevertheless, parent involvement scholars have supported the claim that parents want the academic best for their students. Epstein (1987, 1995) suggested six types of parental involvement, including events that occur in the home, such as completing homework, setting instructional expectations, and setting daily norms for students.

Moon and Singh (2015) conducted a phenomenological research study with 12 African American male students to identify factors that supported or hindered their academic success.

The impact of parent involvement emerged as a common theme. The researchers defined the salience of parental support as the levels of “encouragement the students received from their parents related to academic achievement” (p. 16). Although several students in the study reported they had less “salient support” from family members, the majority emphasized that the support that they received from their parents and other relevant adults encouraged them to achieve academically (Moon & Singh, 2015).

Spera et al. (2009) examined the impact of parental aspiration among parents of various ethnicities, including African American, Asian, Caucasian, and Hispanic. African American parents held aspirations for their students regarding academic achievement and the value of education. The sample included more than 13,000 parents and guardians of middle and high school students. The findings suggested that all parents, regardless of ethnicity, held similarly high aspirations for their students’ academic attainment. The level of parents’ aspirations differed concerning their personally attained educational goals. Research supports the notion that “minority parents view education as a vehicle for upward mobility” (p. 1149).

Allen (2015) assessed the factors that positively influenced African American males’ academic achievement in a public high school. The participants included academically successful male students, their families, and various school officials, such as teachers and site-level administrators. The participants attributed their academic success to various factors, chiefly parental support. Moreover, students and their parents alluded to the significance of “racial socialization which emphasized a level of racial pride within them as students” (p. 18). The students display energetic self-efficacy regarding their knowledge and capacity to recognize racism. Parent participants also acknowledged the significance of supporting their students with skills to acknowledge racism and to understand racial identity. Allen (2015) identified

involvement by parents of successful students as a significant system among various supports that influence achievement by African American males.

Attributes of School Officials

Attributes exhibited by school officials have a prominent impact on involvement of parents and guardians of African American male students, as well as the academic success of their students. Various researchers have identified culturally relevant experiences and curricula to encourage involvement by parents and guardians of African American students, as well as the unique way to ensure academic achievement by students (Boro, 2015; National Education Association [NEA], 2011; Rolland, 2011). According to Rolland (2011) and J. M. Williams et al. (2014), school officials play a significant role in ensuring the success of their students both in and out of the instructional building. The roles of school officials have a significant impact on success and engagement by students and their families (Auerbach, 2009).

Boro (2015) evaluated site-based charter school administrators' perceptions regarding barriers to and enablers of opportunities for high-quality parental involvement. The findings suggested that impactful communication was the most significant factor to guarantee parents' positive involvement in the participant charter schools. Research participants articulated several methods to provide high-quality communication opportunities for parents, such as direct interaction before and after school, technology-based messaging, translation for non-English-speaking families, and on-campus open door policies. These practices provided direct access and meaningful ways for schools to interact with families and to ensure opportunities for parental involvement.

In 2011 the NEA identified steps that elementary educators should take to improve African American male students' academic achievement. Within the eight identified parameters,

the organization included one major factor that directly related to involvement by parents and guardians of African American male students. The organization recognized the need to encourage all school officials to build robust and sustainable relationships with the parents of their students. According to the NEA (2011), school officials should conduct an inquiry about parents' desires for their students' success. They should ask what parents and guardians of African American male students want for their children and how they define success. By engaging in high-quality conversations that elicit meaningful conversations that are informative and respectful of the parents and guardians, as well as of students, school officials are likely to fortify academic achievement by African American males and cement productive relationships with their families.

Rolland (2011) conducted a qualitative research study to identify characteristics and attributes held by successful African American male students in a rural Georgia school district. Five major factors emerged regarding the students' perceived rationale for their academic success as high school students. Support by their parents and the work of their caring teachers emerged as contributors to their success. Rolland (2011) reported that research participants agreed that neither their "family structure" nor their family's educational background contributed more to their than their parents' level of involvement. Students in high school need a significant level of parental involvement to ensure their academic success. The role of supportive and caring school officials such as teachers and administrators also resonated with African American male students as a conduit for their high school success. School officials have a significant impact on the level of cultural relevance experienced by students. The principal has the authority to mandate and support the curriculum. Classroom teachers have the opportunity to influence instructional outcomes through positive, cohesive relationships. As schools build positive

relationships with students, they can build positive relationships with parents to encourage a significant level of parental involvement.

J. M. Williams et al. (2014) identified ways in which school officials have a positive impact on the success of African American students and how to support parents through opportunities to engage in their students' academic experience. The researchers identified nine primary methods that school officials and counselors have at their disposal to support not only student achievement but also opportunities to encourage parental involvement. Facilitating "strength-based partnership programs" (p. 17) and providing "diverse forms" (p. 20) of involvement for parents and guardians, as well as caregivers, can ensure direct access to parents and guardians. School officials must engage parents in opportunities that extend beyond the federally mandated opportunities to participate in their students' learning. They must look outside the building for methods to support students and parents, especially to meet the needs of adults who support African American students, including members of the immediate family, the extended family, and other support providers.

School officials play a vital role in ensuring student achievement and enhancing opportunities for involvement by parents and guardians. Auerbach (2009) reported that leadership skills displayed by school officials, including site-level principals, dramatically affected the level of culturally relevant parental involvement and increased "social justice and educational equity" (p. 9) opportunities among underserved parents and guardians. School officials must seek additional methods to provide all parents equal access and relevant opportunities to actively engage with their students in the school building, as well as meaningful opportunities beyond federally mandated Title I requirements.

The literature regarding parental involvement is substantial. It provides resources to evaluate the collaborative partnerships and untapped relationships between parents and guardians and schools. Each literary work can influence the work of parental involvement researchers. The works of those researchers are summarized in Table 2.

Chapter Summary

Parent involvement scholars and researchers have agreed that parental involvement has a positive immediate and long-term impact on achievement by students (Epstein, 1987, 1995; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Trotman, 2001). Parental engagement with involvement opportunities is beneficial to the school and community. According to Epstein (1987) and Epstein and Connors (1992), the overlapping sphere of influence and the parent involvement framework (Epstein, 1987, 1995) describe the complex relationship between families and their students' school as a partnership. Within that partnership, direct support for and success by students are the primary goal of the team. The community also plays a role in supporting not only the school site but also the parents as a means to improve academic achievement by all students, especially those in significant subgroups.

Table 2*Prominent Parental Involvement Research*

Year	Researchers	Findings
2017	Lauren K. Mark Thanh True T. Nguyen	This qualitative study analyzed how a selected group of teachers and parents were invited to participate in a workshop based on digital citizenship. Theoretical frameworks included Epstein's family-school-community partnerships and Bandura's concepts of modeling and self-efficacy. Findings suggested that as parents and teachers felt "intentionally invited" to participate in the safety workshop, a high level of engagement was attained.
2018	Rebecca Ann White	This qualitative study evaluated experiences of parents using Epstein's six types of parental involvement in assisting their students with secondary homework. Findings suggested that teachers should provide support for parents to assist them in assisting their students with homework tasks.
2019	Oscar Harris	The study analyzed the experiences of EL teachers and EL specialists who engaged in parental involvement activities and events. The theoretical framework was Epstein's six types of parental involvement. Findings suggested that the teachers and specialists used various methods of parental involvement on campus but struggled to implement high-quality communication and decision-making opportunities for parents.
2010	Virginia B. Bartel	The study analyzed perceptions of parents and teachers after a summer course for parents and an interactive homework program for students. The framework applied theories by Hoover-Dempsey and Epstein to examine collaboration between families and schools, the role of parents, and various ways for school and parents to interact as partners. Findings suggested that parents' level of involvement was directly based on their perception of their role as parents.
2003	Ane M. Mariñez-Lora Stephen M. Quintana	The study evaluated parental involvement by African American and Latino parents using the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (HDS) model of parent-school involvement. Findings suggested that the parents' related their decisions to engage differently. The HDS theoretical framework failed to capture the vivid experiences and challenges of all groups.
2017	Jiangmin Xu (2017)	The study examined the relationship between multidimensional factors and involvement by parents of adolescent children, using structural equation modeling. Findings suggested the need to evaluate all forms of parental involvement.

Table 2 (continued)

Year	Researchers	Findings
2013	Alexander Pakter Li-Ling Chen	The study evaluated the use of technology “text messages” as a form of communication between parents and school officials to improve student achievement, applying Epstein’s six types of parent involvement. Findings suggested limited growth in the grades of students whose parents received text messages and a slight increase in the grades of students whose parents did not receive text messages during the study.
2009	Susan Auerbach	The study presented “contextualized portraits” of principals to evaluate their work on parental involvement as a means to ensure social justice for “disenfranchised Latino families.” The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler theoretical framework of role construction was applied to evaluate the leadership of school officials in school-community connections and social justice leadership. Findings suggested the need for administrative leadership programs to teach implicitly and model leadership skills that facilitate purposeful parental involvement and social justice.
2001	Claire Smrekar Lora Cohen-Vogel	The study identified reasons low-income parents participated in involvement opportunities by evaluating their attitudes about schooling. Findings suggested that school officials should to replace parent involvement ideas with notions of collaboration and partnerships, focusing on skill sets that encourage parental engagement and rather than mere involvement.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology of the study, including recruitment and selection of participants and data collection and analysis protocols required for a qualitative research study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative research was threefold. First, the study was designed to hear the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American male students to evaluate how they define academic success for their students and what measures or experiences depict academic success in the perceptions held by the parents and guardians. Second, the study was also designed to evaluate the parents' opinions about which instructional measures are most significant in defining their students' success. The research examined site-defined measures that parents deemed to be most important. The study was also intended to measure whether their perceptions of their students' success had an impact on the parents' engagement in school activities in order to determine whether the success levels of African American male students influenced the levels of engagement or involvement by their parents. In short, the purpose of the study was to evaluate ways in which parents defined success for their African American male students, which school-based measures are most important to that success, and how and why the parents engaged with the site and district as instructional partners.

Research Design

This qualitative narrative research study evaluated African American parents' thoughts and desires in a specified school district regarding their perceptions of success for their African American sons and their engagement as parents at the school site and in the district. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) characterized qualitative research as having several distant characteristics: (a)

naturalistic, (b) descriptive, (c) concern with process, (d) inductive, and (e) meaningful. Qualitative research provides the researcher an opportunity to complete an in-depth, comprehensive analysis of topics that require investigation to evaluate their narrative being. Through qualitative investigation, this research was designed to synthesize the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American male students in an attempt to learn more about their desires for their students, their opinions about how their students' school site and district engaged them as parents, and their level of engagement depended on their perception of success. This qualitative research study provided an opportunity for the researcher to experience first-hand the beliefs and concerns of a selected group of parents and guardians.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. How do parents and guardians of African American males define success for their sons?
2. Which instructional measures used by the school and district are most significant to the parents to signify their students' proficiency and academic success.
3. Does the engagement level of participating parents fluctuate based on their perception of their male students' success?
4. The Advance Success Unified School District (ASUSD) has a multitude of instructional measures to define academic success by their students; of those measures, which instructional measures do parents and guardians of African American males signify as most significant to evaluating their student's success?

5. Do parents and guardians of African American males have a higher appreciation for nonacademic measures such as extracurricular sports, clubs, and organizations when defining academic success for their students?

6. Do parents and guardians of African American males agree that current site/district engagement opportunities are relevant to their needs as parents and to the long-term instructional success of their sons?

7. Do parents of African American males agree that their voices and needs have a level of influence at the site and in the school district?

Participants

The target population consisted of parents and guardians of African American male students enrolled in a specified school district. Due to the complexity of the various family dynamics in the district and at the site, any parent, guardian, or caregiver associated with an African American male student was targeted for participation. According to Hendricks (2006), a research participant is any person who participates in any element of a study. The targeted population for this research study was parents and guardians of African American male students between the ages of 25 and 65 years. Participants could include parents and guardians who did not identify as African American but had a male student who was enrolled in the school district and who was identified as African American. The parents or guardians could be foster parents, adoptive parents, or extended relatives. Parents from all schools in the district were provided access to the study at their individual school sites. The researcher invited the first 10 parents who responded to the research flyer and research interest letter to participate in the study.

Participant Demographics

The backgrounds of the participants are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3*Demographics of the Participants*

Participant	Gender	Age	Demographic information
1. Ms. Long Beach	F	47	Two-parent household Three male students 15+ years of collaboration with the district
2. Mrs. Northridge	F	55	Two-parent household Four students (1 male) 20+ years of collaboration with the district
3. Mrs. Fullerton	F	48	Two-parent household Three students (1 male) New parent to the district; the student transferred into the district during his junior year of high school after attending two other high schools.
4. Mrs. Los Angeles	F	58	Single-parent household (foster parent) Two students (1 male) 15+ years of collaboration in the district.
5. Mrs. Marcos	F	45	Two-parent household Three students (1 male) 17+ years of collaboration in the district
6. Mrs. San Diego	F	40	Single-parent household One male student 8+ years of collaboration with the district
7. Mrs. Bakersfield	F	39	Single-parent household One male student 9+ years of collaboration with the school district
8. Mrs. San Francisco	F	32	Single-parent household, grandparent in the home. One male student 9+ years in the district
9. Mrs. Chico	F	31	Single-parent household Two students (1 male) 6+ years in the district.
10. Mrs. San Jose	F	39	Single-parent household (divorced parent) Two students (1 male); both received special education services 9+ years in the district

Participant Selection

The researcher solicited direct assistance from site-level administrators in the specified school district to distribute the research flyer/interest letter to all parents and guardians of African American male students at their school sites. The flyer/interest letter included the email address for the researcher. Parents and guardians who were interested in participating communicated their interest by emailing or calling the researcher. Once the researcher received a point of contact from potential participants, the research consent form, which outlined the study in detail, was provided. On both the research flyer/interest form and the consent to participate form, participants were given pertinent information regarding the study and an opportunity to decline participation with no negative impact against them or their students. After completion of all instructional safeguards, a one-on-one interview was scheduled for each study participant.

Participant Recruitment

The research flyer/interest forms were distributed at the various school sites in the district. Interested parents who responded to the research flyer/interest forms received an email from the researcher. Once the researcher confirmed receipt of interest in the study, she sent a copy of the University Consent to Participate in Research Form. When that form was received, individual one-on-one or telephone interviews were arranged and conducted.

Community Portrait of the ASUSD

The ASUSD (a pseudonym) is a moderate-sized school district in a southern California city. The includes has population of more than 100,000 (73% Hispanic or Latino, 11%+ African American, 10%+ White, and 6%+ other races). The student population of the district mirrors the city demographics. The ASUSD serves students from Transitional Kindergarten through Grade 12. The district offers several alternative programs to support adult learners to complete their

general education development certificate. The current student population of 25,000 is served by a classified and certificated staff of more than 4,000. The secondary level (Grades 6 through 12) recently experienced a significant increase in student enrollment.

In the era of accountability, student achievement and success remain significant areas of concern for all instructional leaders in the district and in the learning community at large. Previously identified as a Program Improvement District under NCLB legislation, the learning community completed extensive rounds of professional development (CDE, 2003). Each cycle of professional development included mandatory district and off-campus training. Classroom teachers experienced opportunities to learn new strategies to support struggling and at-risk students in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), direct professional development for teachers has a positive impact on learning outcomes for students. However, the new strategies had a limited impact on overall achievement by African American male students.

To support students during the transition guided by Program Improvement mandates, at-risk students participated in complex cycles of English Language Arts and Mathematics interventions. Allen (2015) identified benefits of afterschool tutoring on underperforming African American and Latino elementary school students in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The various cycles of intervention in the ASUSD included before-school tutoring, Response to Intervention pull-out support, and after-school enrichment support cycles for students at all levels. Some students participated in weekend interventions to increase their proficiency. Although classroom teachers and outside support agencies directly led the strategically implemented interventions, the interventions resulted in minimal instructional gains

for at-risk students, especially African American males and especially in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Parents received additional access to district-level engagement programs during the various levels of mandated local and federal program monitoring under Title I. “The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1974 and 1975 created Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) to assure that parents would participate in school and district policies supported by the Federal Funds of Title One” (Epstein, 1984, p. 70). At ASUSD, parents received access to site- and district-sponsored parental advisories and outreach opportunities. The parent involvement advisories included the English Language Advisory Council, School Site Council, District Language Advisory Committee, and District Advisory Committee. Each advisory focused on the instructional development for a particular subgroup of students. At each school site, parents participated in groups such as Parent-Teacher Associations or Parent Teacher Organizations to ensure parental collaboration. However, the African American males in the district consistently showed limited academic improvement in comparison to their peers.

Recently, ASUSD has received a plethora of accolades, including student awards and county, state, and federal recognition. During the 2019-2020 school year, the district’s superintendent identified three significant subgroups as areas of focus for all teachers, site-level administrators, and district administrators: African American students, English Language Learners, and Special Education students. Historically, African American students in ASUSD consistently scored lower than grade-level peers in state end-of-year assessments (CDE, 2019). Measures such as trimester grades, end-of-year summative assessments, specialized programs, awards and recognition, promotion, and discipline defined a student’s level of success throughout the district year at ASUSD. Each instructional measure represents various ways in

which the instructional community identifies success by students on campus (NCES, 2000). However, the identified school-based measures never considered parental perceptions of student success or the ways in which parents define success for their students (Roelofs et al., 2003).

In the ASUSD, the annual Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) sets districtwide priorities that require inclusion of multiple stakeholders from the community. Nevertheless, achievement by African American students continues to lag in comparison to peers in the district in various instructional measures, including state and district measures. While the state priorities outline the required focus areas for all districts, selected groups of students remain at risk of limited achievement, based on all current state indicators.

Therefore, this narrative research study was designed to evaluate the perceptions of academic success held by parents and guardians of African American male students. In addition, the study analyzed ways in which parents and guardians of African American males engaged with their local urban public school district's attempts to engage them as required by California regulations.

Research Setting

During the 2019-2020 spring semester, the United States experienced a global health pandemic: COVID-19. As a result of the crisis, several states, including California, initiated mandatory stay-at-home orders and social distancing for all members of society. The social distancing regulations required everyone to remain a safe distance of 6 feet from others (CDE, 2020a). As a result, all research interviews conducted for this study were completed by telephone with permission of the participants. The required modifications were documented to the Institutional Review Board for its approval of the study.

Data Collection

Before Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the researcher secured the required gatekeeper approval from the District Superintendent. After receiving IRB approval from the university (Appendix F), the researcher sought participants from among the parents and guardians with African American sons enrolled in the district schools.

To ensure equitable and reliable data collection, Spradley's (1979) interview concepts were implemented. According to Spradley, successful qualitative interviews include the ability to establish rapport with research participants and to secure meaningful information and data during the interviews. Successful research interviews should provide the researcher beneficial data. As the researcher conducts interviews, the participants should experience the steps to establish a meaningful rapport, such as "apprehension, exploration, cooperation, and participation" (p. 44).

Once all institutional research-based safeguards were completed, the individual interviews were conducted. Before each interview, the participant received a copy of the interview questions by email to alleviate anxiety during the interview. The researcher recorded and transcribed each answer provided by the participant. At the end of each interview, the participant was given an opportunity to provide feedback or reflection regarding answers to the questions.

Data Analysis

Once all 10 ethnographic interviews were completed, transcripts were analyzed for accuracy. Each interview took less than 45 minutes. According to Spradley (1979), "All ethnographic interviews begin with a sense of uncertainty" (p. 45). Therefore, during the transcription of the data, close attention was given to the voice, tone, and inflection of the participant throughout the interview. Codes emerged as commonalities among participants.

Those codes were analyzed to identify direct major themes in the data. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) articulated ways in which researchers use codes form identify commonality and research themes.

Ethical Considerations

Steps were taken to secure and maintain confidentiality of each participant. A pseudonym marker was used for each research participant to protect their personal identity. Steps were taken to avoid undue influence on potential study participants. On both the research flyer/interest form and consent to participate form, participant were given pertinent information regarding the study and an opportunity to decline participation without negative impact for them or their students. The researcher limited interaction with potential research participants until they had formally agreed to participate in the study. Only participants who returned the signed consent form were contacted by the researcher to schedule an interview.

Expert Review

Prior to start of recruitment of research participants, this study was vetted by a cadre of tenured university professors and the university's IRB to ensure that all instructional safeguards were in place. Once final IRB approval was granted, the researcher received an IRB number that granted permission to conduct the study.

Limitations

Although this study was open to parents at every school site in the district, the majority of the research participants were female parents or guardians of African American male students. Therefore, the research responses came primarily from a female perspective. While participants were being recruited, the nation experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. The shelter-in-place and

distancing orders mandated by the Governor of California dramatically changed the potential number of participants, limiting the participant pool.

Chapter Summary

In an attempt to capture a cross-section of parental voices of parents and guardians of African American students, this research included participants from various grade levels, from elementary school to high school. To ensure that research-based procedural safeguards were in place, the researcher followed instructional guidelines for acceptable research, such as securing IRB approval along with appropriate Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) certifications. In order to evaluate and engage in the research process, one must complete the assessment tools assigned by the applicable university or institution to conduct human research. The CITI uses an online program to ensure that researchers practice ethical and responsible conduct with all human subjects that they may engage in their research.

During the interviews, additional safeguards were in place to ensure that each interview took into consideration the guidelines suggested by Spradley (1979), including opportunities to establish rapport with each interviewee and to pose interview questions that would lead to meaningful and purposeful responses from the participant.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Data and Findings

Research Purpose and Study Questions

The chapter presents the results of analysis of the research data and a summary of the study. The purpose of this study included a direct evaluation of the authentic voices of parents and guardians regarding their perceptions of academic success for their African American male students, as well as their level of parental involvement based on their perceived success of their students. In order to secure the authentic voices of parents, the following research questions were developed to guide the study.

1. How do parents and guardians of African American males define success for their sons?
2. Which instructional measures used by the school and district are most significant to the parents to signify their students' proficiency and academic success.
3. Does the engagement level of participating parents fluctuate based on their perception of their male students' success?
4. The Advance Success Unified School District (ASUSD) has a multitude of instructional measures to define academic success by their students; of those measures, which instructional measures do parents and guardians of African American males signify as most significant to evaluating their student's success?
5. Do parents and guardians of African American males have a higher appreciation for nonacademic measures such as extracurricular sports, clubs, and organizations when defining academic success for their students?

6. Do parents and guardians of African American males agree that current site/district engagement opportunities are relevant to their needs as parents and to the long-term instructional success of their sons?

7. Do parents of African American males agree that their voices and needs have a level of influence at the site and in the school district?

Findings

In addition to the research questions, interview questions were developed to identify the authentic voices of all research participants. Each research question provided a lens to evaluate the ways in which parents defined academic success for their students and to determine whether their level of engagement was influenced by their perception of their students' academic success. At the conclusion of the interview process, themes were identified through the coding process. Table 4 presents the four major themes that emerged from the interviews through the coding process: (a) parents' expectations, (b) communication, (c) access/relationships, and (d) partnerships.

Theme 1: Parental Expectations

All participants expressed a desire for their African American sons to achieve academically and to perform by doing their best in their classes. Eight of the 10 parents noted the significance of trimester grades for their elementary students or quarter and trimester grades for their secondary students (Grades 6 through 12). Several parents reported steps that they take at home and at school to ensure their students' success as significant.

Ms. Northridge, a married mother of four, described steps that she takes at home to ensure her student's success. She reported that she established rigorous expectations regarding homework, extra interventions, and enrichment activities that she created on her own to ensure

Table 4*Research Themes*

Theme	Meaning of the theme in relation to the study
Parental expectations for students	Expectations held by parents for their students' academic achievement, as well as their daily behavior on and around campus
Communication	Various forms of communication between parents and guardians and school officials. Communication also refers to the communication conducted by teachers regarding their grading systems and how they identify proficiency in students
Access/relationships	The level of access that parents have in the school or district to influence or implement instructional change
Partnerships	Relationships that available to parents, guardians, and students

that her son performed successfully. She described actions to set expectations regarding behavior at home and at school. "Because I volunteer almost every day, all the teachers and staff members know me. I often hear them say, 'You know his momma don't play.'" She emphasized that her son had no choice but to do well in school. "For me, it's my expectation; my son will do well."

Ms. San Diego, a single parent of one male student enrolled in the ASUSD district, also described her expectations for excellence for her son. During his fourth-grade school year, the family had moved from the greater Los Angeles area, and her son was enrolled in public school for the first time. Ms. San Diego stated that her son was extremely successful in school during his kindergarten years. However, when he reached the fourth grade, things changed dramatically. She held high expectations in the home regarding completing all homework tasks and setting limits, including going to bed at an appropriate time. Nevertheless, her son struggled dramatically from fourth grade until high school.

Academically, my student is sound; he is smart. However, he spent more time in the discipline office or the classrooms of other teachers due to his behavior. . . . As a parent, I believe my student was labeled a troublemaker, and that is how they treated him.

According to Ms. San Diego, she still maintains high expectations for her son, no matter his challenges in the classroom. “I know my son, and I know he is smart. Thus, I would never think less of his abilities, no matter what.”

Ms. San Francisco is a single mother with a son enrolled in the district. Recently, she struggled with severe health issues, which required her to seek assistance from family members, including her mother. According to Ms. San Francisco, her son is extremely smart and loving at home. She stated that, every morning before he leaves the house for school, she reminds him to display good behavior at school.

Because of my son’s ADHD, he struggles in school. He struggles to be still and not move during class; therefore, the teachers just tolerate him. At home, I set standards for completing homework and playing videos; He knows what I expect. I often feel if my son had someone that cared about him within the school building, he would do better.

Although each parent’s story was different, all expressed a deep desire to ensure that their son did well in school, academically and behaviorally. Each parent expressed that they only wanted the best for their son. Nevertheless, they all experienced interactions at their schools. They expressed a desire to support their sons and acknowledged their positive attributes at home.

Theme 2: Communication

As a theme, the significance of communication resonated with every parent in the study. Communication with the school from the home and communication from the home to the school reverberated among the participants. Several parents reported extensive communication with the school due to their role in the district. Others reported high levels of communication with their son’s teachers, and others alluded to a lack of communication from secondary teachers.

Mrs. Long Beach is the married mother of three male students in the district. Unlike the other parents, Mrs. Long Beach has a direct benefit as she works in the district. She has benefited from having her sons at the same school where she works. She had the direct advantage of speaking to her sons' teachers and principal daily.

As a teacher and parent, I know I have an advantage over other parents when it comes to communication with the school. Thus, as a teacher, I work very hard to keep my parents informed regarding my classroom and the school. It's more than a job for me.

Ms. Bakersfield is a single parent of a male African American student. She suggested that her communication with the school is often negative at best. For example, she stated that the only time the school contacts her is when they have negative news regarding her son's behavior.

Once while on campus, my son was walking toward me, and a random woman who seemed to be a staff member called my son's name and pointed to him as she spoke to another staff member. I eventually walked over to the two women and asked them if they had a concern regarding my son, and the taller woman stated that everyone on campus knows my son very well. A small part of my heart broke for my son.

According to Ms. Bakersfield, when she sees the phone number of the school, she takes a deep breath and repeats a short prayer before answering. "What are they going to tell me today? My son is worthy; I just wish they knew that."

Ms. Chico is a single parent with one son currently in transition to high school. She admitted to having a strong safety net, which provides additional support for her son during the day. She reported a pleasant experience with communication from her son's classroom teacher and from the school administrative team.

My son is very responsible, and he brings all school-based notices home regarding his classes and the school. However, if I have a question before or after school, I can just ask the Principal or Assistant Principal. Everyone on this campus is very accessible and helpful. Nevertheless, I know that is not the case at all schools within the district.

Theme 3: Access/Relationships

All 10 participants alluded to various forms of access and relationships during their interviews. The terms *access* and *relationships* refer to parents' access to people on campus or in the district. Various levels of access allowed parents and guardians to seek direct help when they needed it. Some participants voiced the need to reach out to district officials, the Superintendent, or school board members for remedies to their concerns. One participant mentioned that she did not obtain access or build a district relationship until she filed a formal complaint with the state Board of Education against her son's elementary school and principal.

Ms. San Jose is a recently divorced mother of three, including two students currently enrolled in the district, both of whom had received academic support in English Language Arts and Mathematics. According to Ms. San Jose, she has always attempted to be proactive when interacting with the school regarding the needs of her sons. However, she has sought direct support from the site-level principal and campus resource officers regarding concerns about bullying of her sons.

I am fortunate; I can go straight to the principal when I have a concern. When my friends have a problem, I send them directly to the Principal because she will address the problem and follow up with you no matter your concern. It's funny sometimes when I go on campus, I feel like a VIP; I'm important.

Ms. Los Angeles is a foster parent of twin male students who are currently enrolled in middle school. She works in a neighboring school district as a district-level administrator. In her role at that district office, she works with special programs and alternative support programs. She is responsible for ensuring that students who are enrolled in the specialized program receive appropriate resources and support to ensure their academic success. As a result, she is conversant with education codes and special education mandates. During a recent Individual Education Plan (IEP) session for one of her foster children, she noted that the team violated several procedural

safeguards but she allowed the meeting to continue. She sent a direct message to a district level-administrator in her boys' district to record her displeasure and the inadequate support and services that the boys were currently receiving regarding their IEPs. "Before the meeting was over, a district official came down to intervene in the meeting." Ms. Los Angeles's relationship allowed her to obtain support and services to support her boys. "I know and understand the level of social capital I have as a person. When needed, I use it to protect my boys! I know who to call when I need to call."

Theme 4: Partnerships

Several participants addressed the concept and need for partnerships. The levels of partnerships varied. Some alluded to partnerships and resources provided by the school to support students; others referred to resources in the community referred by the school district. For example, one parent mentioned the importance of her son having a mentor in elementary school; however, those resources did not follow him to middle school. Another parent mentioned that an organization to which she belongs provided direct resources and support to African American male students in the district. However, the students and parents who needed the resources were not likely to use them.

Ms. San Diego reported that she uses the advocacy skills that she used to support her son when he was in elementary and middle school to build parent networks to support other parents who may need support in navigating resources and positive learning opportunities for their children. As a result of her actions, more parents have supportive networks to gain academic resources for their sons, as well as for themselves as parents.

I have friends who always say they do not have time to go to meetings and school-based events. When I inform them of the various resources and opportunities available for them as a parent and their students, they usually change their mind. As a parent, I feel like they need to see you in order to help you.

Chapter Summary

In the interviews, the participants shared their thoughts and wishes regarding the hope-for success for their sons and the experiences with the schools and the district. Although each participant documented personal experiences, the coding of their responses provided a clear example of their needs as parents and guardians of African American male students. For example, one parent noted that her schedule allowed her to work as a stay-at-home mother for her sons; hence, she was able to volunteer at the school site every day. Another parent documented her struggles as a single parent attempting to work longer hours to ensure that her son had his basic needs met. More important, several parents reported that they often had to secure assistance of district-level officials through formal complaints to have their needs met. The comments made by the participants in the interview document a systemic level of concerns related to fairness and support for parents and guardians of African American male students. The comments emphasized the immediate need to engage African American male students' parents and guardians more effectively.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter provides a culmination of the research study, including a compilation of concerns that precipitated the need for this research and the theoretical frameworks and literature that were analyzed to evaluate the significance of parental involvement. This chapter presents a synthesis of the findings from the interviews. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and next steps.

This research study was guided by seven research questions that provided a detailed framework for the study.

1. How do parents and guardians of African American males define success for their sons?
2. Which instructional measures used by the school and district are most significant to the parents to signify their students' proficiency and academic success.
3. Does the engagement level of participating parents fluctuate based on their perception of their male students' success?
4. The Advance Success Unified School District (ASUSD) has a multitude of instructional measures to define academic success by their students; of those measures, which instructional measures do parents and guardians of African American males signify as most significant to evaluating their student's success?
5. Do parents and guardians of African American males have a higher appreciation for nonacademic measures such as extracurricular sports, clubs, and organizations when defining academic success for their students?

6. Do parents and guardians of African American males agree that current site/district engagement opportunities are relevant to their needs as parents and to the long-term instructional success of their sons?

7. Do parents of African American males agree that their voices and needs have a level of influence at the site and in the school district?

Each question provided an opportunity to seek the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American male students.

Discussion

The United States has an extensive history of government legislation to increase student achievement. In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson introduced new legislation to support public education (McGuinn, 2006). The goals of the 1965 ESEA included establishing instructional expectations and funding for public schools. The legislation created an opportunity for legislative leaders to renew the ESEA every 5 years. For the past 30 years, the ESEA has gone through various revisions with the goal of increasing student achievement, providing strategic support for at-risk students, and addressing achievement disparities, including those experienced by African American students. The ESEA revisions included mandates for parental involvement, with financial incentives for parental involvement programs and restrictions in the absence of such programs (McGuinn, 2006). The legislative road map includes Goals 2000 under President Bill Clinton, NCLB under President George W. Bush, and the current ESSA initiated under President Barack Obama.

Although each legislative measure had distinct methods to innovate high-quality learning opportunities for at-risk subgroups such as African American students, and to support development of high interest and relevant parental involvement opportunities. Academic

disparities still exist, and there remains a perception of a lack of involvement by parents and guardians of African American students. This situation provided the impetus for this research study to garner the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American male students to evaluate how they define academic success for their students and to determine whether parents' level of engagement was related to their perceptions of success of their sons.

This research used the theoretical parent involvement frameworks of Joyce Epstein to evaluate the relationships among families, schools, and their communities, as well as the ways in which families and schools interact through a level of service to support the needs of students. Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence and types of parental involvement frameworks provided meaningful opportunities to evaluate and synthesize the collaborative systems used by families, schools, and communities to support students. Epstein's scholarly theoretical frameworks suggest that industrious techniques used by school officials may establish better opportunities for parents and guardians.

This qualitative study garnered the authentic voices of parents and guardians of African American male students through individual personal interviews. The parents were encouraged to voice their concerns and desires regarding the methods used by schools and the district office to define student success for their African American sons. Moreover, the interviews captured the voices of parents regarding the ways in which they engage with their sons' schools. At the conclusion of the interviews, the collected data were analyzed through two cycles of coding to identify common themes. The most significant themes were parent expectations, communication, access/relationships, and partnerships.

Theme 1: Parental Expectations

The expectations for their sons set by parents and guardians dramatically impact their academic achievement and behavior (Epstein, 1987, 1995). According to Epstein's sphere of overlapping influence (1987) and her parent involvement framework (1987, 1995), expectations established in the home set the foundation for skills that students can transfer to the classroom, such as work ethic. For example, setting routines at home for homework, bedtime, and daily study time transfers to the school setting as the student is well rested and prepared for class. Several parental involvement scholars have attested to the significance of parental expectations and their positive impact on student achievement (Allen, 2015; Epstein 1987, 1995; Harris, 2019; Odom, 2013; Rolland, 2011; R. A. White, 2018). The expectations set by parents assist in students' achievement and serve as a means of parental involvement (Epstein, 1987, 1995).

The participants in this study agreed regarding the importance of their expectations for their sons. Ms. Long Beach attributed her son's success to the expectations in her home and the instructional expectations that she set at the school. She said that her son's teachers held high expectations for him because they understood her expectations. Each parent and guardian in the study expressed high expectations for their African American sons. Nevertheless, several parents expressed that, although they held high expectations for their sons, those expectations did not always transfer to immediate success.

Theme 2: Communication

Parents and school officials cannot overlook the significance of communication. Communication between parents and the school provides opportunities for both entities to collaborate and support the best instructional outcomes for students. According to Epstein (1991), communication between the home and school may take on several models. "This

includes the memos, notices, phone calls, report cards, and conferences that most schools conduct and other innovative communications with parents that some schools create” (Epstein, 1991, p. 290). Parents and guardians share responsibility for communication. Returning phone calls from the school and participating in required academic and behavior-related communications allow parents to engage actively.

Theme 3: Access/Relationships

Auerbach (2009) used the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) role construction theoretical framework to evaluate the leadership role of site-level principals as they initiated parent involvement on their campuses. According to Auerbach, school officials play an integral role in supporting development of parental involvement on their campuses and establishing access and sustainable relationships to support student achievement. Boro (2015) evaluated the perceptions of school administrators regarding barriers that negatively impact parental involvement. According to Boro, the following situations can exert a negative impact on involvement by minority parents: work schedules, cultural barriers, language barriers, expectations of school officials, and the educational background of the parents.

Theme 4: Partnerships

Epstein (1955) analyzed the significance of partnerships to improve student achievement. Epstein and Dauber (1991) synthesized data from 171 teachers in eight public schools to evaluate the programs used at the sites to engage parents, as well as the attitudes and practices displayed by classroom teachers. The findings suggested that, although the teachers firmly attested that they wanted to increase levels of parent engagement, classroom and school rules and procedures prevented opportunities for high levels of meaningful parental involvement. Epstein (1987, 1995) referred to community partnerships as the exchange of resources provided to families

through the school site and in the community. For example, students may benefit from a summer reading program at the public library or receive free books from the school library. In all parental involvement, the opportunity provides supportive relations for all students and their families.

Limitations

One major limitation of the research study was the sample size. The study included 10 parents and guardians with sons who were identified as African American male. Due to the size of the district, a larger sample size might have rendered more important data regarding the perceptions of success and access to engagement by parents and guardians of African American male students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research should be replicated on a broader scale to incorporate more parents of African American students, to include more than 12% of the total district population. The stories and reflections contributed by the research participants identified a level of hurt and mistrust based on the way they recounted their personal experiences. By including all parents and guardians with African American students, this research would give the school district and neighboring school districts a broader view of the parents and guardians of their African American students.

This study should be completed as a participatory action research study to establish the collaborative relationships among the family, school, and community, as described in Epstein's sphere of influence (Espstein, 1987; Epstein & Connors, 1992) and Epstein's parent involvement framework (1987, 1995) to create a collaborative partnership between the district and African American students and their parents.

The study could be replicated to include perceptions expressed by students, parents, and site administrators. This could provide an opportunity for all members of the learning community to engage and to provide feedback on methods to improve student instructional outcomes.

Recommendations for Next Steps

1. Increase the opportunity for parents and guardians of African American male students to participate actively in school-based decision making to improve student achievement.
2. Provide support to site and district-level administrators in their efforts to provide relevant involvement opportunities for parents.
3. Re-evaluate site-based spending of Title I funds to increase effective and meaningful involvement of parents and guardians of African American male students, as well as other significant subgroups.
4. Re-evaluate the instructional measures used to define student success.

Conclusion

This research study was an attempt to evaluate the perceptions of parents and guardians of African American male students. Through this qualitative method, the research was designed to evaluate the ways in which parents and guardians of African American male students defined success and to determine whether the parents' and guardians' level of involvement was influenced by their perceptions of success for their sons. The study posed seven research questions that guided the research. The parents and guardians acknowledged the various assessments used during the instructional day; they expressed no negative feelings or concerns regarding these required assessments. However, every participant expressed displeasure with the end-of-year state assessments. According to the parents, placing so much weight on one examination can have a negative impact on students' self-esteem.

The findings suggested that the parents and guardians of African American male students had significant appreciation for the various academic measures used by classroom teachers. The original research question inquired whether parents and guardians of African American male students held a higher appreciation for nonacademic measures such as extracurricular sports, clubs, and organizations. The findings suggest that, although these parents and guardians of African American male students agreed that social outlets such as sports and clubs were significant to their students' well-being, those activities did not overshadow their belief and expectations regarding academic achievement.

The research was designed to analyze the perceptions of parents and guardians regarding opportunities for involvement that were afforded them by the school site as well and the district. A significant number of the participants suggested that both their school sites and the district provided parental involvement opportunities but noted that not all of the opportunities addressed their needs. Several participants alluded to a feeling that their voice did not matter. According to one parent, her voice did not count until she had filed a state discrimination complaint. Hence, some parents and guardians did not feel heard or seen.

The United States has had various federal mandates to provide guidance on effective ways to increase academic achievement by students and additional support to combat academic disparities experienced by African American male students. Various federal mandates have provided funding to support parental involvement opportunities. Increasing student achievement and parental involvement has a direct connection to the long-term health of the nation. Parental involvement experts suggest that increasing parental involvement benefits students by its impact on academic performance and behavior of at-risk students. Partnerships among families, schools, and the community are crucial to the field of education.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Recruitment Flyer

**AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT
RESEARCH STUDY**

**YOUR VOICE
MATTERS!**

Every Voice Counts

How do you define academic
achievement for your African American
male student?

Appendix B

Interest Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

My name is Robin S. McMillon, and I'm currently conducting a research study through the University of Redlands evaluating the parental perceptions of academic success and engagement for parents of African American males. The goal of this research is to gain a greater understanding of how parents define academic success for their students as well as the potential for engagement at their students' school site and within the district. In other words, what's most important to you as a parent of an African American male student within the district? More importantly, what non-instructional measures are essential to your students' success?

Your willingness to participate in this anonymous parent survey will provide me an opportunity to evaluate the authentic voice of parents and guardians of African American male students. Your participation will also assist me in completing the requirements of my doctoral dissertation. Therefore, your participation is greatly appreciated.

If you decide to participate in this research study, every effort will be taken to keep your identity completely anonymous. The study will require a brief forty-five minute to one-hour individual interview with me at a location of your preference, or you may request an over the phone interview. The interview will allow you to give your opinions and thoughts of how you define academic success for your student, evaluate the measures used by the site and district to define success, describe the non-academic factors that are most important to you as a parent, and highlight how you engage with the site and district.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please email me at robin_mcmillon@redlands.edu or call me at [REDACTED] to confirm your interest in this research study. Once I receive your email or phone call confirming your interest, I will provide you a copy of the consent to participate in this research study. This research study is entirely voluntary, and no adverse reactions will occur against you or your student if you decide not to participate in this study. Thank you for your time and energy.

Respectfully,

Robin S. McMillon

Appendix C

Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

(For use with adult subjects only)

What follows is a consent form that explains what will be happening if you choose to participate in this research study. The first section (Investigator Information) should have been completed by the investigator. If this section is incomplete, do not continue with the study. Do not participate if this study has not been assigned an IRB approval number. The information you need to provide begins on Page 2. Please read each section carefully.

Investigator Information (to be completed by Principle Investigator)

IRB approval number:

Title of project: Perceptions of Success & Engagement among Parents of African American Males

Name of principal investigator (PI): Robin S. McMillon

Email of PI: robin_mcmillon@redlands.edu

Telephone number of PI:

Department or major of PI: School of Education, Ed. D program

Position held by PI:

☐ faculty

☐ administrator/staff

☒ student

If PI is a student or staff, complete the remainder of Investigator Information, otherwise go to next page.

Name of faculty or administrator sponsor: james_valadez@redlands.edu

Department or office of sponsor: School of Education

Position held by sponsor:

☒ faculty

☐ administrator

General information about this study

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Whether you do is entirely up to you. You may refuse to participate, or you may stop participating at any time for any reason without any penalty.

Most research studies are designed to collect and gather new information on topics and specified fields of interest. Information gathered from research studies may help explore and expand instructional topics of interest in various instructional fields. As a participant, you may not garner any direct benefit from participating in this study. Nevertheless, your participation is greatly appreciated. With some research topics, there may be some levels of risk associated with the study. Hence, the potential risk factors and other levels of salient information are described below to assist you with deciding whether you want to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the authentic voice of parents of African American males enrolled in a Southern California public school district and identify their perceptions of academic success for their students as well as engagement opportunities afforded to them as parents. The responses of all participants will be analyzed and compared to gain an appreciation of parental perceptions of academic success among the measures used to validate student achievement through the site, district, and state measures. As well as describe the engagement opportunities experienced by parents of African American males within their school district. Each study participant will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview at a location of your choice like a local Starbucks or an over the phone interview facilitated by the principal investigator. The interview will explore the following themes with each participant:

- Define academic success for your student (What measures are most important to you as a parent of an African American male?)
- Evaluate the measures used by the site, district, and state to define academic success (Of those measures, which measures are most important to defining your students' academic success?)
- Evaluate the measures used by the school district to engage you in your students' level of academic achievement.

How long this will take? (i.e., duration of participation)

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in a one-on-one interview or an over the phone interview facilitated by the principal investigator. In consideration of your time, this interview will last less than one hour.

What will happen if you participate in this study?

If you decide to participate in this study after receiving and reviewing the research flyer/interest letter, a copy of the research consent form will be provided to the potential research subject by email. Once the consent to participate form is returned, the Principal Investigator will schedule an individual interview for the research subject in a location of their preference, such as a local coffee shop. Instead of a face to face interview, research participants may engage in an over the phone interview. Each interview option is meant to provide the highest level of comfort to the research participants.

Prior to the start of the interview, any research questions will be addressed entirely by the principal investigator. Once all procedural safeguards are addressed, the forty-five minute to one hour interview

will be conducted. During the interview, the principal investigator will audiotape the interview as well as transcribe the meeting notes. If the study participant declines to have their interview audiotaped, their responses will be transcribed by the principal investigator. At the conclusion of the interview, the participants will receive a thank you note for their participation in the study.

Audiotaping:

As a participant in this study, you will be audiotaped during your individual interview. If you prefer not to have your interview audiotaped, your interview will be transcribed by the principal investigator verbatim.

Protecting your privacy

Every effort will be taken to keep your personal information secured before, during, and after the research study. Personal identifiers will be used in lieu of your name, and emails and individual audio-recordings will be deleted immediately after the interview is transcribed by the principal investigator. All interview transcripts will be secured on a password protected device. In some cases, your information from this study may be reviewed by representatives of the University of Redlands. Nevertheless, the principal investigator will take every step to protect your privacy and your personal information.

What will happen if you experience any problems or discomfort during or after your participation?

This research carries limited risk to the adult participants. Nevertheless, if you experience any undue stress or concerns during or after participating in this study, please inform the principal investigator immediately. Free and low-cost community resources are available through the County of San Bernardino if you find yourself in need of additional supports after the study.

- San Bernardino County (Mental Health Services) (909) 386-8256.

Compensation for participating in this study:

There will be no compensation provided for study participants.

Questions about this study:

Should you have any additional questions regarding this research study, you may contact the principal investigator, Robin McMillon, with the contact information provided on the front of this consent form. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Valadez, at james_valadez@redlands.edu, with any additional questions or concerns regarding this study.

Questions or concerns about the investigators, staff members, and your participation in the study:

This study was approved by the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board (IRB). The board tries to ensure that your rights and welfare are protected if you choose to participate in this study. If you have any questions about your role or how the principal investigator treated you, you may contact the Chair of the IRB Committee, Jessica Hehman, at jessica_hehman@redlands.edu or by telephone at 909-748-8469.

Participant's Agreement

I, _____,
Print Name Above

have read the information presented above. I have asked all questions I had at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Signature of Research Participant	Date

To be completed by researcher:

Print Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix D

Thank You Card to Participants

Appendix E

Debriefing Letter

Dear (Participant Name)

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your willingness and participation in my doctoral endeavors regarding parental perceptions of academic success and engagement for parents of African American males. The information you provided regarding your personal perception of success for your student and your experience with your student's school and the district was compared and analyzed with other study participants. During the study, I looked for commonalities and themes shared among the various parents who participated in the study. As a member of this study, your participation allowed me to understand what instructional measures parents value most as well as those non-instructional measures parents believe are essential to supporting their student academic experience. Notwithstanding, your participation allowed me to appreciate the needs of parents as we plan and create engagement opportunities to support the needs of all community stakeholders.

If at any time, the topics we covered lead to levels of personal concern or unpleasant memories, you may want to reach out for additional supports. The county of San Bernardino offers a wealth of individual supports and counseling services for their residence. The San Bernardino Department of Public Health Services can be reached at (1-888-743-1478).

Once again, thank you for your support and interest in my doctoral endeavors. Below, you will find the contact information for myself and staff members from the University of Redlands should you have any questions or concerns regarding this research study. Lastly, you will also find significant data findings from my research study. If, after reviewing the data findings, you would like to request a full copy of the research study, please respond to this email with your request.

Respectfully,
Robin S. McMillon
E.D. Student
University of Redlands

University of Redlands Contacts:

University of Redlands Student

Robin McMillon robin_mcmillon@redlands.edu [REDACTED]

University of Redlands Dissertation Chair

James Valadez james_valadez@redlands.edu (909) 748-8064

University of Redlands IRB Chair

Jessica Hehman jessica_hehman@redlands.edu (909) 748-8469

Research Findings:

Appendix F

Institutional Review Board Approval of the Study

June 11, 2020

Robin McMillon
School of Education
University of Redlands
Redlands, CA 92373-0999

Dear Robin:

TITLE OF PROPOSAL: **Perceptions of success and engagement ...**

DATE OF REVIEW: **06/11/2020**

DECISION: **Approved**

IRB APPROVAL #: **2020-20-REDLANDS**

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your revised project by the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board (IRB).

You are authorized to begin conducting this study as of Date of Final Approval: **6/11/2020**. This approval is Valid Until: **6/10/2021**.

Please note the following conditions attached to all approval letters.

1. This project must be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the University's IRB Guidelines and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46). These federal regulations are available online at <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/documents/OHRPRegulations.pdf>
2. You must notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the status of your research project.
3. You should report to the IRB any anticipated problems involving risks to the participants.
4. No participants may be involved in any study before the Date of Final Approval or after the Valid Until date.
5. Upon completion of the project, please submit a final report to the IRB. The form is on the IRB website.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Chair at Jessica_hehman@redlands.edu. A signed copy of this letter is on-file.

Sincerely,

Jessica Hehman
Chair, IRB
FWA 00023072