Parental Engagement: Differences between African American and Latino Parents'
Outlooks toward Dimensions Affecting Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study examined the extent to which there were differences between African-American and Latino parents' outlooks toward dimensions affecting engagement in their children's education. Information was gathered using a broad-based survey and focus group interviews. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, parents were asked to respond to an online survey asking their level of agreement on seven dimensions of parental engagement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with community, and positive experiences with schools. Sixty parents responded to the survey and three African-American and three Latino parents participated in the focus group interviews.

Quantitative data analysis revealed that overall there were statistically significant differences between African-American and Latino parents' survey responses on dimensions affecting engagement; moreover, Latino parents had a higher level of agreement on all seven dimensions. Evidence from the focus-group interviews also indicated that there were differences between African-American and Latino parents' outlooks toward parental engagement dimensions. African-American parents reported more engagement in their children's education out-of-school; dimensions such as parenting, learning at home, and communicating; while Latino parents reported more engagement in both in-school and out-of-school dimensions. The differences between African-American and Latino parents' participation in school may be attributed to the fact that state of California mandates the establishment of advisory committees for English Learners. It would be reasonable to conclude that because schools have a greater

responsibility to engage Latino parents and consistently encourage them to attend monthly advisory committees, this may account for Latino parents' higher level of engagement on the seven dimensions of parental engagement.

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background of Study

According to a West-African proverb, it takes the involvement of a village to raise a child. Here the meaning of “village” refers to the necessity and engagement of all members of the community around the school for the benefit of all children/students (Carignan, Pourdavood, King, 2005). A growing body of research supports the positive effects of parental involvement on the educational performance and academic success of school children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sander, 1995; Jeynes, 2003). According to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), the level of parental support and involvement available to African-American and Latino students was strongly influenced by family social class, maternal level of education, single parent status, poverty, health, and parental perception of their role. This proposed study will examine the extent to which there were differences between African-American and Latino parents’ responses to elements affecting parental engagement, and their overall outlooks toward engagement at their children’s school.

Federal, state, and local policies encourage or mandate that schools include parental involvement goals in their programs. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) promotes parental engagement in schools that receive Title I funds and allocates 1% of those funds toward the implementation of organized activities and programs that involve parents. This policy recognizes parental engagement as a valuable, useful, and essential component of student success, school improvement, and other aspects of school management. To further support the benefits of parental engagement, a

published survey from the U.S. Department of Education (1994), *Strong Families Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning* concluded that when parents are involved in their children's learning, the children have better school attendance, increased motivation, lower suspension rates, and higher test scores and graduation rates. For African-American and Latino students, their disproportionate school failure or achievement gap may be attributed to the lack or minimal engagement of parents who support their children's academic achievement.

The Black-White and Latino-White achievement gaps have been pervasive issues in public schools, evidenced by the disparity in achievement levels and standardized test scores between Black, White, and Latino students (Goldsmith, 2011). This gap can be observed on a variety of measures including standardized test scores, grade point average (GPA), motivation and self esteem, behavior, attendance, parent expectations, drop-out rates, and college enrollment and completion (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Regardless which of these measures of academic successes are used, educational research has documented trends that African-American and Latino students consistently underachieve (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Schwartz, 2003; Taylor, 1994).

The 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress compared the achievement gap (disparities) of Black, White, and Latino students in 4th and 8th grades in mathematics and reading. This data revealed that on a 500-point scale on 4th grade math, there was a 23-point score gap between Black and White students, and an 18-point score gap between Latino and White students. In 8th grade, the data showed a 27-point score gap between Black and White students and a 23-point score gap between Latino and White students. According to Education Trust-West (2010), the results of the 2004

achievement patterns of African-American students revealed that only 12% of African-American 4th graders reached the proficient or advanced levels on standardized tests, compared to 39% of White 4th graders and that 61% have not been taught even the basic level. Indeed, achievement data reveals that a Black-White and Latino-White gap exists; it is interesting to note that a Black-Latino gap exists as well.

African-American and Latino students are reading and doing math two years behind their White peers; by middle school they are three years behind. Unfortunately, by the time African-American and Latino students reach the end of high school, they are only able to read and do math at the levels of White middle school students; they are now four years behind their peers in their academic achievement. Jeynes (2005) reported that since parental involvement has been effective in helping the general population of students, some researchers believe that parental participation in education is one way of bridging the achievement gap. These findings have important implications whether or not the differences in achievement levels between African-American and Latino students can be attributed to differences in levels of parental engagement.

Ogbu (2003) wrote extensively on the reasons minority students, particularly African-Americans, do poorly in school. He repeatedly characterized the dismal level of parental involvement in the education of their children as one of the salient factors. He further contended that African-American parents transfer the responsibility for their children's success to the schools, not recognizing the importance of supporting and monitoring their child's schoolwork. In essence, African-American parents often believe that the school is solely responsible for educating their children. Valencia (2002) claimed that it is only a myth that Latino and African-American parents do not value education.

On the contrary, both recognize the importance of being involved in their children's education in order to help them become more successful in school.

To illustrate how race and identity had a significant impact on African Americans, Du Bois (1903) explained a double consciousness African Americans felt, the concept of the divided self, and to represent what it was like to be African American at the beginning of the 20th century. Du Bois was convinced that race was the central problem of the century to come. Woodson (1933) established the legitimacy of race (and, in particular, African Americans), and offered a constructive critique of the educational system with special reference to its blighting effects on the Negro. He termed this Mis-education. Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) suggested using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an analytical lens that "race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States . . . and could account for the differences in education achievement between African-Americans and White students" (p. 170). Leaving the achievement gap unchallenged paints a bleak picture and potentially renders African-American students dysfunctional and captive to an underclass (Sharpton, 2009). Understanding the nature and magnitude of the achievement gap between African-American, White, and Latino students is a critical step in raising awareness among African-American and Latino parents and families.

Parental engagement has been characterized by several definitions and activities, not one of which covers the full array of ways parents and teachers work together to benefit children's education. For example, Howard and Reynolds (2008) asserted that parental engagement included helping students with homework, expressing their expectations of school performance, and creating emotionally supportive learning

environments at home. Along those same lines, McNeal (1999) noted that parental engagement included involvement in parent-teacher organizations as well as monitoring and providing educational support to increase academic achievement. Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon (1997) suggested a theoretical framework to account for the different levels of school-related opportunities for parental engagement in their children's education. Epstein's research mainly focused on what schools (teachers) do to stimulate more parental involvement (Fan & Chen, 2001). These six types are (1) parenting; (2) communicating; (3) volunteering; (4) parent involvement in learning activities or learning at home; (5) parent involvement in governance and advocacy; and (6) collaborating with community.

Increasing parental engagement could prove an important means of boosting the academic performance of African-American students (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 2003). This study will address that gap in literature by employing a mixed methods research design to obtain African-American and Latino parents' outlooks toward parental engagement at their children's school.

Educational Justice Theoretical Framework

One of the goals of education is to enable students to reach their full potential, individually, in relation to their family, and as members of a society. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) explained school success or failure by the type of cultural capital inherited from the family rather than individual talent or achievement. Cultural capital is accumulated from birth based on students' experiences, values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms. This study utilized cultural capital theory to construct explanations for the differential achievement gap of African-American students and the complex nature of

parental engagement. Because of the continuing significance of race in schools and society as a whole, a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens will be used to analyze how race limits or constrains the educational outcomes and life chances of African-American children and their parents.

The interrelationships of family status, education, income, child's level of achievement, and parent perceptions of their role in schools will also be explored. Emphasis in these areas all seem important; however the relatively low level of participation suggests that African-American parents have not been able to increase their involvement by a significant degree.

Statement of the Problem

Research supports the fact that a parent's engagement in their children's education has a positive impact on their success, yet the achievement gap between African-American and Latino students persists and may be attributed to differences in parent participation in their children's education. On the basis of some research, African-American parents were less engaged in their children's schooling experiences; three variables seemed to have a significant impact on parental engagement: family education, social class, and parental perceptions of their role (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). This minimal support had a negative impact on their children's level of academic success.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which there were differences between African-American and Latino parents' outlooks toward dimensions affecting engagement in their child's education. This study will contribute to an understanding of African-American and Latino parents' outlooks toward parental

engagement and seek to bridge the connection between their involvement and the educational outcomes of their children.

Research Question

Are there differences between African-American and Latino parents' outlooks toward dimensions affecting engagement in their children's education?

Delimitation of Terms

Because of the extensive collaboration that usually occurs between parents and teachers when working toward a child's academic success, the term "parental engagement" was used in this study to encompass all such collaborative activities. For the purposes of this study, engagement will be operational as creating and sustaining collaboration between parents and teachers to include: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, (6) collaborating with community, and (7) positive experiences with schools.

Assumptions

Schools tend to favor the perspectives of white, middle-income families, and marginalize the views regarding African-American and Latino parental involvement. The relationship between parent engagement and academic achievement vary on the basis of how African-American and Latino parent engagement is measured. Parent engagement at home and parent engagement at school seem to be two distinctly different measures used with African-American and Latino parents. Teachers often perceive minority parents as uninvolved and disinterested in their children's education and often overlook their strengths and capacity to increase the achievement levels of their children (Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). It is interesting to note, Latino students score slightly higher than

African Americans on most academic scales; as a result there may be differences between African-American and Latino parents' parental engagement at their children's school.

Definition of Terms

- **Academic Achievement Gap:** The observed disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, ability, and socioeconomic status.
- **Boundary Dynamics:** Boundaries where participants interact in organized and casual ways. Resistance to alter one's views.
- **Critical Race Theory:** The study and transformation of the relationship among race, racism, and minorities and how race shapes the manner in which African Americans are perceived.
- **Cultural Capital:** Forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which gives them a higher status in society. Parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system.
- **Double Consciousness:** The sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. It is an awareness of one's self as well as an awareness of how others perceive that person and/or conforming or changing one's identity to that of how others perceive the person.
- **Educational Outcomes:** Methods of measuring student achievement that demonstrate mastery of required skills (and content of a curriculum).

- Parental Engagement: Emphasis on the connection between home and school where parents play an important role in their child's education by supporting their academic success, and social and emotional development.
- Social Capital: A resource used to facilitate human action toward productive outcomes, obtained through the relationships of individuals in a social system.
- Statistically Significant Subgroup: A school site has a statistically significant number of students in the African-American subgroup if at least 100 students, or 50 or more, when the total number of African-American students comprises 15% of the student population.
- Systemic Oppression: Institutionalized social dynamics where minorities or disadvantaged individuals are marginalized in distinct ways.
- Systems Thinking: An approach to problem solving, by viewing problems as parts of an overall system, rather than reacting to specific parts, outcomes or events, and potentially contributing to further development of unintended consequences.

Summary

I am proposing that through the information garnered from the surveys and focus groups the results of this study will provide valuable information to help parents understand the dimensions of parental engagement and the positive impact their engagement can have on their child's academic success. Increasing parental engagement among African-American and Latino parents may help address the pervasive Black-White, Latino-White, and Black-Latino achievement gap.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Lavin-Loucks (2006) emphasized that “the sheer presence of an achievement gap based on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status implies an unequal education system” (p. 15). This literature review will seek to frame the ideological positions in connection with (a) the disenfranchisement and failure of African-American and Latino students in urban school settings; (b) institutional injustices of schools; and (c) the differences between African-American and Latino parents’ outlook toward elements affecting engagement in their child’s education. Additionally, this literature review will examine with significant depth, the repressive social structures and power relationships within K-12 institutions and seek to deconstruct key assumptions held by educators in order to provide adequate and equitable opportunities for African-American and Latino students and their families to improve their academic achievement.

Broad Theoretical Concepts

When it comes to education, society has struggled with educating African-American students and the ongoing academic disparities of the Black-White dichotomy, particularly in urban school settings (Anyon, 1997). This gap has been well hypothesized, studied, and documented and yet it continues to be a perennial education issue particularly for African-American students (Bell, 1992; Irvine, 1991; Kozol, 1991; Lee, 2002). The term achievement gap denotes a somewhat kinder way of discussing the pervasive racial and socioeconomic disparities in student achievement and what Kozol termed “savage inequalities” in America’s schools.

Within educational institutions, African-American students and their parents struggle with what Du Bois (1903) termed double consciousness, the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of other people. African Americans sometimes struggle with being true to themselves without being perceived as defective by individuals in dominant groups who "conceal the ways in which their values and perspectives . . . permeate cultural and institutional norms" (p. 49). African-American students strive to maintain their identities and at times reject the values and perceptions that typify the dominant culture. Du Bois further discussed how these perceptions are undermined by racism and the veil of prejudice that systematically degrades African-American students and their families. Lynn and Baker (2005) argued, "equal respect and recognition is not just about the liberal idea that every individual is entitled to equal rights . . . it is also about appreciating or accepting differences rather than merely tolerating them" (pp. 132-133). In essence, the realities of contemporary racial stratification make it harder for African-American parents to be effective as agents of their children's academic achievement (Gosa & Alexander, 2007).

Social and Educational Justice Background

Freire (1993) asserted that education can be both oppressive and a liberating force in society as well as a vehicle that maintains and supports the status quo of society. Unfortunately, schools serve as agents of the status quo by conveying the ideology and values of the dominant social class and making certain that existing social and economic structures remain constant. Price-Mitchell (2009) reminded us that historically parent education was viewed as a way to teach parents societal norms, proper ways of raising children, and an understanding of social class, a "necessary way of helping immigrant

and indigent families assimilate into middle class society, adopting the values and attitudes of the prevailing culture” (p. 3).

Freire (1993) further believed that by developing a critical consciousness, oppressed people begin to analyze these structures in order to understand the state of their lives and the education of their children. With this knowledge, individuals reflect and act on their own reality by describing and defining a problem clearly, analyzing its causes, and acting to resolve it. The Black and Latino communities must raise their consciousness and awareness regarding the magnitude and significance of the Black-White and Latino-White achievement gap.

Aronowitz (2009) discussed Bourdieu’s view of social class relations by stating that schools promote and reinforce a form of class-specific cultural knowledge that systematically excludes ethnic minorities from the educational system or disenfranchisement. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) further stated that students who lack cultural capital or the requisite knowledge and skills with which to successfully navigate the parameters of middle-class culture, inevitably fail at school. Lee and Bowen (2006) highlighted the fact that “cultural capital exists in three forms: (1) personal dispositions, attitudes, and knowledge gained from experience; (2) connections to education-related objects (books, computers, academic credentials); (3) and connections to education-related institutions” (p. 195). Inevitably, the attitudes and experiences African-American parents have with parental engagement will add or detract from their cultural capital and participation in their child’s academic success in school.

Along the same lines, social capital is often used to facilitate human action toward productive outcomes, obtained through the relationships of individuals in a social system.

Coleman (1988) described the three components of social capital: “the obligations and expectations of reciprocity in social relationships, norms and social control and information changes” (p. 102). Coleman viewed social capital as a means to an end and highlighted the fact that parents can improve their child’s educational attainment by visits to the school. These visits take the form of information (events or activities), access to resources (books, tutoring or additional assistance), and social control (behavior expectations and educational values). Coleman further stated that “the education related social capital possessed by parents or obtained through their involvement at school promotes school achievement only if parents are able to devote time to supporting their children’s education at home” (pp. 109-110).

Achievement Patterns of African-American and Latino Students

The struggle to close and ultimately eliminate the Black-White and Latino-White achievement gaps persists. Public schools have not afforded African-American students either equal opportunities or equal outcomes. This has meant unequal or inequitable access to high quality teachers, rigorous classes, and resources that would help students academically achieve. The A-G high-school courses that prepare students for all options past high school indicate that only 25% of African-American graduates complete A-G requirements compared to 40% of White and 58% of Asian graduates. Significant differences persist in the rates African-American students’ complete high school; dropout rates for African Americans reveal that more than 40% drop out of high school (Education Trust-West, 2010). It has also been reported that schools serving large numbers of African-American students are far less likely to offer the full range of courses.

According to a report by Education Trust-West (2010), achievement and opportunity gaps begin in elementary school and continue through high school and into college for African-American students. Advancing to the next grade does not necessarily mean advancing in achievement for African Americans. In some cases, student declines and opportunity gaps persist from one grade to the next. As a result, Education Trust-West reported that African-American students graduate from high school at a lower rate than their White counterparts and even when they do graduate, they are often unprepared for postsecondary education and career opportunities. This report also highlighted the fact that vast disparities continue to exist for African-American students. Although African-American students collectively increased their API scores by 15 points, from 670 to 685, they continue to trail their white peers by an alarming 153 points. Hence, their score of 685 is well below the state target of 800.

In a survey conducted by Education Trust-West (2010), educators surveyed were asked to share their opinions for the persistent low achievement of African-American and Latino students. They attributed the causes to the students' low socio-economic status, the fact that parents did not care, neighborhood violence, not enough books in the home, and single-parent households. Students on the other hand, attributed their low achievement levels to teachers who did not know the subject they were teaching, counselors who consistently underestimated their potential and placed them in lower-level courses, principals who dismissed their concerns, the curriculum, and a set of expectations that were so low that they bore students and significantly contributed to their decision to drop out. The students surveyed acknowledged that the issues the adults discussed did matter; however, they reported the fact they felt they were taught less was

the most significant. In essence, issues of poverty and educational resources do matter but African-American students who often have less to begin with and are given less in school. Howard and Reynolds (2008) highlighted a litany of challenges that contributed to the disenfranchisement of African-American students: (1) under qualified teachers; (2) deteriorating and overcrowded schools; (3) inadequate learning materials; (4) high administrator and teacher turnover, and a host of savage inequalities that have become commonplace in urban public schools. These issues contribute to the persistent achievement gap issues for African-American and Latino students, yet Latino students score higher on academic measures. Research supports the notion that parents can play a critical role in closing this achievement gap; a closer examination of parents' parental engagement in their children's education may be crucial.

In the California Dropout Research Project, Rotermund (2007) highlighted that inadequate education has significant economic consequences on future earnings, spending on health, crime, and welfare; in other words, the economic magnitude can be substantial. Howard (2008) suggested "there is an increasing correlation between African Americans who perform poorly in school, many of whom ultimately drop out, and their subsequent involvement in the penal system" (p. 2). According to the drop-out project, the probability of incarceration for African-American male dropouts is at least 60%. Weiss et al. (2010) stated that "preparing students for the twenty-first century demands the full spectrum of society's resources to support all students, and especially the disadvantaged and disengaged" (p. 2). It follows then that many years of research confirms that parental engagement improves student academic achievement and graduation rates (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Critical Race Theory and the Disenfranchisement of Minority Students

The disenfranchisement of African-American and Latino students is part of the broader context of schools and society. The culture and climate of schools play an important part and often reveal teachers' attitudes and low expectations of minority students. The perceptions of educators are factors within the broader context of educating minority students. Negative perceptions, expectations, and behaviors interact with students' beliefs and behaviors in ways that help perpetuate the Black-White achievement gap.

Woodson (1933) argued that African Americans were often taught to believe that their race did not matter and that they would never amount to anything and still continues today. He suggested that African Americans should not be thought of from the context of pathology and inferiority but a multi-textured analysis of their uniqueness and situation within the larger context of society. Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) argued that racism is pervasive and deeply ingrained in society when they wrote the "cause of poverty in conjunction with the condition of their schools is institutional and structural racism" (p. 5). Hence, race and poverty account for the inequities African-American students experience and the reasons they are not afforded more equitable educational opportunities.

Dixson and Rousseau (2005) discussed the inequities in the education of African-American students and maintained "race continues to marginalize and oppress people of color" (p. 23) and that until we "dismantle the years of inequitable schooling policies and practices" (p. 23) racism in education will continue to negatively impact African-American and Latino students. As cited in Howard (2008), Bells' use of Critical Race

Theory (CRT) as a conceptual framework in analyzing the underachievement of minority students by acknowledging the “presence and perniciousness of racism, discrimination, and hegemony . . . race-based epistemological approaches are important analytic lenses . . . because they offer the opportunity to challenge dominant ideology” (p. 2). Howard also suggested “an explicit acknowledgement of race and racism . . . may contribute to a unique analysis and a richer, more comprehensive explanation of the educational challenges faced by African American students” (p. 297). Race has played a significant role in how schools have rationalized and accepted the persistently low academic achievement of African-American students. The inclusion of CRT as a framework is warranted because it centers race at the core of the analysis and highlights important implications for students and parents in the educational system. Ultimately giving parents and educators an opportunity to examine these issues may be the impetus for greater dialogue about ways all stakeholders can work together for student success.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is concerned with racism, racial subordination, and discrimination and emphasized the socially constructed nature of race. It analyzes racial inequity as the social reconstruction of race and discrimination (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). It follows then that within society, the dominant culture continues to perpetuate the issues of racism and social class through power relationships and racial hierarchies. Lynn and Jennings (2005) discussed the power of dominant groups in Gramsci’s notion of hegemony whereby social and institutional practices reproduce social inequities through oppressive conditions in schools. These power relationships illustrate how race and social class posit disenfranchised students in the hierarchical structure of schools and the reason institutional forces are often

overlooked as systematic variables in the subordination of marginalized groups. Those who possess the power are frequently unaware of this power and are frequently unwilling to relinquish this power. Lynn and Jennings emphasized the existence of oppressive structures and how they are enacted within classrooms and “take on many different forms and include the power of students, teachers and administrators . . . who hold degrees of power that are constantly negotiated, defined, and enacted in relation to other power brokers within and outside the classroom” (p. 26). Power relationships and the consequences of school failure create a multitude of negative results manifested in the achievement outcomes for minority students. Examining power relationship may serve as a catalyst to improving relationships between educators and parents.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) discussed the school’s role in structuring inequality and demotivating African-American students:

The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples. (p. 169)

This statement adds weight to what Ogbu (1982) termed cultural discontinuity that exists in school settings. The author contended that this discontinuity “develops when subordinate minority group members interact in dominant culture” (p. 295). African-American students must be familiar with both minority and dominant cultures; consequently, when African-American students maintain their identities they are viewed as rejecting the values and behaviors that typify dominant culture. Ogbu further

suggested that knowing African-American students' cultural styles and preferences is critical to relationship building, communication, and meeting their academic needs.

Along these same lines, Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) argued that for Latino students "teachers' perceptions that Latino families do not care about their children's education derived from misunderstandings of actions by these families" (p. 120).

Developing a better understanding of various cultures could shed light on cultural discontinuity.

Anyon (1995) discussed the oppressive factors of race and social class that are embedded in school structures, policies, and practices in ways that ultimately create academic failure. She further contended that there are three significant factors that determine what occurs in minority ghetto schools where the student population is racially and economically marginalized: socio-cultural differences between students, parents, and teachers; an abusive school environment; and educator expectations. Anyon described the relationships between educators, students, and parents as a professional culture of dehumanization and abuse. The manifestations of this culture and the socio-cultural differences are rooted in society's history of racial and social class stratification in and perpetuated in the structure of public school systems. The author further contended that the lived culture of educators evidenced by their attitudes and behaviors toward students who are "racially marginalized, of low academic achievement, difficult to motivate educationally, and from families that have little or no social power" (p. 83) creates a hostile and rejecting atmosphere that systematically devalues students.

Bell (1992) believed that the pursuit of racial equality in society and schools is futile in a social structure in which African Americans are permanently on the bottom. In

order for this atmosphere to change, schools must recognize, understand, and respect African-Americans' cultural and social backgrounds and reverse the downward spiral of relationships between home and school. Recognizing and understanding the complexities of how race and social class manifest themselves in our public school systems should become an impetus for change in the education of African-American students.

Parental Engagement

Research data provides evidence that parental engagement has a significant influence on student achievement (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, and Simon, 1997; Jeynes, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sander, 1995; Stevenson, 1987). Hoover-Dempsey and Sander found that the major educational outcomes of parental engagement are the beneficial influences on student success and "children's development of skills and knowledge, as well as a personal sense of efficacy for succeeding in school" (p. 1); moreover, the ability of parents to reinforce skills obtained in school and promote learning outside school is critical to school success. The authors asserted that a parent's personal sense of efficacy is necessary for parent involvement and "if combined with a construction of the parental role as including parental involvement, and if relatively strong, a parent's sense of efficacy for helping children succeed may constitute a sufficient condition for active parental involvement" (p. 3). In other words, parents have to understand the importance of their role in their child's academic success in order to become actively involved.

Family status variables such as income, education, ethnicity, and marital status are often related to the amount and forms of parental involvement (Gettlinger & Waters-Guetschow, 1998). The authors also stated that role theories suggest that when school

group members (parents, teachers, administrators, and children) communicate frequently and have a shared understanding of role expectations and preferences, there is success in maintaining parents' involvement. According to Drummond and Stipek (2004), parents believed their primary role was to help children at home with reading, math, and homework particularly in elementary school. McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) found that some urban parents resisted involvement in their children's education because of distrust toward the school because they felt the faculty was biased against African-American and Latino children and their families. It was interesting to note the authors also reported that some parents said they deliberately decided not to participate because they thought the school was racist.

Various studies described parental engagement as multi-dimensional and the various behaviors and activities associated with it. As a result, Epstein et al. (2009) identified six types of parental engagements that positively affected student academic achievement: (1) parenting- helping all families establish home environments to support their children; (2) communicating- effective school-to-home, home-to-school; (3) volunteering, recruiting, and organizing parent help and support; (4) learning at home- providing information and ideas to families on how to help students at home; (5) decision making- including parents in school decisions; (6) collaborating with community- identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs. Jeynes (2003) highlighted the fact that intact families and communication are salient aspects of parental involvement. The author further highlighted the fact that "when parents get involved in their children's education, they offer not only information specific to the classroom but likely help in giving children a

broader level of academic information” (p. 214). It reminds us that research repeatedly correlates parental engagement with increased student achievement and should be a strategy to leverage improvements in student learning (Weiss, Lopez and Rosenberg, 2010).

Parents’ Estrangement from Schools

All too often the deficit paradigm or the defective culture theory, the assumption that poor student performance or behavior stems from problems with the students or their families that must be “fixed” has long been deeply embedded in the culture of urban schools. The byproduct of this paradigm is deficit thinking which implies that one of the causes/factors for the Black-White and Latino-White achievement gap is the family’s culture or deficient family practices. It seems that when parents do not engage in dominant culture modes of showing support, they may be perceived negatively or judged as not caring about their children’s education. The deficit paradigm contributes to the perception that the educational failure of African Americans is

a direct result of pathologies within Black families, communities, and cultures . . . this creates, justifies, and maintains unequal educational experiences for African American learners by blaming students, not schools or the society, for the Black-White and Latino-White achievement gap (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 186).

Accordingly, deficit thinking perpetuates the notion that African-American parents are uneducated, viewed as part of the problem; thus the primary reason children aren’t better prepared academically (Valencia, 2002). As a result, those who subscribe to this belief system, contribute to the inequality and injustices against minority students and parents (Valencia and Solórzano, 1997).

Olivos (2006) offered one explanation for African-American parents' estrangement from schools when he argued that "the state of parental involvement reflects society's larger social and political reality as well as the underlying macro and micro level causes of the strained and ambivalent relationships between educators and parents" (p. 27). He attributed parents' estrangement from schools a sign of resistance toward educators who undervalue their input and to the tensions of culture, power, and knowledge. He further stated that "parents must begin to understand their role within the socioeconomic and historic context from which their subordination and their children's academic failure arises" (p. 38) and it is only then that they can effectively contribute to the transformation of schools.

Price-Mitchell (2009) offered boundary dynamics as another reason for the estrangement of American parents' from schools and stated "many of the boundaries between parents and schools are perceived as walls rather than places to interact and learn" (p. 17). Boundary dynamics is often resistance from educators that constitutes an unwillingness to "engage at the boundaries or a teacher who views parents as a distraction from the work of education" (p. 17). Epstein (1986) wrote that some teachers feel that their professional status is in jeopardy if parents are involved in activities that are typically the teachers' responsibility.

Schools assume African-American parents are not concerned about their children's education and these attitudes are, in some instances, exhibited by educators which make parents feel unwelcome and excluded from schools. Abrams and Gibbs (2002) found that African-American parents are more alienated from public schools than non-white parents because they feel they have no voice, are essentially rendered invisible,

and their input unwelcome. Fine (1993) asserted that parents enter public education with neither resources nor power and are not usually welcomed by schools. Schools that collaborate with parents to give them a voice and work toward solving cultural and societal problems, African-Americans' experience in schools rather than reflect them.

To understand the assumptions underlying the African-American students' struggle in education, a critical analysis of the connections between race, culture, and social class must be examined. Lewis, James, Hancock, and Hill-Jackson (2008) also referred to these as competing paradigms of social-structural, deficit, and discontinuity paradigms. Social-structural ideologies convey the fact that “schools are born from, maintained by, and reproduced from racist philosophies, policies, and practices in education” (p. 136); deficit paradigm seeks to “blame the culture of minority families and students as diseased and deleterious of worth” (p. 140); and the discontinuity paradigm “which places the primary responsibility, not necessarily blame, for achievement and failure on members of the schooling system” (p. 141).

Research on African-American and Latino Parental Engagement

Jeynes (2003) conducted a meta-analysis that focused on 21 studies and included nearly 12,000 subjects, to determine the impact of parental involvement on the academic achievement of racial-minority students (African Americans, Asians, and Latinos). Four different measures of academic achievement were used: grades, standardized tests, teacher rating scales, and academic behaviors and attitudes. The results indicate that the impact of parental involvement overall was significant for all minority groups. For all groups, parental involvement had a “significant impact on children across race and across academic outcomes” (p. 213); however, among some of the races certain aspects of

parental involvement had a greater impact than did others. Jeynes also found that teachers viewed children and their families more positively as a result of the level of cooperation exhibited by the child and the family as a whole.

Jeynes' (2003) study indicated that parental involvement benefited African Americans and Latinos more than it did Asian Americans. The author further suggested that "parental involvement has the greatest impact where there are not other cultural factors that are working to raise academic achievement" (p. 215); in other words, some groups are not likely to have a parent present or involved. This study addressed what aspects of parental involvement are most important in affecting the academic achievement of students and found that "intact families and communication as salient aspects of parental involvement" (p. 216) and suggested that more research is needed to understand why these factors play a major role.

Howard and Reynolds (2008) examined parental involvement in reversing the underachievement of African-American students in middle-class schools. They examined the school experiences of middle-class parents and students using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a conceptual framework to examine parental involvement as it pertained to African-American parents. CRT allowed for the incorporation of counter storytelling as a methodological tool that incorporated parent voice. The authors attempted to account for the explicit intersection of race and class in their analysis. Building on the findings from the data, they found that race and class complicated the roles parents' play and the degree to which they become involved. They also suggested "families, parents and schools engage in dialogue and collaboration, with each entity hearing and learning about the

other's perspectives and needs as they attempt to create optimum educational conditions for all students" (p. 95).

Luster, Bates, Vandenbelt, and Nievar (2004) conducted a qualitative analysis to examine family factors related to individual differences in the early school success of children born to low-income adolescent mothers. One hundred thirty nine adolescent mothers participated in a five-year family support program where achievement test scores and teacher ratings were used to identify the most successful and least successful students in first grade. Their research focused on two questions: (1) What happens in the years prior to school entry that may influence how successful these children are in the early elementary grades? (2) How do the family experiences of children who are successful in the early grades differ from the family experiences of children who are struggling in the early elementary grades? Luster et al. found that "mothers of the most successful children were more likely to be described as child-centered, responsible, determined, and intelligent;" in contrast, the mothers of the least successful students "were more preoccupied with their own needs . . . less child-centered, and had mental health and substance abuse problems" (p. 74). As a result, the authors discovered the importance of looking at parenting practices and family environments to determine the early success of children from low-income adolescent mothers.

A study by Gettinger and Waters-Guetschow (1998) examined perceptions for parental involvement that included roles, efficacy, and opportunities among 558 parents and 142 teachers in six elementary, middle, and high schools. The authors found "two broad types of involvement roles: (1) roles in which parents have direct contact or involvement with their child; and (2) roles in which involvement is indirect, with less

direct benefit specifically for their child” (p. 38). The study suggested that increasing parental involvement must focus on the three dimensions identified by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) as (1) parents’ construction of their role, or beliefs about what they are supposed to do; (2) parents’ sense of efficacy, or believe they can benefit children; and (3) parents’ perceptions of opportunities and barriers to involvement. In essence, parents’ involvement decisions are strongly influenced by their perceptions and they become involved in their children’s education if “they have constructed specific roles for themselves, they believe they can help their children, and they perceive opportunities and an openness for involvement on the part of schools” (p. 39).

In a case study of African-American males, Howard (2008) used critical race theory as a lens to examine counter storytelling accounts of their experiences in PreK-12 schools. The focus of the study was to provide participants with a platform to discuss race-related issues and shed light on how African-American males believe race and racism play as factors in their experiences. The results from the study revealed that the participants were aware of how race shaped the manner in which they were viewed by their teachers and school administrators. The findings of this study suggested that educators must be more conscious of the role that race and racism play in their school environments and the challenge is to listen to the stories, experiences, challenges, successes, and triumphs of African-American males.

Archer-Banks and Horenstein (2008) conducted a study to determine the factors that influenced African-American parents’ involvement in their children’s middle school experiences. The participants’ voices in this study provided evidence that African-American parents viewed parental involvement as important, they reported that family

structure and socioeconomic status, school personnel's expectations of parents, and the practices and policies of middle-school personnel influenced their level of involvement. This study emphasized the need for research that examined African-American parents' perceptions of their involvement in the elementary and high school experiences of their children as well as the practices and policies of school administrators. The research clearly points to the fact that African-American parental engagement offers unique opportunities for parents to be more involved in their child's education which in turn has important implications for their academic success.

Conclusion

The information provided in this study sought to construct African-American parents' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences toward parental engagement in their child's K-6 schools and the meaning they attach to them. This will allow the reader to vicariously experience the challenges, barriers, or opportunities faced by parents and provide a lens to understand their perspectives. In order to dismantle the barriers of race and racism related to parental engagement, stakeholders must employ (a) a critical critique of society's perception of African-American students and their parents as well as (b) the reasons African-American parents often feel alienated from participating in their children's academic success within the context of schools. This research project may suggest that educators engage parents in true dialogue and cooperative decision-making in the critical and serious work of rethinking educational structures and practices.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This chapter provides information about the participants, the researcher, the measures, and the procedures. Because the study was conducted in two sequential stages, the method associated with each stage is reported in turn.

Stage One

This stage of the study employed survey data to compare the perceptions of African-American and Latino parents.

Participants

Participants were 55 parents (51 female; 3 male; one gender not reported) from two elementary schools in a large southern California school district. Thirty one (56.4%) were African American and 24 (43.6%) were Latino. Additional information about these participants is provided in Chapter 4.

Measures

Participants all completed a brief demographic questionnaire. It contained questions about themselves (e.g., gender; ethnicity; relationship status). It also contained basic questions about that person's child or children in that school (e.g., grade level). In addition, participants responded to 38 items from a measure developed by Epstein (2002) and Epstein et al. (1997). They were compiled using statements from the Mid-Atlantic Equity Center Parental Involvement survey, Orange County Public Schools Blue Ribbon Panel on Education Taskforce Parental Involvement (2005) survey, and Epstein et al.'s framework of six types of involvement. These items all employed a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Exploratory factor analysis was then conducted with responses from these participants. Although the sample size was smaller than the conventional recommendation of 10 participants per item, this seemed an appropriate means for scale development.

Six of the seven resulting factors replicated those previously developed by Epstein (2002) and Epstein et al. (1997) and corresponded to their types of parental involvement. Because of that replication, these factors all were named in their original scales. A seventh factor that the researchers “Positive Experiences” emerged from the “other areas” items on the original measure.

Scales then were created for each factor, with the score being the sum of the items divided by the number of items. Therefore, the range of possible scores for each scale was 1 to 5. Internal-consistency reliability (Cronbach alpha) was computed for each of the seven scales. Some items were dropped from particular scales to attain adequate levels of reliability. As a result, 30 items finally were used for the seven scales described below:

Parenting: Alpha = .76

The school provides classes to increase parenting skills in general.

The school provides classes for parents who need support in discipline/behavior of their child.

The school provides programs to teach parents how to work with their child in reading and math.

Communication: Alpha = .77

When I visit the school, I feel welcomed and appreciated.

The teachers are easy to talk to.

The principal is easy to talk to.

The written communications from the school (report cards, newsletters, etc.) are
in a language I understand.

If I have a concern, I am able to meet with someone who can help me in a timely
manner. I communicate by phone, notes, or emails with my child's teacher at
least once each month.

Volunteering: Alpha = .71

I was asked about my interests, talents, and availability for volunteering at school.

I feel comfortable volunteering at the school.

The school provides various volunteering opportunities (office help, special
events, field trips, parties, library aid, etc).

I am clear about how I can be involved at the school in ways that would help my
child.

I did not volunteer at the school because of issues related to childcare, work
schedule, other matters.

Learning at Home: Alpha = .61

I monitor my child's homework.

I listen to my child read or read aloud to my child.

At home, I have established routines for my child's schoolwork.

Decision Making: Alpha = .76

I attend School Site Council meetings.

The school actively seeks ideas from parents on school-related issues.

I have the opportunity to give input on policy development through committees.

The school has an organized PTA or PTO.

I have received training on how to participate on the decision-making committees at the school.

The school schedules meetings at various times to accommodate parents.

Collaborating with Community: Alpha = .68

I attend community meetings.

The school provides a positive climate for home/school community partnerships.

The school provides support programs for families (GED, ESL, computer training).

The school provides information about community organizations that can support my child's learning.

Positive Experiences: Alpha = .80

I have had mostly positive experiences with schools. ~ Communication

I am pleased with the education my child is receiving.

I feel the teacher believes my child has the ability to do well in school.

Procedures

The two school sites for this study were chosen using rules provided by the California Department of Education concerning presence of particular racial or ethnic subgroups. In this case, those groups were African American and Latino. The rule stipulates that there are at least 100 students in the particular subgroup, or 50 or more when the total number of students in that group comprises 15% of the student population.

Permission was secured from the school district and the site administrator to distribute the survey to African-American and Latino parents and conduct focus group interviews at the site. Results of the research project are to be shared with school district officials, parents, and school site administrators.

Permission from the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to conducting the study (covering both Stages One and Two). Every attempt was made to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and the assurance that the research would be used for the intended purpose. All parents in that school were contacted via a parent letter and were asked to complete an online parental engagement survey created using Survey Monkey, a web based survey tool.

Stage Two

Prior to the administration of the survey at Stage One, a pilot survey was conducted with diverse subgroups of parents to identify potential areas in which qualitative data might be most beneficial. The results of that pilot study shed light on shortcomings of the survey as the sole means of understanding these parents' experiences. As a consequence, a decision was made to engage a small group of parents in a focus group to obtain qualitative data on their perceptions.

Participants

Participants were six parents (three African American; three Latino) from Stage One of the study. All had indicated their willingness to participate in the next step in the study if they were asked.

The Researcher

My primary role as the researcher was to interpret and understand parents' perceptions of parental engagement and the multiple realities from their perspective, facilitate the multi-voice reconstruction of cultural and historical contexts, and acknowledge how my background shaped my interpretations and positions in the research. I am an African-American parent with a child in 6th grade and have my own perceptions of parental involvement.

Because of my familiarity with the research focus, I was more reflective and conscious of how any biases, values, or judgments I may have as an African-American parent may influence my interpretations; the data will override my preconceived perceptions and attitudes.

Procedures

The participants for the focus group interviews were selected from survey respondents who indicated their willingness to participate further in the study. Specifically, three African-American and three Latino parents with similarities in family structure, socioeconomic status, and education levels were chosen to participate. The six participants were recruited from those who had indicated at Stage One that they would be willing to be contacted to provide additional information. The information provided by the participants is confidential and the research records will be stored in a locked cabinet in my residence for a year. The audiotape of the meetings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project and the information provided will be confidential and there will be no way of identifying participant responses in the data archive.

Data Collection

Two focus group interviews lasting about 45 minutes each were conducted. One group consisted of the three African-American parents; the other, the three Latino parents.

The researcher took notes. As well, sessions were audio taped and transcribed. Focus group interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes in duration. Guided by the eight open-ended questions noted immediately below, the central theme of the interviews was the parents' outlooks toward parental engagement in their child's education.

The eight open-ended questions concerned: (1) established routines and study times they had for their children at home; (2) how they communicate with their child's teacher, how often, and the nature of the communication; (3) their experiences with parental involvement; (4) their feelings about volunteering; (5) their participation in School Site Council meetings; (6) how they follow up and stay aware of their child's homework and school work; (7) established reading routines; and (8) how they thought teachers perceived parents.

The qualitative data from the focus groups was reviewed and the researcher created a list of categories from parents' responses. A unique code was assigned to each category to determine which category each response belonged to and assigned the corresponding code number to the response. The information was coded to identify, organize, and analyze the unstructured qualitative data. This process of analysis was based on interpretation and data reduction through coding, themes, and categories and allowed the sorting and arranging of information and the examination of complex themes and relationships that emerged from participant interviews. The data analysis was

conducted as a simultaneous activity with data collection, interpretation, and narrative report writing.

The results are presented in a descriptive, narrative form and descriptions were the vehicle for communicating a picture of the perceptions and attitudes of African-American and Latino parents on parental engagement. In the final stage of the study, the information was a construction of the participants' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences and the meaning they attach to them. This allowed the reader to vicariously experience the challenges, barriers, or opportunities faced by parents and provided a lens to understand African-American and Latino parents' perspectives. Ultimately, the information was organized into a schema and reported in matrices to show relationships among categories (Creswell, 1994).

Significance in Connection with My Research

The research project will explore whether there are differences between African-American and Latino parents' responses toward dimensions affecting engagement in their child's education. It also will highlight the implications for parents, educators, and educational policymakers' need to incorporate the authentic voices of parents to guide deliberate action and increase parental engagement to leverage improvements in the academic achievement of African-American and Latino students in the school district chosen for this study.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Descriptive Information

This chapter presents quantitative and qualitative data that bear on the extent to which there were differences between African-American and Latino parents' responses toward dimensions affecting engagement and examined their outlooks toward barriers and opportunities for parental engagement at their children's school. This data set is presented in four quantitative and seven qualitative tables. The data revealed that although there were significant statistical differences in responses between African-American and Latino parents on the seven parental engagement scales, the effect of the relationship was small to moderate. A notable pattern in the data suggests that Latino parents have a slightly higher level of agreement on all seven scales measuring dimensions of parental engagement. African-American and Latino parents have similar outlooks toward barriers and opportunities toward engagement at their children's school. First, emphasis on quantitative data gathered from parent responses to the 38 survey statements that promoted engagement is presented. Then the qualitative data analysis from the focus group interviews conducted with African-American and Latino parents is presented.

Phase One Results

For this study, parents from two elementary schools in the school district chosen for this study with statistically significant African-American populations, were chosen and asked to respond to an online parental engagement survey created using Survey Monkey, a web-based survey tool. The 38 survey items were compiled using statements

from the Mid-Atlantic Equity Center Parental Involvement survey (2002), Orange County Public Schools' Blue Ribbon Panel on Education Taskforce Parental Involvement survey (2005), and Epstein et al.'s (1997) framework of six types of involvement. The survey items were designed to explore African-American and Latino parents' responses toward dimensions affecting engagement at their children's school. Involvement was operationalized in terms of the seven scales measure: (1) parenting; (2) communication; (3) volunteering; (4) learning at home; (5) decision making; (6) collaborating with community; and (7) overall positive experiences with schools. Parents were asked to indicate their level of agreement in response to 38 survey statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

This analysis presents descriptive statistics for the survey respondents, descriptive statistics on African-American and Latino parents' responses to the survey statements that promote involvement, group statistics on the seven scales, and between-scale correlations. The descriptive statistics for 60 survey respondents are presented in Table 1. Of the respondents, 52% ($N = 31$) were African Americans, 40% ($N = 24$) Latino, and 8% ($N = 5$) other ethnicities. For the purpose of this study, African-American and Latino parents were used as comparison groups in that they comprised 92% of the respondents. The other 8% of respondents were not included in this analysis.

From the demographic information, the data revealed that there were no significant differences in the economic status of the two groups, however it did show that 87% ($N = 20$) Latino parents reported a higher percentage of two-parent households than African Americans 63% ($N = 19$). Fifty percent ($N = 15$) African-American parents reported a higher percentage of education past high school compared to 22% ($N = 5$)

Latino parents. Research supports the fact that parents with intact families as well as those with higher education levels are more likely to be involved at their children's school. This might lead one to conclude that the respondents in this study would have similar responses toward dimensions affecting engagement at their children's school.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics about Survey Respondents

	African American	Latino	Other
Ethnicity	31 (52%)	24 (40%)	5 (8%)
Gender			
Female	30 (96.8%)	21 (91.3%)	
Male	1 (3.2%)	2 (8.7%)	
Unknown	1 (.01%)		
Family Structure			
One parent	11 (36.7%)	3 (13%)	
Two parents	19 (63.3%)	20 (87%)	
Lunch			
Free	24 (80%)	22 (95.7%)	
Not Free	6 (20%)	1 (4.3%)	
Education			
Some HS	3 (10%)	12 (52.2%)	
HS/GED	12 (40%)	6 (26.1%)	
Trade School/			
Comm College	3 (10%)	3 (13%)	

	African American	Latino	Other
BA/BS	6 (20%)	1 (4.3%)	
Masters or			
Doctorate	6 (20%)	1 (4.3%)	

Table 2 presents the results of the group statistics by mean and standard deviations on the seven scales and between-group differences were tested using sample *t*-tests. Using an alpha of .05 to test the null hypotheses, the Welch *t*-test for equality of variances indicated statistically significant between-group differences on six scales. In each case, the Latino parents indicated a higher level of agreement with involvement in parenting, volunteering, communication, learning at home, decision making, collaborating with community, and positive experiences with school than African Americans. For example, the response scores on positive experiences with schools for Latino parents ($M = 4.45$; $SD = 0.50$) were significantly different than those of the African-American parents ($M = 3.99$; $SD = 0.85$): $t(41) = -2.36$; $p = .023$ (two-tailed). $d = .31$, a moderate effect. Overall, the data revealed there were statistically significant differences between the responses of the two groups; however due to the moderate effect size, one would say that the relationship between their responses is only moderate.

Table 2

Group Statistics with Means and Standard Deviations of the Seven Scales

Scale	Ethnicity	N	M	SD	t	df	p	ES
Parenting					-2.194	48	.033	.302
	African American	28	3.33	1.06				
	Latino	22	3.91	0.71				
Volunteering					-2.134	34	.040	.344
	African American	24	3.38	0.74				
	Latino	12	3.92	0.64				
Communication					-2.308	47	.025	.319
	African American	27	4.06	0.65				
	Latino	22	4.44	0.48				
Learning at Home					-1.711	46	.094	.245
	African American	27	4.15	0.73				
	Latino	21	4.48	0.55				
Decision Making					-3.706	44	.001	.488
	African American	26	3.27	0.54				
	Latino	20	3.93	0.68				
Collaborating with Community					-3.306	43	.002	.450
	African American	25	3.24	0.67				
	Latino	20	3.88	0.60				
Positive Experiences with School*					-2.361	41	.023	.317
	African American	26	3.99	0.85				
	Latino	22	4.45	0.50				

*Welch's t-test with adjusted df due to heterogeneity of variance (Levene's test).

The descriptive statistics on African-American and Latino parents' responses to the survey questions are represented in Table 3. Although the statistical data supports the

fact that there were differences in how both groups responded to the survey items, it is worth noting that African-American and Latino parents agreed on several items. For instance, both agreed with question 5: *I have established routines and study times for my children at home*; African Americans reported ($M = 4.29$) and Latinos reported ($M = 4.35$). Likewise, question 23: *I listen to my child read or read aloud to my child*; African-American parents indicated ($M = 4.22$) and Latino parents indicated ($M = 4.41$) which showed that they were in agreement that they both read to their child or their child reads aloud to them. Essentially, African-American and Latino parents had the same level of agreement on items 5 and 23. It is also interesting to note that on the 5-point Likert scale, African-American parents responded in the neutral range to over half the survey statements while Latino's indicated agreement with over half. This might suggest that African-American parents are not in agreement or disagreement on elements that affect their parental engagement.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics: African-American versus Latino Parents' Response to Questions Regarding Parental Involvement

		African American			Latino			p
		M	SD	N	M	SD	N	
1	The school provides classes to increase parenting skills in general	3.39	1.26	28	4.26	.92	23	0.008
2	When I visit the school, I feel welcomed and appreciated	4.04	1.10	28	4.57	.51	23	0.039
3	I was asked about my interests, talents, and availability for volunteering at school	3.07	1.21	27	4.13	1.06	23	0.002

		African American			Latino			p
		M	SD	N	M	SD	N	
4	I have had mostly positive experiences with schools	3.89	.96	28	4.43	.59	23	0.022
5	I have established routines and study times for my child at home	4.29	.60	28	4.35	.88	23	0.767
6	I attend School Site Council meetings at the school	2.96	1.02	27	3.52	1.27	23	0.091
7	I attend community meetings	2.74	.98	27	3.45	1.14	22	0.023
8	I do not feel respected because of my race/ethnicity.	2.89	1.34	27	2.41	1.47	22	0.238
9	The school provides classes for parents who need support in discipline/behavior of their child	3.36	1.06	28	3.57	1.12	23	0.5
10	The teachers are easy to talk to	4.00	.94	28	4.65	.49	23	0.004
11	The school actively seeks ideas from parents on school-related issues	3.46	1.04	28	4.26	.81	23	0.004
12	I feel comfortable volunteering at the school	3.68	.77	28	4.26	.92	23	0.017
13	Schools expect too much from parents	2.15	1.03	27	3.30	1.36	23	0.001
14	I monitor my child's homework	4.07	1.21	28	4.65	.71	23	0.049
15	Teachers only communicate with me when my child is in trouble	2.75	1.17	28	2.78	1.41	23	0.929
16	I don't feel confident being involved because of my level of education	2.07	.66	28	2.18	1.18	22	0.677

		African American			Latino			p
		M	SD	N	M	SD	N	
17	I have the opportunity to give input on policy development through committees	3.18	1.06	28	3.82	1.10	22	0.042
18	The school provides a positive climate for home/school/community partnerships	3.74	1.06	27	4.35	.57	23	0.018
19	I am pleased with the education my child is receiving	3.71	1.15	28	4.43	.73	23	0.012
20	The schools provide programs to teach parents how to work with their child in reading and math	3.25	1.24	28	4.00	.87	22	0.02
21	The principal is easy to talk to	3.71	1.12	28	4.36	.66	22	0.02
22	The school provides various volunteering opportunities (office help, special events, field trips, parties, library aide, etc)	3.61	1.10	28	4.00	1.02	22	0.203
23	I listen to my child read or read aloud to my child	4.22	.89	27	4.41	.73	22	0.434
24	I have had mostly negative experiences with schools	2.37	.79	27	1.86	.83	22	0.035
25	I don't believe my involvement is important to my child's success	1.80	.91	25	2.23	1.38	22	0.212

		African American			Latino			p
		M	SD	N	M	SD	N	
26	The school has an organized PTA or PTO	3.63	.84	27	3.71	1.01	21	0.752
27	The school provides support programs for families (G.E.D., English as a Second Language, computer training)	3.04	.90	27	3.62	.74	21	0.02
28	At home, I have established routines for my child's homework	4.11	.89	27	4.29	.72	21	0.468
29	The written communications from school (report cards, newsletters, etc.) are in a language I understand	4.48	.58	27	4.73	.55	22	0.138
30	I feel the teacher believes my child has the ability to do well in school	4.23	.71	26	4.55	.74	22	0.14
31	I am clear about how I can be involved at the school in ways that would help my child	3.89	.85	27	4.64	.58	22	0.001
32	If I have a concern, I am able to meet with someone who can help me in a timely manner	4.30	.67	27	4.36	.79	22	0.748
33	I have received training on how to participate on the decision-making committees at school	3.15	1.20	27	3.82	1.10	22	0.049

		African American			Latino			p
		M	SD	N	M	SD	N	
34	The school provides information about community organizations that can support my child's learning	3.59	1.19	27	4.18	1.01	22	0.071
35	I communicate by phone, note, or email with my child's teacher at least once each month	3.59	1.22	27	4.00	1.15	22	0.239
36	I do not know enough about my child's schoolwork to help him/her at home	2.27	1.12	26	2.38	.97	21	0.72
37	The school schedules meetings at various times to accommodate parents	3.44	.80	27	4.36	.90	22	0
38	Answer this question if you did not volunteer at the school this past year. I did not volunteer at the school because of issues	2.60	1.29	25	3.58	1.51	12	0.047

The between-scale correlations determined there was a positive relationship between six of the parental engagement scales, yet there was not a strong relationship between learning at home (.20 - .36). The results are presented in Table 4. Based on this information, one could conclude that parenting, volunteering, communication, decision making, collaborating with community, and positive experiences with schools are strongly related to elements affecting African-American and Latino parents parental engagement, whereas learning at home is not.

Table 4

Between-Scale Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Parenting	--						
2 Volunteering	.62	--					
3 Communication	.61	.77	--				
4 Learning at home	.23	.22	.36	--			
5 Decision making	.59	.72	.72	.26	--		
6 Collaborating with community	.77	.80	.72	.26	.79	--	
7 Positive experiences with school	.63	.62	.73	.20	.49	.66	--

Summary

The data revealed that there are statistically significant differences between African-American and Latino responses to statements on the seven scales of parental engagement, however the relationship is considered moderate. It is, however, important to note that there were no significant differences in their response to learning at home, consequently learning at home was not strongly related to the other six scales.

Phase Two Results

This research question asked: *What are African-American and Latino parents' outlooks toward dimensions affecting engagement in their child's education?* To gather data and obtain in-depth information on parents' outlooks, focus group interviews were conducted and parents were asked to respond to eight open-ended question prompts developed from the parental engagement survey. This section discusses participant responses.

The participants for the focus group interviews were selected from survey respondents who indicated their willingness to participate further in the study. Specifically, three African-American and three Latino parents with similarities in family structure, socioeconomic status, and education levels were chosen to participate. One focus-group interview was held for each group and sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each session followed the same structure with eight identical questions being asked of each group. The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed word for word, and participant names were coded to protect their identity. Parents' responses were analyzed to determine the degree of connection their responses had to the question prompts. The data was transformed and coded by identifying verb phrases that were most related (5) to unrelated (1) in answering the research question. From the coded data, key themes and patterns were identified that were representative of the data.

Overall, participant responses centered around four themes: (1) routines, (2) parent participation at school; (3) parent-teacher communication; and (4) teacher attitudes toward parents. In order to capture the authentic voices of the participants, a table was designed to present their responses characterized by the five degrees of connection to the question prompts. Each of these is discussed in more detail below. The following questions were posed in the focus groups.

For the purpose of this analysis, questions 1 and 7 were clustered together to illustrate an emergent theme the participants discussed.

Question 1: *What established routines and study times do you have for your child at home?* Question 7: *Tell me about your child's reading? Do you read to them? Do they*

read to you? How frequently is this done? Do you notice anything about their reading when they read to you?

Routines

The respondents described three types of routines: homework, reading, and afterschool as illustrated in Table 5. Essentially, parents stated they supervised homework routines, participated in reading routines, and encouraged after-school routines. In discussing homework routines, most parents simply stated they sat down with their children while they completed their homework, yet they did not specifically discuss study routines. For example, in Table 5 column 1, *verb phrases most related*, L1 commented, “I usually sit there with both of them and work on homework.” AA3 reported a similar routine, “We sit down with him to get the homework done.” Likewise, L2 stated, “I make sure they are doing their homework. If they have a question, I try to figure out a way.” In two instances, parents indicated they did not supervise homework. In *verb phrases moderately related*, AA2 reported, “She does her homework at the Boys and Girls club” while AA3 stated, “The daycare provider starts homework.” It was interesting to note in column 3, *verb phrases somewhat related*, four of the parents shared they knew how often homework was sent home which leads me to believe they considered it a routine that was established by the teacher. Most commented that it was sent home in a packet weekly. As an illustration, AA2 stated, “She receives a packet of homework each Friday;” AA1 stated, “She gets a packet of homework, one sheet each day.” Likewise, L2 reported, “They send home the homework daily. Packets are sent home for the week.”

In *verb phrases barely related*, several African-American and Latino parents discussed that they allowed their children to relax after school. For instance, in table 5

column 4, AA1 stated, “We usually just let her play for a little bit, relax, and get settled down from school.” Along the same lines, L1 replied, “When my kids get home from school, I see it as a time for them to kinda relax and unwind. My daughter just sits and watches a cartoon.” In column 5, *verb phrases unrelated*, AA1 shared that “Sometimes we fight with her, we give her a pill at 8:30.” Overall, the data revealed that there were no differences between African-American and Latino parents; as a result, they have similar outlooks on the importance of establishing at-home routines for their children.

Table 5

Homework Routines

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA1		We get her to actually sit down, do a day or two of homework.	She’ll say read this to me. She gets a packet of homework, one sheet each day.	Relax and get settled down from school. We usually just let her play for a little bit.	Sometimes we fight with her. We give her a pill at 8:30. I’m well, CAPS is a good place.
		She sits down to actually read a book. She writes her spelling words five times a day.		Sometimes she goes to CAPS after school. She doesn’t do homework there.	

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA2	<p>She is required to read 15 min.</p> <p>I usually allow her about 30 min. of reading every day.</p> <p>I usually read to her some nights.</p>	<p>She does her homework at the Boys & Girls club.</p>	<p>We start looking at the work she has done for the evening</p> <p>She receives a packet of homework each Friday.</p> <p>She arrives home @ 6 p.m.</p>	<p>She gets home, is fed.</p> <p>She is usually in bed by 8:45</p>	
AA3	<p>We sit down with him to get the homework done.</p>	<p>The daycare provider starts homework.</p>		<p>We pick up the kids from daycare.</p>	
L1	<p>I usually sit there with both of them and work on homework.</p> <p>They have reading for 30 min.</p>		<p>My kindergartner gets a packet and my 4th grader it's daily.</p>	<p>When my kids get home from school, I see it as a time for them to kinda relax and unwind. My daughter just sits down and watches a cartoon.</p>	

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
L2	I make sure they are doing their homework. If they have a question, I try to figure out a way.		They go to the table. They send home the homework daily. Packets are sent home for the week.	Some wanted to do homework in their rooms.	
L3	Every day they read and do their homework.			Usually they don't get home until 4:00. By the time they eat dinner, read, do their homework, it's bedtime.	

Reading Routines

This was another theme that emerged as illustrated in Table 6. Parents shared that they read with their children, their children often read to them, as well as what they noticed about their child's reading. For instance, in column 1, *verb phrases most related*, AA2 commented, "I do read to her, she does read to me, and our reading is done daily." L1 reported, "I do read to them. We take turns, she'll read one page and I'll read the next.

She's reading 30 minutes a day." Conversely, in column 2, *verb phrases moderately related*, AA2 stated, "There is no set routine, if he's tired of playing and he's done with homework, then we can pull up a book." Parents also reported noticing specific elements in their child's reading such as pronunciation, tone, and enthusiasm. As an illustration, in column 2, *verb phrases moderately related*, L1 shared, "The thing that stands out to me most, when he reads, just the tone he uses. It's not only how I read to him but the teacher reads to him." In another example, AA2 shared, "The one thing I notice about her reading is she's very enthusiastic and she loves to read."

Established homework, reading, as well as afterschool routines were consistent with all parents' responses and seemed to reveal the importance parents placed on them as contributing factors in their child's success. The parents provided the structure and accepted responsibility for ensuring successful completion. Essentially, parents discussed the importance of reading to their children and the consistency in the amount of time their child reads daily. Parents reported that being involved in their children's homework and reading routines allowed them an opportunity to evaluate their reading skills and offer support. They did not, however, discuss or give details regarding specific techniques or strategies they used to reinforce homework skills or establish study routines with their children.

Table 6

Reading Routines

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA1		She has trouble pronouncing words, like loading she'll say <i>woading</i> . We work with her on her words.	I try to help her but sometimes she doesn't want me helping her. She feels more comfortable with her mom.		She don't want to be around guys cause she had problems earlier in life.
AA2	I do read to her. It's important for her to hear appropriate voice and words. She does read to me and our reading is done daily.	The one thing I notice about her reading is she's very enthusiastic and she loves to read.	She will pick up a book on her own.		
AA3	We read to him occasionally. We have him read to us in the car.	There's no set routine, if he's tired of playing and he's done with homework, then we can pull up a book.	I bought some of the books with the CD and it signals turn the page.		

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
	Some of the readings from the bible we'll read together.				
L1	I do read to them. My 4th grader still likes to read to me. She'll hear me start to read and she'll want to hear.	The thing that stands out to me most, when he reads, just the tone he uses. It's not only how I read to him but the teacher reads to him.	She loves to read. My son is excited because he can read now.		
	We take turns, she'll read one page and I'll read the next. She's reading 30 minutes a day.		It's so exciting to hear my daughter read, she reads so well. It's incredible at 9 years old.		
L2	I do read to them, not as often as I should.	They read their books, some read silently, some read out loud.	My son will try to read with a tone.		
			I haven't read to my older kids, it relaxes them to where they fall asleep.		
L3	I usually read to the girls and they read to each other.	They love to read in the car, they read them over and over again.			

For the purpose of this analysis, questions 2 and 6 were clustered together because patterns centered on parent-teacher communication, specifically the modes, frequency, and nature of the communication. Table 7 illustrates their responses.

Question 2: *How do you communicate with your child's teacher, do you call, email, or write a note? How often and what do you communicate about?* Question 6: *How do you follow up and stay aware of your child's school work/homework? Do you look over it? Do you check or sign the work? Do you sometimes have questions about it?*

Parent-Teacher Communication

Parents in this study discussed traditional patterns of parent/teacher communication, checking and signing homework, sending notes in writing or by email as well as talking to the teacher in person and the nature of the communication. Table 7 presents their responses.

To communicate with the teacher, the majority of parents stated they preferred to write a note in their child's homework packet or send one by their child. One respondent's primary reason for communicating with the teacher was to monitor their child's progress in school and/or clarify any questions they may have had about homework. A case in point, AA2 in the statement *most related* stated, "I prefer written communication . . . I prefer to write a note in her packet every week." I may ask questions about upcoming events or if any incident occurred." Along those same lines, L2 shared, "We pass documents back and forth, we get notes back, we ask questions on paper, talk, or on the agenda." Indirect communication with the teacher was evident in a statement by AA3 in column 2, *verb phrases somewhat related*, "Just to touch base with the teacher on his progress. I sign off on his homework so the teacher knows I've looked

at it.” L3 in column 3, *verb phrases somewhat related*, “They have a calendar and they need to write what they have for homework.”

The frequency of parent teacher communication varied, while some parents indicated they talked to the teacher daily, most indicated weekly communication or on an as-needed basis. For example, in column 1, *verb phrases most related*, AA1 reported that, “Every Monday my sister talks to her to see if she has homework. Sometimes I’ll talk to her afterschool.” In *verb phrases barely related*, AA1 stated “She’ll lie and say she doesn’t have homework.” On the other hand, AA2 shared “I usually just communicate when I have problems, which is very rare.” The data showed that virtually all parents reported communicating with the teacher through traditional means to monitor their child’s progress and there were no significant differences between African-American and Latino parents in this area.

Table 7

Parent/Teacher Communication Progress Monitoring

	5 Verb phrases most related	4 Verb phrases moderately related	3 Verb phrases somewhat related	2 Verb phrases barely related	1 Verb phrases unrelated
AA1	Sometimes I’ll talk to her afterschool.	She’ll tell me if she’s been good, has an attitude, or been sleeping.		She’ll lie and say she doesn’t have homework.	
	Every Monday my sister talks to her.			Sometimes she’ll throw some extra stuff in there.	

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
		Recently she said she's real great in class, been doing her work, turning in papers and listening to her.			
	She checks to see if she has homework.				
AA2	I prefer written communication.	There is an area in her packet where I can respond.			
	I prefer to write a note in her packet every week.	The teacher writes comments & provides feedback on my child's progress.			
	I may pick up the phone and call.	I check her homework and provide my signature every Thursday.			
AA3	Usually I write a note.	I usually just communicate when I have problems, which is very rare.	I put it in his backpack and make sure he gives it to the teacher. I make sure he knows I've written a note.		

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
	I have sent an email. If I haven't heard back, I'll call the school the next day and leave a message for the teacher.	Just to touch base with the teacher on his progress. I sign off on his homework so the teacher knows I've looked at it.	My son encourages me to sign off because he gets special things or extra points.		
H1	You can write the teacher a message and she will answer you that same day.	The teacher sends messages constantly for my son in kindergarten.	My daughter brings home a homework log. It's a spiral bound notebook. There's a section for the teacher's and parent's questions. They have to have it signed to get credit for their homework.	Teacher attached her homework assignments in her notebook. She brings it home every single day.	
H1	There are a lot of times the teacher will call me.	My daughter brings the notebook, the message is written in the notebook.	Teacher will say I wanted to make sure to say this to you in person, not so much on paper.		
H2	We pass documents back and forth.	I tend to go once in a while, not very often, twice a month.	For my 4th grader it's weekly. It's usually teacher initiated.		

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
	I'll write a note or	I review his			
	I'll go around if I	homework and I have			
	haven't been there	to sign it.			
	in a while and talk				
	to see how he's				
	doing. It's like				
	more about				
	behavior				
	We get notes				
	back, we ask				
	questions on				
	paper, talk or				
	agenda. I don't				
	really				
	communicate with				
	the teacher unless				
	there's something				
	I don't				
	understand.				
H3	I email or if I have	I go to the school	They have a calendar		
	a question, I'll	plenty of times a	and they need to write		
	write a note to the	week.	what they have for		
	teacher or call.		homework.		

Question 3: *As a parent, describe your experience with parental involvement at your child's school.*

Participation at School

Table 8 illustrates parents' experiences with overall participation and their outlooks about opportunities to participate. Parents stated they were involved in school activities by attending school assemblies and participating in the PTA. For example, in *verb phrases most related*, AA2 shared, "I've actually been involved in some of the PTA meetings. I attend all assemblies/events as much as I can." AA3 stated, in column 1, *verb phrases moderately related*, "Whenever there are little things that the PTA is involved in, I try to have a presence." Several parents, however, expressed strong opinions about school practices that discouraged their involvement. For instance, in column 1, *verb phrases moderately related*, L1 commented "We have countless times given them ideas to bring parents in, let parents know about the meetings . . . They never take advantage of those ideas. I see the lack of attempts that the school makes to try and bring parents in;" "I don't think they want us there." In column 2, *moderately related*, L2 commented, "It depends on how they welcome the parents. Parents do tend to come in but it depends on the school." In *unrelated statements*, AA1 responded by saying, "It gives me a lot of experience of being an uncle. Her mom helps me too if she's there, if not, sometimes she don't listen to me." Likewise, L3 stated, "I have one-to-one communication with the teacher and the principal." These comments may suggest that the African-American parents in this study were not available to participate at school during the day. The Latino parents on the other hand were available to participate but discussed barriers that prevented them from being actively involved.

Table 8

Parent Participation at School

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA1					It gives me a lot of experience of being an uncle. Her mom helps me too if she's there, if not, sometimes she don't listen to me so her grandma or grandpa steps in.
AA2	I've actually been involved in some of the PTA meetings. I attend all assemblies as much as I can.		My schedule doesn't allow a lot of evening involvement.		

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA3	I'm involved in the PTA.	Whenever there are little things that the PTA is involved in, I try to have a presence.	Since I work, I can't volunteer too much during the day. I make donations to help out, that way to offset because I'm not able to volunteer.		
L1	I try to stay involved as much as I can with whatever I can help with.	Parent participation is pathetic. I see the same faces every meeting, the same people volunteering, and asking questions. We have countless times given them ideas to bring parents in, let parents know about the meetings. They never take advantage of those ideas.	I see the lack of attempts that the school makes to try and bring parents in. The fewer parents you have coming in, the fewer squeaky wheels you're gonna have, and the fewer eyes you have around to see what it is that we are not doing that we are supposed to be doing.	I want to give them the benefit of the doubt.	

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
L1		I think they are making a conscious decision not to put those strategies in place to bring parents in.	That's our conspiracy theory about what schools are doing and not doing. Government conspiracy theory. They will have fewer people complaining and questioning and wanting answers.		
L2		It is always the same faces, making the same comments and not getting the answers that we normally would want. It depends on how they welcome the parents. Parents do tend to come in but it depends on the school. My 2nd grader, there are not as many parents involved. My 4th grader, there are a lot of parents that go and help the teacher.		Told you have to wait outside or leave the breakfast area. There are occasions where parents did not come back.	

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
L3		At this school, they don't require it but it is nice when they ask for help.		I had one-to-one communication with the teacher and the principal.	They required 20 hours of volunteer work for each family.

For the purpose of this analysis, question 4 and question 5 were clustered together because patterns centered on parent participation in volunteering and decision making committees. Table 9 and 10 illustrate their responses.

Question 4: *How do you feel about volunteering at your child's school? Are there volunteer opportunities at the school? Do you feel comfortable volunteering? How could the school make you feel more comfortable about volunteering?* Question 5: *Do you attend School Site Council meetings? If so, are they helpful? Why do you attend? Do you feel comfortable participating?*

Participation in Volunteering

Table 9 shows parents' responses and outlooks toward volunteering. Essentially, parents reported they were willing to volunteer and enjoyed doing so; a few parents indicated they do not volunteer for various reasons and described barriers to volunteering as reasons for their limited participation. Latino parents stated schools do not ask them to volunteer; inconsistencies in school policies and practices existed that approve parent volunteers, the lack of authentic engagement, and the belief that they were not welcome in schools. In addition, only two Latino parents participated on a decision-making

committee. A case in point, in column 1, *verb phrases most related*, L1 reported, “I feel eager to volunteer. There are plenty of opportunities at the schools. I want to benefit them in anyway.” Furthermore, AA2 shared, “I enjoy volunteering. There are volunteer opportunities.” L2 responded, “I tend to volunteer at the elementary school, especially when they call us for book fairs.” Some, however, expressed personal barriers and time constraints that prevented them from participating. In column 3, *somewhat related*, AA3 shared “Since I work, I can’t volunteer too much during the day. I make donations to help out, that way to offset because I’m not able to volunteer.” Likewise AA2 revealed “My schedule doesn’t allow a lot of evening involvement.” Statements *somewhat related* to the question appear in column 3. AA3 shared, “My concerns are that people who volunteer are good people and that they go through whatever process the district has and are kind and treat children the way the teacher treats children.”

Parents shared that after they obtained clearance to volunteer they weren’t called. L1 went on to say, “I have never been called to volunteer. I flat out told them anything you need, punch out papers, cut papers out, whatever you need call me.” AA1 responded by saying “I signed up but they haven’t called me yet.” Along those same lines, L2 stated, “It seems like when it’s convenient, they will call you when they need help . . . Won’t get us involved when it had to do with other decisions like the PTO.” Nonetheless, L2 shared a slightly different perspective of personal experience and stated in *verb phrases most related*, “I tend to volunteer at the elementary school, especially when they call us for book fairs; in the classroom, I do volunteer but not often.” In *verb phrases somewhat related*, L2 also stated “It depends on the school. They didn’t make the official clearance an issue; you could just sign in the visitor log. At the other school, you couldn’t

come in unless you had that.” Seemingly, schools provided opportunities for parents to participate in school even though some participated on a limited basis. Based on the parents’ responses, the barriers or negative experiences seemed to outweigh the opportunities and may have contributed to their limited participation for both African-American and Latino parents.

Table 9

Participation at School – Volunteering

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA1	I don’t volunteer here. I signed up but they haven’t called me yet.	I’ll do anything.			
AA2	I enjoy volunteering. There are volunteer opportunities.	Our school gives a deadline for submission, they don’t give you an opportunity throughout the year. If I miss the deadline, I don’t have another opportunity to volunteer. I feel the date is too early in the year.			

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA3	I just wish I had more time to actually volunteer at the school.	I think volunteering is good especially for parents who are available to do that.	My concerns are that people who volunteer are good people and that they go through whatever process the district has and are kind and treat children the way the teacher treats children.		
		I do feel comfortable there when I have been asked to volunteer or when I have offered to volunteer.			
L1	I feel eager to volunteer. There are plenty of opportunities at the schools. I want to benefit them in anyway.	They don't make it readily available for people to volunteer.	They could put a log book at the front office. These are the things we need people to volunteer for, what time could you show up. Send flyers home, ask parents to volunteer.		There's no one guarding the hen house.
		I flat out told them anything you need, punch out papers, cut papers out, whatever			

you need call me.

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
	I've never been called to volunteer.		This year, because of the new secretary, I had to do a TB test and background check. It has to come back before I could volunteer. Last year they didn't have me do a TB test.		
	I don't think they want us there.		Another parent had to go through the same thing and she complained about that. Next year she's not doing it because they won't call her.		
L2	I tend to volunteer at the elementary school, especially when they call us for book fairs. The teacher has asked me to come in and volunteer.	When teachers ask, or people ask, it welcomes you more. That's when they have more volunteers.	It seems like when it's convenient, they will call you when they need help. Won't get us involved when it had to do with other decisions like the PTO. It depends on the school.		

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
			At the other school, you couldn't come in unless you had the clearance. The other school, they didn't make the official clearance an issue. You could just sign in the visitor log.		
L3	I have volunteered an hour at this school.		They don't have organized parent volunteers.	At the previous school (private) I think they enjoyed having the parent involvement. They had a lot of parent involvement there and it was welcomed. Last year they welcomed you even if it was just for observation.	

Participation on Decision-Making Committees

Parent responses and outlooks toward participation in decision-making committees are displayed in Table 10. African-American parents stated that they do not

participate on these committees and one reported that they did not know what they did, while two Latino parents indicated they attended the meetings but did not actually participate in decisions. Both Latino parents understood the purpose of the meetings but did not feel as though they had input. Specifically, in column 1, *verb phrases most related*, L1 shared, “I attend every School Site Council meeting. They are not helpful and I don’t know why I go.” In fact, L2 in *verb phrases most related*, “I’m involved in both School Site Councils. I have become to where I don’t feel comfortable participating at my 2nd grader’s school.” This information leads me to conclude that, some schools have decision-making committees established; in particular School Site Councils, yet parents stated they do not attend or they attend but do not fully participate. The data revealed that there are differences between African-American and Latino parents on participation of decision making committees at their children’s school.

Table 10

Participation at School – Decision-Making Committees

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA1	I don’t participate.				
AA2	I do not.	I don’t know what they do. The first knowledge I had about School Site Council was when they were soliciting people to be nominated.			

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
AA3	No I don't attend School Site Council meetings.				
L1	I attend every School Site Council meeting. They are not helpful and I don't know why I go.	The whole idea behind going to SSC is because we want to make sure things that should be done are being done. The problem is that a lot of the times it's not.	The suggestions we make are never carried out or don't even become an idea in their minds.	There are some schools worse than others and there are ones that are better. Schools like School 1 and School 2 there's more parent involvement. I'm assuming that the leadership is much better. Parents expect them to run it and hold them at a higher level.	

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
L2	I'm involved in both School Site Councils. I have become to where I don't feel comfortable participating at my 2nd graders school.	Where my son goes, you're not really told what the jobs are SSC is to do other than approving the budget.		There's a difference in the two schools. The leadership makes a difference.	For my 2nd grader, they have the higher API score, special notes to everyone which I thought was interesting.
	I go because I want to make sure they are making changes.	The SSC has a big part into the decisions that are done in the school.			
L3	I haven't done so at this school.		My other daughter goes to a daycare sponsored by the state and I am on the advisory board.		

Question 8: *How do you think teachers perceive parents at your child's school?*

This question seemed to be an area of concern for the majority of the participants.

Table 11 shows one African-American parent was concerned about being judged by the teacher while another commented on the job the teacher was doing. In column 2, *verb phrases somewhat related*, AA3 stated, "I don't want to be judged, people judge a book

by its cover” and in column 3, *verb phrases somewhat related*, AA1 commented that “I think they do a good job keeping them updated on what’s gonna happen at school.” Four parents discussed they thought teachers were not very inclusive of them, they were a nuisance, and did not want them at school. For instance, in column 1, *verb phrases most related*, AA2 reported, “I don’t think they’re very inclusive unless you specifically make your presence known.” L1 stated in *verb phrases most related*, “98% of them say, what are they doing here? Why can’t they just drop their kids off and go? It’s sad to see teachers act that way toward parents.” L2 also commented, “I think sometimes teachers feel you’re a nuisance and in the way.” These comments suggest that the African-American parents in this study did not view teacher perceptions as a barrier; however one African-American and the Latino parents expressed strong concern about teachers’ negative perception of them and seemed to discourage their engagement. This data leads me to conclude that for Latino parents, teacher perceptions of them have a great deal to do with whether or not they feel comfortable in the school while it was not a major concern for African-American parents.

Table 11

Parents' Perceptions of Teacher Attitudes

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
A1			I think they do a good job, keeping them updated on what's gonna happen at school. If anything happens, they contact us.	This is the best school I ever heard of because when I went to school, no one told parents what happened.	
AA2	I don't think they're very inclusive unless you specifically make your presence known. I probably won't even get a hello from a teacher unless I speak to them first.				

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
	When I engage or initiate a conversation, those teachers and administrators come back and speak to me. I do not feel they even care about me as a parent or her development.				
AA3	I think teachers perceive parents from what they get from the parents. They perceive you how your child comes to school dressed, fed, and pencils ready to work.	I don't want to be judged, people judge a book by its cover.	Teachers thank us for coming to the school.		

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
	Even if they never see me, they see me as a concerned parent because I send my child to school prepared.				
L1	98% of them say, what are they doing here? Why can't they just drop their kids off and go? It's sad to see teachers act that way toward parents.	I wish the leadership at the school would understand that it's supposed to be a partnership between the teachers and the parents. School 1 is one of the better schools, teachers are used to parents being there. I think they're more welcoming to the fact that parents are there to help.		What the children learn at school, they take it home and mom and dad help you and you come back and continue it. Lower performing schools, where a lot of the parents don't get involve, they're not used to parents.	

	5	4	3	2	1
	Verb phrases most related	Verb phrases moderately related	Verb phrases somewhat related	Verb phrases barely related	Verb phrases unrelated
L2	I think sometimes teachers feel you're a nuisance and in the way.	When they welcome you to help out. Depending on how they see parents, they might not see it as volunteering. They just feel that parent involvement is making sure your kids are doing their work.	When they're having issues with parents' kids, they do want to make sure parents come in to make sure their kids are staying focused and are not distracting other kids.		
	I've always had teachers who are very welcoming.				
L3	Sometimes you feel like the teacher doesn't want a parent in the class.	I haven't really gotten to know the teachers yet.			

Alignment of Phase One and Phase Two

Both the quantitative and qualitative analysis examined parent outlooks toward dimensions affecting engagement in their children's education. The analysis of the quantitative data from the survey showed that African-American and Latino parents showed moderate differences in their responses to statements that promoted engagement as represented by the seven parental engagement scales: parenting, volunteering, communication, learning at home, decision-making, collaborating with community, and positive experiences. Additionally, the analysis illustrated that Latino parents had a higher level of agreement on all parental engagement scales. The qualitative data analysis from focus group interviews with African-American and Latino parents showed that there were differences in their outlooks toward dimensions of parental engagement. Parents were in agreement on engagement with their children's education out-of-school in activities such as parenting, learning at home, and communication yet differed on their level of engagement with in-school activities such as volunteering and decision making.

Summary

The analysis of the data illustrated differences between African-American and Latino's responses to the survey statements that promoted engagement and which African-American parents responded in the neutral range; essentially they did not agree or disagree on the majority of the parental engagement scales. Latino parents had a higher level of agreement on all scales. This might lead one to believe that Latino parents are more engaged in their child's education than African-American parents who did not seem to feel any of the dimensions affected their engagement. During the focus group interviews, African-American parents did not have a lot of discussion among them, gave

limited detail, and made brief statements in response to the question prompts which could explain the neutral range of responses to the survey. Had there been more focus group sessions, African-American parents may have given more detail about their outlooks. On the other hand, two of the Latino parents gave more detail in their responses during the focus group interviews and seemed to have stronger opinions about dimensions affecting engagement and were more involved in their child's education. Nonetheless, it is also likely that the parents who volunteered for the focus group interviews are more active and have an on-site presence at their children's school. The qualitative data in this study showed that there were differences between African-American and Latino parents' responses. Both groups were in agreement on parenting, learning at home, and communication dimensions; however they had differing views on volunteering, decision making, and positive experiences with schools.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Summary

The results of this study indicate that when specific dimensions of parental engagement were examined separately, the quantitative findings revealed that responses between African-American and Latino parents yielded statistically significant differences on six of the seven scales and the differences were moderate. African-American parents indicated a neutral response on five of the seven dimensions. The results also found that African-American and Latino parents provided general agreement on engagement with out-of-school dimensions such as parenting, learning at home, and communication but differed in their level of agreement with in-school dimensions such as volunteering, decision making, and positive experiences with schools. The most significant differences seemed to be in the dimensions of parental engagement at school. Several notable patterns emerged in the results.

From the survey responses, Latino parents indicated higher levels of agreement with statements that promoted in-school dimensions of volunteering and decision making. Statements such as: I feel comfortable volunteering; I was asked about my interests, talents, and availability for volunteering; and I am clear about how I can be involved at the school in ways that would help my child. It is more challenging to explain that on the contrary, information shared during the focus group interviews revealed that Latino parents did not feel comfortable volunteering, they were not clear about how to be involved at school, and that although they were asked about their availability to volunteer, they were never called once approved. Parents felt that schools could do more

to involve them and seek their opinions and ideas. The majority of African-American parents indicated that they would like to participate in their children's education in-school but were unable to do so because they worked and stated that they attended assemblies and felt they participated in other ways.

Latino parents agreed with statements that promoted decision making such as: I attend School Site Council meetings, the school actively seeks ideas from parents on school-related issues, and I have the opportunity to give input on policy development through committees. Due to the fact that the state of California established English Learner Advisory Committees (ELAC) that meet monthly and are frequently held immediately before or after School Site Council meetings, may account for higher levels of participation of Latino parents with in-school dimensions of engagement.

In the qualitative analysis, all of the African-American parents stated they did not attend School Site Council meetings or participate on decision-making committees. It is interesting to note that for decision making, Latino parents stated that they did attend School Site Council meetings but did not know why they attended and that they did not give input on policy development. The structures put in place at the school level for volunteering and participating in decision-making committees did not seem effective in engaging the African-American and Latino parents in this study.

It is worth noting that both African-American ($M = 4.15$) and Latino ($M = 4.48$) parents indicated the highest level of agreement on statements that promoted the out-of-school dimension of learning at home. They both agreed that they provided support to their children by establishing home environments and routines that support their children as students and they provided guidance with homework. Statements such as: I monitor

my child's homework, I listen to my child read or read aloud to my child, and I have established routines for my child's schoolwork. These findings support the research of Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Burow (1995) who argued that the most common point of intersection between the child, parent, and teacher was when parents helped with homework. Moreover, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) identified several constructs that influenced parental engagement as being (1) parents' role construction, or beliefs about what they are supposed to do; and (2) parents' sense of efficacy, or beliefs that they can benefit their children. African-American and Latino parents had the highest level of agreement on the dimension of learning at home. To account for these findings, Lee and Bowen (2006) discussed cultural capital and that supports the notion that parents with cultural capital, those with intact families as well as those with higher education levels are more likely to be involved at their children's school. Jeynes (2003) theorized that parent involvement may have the greatest impact in the absence of other cultural capital factors. With that in mind, the demographic data for both groups indicated that African Americans had a higher number of parents with an education beyond high school compared to the majority of Latino parents who had a high school diploma or less. Latino parents reported a higher number of two-parent households or intact families. Nevertheless, the question remains, which element of cultural capital has the most significant influence on a parents' decision to become engaged in their child's education?

Both African-American ($M = 3.24$) and Latino ($M = 3.88$) parents' indicated the lowest level of agreement with statements that promoted collaborating with community. These statements included: I attend community meetings and the school provides a

positive climate for home/school/community partnerships. The qualitative data did not address this dimension; consequently there is no comparative data.

One critical finding from parents' responses to the question regarding how they felt teachers perceived them, one African-American parent was concerned about being judged by the teacher, while the other African-American and Latino parents described how they felt the teachers did not want them at the school, ignored them, felt they were a nuisance, or did not acknowledge their presence. This could indicate that the parents did not feel a warm and trusting relationship with the teacher and tensions may have existed between parents and teachers. Critical race theory could be used as an analytical lens to examine the parents' perceptions of teacher attitudes. Racism can be subtle or blatant, personal or institutional; the parents in this study reported that they felt teachers perceived them in a negative way. The African-American and Latino parents in this study expressed what Ladson-Billings and Tate (2009) called voice, in that "the voice component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed" (p. 58). In other words, they expressed their reality and perceptions.

One must consider that racism continues to be significant in society, and that for some, it is normal and deeply ingrained and is almost unrecognizable in schools due to the fact that not all forms of racism are easy to detect or identify. When teachers' react in this manner, it may be attributed to unconscious racism, in that much of behavior is driven by learned stereotypes that operate automatically. Teachers' positive or negative attitudes often act as reinforcers for parents and they may not be aware of how their attitudes impact parents. It is worth pointing out that the demographics of the teachers in

the school district chosen for this study, 57% White, 10% African American, 25% Latino, may contribute to this issue.

Ogbu (2003) offered one explanation why African-American parents may have responded neutral on all dimensions of parental engagement. He has written extensively on the reasons minority students, particularly African Americans, do poorly in school. He has repeatedly characterized the dismal level of parental involvement in the education of their children as one of the salient factors. He further contended that African-American parents transfer the responsibility for their children's success to the schools, not recognizing the importance of supporting and monitoring their child's schoolwork. They may also have had negative experiences with schools in the past.

A growing body of research supports the positive effects of parental involvement on the educational performance and academic success of school children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sander, 1995; Jeynes, 2003). Along those same lines, Jeynes stressed that parental engagement was salient in determining how well students do in school. Similar studies have illustrated that increasing parental engagement could prove an important means of boosting the academic performance of African-American students (Fordham, 1996; Ogbu, 2003). The implications derived from this study suggest that African-American parents have different outlooks on dimensions affecting engagement in their child's education compared to Latino parents. It may benefit students, parents, and teachers to find ways to mediate these differences and increase parental engagement among both groups. In order to engage African-American and Latino parents to leverage improvements in their child's academic success, I think educators and parents should use Ehly's (2005) question as a guide to develop ways to

increase parental engagement opportunities that will benefit children . . . “Does the school value the parent, seek input, invite questions, recruit participation, open doors for involvement in governance, offer guidance and feedback when requested” (p. 1)?

The Black-White, Latino-White, and the Black-Latino achievement gaps are pervasive issues that impact students, parents, schools, and society. If progress is going to be made in closing these achievement gaps, African-American and Latino parents need to understand the importance of parental engagement. In addition, schools need to develop policies and practices that build relationships with parents, create effective and creative opportunities for engagement, and remove barriers imposed at the school level.

Ultimately, there are differences between African-American and Latino parents in their outlooks toward dimensions of parental engagement. Evidence from this study suggests that African-American parents are more engaged in their child’s education out-of-school; dimensions such as parenting, learning at home, and communication are some examples. Latino parents seem to be engaged in both in-school and out-of-school dimensions of parental engagement. The differences between African-American and Latino parents’ participation in-school may be attributed to the fact that the State of California mandates the establishment of advisory committees for English Learners. It would be reasonable to conclude that because schools have a greater responsibility to engage Latino parents, they consistently encourage Latino parents to attend the monthly advisory committees; however there is no such mandate for the engagement of African-American parents.

Limitations

Socioeconomic status may have been a factor in the differing level of engagement between African-American and Latino parents in this study. Additionally, because there was limited commentary among the African-American parents, subsequent focus group interviews may have given parents' more opportunity to dialogue, and more detailed information may have emerged. It is worth noting that the parents who participated in this study possibly play a more active role in their children's education.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is needed to examine parental engagement among African-American and Latino parents' to determine their sense of efficacy, domain specific as well as generalized, toward parental engagement dimensions as a means to close the achievement gap for their children. It would be useful to examine the specific reasons African Americans are not more engaged in their children's education through in-school dimensions and how schools can help African-American and Latino parents feel more comfortable participating in all seven dimensions of parental engagement.

In addition, research on the development of strategies to integrate parental engagement into instructional policies and practices would benefit students, parents, and schools. Whereas this study sought parents' perceptions of how teachers viewed them, a study that incorporated parent and teacher dialogue would add value to the conversation on how to improve parental engagement among African-American and Latino parents. Although the results of this study provided some insights, it also raises some interesting questions about perceptions that African-American and Latino parents have toward barriers to engagement at the school level and could guide further research.

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APPENDIX A

Parental Engagement Survey

We are interested in knowing about factors that are related to your participation in school activities. Therefore, we invite you to participate by completing this survey. The responses you provide will remain anonymous, unless you are willing to participate further and provide your contact information. To complete the survey online go to: www.surveymonkey.com/parentsmatter or www.surveymonkey.com/padres2 or return to the school office.

Parent/Guardian Information

1. Age
☐ 18-25 ☐ 26-50 ☐ 51 and older
2. Ethnicity (please check the category that best describes you)
☐ African American ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Pacific Islander
☐ Asian ☐ Multi-racial ☐ Other
☐ American Indian ☐ White (non Hispanic)
3. Gender
☐ Male ☐ Female
4. Family Structure
☐ One parent home ☐ Two parent home
5. Lunch Qualification
☐ Free/Reduced ☐ Do Not Qualify
6. Highest Education Completed
☐ Some High School (or less) ☐ College Degree
☐ High School Diploma/GED ☐ Masters/Doctorate Degree
☐ Trade School/Community College degree
7. Employment
☐ Full-time work ☐ Part-time work ☐ Not working/Unemployed
8. School Location
☐ School 1
☐ School 2

9. Please provide the following information about each child you have in this school.

Your youngest (or only) child in the school

Grade: ___K ___1st ___2nd ___3rd ___4th ___5th ___6th

Academic progress (*check one*) ___ Advanced ___ Proficient ___ Basic

___Below/Far Below Basic

Your next oldest child in the school

Grade: ___K ___1st ___2nd ___3rd ___4th ___5th ___6th

Academic progress (*check one*) ___ Advanced ___ Proficient ___ Basic

___Below/Far Below Basic

Your next oldest child in the school

Grade: ___K ___1st ___2nd ___3rd ___4th ___5th ___6th

Academic progress (*check one*) ___ Advanced ___ Proficient ___ Basic

___Below/Far Below Basic

For each of the following, please check the box that best indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. The school provides classes to increase parenting skills in general.					
11. When I visit the school, I feel welcomed and appreciated.					
12. I was asked about my interests, talents and availability for volunteering at school.					
13. I have had mostly positive experiences with schools.					
14. I have established routines and study times for my child at home.					
15. I attend School Site Council meetings.					
16. I attend community meetings.					
17. I do not feel respected because of my race/ethnicity.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18. The school provides classes for parents who need support in meeting their child's discipline/behavior needs.					
19. The teachers are easy to talk to.					
20. The school actively seeks ideas from parents on school-related issues.					
21. I feel comfortable volunteering at the school.					
22. Schools expect too much of parents.					
23. I monitor my child's homework.					
24. Teachers only communicate with me when my child is in trouble.					
25. I don't feel confident being involved because of my level of education.					
26. I have the opportunity to give input on policy development through committees.					
27. The school provides a positive climate for home/school/community partnerships.					
28. I am pleased with the education my child is receiving.					
29. The school provides programs to teach parents how to work with their child in reading and math.					
30. The principal is easy to talk to.					
31. The school provides various volunteering opportunities (office help, special events, field trips, parties, library aid, etc.)					
32. I listen to my child read or read aloud to my child.					
33. I have had mostly negative experiences with schools.					
34. I don't believe my involvement is important to my child's success.					
35. The school has an organized PTA or PTO.					
36. The school provides support programs for families (G.E.D., English as a Second Language, computer training)					
37. At home, I have established routines for my child's schoolwork.					
38. The written communications from school (report cards, newsletters, etc.) are in a language I understand.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
39. I feel the teacher believes my child has the ability to do well in school.					
40. I am clear about how I can be involved at the school in ways that would help my child.					
41. If I have a concern, I am able to meet with someone who can help me in a timely manner.					
42. I have received training on how to participate on the decision-making committees at the school.					
43. The school provides information about community organizations that can support my child's learning.					
44. I communicate by phone, note or email with my child's teacher at least once each month.					
45. Answer this question if you did not volunteer at the school this past year. I did not volunteer at school because of issues related to childcare, work schedule, other matters.					
46. I do not know enough about my child's schoolwork to help him/her at home.					
47. The school schedules meetings at various times to accommodate parents.					
Additional Comments 					

Rate how you feel about your child's teacher (*please check a or b*)

- Interpersonal Skills a. _____ Cooperative, friendly, respectful, trusting, warm
- b. _____ Confrontational, unfriendly, distant, lacks concern

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Participation

Are you willing to participate further?

If you are willing to participate further by attending a 1 hour-long focus group interview with several other parents, please provide your contact information. During this interview, we would like to get more detailed information from you on your thoughts and experiences with parental engagement in your child's education. The meeting will be held during the week of December 13 - 17 at the school and you will be contacted with the specific time.

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

School _____

Ethnicity	☐ African American	☐ Asian
	☐ American Indian	☐ Hispanic/Latino
	☐ Multi-racial	☐ Pacific Islander
	☐ White (non Hispanic)	☐ Other

Thank you for your cooperation in completing this survey.

APPENDIX C

Parental Involvement Survey

Informed Consent Letter

Dear Parent/Guardian:

You are invited to participate in a research project on parental involvement. Lori Caruthers Collins, a doctoral student from the University of Redlands, School of Education will conduct the project. She seeks your feedback on a survey about the factors that contribute to your involvement or noninvolvement in your child's education. It is anticipated that your participation may increase our understanding of parent participation as a strategy to achieve student success in elementary schools.

Your participation in this research project presents no more than normal life risks. Your participation is completely voluntary; you may choose not to respond to any or all of the items or stop your participation at any time. Choosing not to participate in this study will in no way impact you or your child at the school. The actual survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The information you provide during the project is confidential and anonymous and the research records will be stored securely in a locked cabinet in my residence for a year. The results of this study will be used for a dissertation and may be used for a scholarly report, journal article, or conference presentation.

By clicking "NEXT" on the button below, you are agreeing that you understand this explanation and agree to participate. You must also understand that (a) doing so does not relieve the researcher or institution from their responsibilities and (b) you may contact Lori Caruthers Collins by email (lori_collins@redlands.edu) or telephone [REDACTED] or the project's chair Dr. Alayne Sullivan by email (alayne_sullivan@redlands.edu) or telephone (909) 748-8673 if you have any questions or concerns before or after the project.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board, Professor Catherine Salmon catherine_salmon@redlands.edu or (909) 748-8673.

IRB APPROVAL NUMBER 2010-39

APPENDIX D**Focus Group Interview Protocol**

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Lori Caruthers Collins and I am a doctoral student at the University of Redlands conducting research on parental involvement. I would like to ask you about your perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about your involvement or noninvolvement at your child's elementary school. You should understand that there are no particular answers we are looking for other than those which give me the benefit of your most accurate and candid views. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may decline to answer any questions or stop your participation at any time.

This focus group meeting should last about 1 hour. I will be taking notes during the meeting however, I would like your permission to tape-record the meeting because I want to get the details of what you say. The audiotape of the meeting will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project and the information you provide will be confidential and there will be no way of identifying your responses in the data archive. I am not interested in any one individual's responses, I want to look at the general patterns that emerge when all the data is analyzed.

Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this focus group meeting?

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E**Focus Group Questions**

Date _____ Number of Participants _____

- 1. What established routines and study times do you have for your children at home?**
 - b. What routines have you established in your home for study time and homework?
 - c. Can you discuss the times, the person responsible, how does that work in your home?

- 2. How do you communicate with your child's teacher, do you call, email or write a note?**
 - b. How often and what do you communicate about?

- 3. As a parent, describe your experiences with parental involvement at your child's school.**

- 4. How do you feel about volunteering at your child's school?**
 - b. Are there volunteer opportunities at the school?
 - c. Do you feel comfortable volunteering?
 - d. How could the school make you feel more comfortable about volunteering?

- 5. Do you attend School Site Council meetings?**
 - b. If so, are they helpful?
 - c. Why do you go?
 - d. Do you feel comfortable participating?

- 6. How do you follow up and stay aware of your child's schoolwork/homework?**
 - Do you look over it?
 - Do you check the work?
 - Do you sign the work?
 - Do you sometimes have questions about it?

7. Tell me about your child's reading?

- b. Do you read to them?
- c. Do they read to you?
- d. How frequently is this done?
- e. When friends come over, do they read to each other?
- f. Do you notice anything about their reading when they read to you?

8. How do you think teachers perceive parents at your child's school?***Probes:***

- Would you give me an example?
- Can you elaborate on that statement?
- Would you explain that further?

I will be analyzing the information from this meeting in order to find out what factors influence a parent's decision to become involved or not in their child's education as a strategy to achieve student success. I'll be glad to send you a copy of the findings, if you are interested.

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX F**Debriefing Procedure**

The focus group you participated in examined the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of parents toward parental engagement in their child's education. The information from the surveys and focus group meetings will be analyzed to determine the relationships between African-American parents and parents from other ethnicities that exist and general patterns that emerge when all the data is analyzed.

This study sought to examine (1) your personal perceptions and feelings about parental involvement in your child's education; (2) the routines you establish to support your child's education at home; (3) how you communicate with teachers; (4) the parental involvement activities or programs available at your child's school; (5) how you feel about volunteering; and (6) your perceptions on how teachers perceive parents.

The results of the research should be available by next Fall Semester, please feel free to contact Lori Caruthers Collins [REDACTED] if you have any additional questions. By signing this form you indicate that you have read the debriefing statement and have been given a chance to ask questions.

I have read and understand this debriefing procedure.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX G

Reflections

Date of Interview	Number of Participants
Describe the participant's attitudes during the focus group meeting.	
Describe any unusual circumstances and/or events that had any bearing on the interview.	
Describe anything else that happened during the interview that has any bearing on the study's objectives.	
Additional comments:	

APPENDIX H

Letter of Agreement

Permission to Conduct Research

This is an agreement between [REDACTED] School District, the University of Redlands, School of Education, and Lori Caruthers Collins, researcher to recruit and conduct research with parents in elementary schools. Specifically, the study seeks to determine what are the factors related to a parent's participation or involvement in their child's elementary school. A broad based survey will be distributed to approximately 300 parents from diverse backgrounds. These parents will be asked to respond to Likert like questions about their perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward parental involvement. As a follow up to the information obtained in the survey, parents who indicated they wished to participate further will be selected to participate in a one-hour focus group meeting in order to obtain more detailed information on their perspectives.

Principals from the identified schools will be briefed about the projects' goals and objectives throughout the projects duration. Copies of the approved survey and informed consent letters will be given to district personnel prior to distribution. The privacy rights of individuals and schools will be respected and information obtained from the surveys and focus group meetings will be kept confidential. Data with parent, school, or other identifiers will not be reported. Complete anonymity of all participants will be maintained, and all personal-identifying data will be destroyed upon completion of analysis and the final report. Upon conclusion of the research, a copy of the research findings will be submitted to the school district. At that time, Lori Caruthers Collins, researcher agrees to present the findings to district personnel regarding the research implications for practice or policy.

If any additional information is needed about the project, please contact Lori Caruthers Collins, researcher, by email lori_collins@redlands.edu, or by telephone [REDACTED]. The project's chair Dr. Alayne Sullivan may also be contacted by email alayne_sullivan@redlands.edu or by telephone (909) 748-8798. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the University of Redlands Institutional Review Board, Professor Catherine Salmon by email catherine_salmon@redlands.edu or telephone (909) 748-8673. Thank you in advance for your participation in this research project.

Approved: _____ Date _____
 [REDACTED], Deputy Superintendent

Approved: _____, [REDACTED] Elementary School
[REDACTED], Principal

_____, [REDACTED] Elementary School
[REDACTED], Principal