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## Qualitative Examination of Noncustodial African American Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Education

Christy Ann Wallace  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Christy A. Wallace

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Dr. Benita Stiles-Smith, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty  
Dr. Melody Moore, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty  
Dr. Yoly Zentella, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost  
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Qualitative Examination of Noncustodial African American Fathers' Involvement in  
Their Children's Education

by

Christy A. Wallace

M.B.A, University of Phoenix, 2007

MIP, Walden University, 2019

B.S., Southern University, and A&M College, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

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## Abstract

Parent involvement in children's school experience has been shown to be important to academic success. Although African American parents approach their parenting in culturally unique ways, these have not been adequately explored or described. Many African American children grow up in a household with a single mother and an involved but nonresident father; the purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of these fathers with their grade school children's schools and education. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory underpinned the research. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data was collected from a sample of 10 nonresident African American fathers using a semi structured interview guide. The research question and sub-questions focused on noncustodial African American fathers' depictions of their participation in their children's academic success. The data were analyzed using a modified van Kaam method, with member checking and active processes for ensuring trustworthiness of the data. The results of this study indicated noncustodial African American fathers had helpful practices for learning in the home, honest communication, and exposure to useful educational and extra-curricular activities as meaningful influences in their children's academic achievement. This study provided an understanding of nonresident African American fathers' experiences with their children in pursuit of academic achievement which may be helpful to schools and teachers in for acknowledgement and better support of their involvement leading to positive social change.

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## Dedication

I dedicate my study to God, my husband James, my beautiful girls Madison, Samantha, and Taylah, and my wonderful family and friends that have helped me during this process. I also would like to give a special dedication to my Grandma Willie Mae Dennis, who taught me to continue even if it gets tough, and to move forward in my quest to be the best I can be. No matter the obstacles, always do your best to reach your goals.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Today, 41% of all births in the United States occur to unmarried parents, with even higher proportions among racial and ethnic minorities (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2012). Most African American youth are raised in single-parent households, most single mother-headed at some point during childhood and/or adolescence (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2017; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). These single mothers generally co-parent with nonresident, noncustodial fathers (Caldwell et al., 2014). Based on the rising statistics of the single mother-headed household and noncustodial father family structure, there is a need to evaluate the parenting characteristics of African American parents. In this study, I interviewed noncustodial African American fathers to identify what they view as the traits that foster academic success among their school-age children.

Although many unmarried parents are cohabiting when their child is born, about two-thirds will be living apart by the time their child turns 5 years old (Carlson, McLanahan, & Brooks-Gunn, 2008; Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013). Unmarried parents generally settle into a co-parenting arrangement. When a child is school-age, parental support in school evolves.

In this study, I explored the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers, with a focus on what they see as their contribution to their school-age children's academic success. The results of this study afford new evidence on noncustodial African American fathers' participation in their children's progress in school.

In this chapter, I will provide the background of the study followed by the problem statement. Next, I will explain the purpose of the study. The research questions guiding the study will then be presented. A discussion of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as the theoretical framework will follow. Next sections will include the nature of the study, assumptions, scope, and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. Finally, I will provide a summary to conclude the chapter.

### **Background of the Study**

Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro (2017) reported that there are various social contexts that hinder academic success of students. Swinton, Freeman, Zabriskie, and Fields (2009) found one of these being the different contexts to parental involvement and sought to understand the context fathers engage in core activities including social, emotional, and academic support. Martin et al. (2010) found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of African American youth in the United States are born to unmarried parents and noted that many African American fathers' co-parent within single-parent family structures. Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) reported that the home and school contexts are characterized as autonomous microsystems, while parent involvement is conceptualized as a mesosystem, which is made up of interactions between key microsystems. Guided by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's concept of ecological systems, I qualitatively explored how the interactions between key microsystems (i.e., home and school) affect other systems (i.e., parental involvement and academic success) through the noncustodial African American fathers' lived experiences.

Odgers et al. (2012) found that parental involvement has a positive impact on students' performance in school. Accounts of parenting from the perspective of African American fathers are particularly rare, even though such accounts can clarify the unique aspects of their parenting practices, particularly for fathers of preadolescent youth (Doyle et al., 2015). The promotion of parental involvement in education has featured prominently in educational policies in recent years, such as No Child Left Behind. Social contexts, including interpersonal relationships, may contribute to deviations of expected educational pathways (Englund, Egeland, & Collins, 2008). Considering the findings by Odgers et al. (2012), and the statistics from Doyle et al. (2015), findings of this study revealed that noncustodial African American fathers in terms of their parental involvement in their children's academic experience through lived experiences.

The academic achievement of a student can be viewed as giving insight into the relationship between the student and his or her parents (Taylor, 2012). Taylor (2012) argued that further research is necessary in order to understand lived experiences that are common among noncustodial African American fathers and those encounters that influence academic success in their children. The results of this study contribute to the gap in literature of the noncustodial African American fathers' lived experiences of parental involvement in their children's academic experience. The lack of understanding on this issue generally leads to the failure of school personnel to be able to develop efficient methods to encourage African American parental involvement (Delpit, 2012). Furthermore, African American parents tend to perceive that there is bias in the way they are treated by school personnel, which typically leads to a strained relationship between

African American parents and the school (Delpit, 2012). There is, however, substantial information linking parental involvement and academic performance based on Jeynes's (2012) meta-analysis of 52 studies. In this study, Jeyne (2012) examined the relationship among different types of parental involvement agendas and academic success of school aged children. The results of this study by Jeyne (2012) revealed significant correlation between parental programs and successful academic achievement of school aged children. Chapter 2 includes a detailed review of the current literature.

### **Problem Statement**

Single-parent African American families, though rising in number, are not explored by researchers or school administrators, which leads to a lack of understanding in engaging African American families with the school (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). According to Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994), the home and school contexts are interacting autonomous microsystems, and both are part of an ecological system that directly affects the child. The specific problem is that the interaction between home and school contexts is mediated by parental involvement; therefore, parental involvement may be related to academic performance (Ceballo, Maurizi, Suarez, & Aretakis, 2014). There has been little information on the impact of African American fathers' parental involvement with their children, despite the rising number of African American children born into single-parent family structures (Doyle et al., 2015). Despite the increasing number of children born into household structures with noncustodial African American fathers, there is a lack of literature specifically on the fathers' parental involvement in their children's academic success.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers in their involvement with their children's academic performance. Cabrera and Tamis-LeMonda (2013), Jeynes (2012), Taylor (2012), and Wentzel and Miele (2016), have all argued that further research is necessary to understand what behaviors are most common among noncustodial African American fathers. In this study, I explored the fathers' perspectives of their contribution to the academic progress of their children through actual lived experiences.

### **Research Question**

The following research question and subquestions developed to guide this study:

Research Question 1: How do noncustodial African American fathers describe their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1a: What educational strategies do noncustodial African American fathers describe to encourage academic success of their children?

Subquestion 1b: What experiences do noncustodial African American fathers describe that impede or promote their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1c: What educational and noneducational interactions do noncustodial African American fathers describe as influences in the academic success of their children?

## Theoretical Framework

I used the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as the theoretical framework for this study. In ecological systems theory, five systems are identified within an environment: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the ecosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) the microsystem includes the child's family, school, peers, and community, the mesosystem is a collection of either the child's family or school, the ecosystem is the third level includes surroundings or events that the child does not engage in but have a significant impact on the child's development, macrosystem includes cultural influences on the child directly, and lastly chronosystem is shaped by environmental events and transitions that occur throughout a child's life. These systems shape the psychological development of an individual. The ecological systems theory allows a researcher to explore the familial, political, and historical influences that affect African American fathers. Parental figures and schools are both considered microsystems interacting among the larger systems (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). The interaction of the systems is relevant for understanding the influence of parental involvement and the school to the fathers' experiences.

The ecological system theory states that individuals face diverse environmental characteristics throughout their lives that impact their behaviors in various ways. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory explains the traits of a child and the environmental influences in relation to the child's overall development. Ecological theory was useful for exploring the lived experiences of African American fathers in relation to their children's academic success.

Timkey (2015) stated that continued research is needed concerning parental involvement and academic success that will pinpoint characteristics of successful parental participation of African American fathers. An ecological perspective supports the phenomenological approach of this study as the noncustodial African American father's perceptions of their lived experiences described characteristics of the ecological system and the related influence on their children's growth and development. Chapter 2 includes more about this model.

### **Nature of the Study**

The focus of a phenomenological study is to examine people's experiences and how they understand those experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The goal of phenomenology is to identify the essence of the experience that underlies a particular learning experience. I selected the qualitative phenomenological research design for this study to explore the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers in their involvement with their children's academic performance.

Following the approach of Creswell and Poth (2017), a phenomenological research design structures the study. I considered the philosophical perspectives behind the approach, especially the concept of studying how people experience a phenomenon. I designed research questions for exploring the meaning of that experience for individuals and asking individuals to describe their everyday lived experience. I collected data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation through semi-structured interviews. I used semi-structured interviews to create direction in my line of questioning and allowed the participants to discuss their experiences in-depth. I asked

probing questions as needed to further understand the phenomenon. I analyzed the collected data through the process of horizontalization or organizing interview statements. I then transformed these units into clusters of meaning. The phenomenological report ends with the identification of the essential, invariant structure of the participants experiences (Creswell, 1998).

### **Definitions**

*Custodial parent:* In the situation where a child's parents live separately due to divorce, death, or other circumstances, the parent with whom the child resides (Anderson, 2014).

*Noncustodial parent:* A parent who does not live with his or her child (Anderson, 2014).

*Parental involvement:* The concept of parental involvement in the education of children differs and is not equal among all families. In this study, parental involvement will refer to five types of investments that parents are able to provide their children: social capital, interactional, expectations, educational, and economic investments (Quadlin, 2014).

*Self-concept:* In the context of this study, self-concept refers to the judgments and beliefs of an individual regarding their educational skills (Hattie & Anderman, 2013).

### **Assumptions**

An assumption is an unexplained theory of how an individual think without realizing they think it (Creswell, 2003). I assumed that the participants provided honest, unbiased feedback. I also assumed that as noncustodial African American fathers, the

participants had relevant information and experiences to share that contributed to this phenomenological investigation.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study is the experiences of noncustodial African American fathers regarding their perceptions of how their involvement impacts their children's academic success. I did not seek the experiences of single African American mothers, children, or African American custodial fathers. The research was delimited by the school setting from which the participants were recruited.

Single parenting in the African American community is one component that has been identified with consideration of specific problems of academic achievement for children (Caldwell et al., 2014). I chose a qualitative approach instead of the quantitative approach because it allowed an in-depth account and investigation of participants' lived experiences. I used ecological systems theory to underpin my exploration of African American noncustodial fathers' experience of and perspectives regarding their involvement in their children's schooling.

I considered using attachment theory (Zucker, 2009) to focus on the bonds between the parent and child and conclusion regarding the disruptions that strained attachment bonds may produce for children. However, this theory did not provide the degree of focus on the fathers' lived experiences relating parental involvement and the school, as did ecological systems theory.

The transferability of qualitative research findings is limited (Lincoln & Guba 1985). The findings may only be explicitly applicable to the population used in the study

(Lincoln & Guba 1985). Noncustodial fathers of diverse ethnicities may offer different answers to comparable research questions. Consequently, the results of this study might or might not be beneficial with regard to noncustodial parents of diverse ethnicities and noncustodial mothers. The results of this study would not likely be relevant to custodial parents or caregivers and may have limited relevance to the lived experiences of children of diverse ethnicities and interactions with their caregivers.

### **Limitations**

The results of this study are limited by the fact that this is a qualitative investigation; therefore, I am unable to provide measurable indicators of how noncustodial African American fathers' involvement affects their children's academic success. Instead, I aimed to uncover patterns and theories in order to explain the phenomenon from the perspective of the fathers themselves. This, however, represents another limitation. Studies relying solely upon self-report data may not be as accurate as those involving objective or third-party observational data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In addition, although the results revealed general truths about noncustodial African American fathers across the country, the specific results may not be inclusive beyond the setting of the study.

The dependability of the self-reported data is often questioned in research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). There is a possibility that participants may have communicated information that was flawed in their interviews, and that I may thus have been led to mistaken conclusions in data analysis. The limitations related to research bias must be considered in qualitative study. I used member checking of interview data to reduce

incorrect information and research results. I used bracketing to prevent researcher partiality, as described by Gearing (2004), with efforts to keep separated the researcher's opinions and reactions from the data collected.

### **Significance**

The nature and influences of parental involvement on student outcomes may vary across ethnic backgrounds (Rowley, Kurtz-Costes, & Cooper, 2010). Deeply rooted cultural beliefs regarding the role of the family in education, the meaning and goals of education, and the diversity of parents' experiences with schools may explain the ethnic variation in parenting approaches and family-school relations (Hill & Torres, 2010). Previous researchers have shown academic engagement as a strong predictor of academic and emotional development (Li & Lerner, 2011; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). This research is significant because the results from this study provide more insight into the perspectives of noncustodial African American fathers related to their children's school experience. Results from this research may provide information for positive social changes with intervention services in the home, community, and school, to increase the involvement of fathers in the academic lives of their children.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I introduced the study and provided information about various fundamental aspects of the research. Martin et al. (2010) found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of African American youth in the United States are born to unmarried parents and noted that many African American fathers' co-parent within single-parent family structures. The problem is that single-parent African American family structures, though

rising in number have largely remained unexplored. This lack of exploration has resulted in a lack of understanding of how to engage African American families with schools (Weiss et al., 2009). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers with their involvement in their children's academic performance. I developed one qualitative research question and three subquestions to guide the study. I used Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as the theoretical framework for this qualitative phenomenological study.

In Chapter 2 includes a review of literature related to the topic of the study. Chapter 2 consists of an analysis of current literature related to the research theme from the ecological systems theory to account for different context influences on their children's academic success. I will describe the basis of additional research supporting the need to identify the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers' regarding their impact on their children academic achievement. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the key themes in the literature, what is known, and where the gap of evidence takes place in the discipline.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

Despite an increasing number of children living in household structures without their noncustodial African American fathers, there has been a lack of research on the impact of African American fathers' parental involvement with their children (Doyle et al., 2015). Cabrera and Tamis-LeMonda (2013), Jeynes (2012), Taylor (2012), and Wentzel and Miele (2016) argued that further research is necessary to understand what parenting behaviors are most common among noncustodial African American fathers. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers in their involvement with their children's academic performance.

In this chapter, I will present a review of the literature that served as the basis for this study and provided facts related to the theme, phenomenon, and population. For this purpose, I accessed peer-reviewed articles, scholarly works, and relevant online websites. In review of the literature I provided specific consideration to the theoretical framework while examining researchers that have similar fundamental views. Research concerning the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers' involvement in their children's academic performance was absent in the literature.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In this literature review, I attended to peer-reviewed journals that explored the various viewpoints of academic success and parental involvement, examining retrievals from Walden University library center. The databases included Education Research Complete, ERIC Education, SAGE full-text database, ProQuest Central, and Social INDEX with full text. The terms in this literature review, singly or in association with each other, included the following: *father involvement*, *children academic success*, *African American father*, *noncustodial parent*, and *academic achievement of minorities*.

The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was used as the theoretical framework. In Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory, five systems are identified within an environment: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the ecosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. These systems are seen to shape the psychological development of an individual. Researchers such as Modecki, Hagan, Sandler, and Wolchik (2014) noted the role of ecological systems theory in allowing researchers and practitioners, especially those working in the field of psychology, to observe paternal role functioning in the environment in which it occurs.

Coll et al. (1996) used the ecological systems theory to underpin research in the context of African American fathers and their children's engagement. In order to understand the developmental processes of parents and children of color, it is necessary to explore the intersection of social class, culture, ethnicity, and race to create integrative models for developmental competence (Coll et al., 1996). Ecological systems theory can underpin exploration of the familial, political, and historical influences on African

American fathers. In the context of the present study, the role of noncustodial African American fathers in the lives of their children, especially in the context of educational activities, differs from other fathers on the basis of at least two factors: their being noncustodial fathers and their racial identity as a minority. As such, the lived experience of these fathers in the context of their environmental influences is important. Foster & Brook-Gunn (2012) addressed microsystem in the context of this study is the school, neighborhood, and family of the African American child. The mesosystem connects two structures from the microsystem, such as the relationship between the noncustodial African American father and the child's teacher. Foster & Brooks-Gunn (2012), addressed the ecosystem to a larger system in society in which the child is not directly functioning, such as the social and political factors relevant to African Americans. Foster and Brooks-Gunn (2012) indicated that macrosystem to African American cultural laws, customs, and values, and the chronosystem to the child's age and corresponding growth. This framework was appropriate by exploring perceived influences of noncustodial African American fathers on their children's academic achievement. The ecological systems theory provided a context of the noncustodial African American fathers' lived experiences as expressed by the fathers 'engagement in their children's academic performance.

## **Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**

### **Ecological Theory Underpinning this Research**

The ecological theory assists in understanding the influence of environment and cultural impact on the individual. In 1979 ecological theory was first introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), for the intent of identifying why people act differently in various environments. Bronfenbrenner's theory provided organization for information about people and their environment and a concise understanding of the intercorrelation of people and their communities. All individuals progress through various changes in life in relation to their capabilities and environmental support available. Bronfenbrenner (1979) further explained that ways in which individuals or groups associate with a child will certainly impact development of the child. Ecological theory and analysis developed descriptions and clarified the thoughts and actions of individuals and groups within certain contexts of their lives. Raymore (2002) discussed that "an ecological perspective of human development is concerned with comprehending the environment in which an individual exists." (p. 41-42). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory focuses on human development within the context of a system of connections that influences the human environment.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory consists of four layered systems: microsystems, mesosystems, ecosystem, and macrosystems. The microsystem is the layer nearest to the child and shapes relationships, social interactions, and the environment the child has the most contact. Structures in the microsystem include family, school, and the community, and support reciprocity between the child and social

constructs. Bronfenbrenner (1979) indicated that reciprocity is recognized as the functioning of bidirectional influences. The mesosystem is a combination of two or more microsystems that connect a child's parent and the environment; the interaction between an adult impacts the child are interconnected and influence one another. Bronfenbrenner (1979) concluded that the bidirectional influences at the microsystem level have the most powerful influence on the child, though the mesosystem certainly influences the child's parents.

Research conducted by Ogbu (1981) indicated parenting patterns of specific groups, providing the importance of recognizing the viewpoints regarding success among specific cultures. Ogbu (1981) maintained that "certain populations possess unique instrumental competencies that meet their societal needs, and they adapt their child-rearing techniques to inculcate these needs" (p. 417). Ogbu (1981) asserted that parent-child relationships are a socially logical process that are shared by individuals and the community in which the child interacts, amplifying focus on culture. Likewise, Bronfenbrenner's ecology theory (1995) qualifies the vital approach between individuals and others in their environment by contending purposefully frequent interaction is necessary between an individual and their environment for evident growth to take place.

### **Research with African American Fathers**

This section included methods reviewed in the literature analysis of research with noncustodial African American fathers, to determine the need for current examination of noncustodial African American fathers' perceptions of their lived experiences regarding their children's academic achievement. The findings identified noncustodial African

American father's perceptions of their children's success in academia, an analysis of qualitative and quantitative studies was considered in this literature review. This study examined theoretical and methodological characteristics of predictors of academic success in African American children, the impact of African American parental engagement, and the relationships connecting to African American father's and groups within specific environments of their lives.

Qualitative theoretical research is important for developing an understanding of the noncustodial African American father's view of specific experiences that may contribute to positive academic outcomes in their children's educational achievement. Past research has indicated that identification of relationships between parental involvements from the perspective of minority groups is necessary. Particularly, the role of the African American father is valuable in that it is complex and frequently misunderstood. In this study, qualitative assessments assisted in the examination of African American fathers parenting rituals based on their viewpoints and experiences. Qualitative studies completed with African American fathers can pinpoint explicit parenting traditions vital to African American parents as well as provide a clearer indication of gendered, ethnic, and social environments that impact their parenting viewpoints (Doyle et al. 2015).

A qualitative investigation conducted by Doyle et al. (2015) examined 30 African American birth fathers of pubescent males with the possibility of developing destructive behaviors and symptoms of hopelessness. In this study the fathers provided detailed portrayals of their parenting rituals, which were inspired by their lived experiences as

males, economic status, environment, and residential status, (Doyle et al. 2015). Yet, to date, research on the roles of the African American father are small in number compared to research on African American mothers. Doyle et al. (2015) revealed that the roles of mothers and fathers may coincide in families, but the roles of fathers are quite different than those of mothers. Therefore, research regarding those communal differences in fathering should be investigated among minority groups. Doyle, et al. 2015, revealed that consideration should be given to parenting customs of African American fathers to develop father-focused prevention interventions to aid in positive outcomes for African American fathers, families, and children.

Studies that depict the parenting viewpoints of African American fathers are uncommon. Qualitative research is vital to aid in obtaining African American fathers' lived experiences regarding their parenting rituals. These investigations contribute to researchers recognizing explicit characteristics of parenting roles, cultural and environmental influences of African American fathers (Doyle et al. 2015).

### **Parental Involvement**

There are a number of parental involvement factors that are significant in the context of the education of children (Dumont, Trautwein, Nagy, & Nagengast, 2014). These factors include the education of the parents, their socioeconomic standing, the family structure, the age of the child, and the employment of the mother (Dumont et al., 2014). These are factors that are consistent with the ecological framework of this research study which contribute to the role of the noncustodial parent. In addition, families with two parents who live together show higher parental involvement when compared to

families with a single parent (Karbach, Gottschling, Spengler, Hegewald, & Spinath, 2013). One of the reasons suggested for the lower involvement is the economic and social status differences, and the obvious quantitative differences between the available parents (Karbach et al., 2013). With respect to the education of the parents, higher education and higher socioeconomic status among parents are associated with higher parental involvement when compared to parents with lower education and socioeconomic status (Karbach et al., 2013). Lower education may result in a feeling of intimidation among parents with respect to school (Jeynes, 2012). Unpleasant experiences associated with school may also result in hesitation among parents toward engaging in greater school involvement (Dumont et al., 2014).

There are other factors not associated with demographic constructs that may significantly influence the involvement of parents in the education of their children. For instance, higher confidence among parents about the benefits of their assistance to the education of their children, confidence in the children's abilities with educational activities, and higher aspirations regarding the education of their children are some of the factors that may influence the involvement of the parents in the education of their children (Kim & Hill, 2015). There is a decrease in parental involvement with the promotion of children from elementary school to middle and high school (Jeynes, 2012). One of the reasons suggested for this decrease is the belief among parents that with the growth of the children their needs for parental involvement are not as high (Jeynes, 2012). The age of the children may affect the involvement of the parent due to children asserting their independence and seeking lower involvement of parents (Jeynes, 2012).

Additionally, fewer opportunities may be available for parental involvement in higher grades due to the policies of the school (Jeynes, 2012).

Parental involvement has been shown to be affected by the policies of the school and the practices of the teachers (Kim & Hill, 2015). Other characteristics associated with schools that influence the involvement of parents includes the size of the school as well as the school being public or private (Kim & Hill, 2015). For instance, there is higher parental involvement when the school attended by the children is private and smaller in size when compared to schools that are public and larger in size (Kim & Hill, 2015).

Based on the insights discovered in fields such as education, sociology, economy, and psychology, the availability of resources can be categorized into financial capital, human capital, and social capital (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). The factors that influence parental involvement mentioned in this section so far can be categorized into one of these three categories. For instance, higher economic status implies higher financial capital (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). Higher confidence among parents can be classified as human capital. These forms of capital and the constructs associated with them provide a general framework in which the overall availability of resources in the context of a family can be explained, which ultimately determine the parental involvement in a given family (Wentzel & Miele, 2016).

In the framework suggested by Wentzel and Miele (2016), social capital refers to the quality of bonds with a family determined by the manner in which the interactions between parents and children take place, the environment at home, and the aspirations of

parents with the education of children, and the allocation of time by family members to spend with each other. It refers to the quality of the relationships among family members that form their support system. Parental involvement can also be seen as a type of social capital, which is assisted by the availability of other types of capital. External to family, social capital refers to the relationship the members of a family have with institutions and people outside of their house such as schools, religious organizations, and neighbors (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). Human capital refers to the level of education and the abilities and skills possessed by the members of a family. External to family, this refers to the education, abilities, and skills of the members of a community as a whole, and those who are employed at institutions. Physical capital refers to the income of a family and their assets, such as books (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). External to the family, this refers to the resources of the community such as libraries, schools, and so on.

Parental involvement is affected by a number of resources; as such, in the aforementioned framework it is possible to understand the relationship between the various forms of capital in and external to a family (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). The availability of some resources affects not only the involvement of the parents, but also the educational outcome of a child. For instance, the education of the parents not only suggests the skills possessed by an individual, but also predicts his or her beliefs, expectations, and aspirations in the context of education (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). While it cannot be established that parents, who have lower educational qualifications do not have higher aspirations for their children, there are higher chances of parents with higher educational qualifications to provide the factors associated with supporting their

aspirations for their children (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). Further, higher income provides a family the opportunity to live in a higher quality neighborhood, provide educational resources at home, and send the children to higher quality schools. On the other hand, higher income, if it results in parents working for longer hours, may hinder the involvement of parents at home, reducing the social capital (Wentzel & Miele, 2016). As such, this framework of parental involvement, along with the specific characteristics of African American fathers, can be significant in understanding the effects of noncustodial African American fathers' involvement in the education of their children.

There is a positive relationship between the involvement of parents and the educational success of children (Kim & Hill, 2015). Quadlin (2014) found that the relationship between the involvement of parents in the education of the children and the educational achievement of children differs on the basis of the directionality of the availability of resources among parents and the achievement of children. Quadlin mentioned that the concept of parental involvement in the education of children differs and is not equal among different families. Reflecting the three categories of financial capital, human capital, and social capital based on the availability of resources provided by Wentzel and Miele (2016), Quadlin recognized five types of investments that parents can provide their children. Quadlin noted the significance of social capital, interactional, expectations, educational, and economic investments, mentioning the opportunity of each type of investment in affecting the desire of students toward personal and educational achievement. Similarly, the response of a child to the relationship with parents was a significant factor that affected the possibility of academic achievement among children

(Quadlin, 2014). There is a scholarly consensus regarding the relationship between the involvement of the parents and the behavioral and educational outcomes of the children, and the lack of agreement among the same regarding the role of the involvement of the father (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Jeynes, 2012; Kim & Hill, 2015).

In this section, I reviewed general findings regarding how parental involvement influences students' academic success. A positive relationship exists between parental involvement and student academic success (Kim & Hill, 2015); however, factors such as longer working hours, lower parental education, children's age, and the size and public/private status of the school may affect this relationship. In the current study, I hoped that recruitment would produce a set of participants with different experiences, such as having children at public or private schools, working a variety of schedules or types of jobs, and with varying educational backgrounds—although all will be noncustodial African American fathers. I then determined whether these factors influenced the participants' perceived parental involvement and compared these results to the variations noted in the body of literature.

### **Fathers' Involvement and Children's Academic Success**

Involvement of fathers has turned into one of the most talked-about themes in education (Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013). The debate about the role of the father in supporting the education of children has extended beyond the confines of educators to parents, politicians, and social scientists as well (Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013). Jeynes (2012) examined the effect of the involvement of fathers in general population. This research historically emerged out of research on how the involvement of parents

affected children's education, itself inspired by the research on the consequences of family structure (Anderson, 2014). The participation of parents has been a significant part of child rearing in the United States for a large part of its history (Conger, Conger, & Martin, 2010).

A brief overview of research on the involvement of parents suggests that researchers in the field of social sciences did not actively examine the involvement of noncustodial parents in the lives of their children in the first half of the 20th century (Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013). This changed, however, with the increase in divorce rates in the United States in the second half of the 20th century and the changes in structure of American families and challenges for parental involvement (Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013). The result was a renewed interest among researchers in family structure and consequently on the involvement of parents. Jeynes (2015) conducted meta-analysis on accrued research relating to father involvement in academic achievement of children and found that this could be demonstrated as having a significant correlation. Thus, research has shown a developing appreciation of the significant role of fathers' involvement in the education of children in more recent years.

While researchers have shown the positive effect of parental involvement on the education outcome of their children, none have established whether the involvement of fathers specifically has the same positive effect, and research on the involvement of fathers has focused mainly on the fathers living at home (Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013). There is a significant difference between the research on the involvement of the father and the research on the involvement of the noncustodial father in the education of

the children (Coates &Phares, 2014). In addition, while some have examined the involvement of parents and the associated constructs that significantly influence the engagement of parents in the education of their children, there has been relatively little research exploring the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers in a similar context (Coates &Phares, 2014).

The belief that the involvement of fathers in the education of their children has a positive impact does not have unanimous support among researchers (Cabrera & Tamis-LeMonda, 2013; Quadlin, 2014; Taylor, 2012; Weiss et al., 2009). Primary focus of father involvement significantly is based on financial support. Lamb (2004), father-child relations are rooted in a larger ecology that involves mother-father relationships and diverse family and monetary means. Literature (e.g. Harper & Fine, 2006; Wertheimer, Croan, Moore, & Hair, 2003) has not indicated an undisputed evidence of father involvement explicit impact on their children's educational achievement. There has been evidence to support an emergence of research studies conducted on paternal involvement, without a primary focus of noncustodial parental involvement of minority parents. Studies conducted on family participation have been conducted in broad areas of parental participation rather than specifically on the influences of noncustodial parental lived experiences of their children's schooling (e.g. Freeman, Newland, and Coyl, 2008; Smeeding, Garfinkel, and Mincy, 2011). Especially in the context of noncustodial African American fathers such examination is lacking, suggesting a significant research gap (Boyd-Franklin, 2003; Caldwell et al., 2014; Doyle et al., 2015). The goal of this

study was to contribute to this body of research, focusing on noncustodial African American fathers.

In the following section, the literature on the predictors of academic success for African American children will be reviewed. This will provide an important framework to understand the relationship between noncustodial African American fathers and their children's academic performance.

### **Predictors of Academic Success for African American Children**

This section discusses educational outcomes recognized as influential to positive academic achievement predictors. Several predictors that shape academic achievement are family and environmental habits, school policies and procedures, and student self-regard in literature. The impact of African American student's academic achievement gap's impact on the progression of academic attainment compared to similar students of diverse ethnicities. And lastly, characteristics of the ecology that are linked to the overall success in academic achievement of students will conclude this section of predictors of academic success for African American children.

Predictors of educational achievement in African Americans are a combination of ideal collectivism and community. Collectively, African American students are faced with lower academic achievement in comparison to other races. The result of such findings may be attributed to challenging contexts.

There is an educational achievement gap between European Americans and African Americans. Boyd-Franklin (2003) explored this gap by focusing on the lower performance in educational measures among African American children with respect to

reading. An analysis of student achievement showed that 61% of all African American children in the fourth grade had proficiency that was below grade level in the measures of reading (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). In contrast, European Americans had 25%, Asians had 31%, and Native Americans had 53% ratios on the same measures (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). In states where there is a higher population of African Americans, the lower performance is more visible. For instance, the ratio of African American children who are unable to read in Texas is 49%, in the District of Columbia it is 67%, in Alabama it is 57%, and in Mississippi it is 66% (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Compared to these numbers, African American children with a higher level of proficiency at the national level represented only 12% (Boyd-Franklin, 2003). Given these significantly high contrasts, it is important to examine the factors that affect the educational success of African American children. One such factor that I examined in this study was the involvement of fathers.

The challenges faced by African American children include not only the challenge to perform at academic activities, but to excel in challenging environments. In spite of the fact that all individuals have to work through challenges that might negatively affect their potential, the challenges faced by African American children are more severe due to their ethnicity (Cokley, McClain, Jones, & Johnson, 2012). For instance, African American students are socialized in school systems to marginalize their ethnic background. Similarly, educators in public school have a number of preconceived ideas about African American children, one of which stereotypes them as being criminals (Cokley et al., 2012). Further, some teachers' perception about African American

students and their culture is governed by the notions that view them as more aggressive and less intelligent compared to students who are not African American, and requiring services related to special education (Cokley et al., 2012). In contrast, the introduction of programs promoting racial and global self-esteem has shown positive impact on educational achievement of African American students (Cokley et al., 2012). Despite the success of these programs, the educational success of African American students with respect to the constructs related to their conditions—including their racial identity—can only be ensured with the promotion of these concepts in the home environment (Cokley et al., 2012). As such, it is important that, in addition to programs that are school-based, involvement of parents is also initiated in which better educational outcomes are promoted. Cokley et al. (2012) identified several factors that predict the academic success of African American students. The following sections review these factors, which include the involvement of parents, the influence of teachers, and student's self-concept, in the following subsections.

### **Involvement of Parents**

The involvement of parents in the academic development of children is a significant construct in their educational skill development (Coates & Phares, 2014). Fleck, Hudson, Abbott, & Reisbig (2013) noted that scholars have consistently found short-term as well as long-term influences that the involvement of parents have on the educational success of their children. In spite of the evidence on the positive impact of parental involvement on the educational achievement of the children, there is disagreement regarding the methodology utilized to measure this relationship (Coates

&Phares, 2014). There are different approaches regarding the definition of parental involvement, along with differences regarding the conceptualizations with respect to the constructs related to academic success (Coates &Phares, 2014). In contrast, a number of activities are agreed upon to have positive results on the educational outcomes of children, including participation of parents in school-based activities, parents assisting with homework, and supervision by parents (Coates &Phares, 2014). There is an established research tradition on the influence of parental involvement, which I expanded by focusing specifically on noncustodial African American fathers.

A lack of resources obstructs parental participation in their offspring's academic life. There are specific constructs that indicate precise outcomes related to parental involvement. Ong-Dean (2009) determined that parents from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds tend to have less educated parents, come from lower socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, and do not have the social capital necessary to become involved in their children's education or to advocate for their child. There is a substantial amount of literature regarding parental engagement and academic achievement.

In Jeynes's (2010) meta-analysis of 52 studies on parental involvement and student outcomes, the findings revealed that parental involvement had a moderate to strong effect on the various measures of academic achievement used in the studies. Parental engagement has a consistent relationship with a number of variables. A lack of resources obstructs parental participation in their offspring's academic life.

Discussions between parents and children have been found to be significantly associated with educational achievement (Baker, 2015). Baker indicated that one of the

most efficient methods for improving the educational achievement of students is through the engagement of parents with children in topics related to education. This type of parental involvement is critical for encouraging student achievement. School teachers can assist African American fathers to engage more in the lives of their children and their educational performance by providing chances through which African American fathers can interact with the teachers of their children in the presence of the children (Baker, 2015). Such an approach also promotes the inclusion of attitudes whereby teachers can appreciate the different ways fathers of different racial backgrounds get involved in the lives of their children as well as their education. Such interactions provide teachers the opportunities to seek ways in which they can increase the regularity of parental involvement, as well as their expectations (Baker, 2015).

While examining this factor, Jeynes (2012) conducted a meta-analysis on a total of 77 studies on various programs for parental involvement in the context of urban schools. The questions raised by Jeynes concerned the effectiveness of school-based programs. The findings of the study suggested that programs which required involvement of parents were related with higher educational outcomes among students. In conclusion, Jeynes mentioned that schools ought to adopt strategies for providing guidance to parents regarding the strength of home-related reinforcement, communication with school, and reading. Jeynes (2012) focused on providing guidance to parents regarding reading strategies in order to assist children in the home environment for enhancing the overall educational achievement of students. Jeynes (2012) found that the research consistently indicates the necessity of communication for parents and the tools

they could employ while assisting their children with educational outcomes for success at school. The findings of the study also indicated that educational success of students was higher when the parents had a desire to be involved in the education of their children and sought chances to become involved, rather than engaging solely through programs sponsored by schools. In this light, the most effective situation would be a combination of both in which there was a strong relationship between parents and teachers, tools were provided continuously to parents for assisting children with tests, and genuine methods were provided to families for becoming more involved, especially in the urban areas, so that parents who had not experienced a particular school setting would feel more welcome (Jeynes, 2012).

Robinson and Harris (2014) concludes the imperturbable idea of a valuable school as one in which the liability of educating children is a collective obligation among parents and teachers- where teachers provide an education and execute school curriculum, and parents reinforce emphasize these energies by establishing cultural environment outside of school that is cohesive to positive educational outcomes. In addition to finding comparable significance of parental involvement, these authors noted that there was lower participation from parents who came from minority groups when compared to White parents. The authors suggested this as an issue that should concern stakeholders in the field of education. The researchers also recommended that future studies should examine the relationship between parental involvements in the context of minority groups. Such an examination would provide valuable insights to school administrators and policymakers in the field of education regarding the significance of race and class

differences in influencing the education of children. These results could indicate how a better understanding of these constructs shed light on ways to enhance the educational achievement of children from minority groups.

Others have supported and criticized the findings of Robinson and Harris (2014) regarding the relationship between parental involvement with teachers and student achievement. For instance, Walker (2014) noted the limited data based on survey employed by Robinson and Harris (2014) in order to make expansive conclusions, while noting that there are also drawbacks in the involvement of parents with teachers for the educational success of their children. Further, the measure of success employed by Robinson and Harrison in school consisted only of test scores. However, these authors' findings regarding parents helping children in the home environment have been supported (Robinson and Harris, 2014). For instance, if a child performs below average in school, the involvement of parents in assisting children with homework in the home environment can be of significant value. On the other hand, it is not possible to establish that parents who do not assist their children with homework in the home environment due to their lack of engagement are responsible for the poor grades of their children (Walker, 2014).

### **Influence of Teachers**

The expectations of teachers are one of the most significant factors in children's academic achievement (O'Brennan, Bradshaw, & Furlong, 2014). The judgments of teachers regarding the maturity, conduct, and achievement of African American children are a major predictor of their test scores (O'Brennan et al., 2014). One of the factors

responsible for the continuing achievement gap is low expectation of teachers, and many teachers who are not African Americans underestimate the influence of their judgments on the lives of African American students (Skipper & Douglas, 2015).

Further, those students who study under teachers who are not effective due to their limited qualifications show lower educational gains when compared to children who study under teachers who are academically effective (O'Brennan et al., 2014). The influence of teachers' qualification is significantly more problematic in the context of African American students, as the latter are more likely to study with teachers who possess lower educational certification levels as well as experience when compared to students of other ethnic backgrounds (Skipper & Douglas, 2015).

Ong-Dean (2009) also indicated that school staff may have the misconception that the parents of students from minority backgrounds are apathetic, disinterested, or indifferent to their child's education, and thus may not work to engage these parents in activities at the school. Families with higher SES backgrounds tended to have higher levels of education, more social and cultural capital, and greater resources (Ong-Dean, 2009). Families with higher SES experience higher educational attainment and professionalism, knowledge of resources that promote academic performance, and the receptiveness of school staff ability to collaborate with families.

Rodriguez and Elbaum (2014) investigated school socioeconomic status, school size, grade level, and student-to-teacher ratio as predictors of schools' efforts to engage parents of students receiving special education services. The results of this study indicated that contextual features of the school environment are associated with parents'

perceptions of how well schools engage them in their child's education (Rodriguez & Elbaum, 2014). The researchers recommended that policy decisions that affect the student-to-teacher ratio and changes in classroom caps should be carefully weighed as they may relate to instruction and student learning in the classroom and to schools' efforts to facilitate parents' meaningful and effective involvement in their child's education (Rodriguez & Elbaum, 2014).

### **Self-Concept**

Self-concept in the context of education refers to the judgments and beliefs of an individual regarding their educational skills (Hattie & Anderman, 2013). Self-concept has positive association with educational achievement. It is suggested that students who possess confidence regarding their abilities and believe in their competence, contribute higher efforts, and show higher engagement that encourages learning (Hattie & Anderman, 2013). Beliefs are specific to domains and subjects, that the development of academic self-concept occurs at a young age among children, and that this continues to develop (Hattie & Anderman, 2013).

Caldwell et al. (2014) suggested the factors discussed in this section which affect the educational success of African American students. The interconnections between parental involvement with the involvement of teachers and the child's own self-concept provide a multi-dimensional perspective in understanding the educational achievement of African American students through the consequences of noncustodial fathers' involvement with the ecological systems theory as the theoretical framework.

### **African American Fathers' Involvement and Commitment to Education**

A model centered on European variables has resulted in the elimination of cultural factors that limit the generalization of these studies in the context of African American males (Ransaw, 2012). Findings based on such approaches have given rise to stereotypical perceptions of African American males as poor fathers and husbands. Developments in research have given rise to more inclusive approaches, wherein the researchers consider concepts related to culture when examining African American males as fathers (Ransaw, 2012). Insights emerging from these developments have shown that African American males are involved in raising their children, although in ways that are different than the mainstream conceptions of fatherhood (Ransaw, 2012).

### **Factors Influencing Parental Involvement**

Due to their economic and social conditions, African American males are in many situations not capable of financially supporting their family at first and prefer to contribute by assisting the family through childcare (Ransaw, 2012). The high rate of unemployment, criminal conviction, or accusation, and incarceration of African American males, which is seven times that of White males in the age group of 20 to 39, has resulted in more absent fathers in African American families when compared to other ethnic groups (Ransaw, 2012). Due to these reasons, the likelihood of temporary unemployment is high among African American males (Fletcher, 2015). In turn, this gives them the opportunity to be more involved in their children's lives by teaching them the ways in which they can survive their economic conditions and the significance of culture in the face of discrimination (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). When viewed

through this perspective, it is possible to derive different insights regarding the involvement and commitment of African American fathers in the lives of their children.

In understanding fathering in the context of African American families, it is important to understand the significance of racial and ethnic identity and oppression of these families as minorities (Ransaw, 2012). As a result of this oppression, involvement as fathers is likely to arouse cultural pride in men of African American community, which also influences higher participation in the early childrearing period. Along with the development of cultural identity, the men in African American families also provide domestic contributions. Cultural influences of ethnic identity of African American fathers identify multi-complex and animated conceptions of fatherhood, (Murray & Hwang, 2015). An ethnic lens for understanding fathering is useful only when the definition of ethnicity shifts past “ethnicity to include race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and economic standing” (Miller & Maiter, 2008). For instance, in African American families with married couples, fathers assist in the childrearing by helping with disciplining children, changing their diapers, playing with children, taking children to visit doctors, and assisting the children in homework (Ransaw, 2012). Noncustodial fathers, also assist in childrearing practices by staying with the children alone, taking them out, playing with them, bathing them, changing diapers, and feeding them (Fletcher, 2015). These insights, however, are based on studies conducted in the 1980s (Ransaw, 2012). Despite a paucity of research, the studies conducted on African American fathers succeeded in providing new views about the misconception commonly held against African American fathers (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). Hines and Holcomb-McCoy (2013) suggested

that White American fathers are more likely to father by providing knowledge, skills, and opportunities to their children such as economic resources to buy services and products.

In contrast, African American fathers provide cultural resources such as ethnic identity (Ransaw, 2012). African American racial identity may be particularly salient to father involvement and co-parenting because the African American worldview emphasizes the importance of family and an extended-family model of parenting (Jones, 2007). African American fathers are more traditional in their roles as fathers; they assume the customary obligations of parenting. Consequently, African American father's cultural identity has a significant impact on noncustodial parental involvement.

Considering these insights, it becomes more important to understand the particular context of African American fathers. Especially in the context of educational involvement among noncustodial African American fathers, the research on which is scant, such insights could shed new light on a number of misconceptions as well as gaps in the research.

Among African American families, Boyd-Franklin (2003) found that satisfaction of fathers with their role of parenting was related to children's receptive and cognitive language scores. Further, informal support to children by fathers was associated with cognitive development in the home environment among children. The African American fathers who are involved in the lives of their children are strict, supportive, and controlling (Fletcher, 2015). They promote egalitarian role in the family and expect autonomy earlier. As such, understanding African American fathers requires a view of

fatherhood that is dominant, specifically in terms of the involvement with children and their academic outcomes (Ransaw, 2012).

There is a demonstrable relationship between authoritative practices of fathering and better behavior in school among children in the middle school and an interconnection between intimate relationships and higher self-esteem among African American children (Ransaw, 2012). Additionally, the chances of failing at a grade were lower among African American children who had their biological fathers present at home (Ransaw, 2012).

Some research has demonstrated effects of the presence of African American fathers for their children. Lack of fathers was interrelated to higher depression symptoms among African American girls (Ransaw, 2012). Booth, Scott, & King (2010) explored the value of relationship and attachment between fathers and children, revealing that children who were close with their nonresident fathers were more prone to have high self-worth, less likely to misbehave, and fewer depressive symptoms. Rodney and Mupier (1999) supports those African American boys who have a father in the home are least likely to fail a grade. Despite this, there has been relatively less research examining the effect of biological fathers' presence at home on children (Ransaw, 2012). Although children raised in a home where a father is present graduate from high school and attend college at much higher rates than children raised in a fatherless home, nearly 70% of children from noncustodial homes do graduate from high school, and 50% of them attend college (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). However, countless influences of noncustodial African American fathers have not been evaluated sufficiently (Ransaw, 2012).

Kelly and Shelton (2013) suggested that socioeconomic disparities involving education and financial stability have mesosystemic and exosystemic negative impacts on African American couples' structure, interaction processes, and family stability. The history of the African American family is that of brokenness that has been impacted by the history of slavery. Thus, its imprint has influenced the African American family in a variety of ways, most importantly in the role of parenting. Mays, Cochran, and Barnes (2007) indicated that the African American families confronted with poverty and its correlated traits (e.g., drugs, crime, gangs, and violence; unemployment, stress, and anxiety; and substandard housing and schools) often creates social conditions that decrease social connectedness and provide fewer social benefits among African American families. Given the history of mistrust between African Americans and numerous facets of our society as well as the normative challenges everyone faces when trust has been broken, it is no wonder that trust among African Americans is sometimes challenging to foster (Chambers, 2008).

### **African American Family Unit**

Most African American youth reside in a single-parent, primarily mother-headed, household at some point during development (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012). Developmental models of parenting and externalizing behavior, however, do not take into consideration the significant cultural influences experienced by children of minority status (Yasui and Dishion, 2007). One significant cultural factor is that African American mothers tend to use an authoritative approach. Yasui and Dishion (2007) signified that the outcomes of certain types of parenting styles may depend on the context

in which certain disciplinary methods are used and the meaning it carries for both caregiver and child.

The African American family is oftentimes a complicated unit as it relates to involvement with different systems. In most African American communities, there is a distrust of community organizations that disrupts progress in changing the cultural beliefs of this population. Weiss et al. (2009) suggested that the failure of school personnel to create comprehensive involvement initiatives for African American parents is partly due to a lack of understanding of the many ways in which African American families engage with their children's education as part of the broader learning system. African American students are considerably drifting behind other students based on challenging relations among minority families and school administrators. Lisa Delpit, MacArthur Award-winning author, and social reformer fosters the approaches of teachers becoming better "culture transmitters" in educational settings, where discrimination, classifications, and ethnic assumptions produce ineffective education. African-American parents strive to be a part of the school community, African-American students continue to experience punishments, more suspensions, and expulsions at three times the rate of their peers who engage in similar behaviors (Delpit, 2012; Kunjufu, 2012; White-Johnson, 2001).

African American families are hesitant from fully participating in the educational system. Thompson, (2003, 2004) indicated many African American parents, student's academic ability is crucial for sustenance, but for educational achievement. Consequently, African American parents despite discrepancies in scholastic attainment maintain engagement in their children's education.

### **Fathers and Academic Success**

Education is an essential component that affords the opportunity of social, economic, and political attainment in America. It is requisite to self-fulfillment, employability, and full participation in the rapidly growing informational and technological society (Reed, 1988). Academic success is contingent on regular school attendance, accountability, and respect of peers, faculty, and community. Consequently, those who experience academic turmoil oftentimes experience difficulties in maintaining quality relationships with peers, faculty, and in their community. Supportive parents and family ascribe to their ability to develop positive self-image.

Wood (2012) examined factors that support academic success for African American children. Wood identified African American parental involvement in school activities, expectations that African American parents allot to their children to hold them liable, and the responsibility and support of both the student and faculty as it relates to educational standards as necessary factors for academic success. This author identified three types of home activities that African American parents could utilize to ensure adequate provisions for positive social skills and academic achievement: academic tutoring, family recreational activities, and other areas of guidance and coaching.

Wood (2012) also indicated that the responsibility of African American fathers is vital concerning inspiring socially and academically capable children, particularly in affording inspiration, guidance of societal rules and aligning attitudes of academic and social success. Wood (2012) findings concluded that family support system that connects

the home and community has marginal impact in the role of academic performance of African American children's academic success.

Consequently, the literature supports that successful academic achievement is obtainable with parental support, most importantly in the African American community father's involvement. African American families that are impacted by chaos influence the academic achievement of students and the ability to develop a positive self-image. The impact of negative home and family environmental factors, undereducated and under-informed parents, families living in poverty, broken homes due to parental separation, and non-supportive relatives and friends must be taken into account in any attempt to comprehensively define the scope of the problem (Mandara, 2006). Supportive parents and family attributes that are consistent with the ability to provide a stable home are key factors in academic achievement.

### **Single Parents**

In most urban communities, many homes are managed by single parent households where the fathers reside outside of the home. African American single mother families are overrepresented in the trend, with 56% of African American youth residing in single mother homes (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The conventional family is often described as a two-parent structure in African American societies. Currently, there is an emergent emphasis on the impact single minority parenting rearing their children, as it correlates to academic achievement (Edwards, 2013). As a result, the parental responsibilities are split, with many of these belonging to only a single parent. Despite

genetic context, fathers are assumed to exhibit a lively attitude with their children, while mothers are responsible for the roles of nurturer that participates in dressing, feeding, grooming, and extra-curricular activities (Lewis & Lamb, 2003; Phares et al., 2009).

A vital component of father engagement, specifically for the noncustodial fathers, is the way the mother encourages the father's bond with his children (Perry, 2009).

There is a need to understand the types of supports that noncustodial fathers render to their children's academic progress and how that support aids academic achievement because parental involvement promotes a greater probability of positive academic progress for all students. Thus, parental involvement in any activity could have positive impact on the child's overall well-being.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In review of the literature, the objective was to identify gaps in literature related to a lack of research on the impact of African American fathers' parental involvement with their children's educational process. The reviewed literature also focused on what parenting behaviors are most common among noncustodial African American fathers. Focus was also devoted to literature regarding social class, culture, ethnicity, and race in the context of educational activities, noncustodial fathers, and their racial identity, and as these correlates with perceived environmental influences. This research helped to fill the gap in identifying specific behaviors noncustodial African American fathers perceived as influential in their children's academic success and may be useful to educational institutions and noncustodial African American fathers for increasing factors seen as contributing to children's academic success.

I reviewed Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979); the theoretical framework used for this study. This theory identifies the microsystem, mesosystem, ecosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem as a set of systems that affect an individual's psychological development. A child's father and school are both likely part of a child's microsystem, while the relationship between the two would represent a mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecological systems theory permits a researcher to observe parental role functioning in the natural environment in which it occurs, and to explore the familial, political, and historical influences on African American fathers.

There is evidence of the effects of society on the African American family through its inception and evolution in the United States. There is also evidence in published research on explicit effects of African American noncustodial fathers' engagement in their children's education. Black and Dubowitz (1999); Coley (2001); Jackson, Jeong-Kyun, and Franke (2009), have each confirmed that when low-income fathers are steadily present, their children encounter correlated gains in cognitive and language development and academic achievement; and that they manifest fewer problem behaviors.

Published research on implicit effects of African American noncustodial fathers' engagement in their children's education, endorsed the correlations between parental engagement with and separation from the educational system. Father-child bonds have been described as impacting a student's intellectual, social, and emotional growth (Zhang & Chen, 2010). East, Jackson, and O'Brien, (2006), identified factors that affect the African American family such as higher rates of incarceration, cultural effects, and

systematic concerns. Noncustodial African American fathers can also be associated with complexities including social problems, poor academic functioning, and maladaptive behavior (East, et al., 2006). These researchers summarized characteristics that impact parental involvement and endorsed further investigation into understanding the roles of noncustodial African American fathers in their children's academic success. This literature review has demonstrated the need for further examination of the lived experience of the role that nonresidential African American fathers have in their children's academic experience.

An overview of research provided information on the involvement and impact of African American fathers on their children's academic performance. The absence of noncustodial African American fathers' voice for their lived experience was noted. Thus, obtaining information from these fathers regarding their participation in their children's school lives could be beneficial in aiding those who suffer from low academic performance. Academic motivation can create confidence in one's ability, along with increased value of education and desire to learn (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). African American students that are of low socioeconomic status experience an assortment of factors that can contribute to problems that result in unsuccessful progress in school. A vital indicator of academic success is the involvement of parents that promote habits that allow for the development of positive academic achievement and further study of this aspect of parenting in the African American community is warranted.

This research holds potential to offer improved understanding of factors that contribute to noncustodial African American fathers' positive involvement in their

children's education and academic success. Given the paucity of information currently available, this is best approached with a phenomenological qualitative design to discover patterns and themes associated with noncustodial African American fathers' lived experiences in their children's academic achievement (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Discussion of the research design and rationale follows in Chapter 3. Also explained will be the role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers' regarding their parenting behaviors that influence the academic success of their children. This design explored and determined the experiences of noncustodial African American fathers.

Chapter 3 explains the method for this research. The chapter includes discussion of the research design and rationale for the study design, the research questions, and study procedures as related to the research questions. The data analysis, role of the researcher, issues of trustworthiness, ethical procedures, and a closing summary will complete the chapter.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

This study presents the personal lived experiences of African American noncustodial fathers' engagement in their children's education. There are multidimensional social contexts and variables that impact the parenting of African American fathers. Therefore, a focus on social context in father-school behaviors, and fathers' perceptions and perspectives of these was explored with one research question and three subquestions posed for this study as follows.

The following research question and subquestions were developed to guide this study:

RQ1. How do noncustodial African American fathers describe their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1a: What educational strategies do noncustodial African American fathers describe to encourage academic success of their children?

Subquestion 1b: What experiences do noncustodial African American fathers describe that impede or promote their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1c: What educational and noneducational interactions do noncustodial African American fathers describe as influences in the academic successes of their children?

The study used qualitative methodology, to describe and interpret a phenomenon (Creswell and Poth, 2017), rather than to test a theory in order to generalize the results from a sample to a population. I explored different types of qualitative data-gathering procedures and pinpointed several types of qualitative analysis: (a) phenomenological studies, (b) narrative studies wherein the researcher collects stories from study participants (c) case studies, (d) ethnographies, and (e) grounded theory.

I chose a phenomenological research design through which to examine the lived experiences of the sample. A biographical design was not suitable because my aim was not to describe detailed information about the life of a single participant. A case study was also not suitable, because description of a behavior was not the focus of this study. An ethnographic design was not appropriate because my aim was not to understand symbols in culture and traditions. Finally, a grounded theory design (Creswell and Poth, 2017) was not appropriate for this study because to develop a theory was not the goal of this study.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In the role of researcher, I operated as an impartial observer throughout the data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting. Moustakas (1994) pinpointed numerous fundamental duties for examiners involved in the function of a phenomenological design, including investigation of a phenomenon from every potential viewpoint until a cohesive construct is verified within the descriptions of correlated experiences. Likewise, it is vital for researchers to not utilize any justification or explanation of data or similar themes within, but preferably to clearly describe the information as it has been shared in the data collection process. However, researchers are also examiners. As such, I used contemplation and discernment to identify the data clearly in relation to the phenomenon being examined. It is the role of the researcher to declare that discernment does not in any way distort the collected data. It is also the obligation of the researcher to avow that the study design, participant selection, data collection, and publication results are carried out in a way that is impartial, fair, and unbiased.

My role as a researcher was influenced by my work as a full-time program administrator with a juvenile justice residential treatment facility. I had held my position for 4 years, and encountered parents of various ethnicities, social, and economic status. My role and obligation to this research included development of the study design and interview protocols, conducting interviews, and executing data analysis. I had no affiliation with education professionals or parents in any educational setting. I did not have any influence with over participants because had no connection with school

personnel or parents in any education setting. I managed any potential undue influence or bias by planning to exclude from participation in the study any parents or educational institutions with whom I had a personal relationship.

## **Methodology**

In this section, I will describe the procedures for participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. The target population, along with the sample, and the rationale for the sample size are described, and next a description of the step-by-step procedures in the data collection section for possible replication of the study. Finally, I will describe the data analysis (Moustakas, 1994) plan following the modified van Kaam method.

### **Participation Selection Logic**

The participants of this study were noncustodial African American fathers with school-age children. I recruited 10 noncustodial African American fathers to participate in this study. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), a sample size of 10 to 15 will be enough to reach data saturation, provided that the information gathered from data collection is in-depth.

## **Instruments**

I created a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) designed to gather information from participants regarding the subject matter, and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix B). Moustakas (1994) recommended creating a list of open-ended questions that will allow the participant to give a comprehensive explanation of his or her experience as it relates to the research theme. In this instance, the questions were

created to specifically address participants' perceived experiences that impacted their children's academic achievement. Fink (2000) recognized how demographic data permits an examiner to recognize potential connections among participants' experiences that could permit for better comprehension of the phenomenon.

I interviewed participants one time using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews granted the opportunity for participants to answer questions more on their own accord than the uniformed interview allows, yet still provided a good form for comparability over that of the focused interview as advised by May (1997). The appropriate procedure for examining difficult and complex topics as the researcher is to coach the participant prior to asking complex questions and to explain difficult ones to the participant (Kumar, 2005). Although the interview is the most vital technique of gathering rich and comprehensive data, it can be costly and intense. The value of the data collected is influenced by the interest, abilities, and dedication of the participant (Kumar, 2005). The risk of researcher partiality can also exist. Therefore, bracketing is utilized specifically to form a stance of deferred opinion, to ensure the results are free from hidden assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon and the conditions that are observed as described by Husserl (1964). According to Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, and Hendry (2011), apprehension with phenomenological analysis is linked to the subjectivity of individual experience and the task of responding to specific research questions rather than generalizing from personal ideas. The research questions and interview guide were designed for exploring noncustodial African American father-child behaviors in relation to education and school, and fathers' perceptions and perspectives

of these.

### **Researcher Developed Instruments**

Landsheer and Boeije (2010) expressed apprehension with examiner-developed questionnaires, in that it is necessary for questions to be of high quality to ensure that results are reliable. Phenomenological studies are focused on ideas that an individual has about an experience. There are numerous apprehensions with this type of analysis, given that outside influences such as time and the unreliability of memories can affect the perception of an experience. Landsheer and Boeije (2010) warned that the precision of a participant response erode over time, and people's perception of their experiences can shift. Seidman (2013) proposed that instead of requesting participants to recall an experience, it is helpful to ask them to reconstruct the experiences in an attempt to place them back at the setting, thereby allowing a more precise recollection of the experience.

Stoyanov, Machamer, and Schaffner (2012) confirmed that content validity in inquiry requires competence to accurately indicate precisely what is being analyzed. Qualitative research is based on individual narrative of an experience or event, and there is apprehension that test designs may only have face validity, which signify that those who participate in the analysis believe the outcomes to be valid. Phenomenology is reliant specifically on those very same narratives to identify the experience. Stoyanov et al. (2012) contended that the test design maintains content validity if it primarily acquires fact validity. Fulford and Stanghellini (2008) declared that validity is grounded in factual data, which primarily are obtained from subjective interpretations of reality. As a result of this, phenomenology should hold as much content validity as quantitative statistical

data, as the subject matter experts of any phenomenon must be ones who have come into contact with the content in this study and defined it.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data collection**

I recruited participants; I obtained permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; IRB approval # 05-06-19-0068450). I received permissions from local school administrators to advertise the study on the school premises. I began recruiting participants upon receiving these approvals. I advertised the study by posting flyers on school bulletin boards. The flyers contained the nature and purpose of the study, as well as my contact information. I was contacted by the fathers who volunteered for the study and conducted screening to determine whether they met the inclusion criteria. I contacted the participants who met the criteria to schedule an interview at a time and place that was convenient to the participants. Prior to the interview, I collected a signed informed consent form from each participant and collected the participants' demographic information for reference.

Demographic information was used for description purposes only and to make sure that inclusion criteria were met. As Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) discussed, it may be feasible to use demographic information for discovering themes within the data.

I used a semi-structured interview to gather the data. Interviews allow a researcher to gather in-depth information about a phenomenon; however, semi-structured interviews allow a researcher to have a direction in the line of questioning, while allowing the participant to respond freely (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

I interviewed each participant for approximately 90 to 120 minutes. As Friesen (2010) recommends, I started with the least complex questions to aid in establishing rapport. I then requested noncustodial African American fathers give more detailed information about their children, their bonds with their children, their perspectives about fatherhood, and their nurturing conduct. As the researcher I devoted attention to my demeanor and verbal and nonverbal presentations that might have inadvertently influence responses (Friesen 2010). To guide the data collection (Appendix A) a self-constructed interview protocol was used.

I contacted participants to disclose a short one-to-two-page synopsis of the results. Moustakas (1994) recommended distributing a summary of the inquiry of results to each participant, so each participant can assess the results for truthfulness. In doing so, an explanation of vague or inaccurate information can be amended by the respective participant. This may prevent the researcher making errors of assumption of misinterpreted information. The participants were informed of this step and requested to clarify mistakes once the summary was received.

If an interview had been contributed by an ineligible participant, the contributor would have been notified, and the interview module would have been archived but not utilized in any way. If a participant refused consent, the interview would have been immediately terminated, and the participant no longer considered an active participant in the research. Neither of these situations occurred.

I reviewed my field notes to achieve data triangulation. Immediately after data gathering, I transcribed the data in Microsoft Word. These files will be kept in an

encrypted folder to be accessed only by myself. I will keep all hard data in a locked drawer and will destroy these data after 5 years.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

In review of (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2011) after all the data had been collected, I uploaded all files to NVivo. NVivo is software that assists in storing, organizing, and analyzing qualitative data. The data analysis was guided by the modified Van Kaam method described by Moustakas (1994), which includes seven steps: (a) horizontalization, (b) reduction and elimination, (c) clustering and thematizing, (d) validation of invariant constituents, (e) individual textural description, (f) individual structural description, and (g) composite description.

In horizontalization, the data was reviewed for the relevant invariant constituents. Irrelevant data was reduced or eliminated in the second step. I clustered data with similar content and assigned these clusters into initial themes in the third step. The initial themes were validated in the fourth step. The fifth step included summarizing the themes using keywords in the data, while the sixth step included interpreting the transcripts. The seventh step was generating the final themes through reviewing the data according to the experiences of the participants. The steps guided the coding process; however, coding was a cyclical rather than a linear process. I therefore went back and forth between the steps as needed (Moustakas, 1994).

From the data chosen for further examination, themes were shaped into clusters, then labeled, that best represented points of convergence of participant responses, and that significantly aided in concisely and comprehensively presenting the data. Next, all

Moustakas (1994), seven steps went through “final identification” (p. 121) by checking each invariant constituent and each developed theme versus each participant’s transcribed interview for significance based on explicitness and compatibility. Next, I developed an “individual textural description,” including exact examples, then an “individual structural description” for each participant from her/his own information. Finally, a “textural-structural description” was compiled for each participant that expressed “the meanings and essences of the experience,” followed by a “composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). After all the themes were identified, I developed topics and construct codes, a procedure followed by Moustakas (1994).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

I applied procedures to increase trustworthiness throughout the study. This research study had four structures of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The trustworthiness of a research analysis is essential to approval into the academic domain and to conduct further research on the topic. The intent of trustworthiness in a qualitative examination is to validate the argument that the examination’s results are worth consideration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### **Credibility**

Credibility indicates the results accurately described the experiences of the participants (Scoboria, Wysman, & Tovar, 2012). In this research, credibility was obtained through bracketing. Husserl (1964) argued that the nature of partiality or overall interest with a phenomenon is not only what permits one to be objective, but represents

the purest, richest form of objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained five vital methods for establishing credibility: (1) activities that enhance the likelihood that credible findings and interpretations will be produced (prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation), (2) an activity that provides an external check on the inquiry process (peer debriefing), (3) an activity aimed at refining working hypotheses as more information becomes available, or negative case analysis, (4) an activity that makes possible checking preliminary findings and interpretations against archived “raw data” or referential adequacy, and (5) an activity for providing for the direct test of findings and interpretations with the human sources from which they have come, the constructors of the multiple realities being studied or member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 301). This research utilized the triangulation technique in several different ways as a data source, different viewpoints, or assumptions, and/or different procedures were set against one another to cross-check the data (Denzin, 1978).

### **Transferability**

Compared to quantitative analysis, peripheral validity is determined by indicating that the data has been gathered from a sample that is somewhat symbolic of the population to which validity is obtained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). But qualitative researchers put away the opinion of speculation because of uncertainty of whether speculations can be made about human behavior, given the passing of time, and changing contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). The qualitative researcher entrusts that some range of transferability is probable under specific conditions. Such conditions may be achievable

if enough “rich, thick description” is obtainable to make a logical conclusion regarding the range of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1982).

The qualitative researcher must make available ample detail about a context to (1) impart an explicit experience of it, and (2) support judgments about the extent to which working theories from that context may be transferable to a second comparable context (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). I included rich, thick accounts of the ten participants’ responses who agreed to participate in this research study from their semi-structure interview responses in chapter four. From these ten participants’ semi-structure interview responses, recommendations were afforded as to how the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers’ parenting behaviors influenced their involvement in the academic success of their children.

### **Dependability**

In comparison to quantitative research, reliability, or dependability, is thought to be completed when an analysis can be replicated or duplicated under the same conditions in another situation and at another time (Shenton, 2004). If variations are obtained among the two repetitions, the difference is defined as unreliability, or error (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). Yet, qualitative research designs are changing, and modifications are made intentionally. Changing designs also prevent an explicit duplication of a study; particularly given that an additional investigation may choose a different course from the same data. The qualitative researcher describes “dependability” to mean “stability” disregarding such deliberate and random changes (albeit rational and logical) in research design (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). Guba proposed the contention that there is no credibility

with dependability, with an understanding of the former being adequate to determine the latter. If it is possible using the credibility processes outline above to display that an analysis has quality, it should not be necessary to validate dependability independently. Although not without merit, this is viewed as a weak argument, as it deals with dependability in practice, but not in principle (Guba, 1981a).

A clearer technique for displaying dependability, and the one used for this qualitative research, is characterized as “overlap techniques,” which is one form of triangulation method which supports allegations of reliability to the degree that they yield complementary results (Lincoln &Guba, 1982). Yet, these researchers document that triangulation is usually done to confirm validity, not reliability; however, by the contention above, evidence of credibility is equivalent to validation of dependability. The “overlap methods” are simply one way of going about carrying out this argument, and not a separate approach (Lincoln &Guba, 1985).

### **Confirmability**

According to Marshall and Crossman (1999), confirmability indicates uncertainty of the results of the participants experience is truthfully depicted. Guba argues that there is a qualitative sense in which the objective/subjective distinction may be made (Lincoln &Guba, 1985, p. 300). Whatever is significant to the qualitative researcher is not quantitative agreement, but qualitative confirmability. The obligation of objectivity should therefore be placed on the data, rather than the researcher; it is not the researcher’s certifiability at issue, but the confirmability of the data (Lincoln &Guba, 1982). For that reason, transferability, “overlap methods” triangulation was used for this qualitative

research, which is one form of triangulation method which sustains claims of reliability to the degree that they supply corresponding results (Lincoln & Guba, 1982). The significance obtained from this method is two-fold: (1) various examiners improve the ingenious potential of the analysis, and (2) the assimilation of observations from various examiners improves confidence in the results (Eisenhardt, 1989).

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical procedures for this study included obtaining IRB permission. Community partnerships with supportive local grade schools were formed for the study. Following IRB review and approval to proceed, advertisement at the participating school took place, seeking volunteer African American fathers who had noncustodial status parenting their children who attended school. Participants in the study were informed of the type of research and the possible risks and benefits of their involvement in this study in the process of informed consent for participation. Though this did not occur, any participant who was known to me would have been declined to avoid any potential conflict of interest. Participants were identified only through pseudonyms once written consent was received. The participants were treated as human subjects with rights to privacy, as well as the right to withdraw from the study should they have wished to do so. The rights of the participants were stated in the informed consent form, and I collected all signed consent forms prior to data gathering. The data was treated with confidentiality. I will store the hard data under lock and key and will destroy these data after 5 years; all soft data is stored in an encrypted computer accessed only by myself. I will distribute to the

participating schools a summary document of the results and probable suggestions from this body of research.

### **Summary**

To conclude, this chapter presented the research methodology by first presenting a review of the nature and purpose of the study and the study design. Next, key theoretical assumptions regarding the use of a qualitative, phenomenological approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings were described, along with a concise description of the study's purpose and value.

An account and basis for the choice of the research design included descriptions of other designs that were not suitable for this study. The procedures for participant choice and data collection were identified, and the interview guide was discussed. Research questions and interview questions were provided in appendixes, and a description of the data analysis methodology was given. An account of how I ensured ethical treatment of the current study's participants finalized this chapter. Chapter 4 will present the results with examples from participant data.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The study addressed individual lived experiences of African American noncustodial fathers' engagement in their children's education. This research contributes to the field of psychology in providing perspective regarding the types of resources African American fathers believe they need to support their children's academic success. The primary research question and related subquestions were:

Research Question 1: How do noncustodial African American fathers describe their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1a: What educational strategies do noncustodial African American fathers describe to encourage academic success of their children?

Subquestion 1b: What experiences do noncustodial African American fathers describe that impede or promote their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1c: What educational and noneducational interactions do noncustodial African American fathers describe as influences in the academic successes of their children?

In this chapter, I will present the results of the study. I also will present demographics and data analysis procedures. I will discuss subjects relating to trustworthiness such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Closing this chapter, I will include a detailed discussion of the findings of this study using thick descriptions and tables.

### **Setting**

Participants had one option for the interview setting. The interviews were conducted in person, in a private, and confidential room at a public library in a central location. During the duration of the interviews, each face-to-face interview was conducted without interruption within the private room in the library. Throughout the course of the research, from the recruitment to the interviews and through the review process, no participant requested to withdraw from the study nor were any psychological or stress reactions noted.

Participants volunteered to participate in the study. When an interview time was scheduled, the participants individually met me, and were provided a verbal explanation of the informed consent as well as given time to read the documents, ask questions, and sign the document. The interview proceeded. After the interview was completed, I debriefed each participant and provided them with information as described in the informed consent and procedures. None of the participants indicated any distress and no follow-up was required.

### **Demographics**

Ten fathers participated in the research study. All participants were noncustodial African American fathers who were employed and completed high school. Participants ranged in age between 29 and 53 with the following groupings: 20-29 ( $n=1$ ), 30-39 ( $n=6$ ), 40-49 ( $n=2$ ), and 50-59 ( $n=1$ ) with a range of 1 - 3 school aged children. This information is summarized in Table 1

Table 1 African American Fathers 1

Participant Number	School Age Children	Age of Father
01	3	47
02	3	35
03	3	38
04	3	29
05	2	37
06	3	53
07	2	35
08	3	Ta
09	1	44
10	1	33

### Data Collection

The fathers contacted me via telephone regarding a flyer posted in their children's school recruiting African American noncustodial fathers for the study. For each interview, I set up a time that was equally agreeable to the participant and myself. During the telephone contact, I disclosed information regarding the specific requirements needed to participate in the study. During the face-to-face contact, participants were provided the demographics questionnaire, informed consent, and the semi-structured interview questionnaire.

I received IRB approval May 6, 2019. The participant recruitment phase for this study took place between May 8, 2019 and July 15, 2019. The interviews took place in a private room at a centrally located public library; interviews lasted between 55 min 20 seconds to 63 min 10 seconds, with an average interview time of 51 min and 3 seconds (see Table 2). I recorded data both by hand and an audio recorder. The interview times reflect the actual interviews, and include the informed consent form, demographics, and 13 semi structured interview questions.

I stored the data in an encrypted file on my personal computer, and the contents are my scholarly property and not sharable with any outside parties. I stored all hard data in a locked drawer and will destroy these data after 5 years. Following each interview, I transcribed the dialogue into a Microsoft Word document. No follow-up interviews were necessary. There were no variations in data collection from the plan presented in Chapter 3.

### **Data Analysis**

I analyzed data using Moustakas (1994) modified van Kaam method of analysis. Data were transcribed using NVivo from each participant's interview, underlining general words, phrases, and passages addressing research questions and numbering them as 1) Focus on core subjects, 2) Engagement in school activities, and 3) Discipline in the home, and so on. I also listened for cues that suggested changes in tone, mood, and emotions. I reread each participant's transcript, linking the codes, and noting information about key words, phrases, and passages in a journal (see Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Checking the accuracy of the identifying statements, I then linked and highlighted

the themes. These steps were necessary for completing the first step of Moustakas' modified Van Kaam data analysis steps: equally labeling all statements. Incorporating the second step, I sorted, ranked, and categorized equally numerated words, phrases, and passages. Next, I clustered them into categories (e.g., reviewing, initiating, and locating) as they linked to the research question they addressed, sorting them according to their relationships. I kept the ones that were rationally similar, and I deleted the ones that were not.

I did not employ any discrepant cases in this study. There were not any unusual circumstances that occurred during the data collection phase of this study. To validate that no unusual events or discrepant cases occurred it was essential that I recognize (a) all that the participants experienced and (b) in what manner they experienced the phenomenon. The ecological systems theory foundation as explained in Chapter 2, provided information from the literature reviewed on the topic and commonalities to the responses were discovered. I matched each interview question to the related specific research question. Commonalities and themes then emerged from the use of my queries. I also coded the interview questions to illustrate basic themes, and general response categories by interview questions.

As I wrote the results, I proved credibility of the participants' responses aligned with the research questions to guide and frame an analysis of the themes and patterns from the participants. According to Creswell (2012) the researcher should begin data analysis using the coding process, in which information can be organized into categories. I used participants responses from interview questions to categorize, separate data into

categories, and themes based on data similarities. I was able to pinpoint themes and patterns by rereading all transcripts and notes, underlining key words/phases throughout the data. The underlying word/phases were selected based on the number of times they appeared as it related to the study problem.

Interview Question 1 was, “How many children do you have?” Participant 01 noted that, he had three children. Participant 04 also stated that, he had three children and unlike the other fathers his children were triplets. All of the participants provided information regarding how many school aged children they had.

Interview Question 2 was, “Are there things that you do with your children to inspire your children to excel in school?” A notable category that formed from the responses to this question was that noncustodial African American fathers believed in providing support for their children in school. Most of the fathers provided examples of specific types of activities they participated in with their children to promote academic achievement. Participant 03 noted that, as a noncustodial African American father, he “helped with homework, read homework, and checked for its accuracy.” Most of the fathers like Participant 03 voiced their participation in scholastic practices that promoted positive educational outcomes.

Another category or response that emerged from this interview question was promoting learning by different approaches. Many fathers voiced how their children were receptive to learning in nontraditional methods. Participant 07 noted that as a noncustodial African American father, he “engages in reading games that result in an

incentive for the kids.” The games that this participant utilized to increase reading skills were fun and interactive in ways that are different from traditional learning styles.

Interview Question 3, “Do you participate in activities with your child?” Many of the participants expressed different types of activities they routinely engaged in with their children. One category of interview question focused on the engagement of school activities. Participant 04 expressed, “I participate in their class work at school, field trips as well. “Another category that developed from this interview question focused on volunteering in sports. Participant 03 expressed that he and his kids engage in “basketball, football, and checkers.” The final category that emerged from this interview question was parental support. Participant 01 stated, “I watch movies and probably read the newspaper a lot.”

Interview Question 4, “What types of school related activities do you believe are important for your child to be successful in school?” A noteworthy category that emerged from this interview question was attentiveness to core subjects. Participants overwhelmingly described helping with homework. Participant 05 noted, “We go over homework every night, go over grades when they get their report cards, and we make a B requirement of nothing less than a B.” An additional category that formed from this interview question related to how participation in specialized educational activities was achieved. Participant 07 stated “Reading is very critical right now.” An added category of this question focused on parental interaction with teachers. Participant 07 voiced, “He was struggling in reading, but when we talked to the school counselor, they gave us some ideas on how to bring him up to speed basically reading.” The final category that evolved

from this interview question related to educational tutoring. Participant 03 stated that, “afterschool tutoring, sports, chess, and checkers” were important activities related to school success.

Interview Question 5, “What are some of the things you do at home to support your child.” The initial category that was noted from this interview question described help with homework. Participant 05 replied, “We go over homework every night.” The second category discovered from this interview question was exposure to educational and noneducational activities. Participant 10 replied,

“I give her certain books to read give her time to read, time I make her do it on a certain time of the day. Devote that kind of time actually to reading and doing her work, time I sit down with her I help her.”

The third category that developed from this interview question related to communication. Participant 07 stated, “We go over homework every night, even if he doesn’t have homework we go over stuff from the night before.” The final category that emerged from the interview question had to do with improving self-esteem skills. Participant 06 stated that “Extended studies, math, and reading and writing mainly the weakest points of all studies” were some of the things that were addressed at home.

Interview Question 6, “Do you feel welcome in your child’s school?” From this interview question several categories originated. The first category of response to this interview question described rapport with school officials. Participant 05 stated, “Administration is open, they encourage parents to come while their children are at school.” Participant 04 replied, “Yes, by greeting me at the door, letting me know my

child is safe.” Additional categories included sponsoring school activities and being a school stakeholder. Participants unanimously voiced that they were open to participation in school sponsored events. Participant 08 stated,

“They know me by they know me on a first name basis pretty much and all of the teachers and most of the teachers, principals, and counselors. They welcome me with open arms, and whatever they need or I just, anything my kid’s need they know to call me.”

Interview Question 7, “What could the school do differently that would make you feel welcome?” Two categories of response to this interview question described scheduling of activities and friendly environment. Most of the fathers unanimously indicated no issues with their children’s schools. Participant 07 replied, “Yes, the school is pretty open, I feel very welcomed, the school is pretty welcome.” Participant 10 replied, “Ah being welcoming as far as being nicer, speak for sure, have more activities for just the parents to come.”

Interview Question 8, “What do you do to ensure your child does well in school?” Several categories emerged from this interview question. The initial category was communication. Participant 08 replied,

“Ah pretty much respect, I don’t let him go off into their tablet or YouTube games, it’s like their foundation has already been set. Cannot watch your tablet, you cannot play the games; you cannot do anything until your homework is done. Can’t go outside, go play, none of that until your homework or schoolwork is or whatever it is needs to be done.”

The next category developed from this interview question was attendance of educational activities. Participant 07 replied,

“I do pop ups, I do random pop up to see how he does, and the school allow me to do that. I would sign in and even sit down in the classroom as well, to get the feel of it.”

Another category that emerged from this interview question was monitoring of assignments. Participant 06 stated, “engage in their educational skills, making sure they can read and write, and understand their studies.” The final category that emerged from this interview question was positive reinforcement. Participant 04 stated, “We go over things that they struggle with, if struggling with something in class, we go over it until they get a better understanding of it.”

Interview Question 9, “Do you do anything at the school to support your child or help the school? Several categories emerged from this interview question. The primary category that emerged from this interview question was regarding volunteering.

Participant 09 replied, “I go on trips, I consider, I participate in anything teachers ask me if it’s a PTA meeting, pizza I chaperone at field trips, uhm basically they call me.” “If they need me basically a call away.” Another category developed from this interview question was financial support. Participant 08 replied, “Ah yes, for field trips they pretty much know that 9 out of 10 that fundraisers I always participate. I just overall a helping hand whatever they need.” Participant 08 replied, “Donations on activities.” Another category in response to this interview question was scheduling. Participant 02 replied, “You mean volunteer? No because of my work scheduled”. The final category that

emerged from this interview question was time. Participant 01 stated, “I make sure they get there on time and make sure they are well behaved while they are in school”.

Participant 10 replied, “Not really, if they need me than I am there but just be at the school nah I don’t do that”.

Research Question 10, “What factors would have influenced you as a parent volunteering or participating in school activities?” Three categories emerged from this interview question, with volunteering being the first factor. Participant 08 replied, “My parents actually my Mom, anything I did as a kid she was always there supporting me and I know as a kid that made me feel good knowing that I always had that support system. Whether it was my Mom or my Dad I knew that I had that type of support from them. So, I just kind of want to instill that.” The second factor identified from this interview question was scheduling. Participant 07 stated, “Time, time is really good, I spend a lot of time with my son and with them at school.” The final category developed from this interview question was the factor of employment. Participant 02 replied, “If I had more of a flexible schedule, I would volunteer, parent teacher conferences I would volunteer at the school. I know the kids like that.” Also, Participant 03 replied, “. . . short notice of work scheduled”.

Interview Question 11, “What have been the most useful parent involvement activities that you attended and/or participated in?” The categories identified with this interview question were contact with school officials, time, and co-parenting communication. Regarding contact with school officials, Participant 03 stated, “PTA meetings, parent teacher conferences and field trips.” About the category of time,

Participant 04 stated, “Field trips and things in their class as far as participating in their parties.” The final category that emerged was co-parenting communication, about which Participant 03 said “Trouble co-parenting, mother’s lack of communication”.

Interview Question 12, “What are some of the struggles you faced with increasing your child’s academic success?” The two categories that emerged from this interview question were time and support. Participant 02 noted, “I think a lack of time, spending time with the kids, whether it’s in school or at home, because I work a lot.” Participant 05 replied, “Trying to stay on top of them to stay on time. To stay on top of them I must find time. Be there; make myself available so that they can ask me questions.” Regarding support, Participant 07 replied, “Ah, struggles at first, it was he is just like me, he doesn’t like to read like me, he doesn’t like to read he doesn’t like that stuff. But once he sees me reading then he can know that it’s ok to read.”

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

I used the plan stated in Chapter 3 to make the most of the study’s transferability. I utilized credibility through member checking, transferability through thick descriptions, dependability through external review and reflexivity, and confirmability through triangulation. These strategies are discussed in the following sections along with how they were used for this study.

### **Credibility**

In qualitative research, credibility provides an appraisal of the data that were obtained and the analysis that resulted (Creswell 2009). Credibility provides trustworthiness through the researcher’s analysis of the participation perception. For the

goal of this research, credibility was achieved through member checking. The researcher took notes during the interview to ensure that the data presented by the participants were collected correctly. Each participant of the study was asked an identical series of questions, all allowing for open-ended responses to ensure richness of the data. Participants were presented data that was collected from their interview for review as part of member checking. Participants were given an opportunity to make certain that the data was correct, to verify if the conclusions and themes that were drawn were what they intended, and to provide any feedback to ensure accuracy. Participants found that the data collected was representative of the information given in interview.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is the degree to which the outcomes of qualitative research can be transferred or generalized to other settings or contexts (Creswell, 2009). In this study, precise and accurate descriptions of techniques and methodology were utilized to allow for best transferability. I described patterns of social and cultural connections and gave contextual understanding into these experiences. Transferability to other populations and locations was provided by in-depth and rich descriptions of the responses, experiences, and themes of participants, including the exact words of the participants. Transferability was achieved to allow for a description to emerge giving a valid depiction of shared experiences identified by the data provided by the participants.

### **Dependability**

Dependability through external audit and reflexivity was applied to allow consistency of the methods used over time. This method allows the process to be

provided in an explicit way to be duplicated. Consistency is critical for variances in time, location, researchers, and an analysis of the data that is collected. I used reflexivity to focus on the development of the research and analysis of data, step-by-step, to address any potential bias. Reflexivity was utilized to ensure intent and methods of research remained concentrated to the study. I reflected about the research initiative and what events brought the data to this point. I relied on peer review, from my doctoral chair and committee member to keep me accountable and ensure that all measures of validity and reliability were met. In this study I used an audit trajectory to compile notes and audio recordings taken throughout interviews and analysis portions of the study. This procedure ensured that any research bias was addressed, as well as any probable assumptions.

NVivo 12 software in addition to the hand analysis were used as two points of comparative analysis to ensure dependability. Thus, accurate coding and theme identification were double checked. NVivo 12 software and hand analysis delivered similar results which then informed the results and findings sections of the study.

### **Confirmability**

The final phase used to ensure trustworthiness was confirmability, the degree to which the results can be confirmed by others (Creswell, 2009). To achieve an understanding of the phenomenon being examined, triangulation was used. Triangulation makes use of various data sources to gather a thorough comparative depiction to ensure consistency within the data collection processes. Within triangulation, data was collected in several ways to ensure consistency within the method. This included having an audit

trajectory which involved keeping documentation of raw data, notes of processes throughout, and any outcomes that developed through the process, noting also under-dependability. Other triangulation included use of NVivo analysis software as well as my own hand analysis to detect codes and themes within the data, along with reflexivity throughout the research process.

### **Results**

The following section will provide results of noncustodial African American father's interviews according to the research questions. As mentioned in the trustworthiness section previously, rich descriptions will be utilized, linked to responses and experiences of noncustodial African American father are, with exact quotes from participants being given. Each section will provide results as well as descriptors and patterns from the data that support the findings and show validity within the research. This section will present the research question and themes that appeared throughout the interviews.

The following research question and subquestions guided this study:

**RQ1.**How do noncustodial African American fathers' describe their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1a: What educational strategies do noncustodial African American fathers describe to encourage academic success of their children?

Subquestion 1b: What experiences do noncustodial African American fathers describe that impede or promote their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1c: What educational and noneducational interactions do noncustodial African American fathers describe as influences in the academic successes of their children?

The research was achieved based on one research question and three subquestions to produce themes related to noncustodial African American father's parental involvement in their children's academic success. Each participant provided individual experiences and practices of past and present as it related to involvement with their children. Through the analysis of the data, themes were identified. The themes, as described by the study participants are explained in further detail in subsequent subsections.

### **Research Question, Subquestions, and Themes**

Parenting skills and routines carried out by parents are vital traits in a child's education and supports student success. The initial theme parenting skills and routines intricately connected to the succeeding themes which illustrated the methods by which participants assist, help, and demonstrate parental involvement while helping their children achieve academic success. Most participants described an array of tasks that they allocate themselves to in order to ensure that their child succeeds in school. Subsequently, noncustodial African American fathers 'views of engaging parenting practices will be discussed using participant interview data.

Table 2 Summary of Classification 1

Research Questions	Emerging Themes
RQ1: How do noncustodial African American fathers describe their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress?	Learning in the home Discipline in the home Open Communication Exposure to positive activities Encourage learning in diverse methods Positive peer interactive activities Support useful educational habits
1a): What educational strategies do noncustodial African American fathers describe to encourage academic success of their children?	Engaging in school activities Volunteering in sports Parental Support Exposure to different cultures Attentiveness to core subjects Participate in specialized educational activities Parent interaction with teachers Educational tutoring
1b): What experiences do noncustodial African American fathers describe that impede or promote their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress?	Communication Improve self-esteem skills Rapport with school officials Time Co-parenting Scheduling of activities Friendly environment
1c): What experiences educational and non-educational interactions do noncustodial African American fathers describe as classifying influences in the academic successes of their children?	Scheduling of activities Friendly environment Communication Attend educational activities Monitor assignments Positive Reinforcement Volunteering Financial Support

### **Research Question 1**

RQ1: How do noncustodial African American fathers' describe their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress? Themes emerged from noncustodial African American father's engagement with their children in routine activities which contributed to academic success of children by way of engagement in activities for exposure to creating well rounded individuals rather than to exclusively aid in academic success. The participants unanimously agreed that exposure to academic and non-academic activities increased academic success in their children.

The theme that emerged from this category was tasks that influenced academic achievement, according to the participants, were an instrumental component of academic success. The noncustodial African American fathers described this theme as follows.

Participant 01 was a 47-year-old African American noncustodial father of 3 school age children. He and his children engaged in activities that increased academic abilities and social interactions. Participant 01 communicated reading was undeniably fundamental to how he and his children completed tasks leading to academic achievement. He disclosed that reading the newspaper was vital in developing skills related to reading comprehension.

Participant 02 was a 34-year-old African American noncustodial father of 3 school age children. Participant 02 described participation in school and home activities that include an exchange of ideas and increase his children's self-esteem being important factors that contribute to his children's academic attainment.

Participant 03 was a 37-year-old African American noncustodial father of 3 school age children. He and his children engage in reading activities that helps them achieve academic success. Participant 03 explained, "reading with them during homework," allows him awareness of their comprehension of assignments they are completing.

Participant 04 was a 29-year-old African American noncustodial father of school age triplets. Participant 04 contributes "extra hours of reading" to promoting academic accomplishment among his triplets. Participant 04 and his children routinely join literacy programs offered by his local branch, which he attributes to their exceling academically.

Participant 05 was a 37-year-old African American noncustodial father of 2 school age children. He shared that "Math, reading, sport activities like basketball," are all pursuits that lead to academic success. Participant 05 actively engaged in planned weekly trips to the library and writing projects that he believed promoted academic excellence.

Participant 06 was a 53-year-old African American noncustodial father of 3 school age children. He explained, "After school studies, reading, and writing, afterschool hours," are activities that contributed to his children attaining academic success. Participant 06 went on to explain that he "engages in communicating with his children about homework assignments, checking for errors, and providing further explanations if needed."

Participant 07 was a 34-year-old African American noncustodial father of 2 school age children. He engaged in reading games out loud with his children; he initially reads and calls on them to read where he left off and provides rewards as positive

reinforcement. He believed that these reading activities promoted academic success in his children.

Participant 08 was a 31-year-old noncustodial African American father of 1 school age child. He rewarded his child with prizes as he checks homework. He communicated that positive reinforcement builds self-esteem that promotes academic achievement.

Participant 09 was a 44-year-old noncustodial African American father of 3 school age children. He disclosed communicating with his son in particular, expressing to him the importance of obtaining his education. Participant 09 stated, "I point out things going on with his peers and inform him that he does not want to be in those types of predicaments." Participant 09 acknowledged positive forms of communication assisting his children in academic success.

Participant 10 was a 33-year-old noncustodial African American father of 1 school age child. He and his daughter engaged in reading subjects relating to social sciences, visited museums, and participated in grade level camps. He described an instrumental component of his daughter's academic success being exposure to the sciences.

### **Subquestion 1a**

Subquestion 1a: What educational strategies do noncustodial African American fathers describe to encourage academic success of their children? Themes that arose from the noncustodial fathers' interactions with their children included support of family rituals and traditions.

Participant 01 revealed that an educational strategy he implements is providing support completing homework and reviewing homework assignments for accuracy.

Participant 02 asserted that positive interactions in the home and community are essential in promoting academic success; he and his family engage in recreational and educational activities that support academic achievement.

Participant 03 employed proofreading homework assignments and implementing reading routines. He had an established routine for completing homework so that his children adhere to a specific schedule.

Participant 04 reported that reading, and his children reporting verbally to him what they read, helping them with homework, and participating in school activities were all essential components of his children achieving academic success.

Participant 05 divulged that he implemented a time orientated reading schedule each day to ensure positive reading outcomes were achieved. He also engaged in exercise routines on the weekends which he believed contributed to inspiring positive academic outcomes.

Participant 06 reported that he reviewed his children's grades and required them to focus on core subjects that might require additional attention. He also engaged in helping his children in areas of concern by assisting them with their homework or explaining it to them in detail or utilizing resources in the community or at school.

Participant 07 said that he proofread homework and reinforced previous assignments if there was not any homework assigned. He maintained that it was important to ensure his children study daily.

Participant 08 related that he and his children completed homework regularly and there was always work to be done by regularly reviewing previous assignments. He attributes his children's inspiration for academic achievement to his sustained routine proofing of their assignments.

Participant 09 reported that he customarily assists with homework and projects to ensure that his children excel academically. The approach used by Participant 09 was checking and having his children revise any errors.

Participant 10 described that he and his daughter engaged in reading books within a specific timeframe and he devotes that time to go over her comprehension of the book. He also engages in helping her with homework assignments regularly.

The main theme evolved from the participant's experiences portrayed provision of structured time for studying. The noncustodial African American fathers in this study utilized strategies of proofreading, setting systemic agendas for completing homework, and planned educational outings.

### **Subquestion 1b**

Subquestion 1b: What experiences do noncustodial African American fathers describe that impede or promote their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress? The theme that emerged from participants' lived experiences with their children was parental engagement in school related activities on and off campus. Most of the participants' familiarity with school engagement events set the tone for the level of involvement participated in. Some of the fathers had specific

issues with time because of their work schedules; other parents found it effortless to participate in activities.

Participant 01 disclosed that he felt welcome in his children's school; he engages in extra-curricular activities at his children's schools.

Participant 02 indicated that accessibility and communication between himself and school is related to the frequency in which he can be involved. He acknowledged, "I leave my contact numbers with the teachers and principals, so that they can have a direct contact to me." He identified "he was unable to volunteer because of his work schedule." Participant 02 expressed concerns that his work schedule prevented him from engaging in activities as much as he would like to.

Participant 03 acknowledged difficulties with co-parenting and communication between him and the mother of his children preventing his involvement. He had encountered short notice of events that interfere with his work schedule.

Participant 04 revealed that it's easy to be involved because his children are triplets and the school are accommodating, holding events during varied times to ensure parental involvement occurs.

Participant 05 maintained parental engagement is a priority of his, saying "It takes a village." He participates in activities that allow him to support other students and faculty in the school if need be. He did not present any difficulties with attending or supporting activities.

Participant 06 expressed he attended educational functions but if he were faced with a schedule that did not work for him, he would make monetary donations to the school.

Participant 07 described his accessibility to his children's school as laid-back. He randomly makes pop-in visits and monitors his children in class. He stated "Time, I spend a lot of time with my children at school."

Participant 08 said that he and school officials communicate on a first name basis, implying good relationships. He expounded that his family has had a similar relationship with school personnel at his children's school. He said that he can attend just about all of school sponsored activities or donate a financial contribution.

Participant 09 responded,

"My son just had a ceremony it really kind of uplifted me seeing all of the stuff they do, how enthused they feel about education; they set the bar so high for them at the school. I mean I was really; I really was interested. I thought it was going to be boring, but I was really interested, they really uplifted me". The culture of the school was described as positive by Participant 09, which cultivated his interest and engagement as a parent along with his son.

Participant 10 detailed difficulties with the number of school related activities. However, if he is informed of function in a relatively enough time, he would attend.

The participant responses were somewhat different in the way the information was communicated but remained firm regarding noncustodial African American view of

being accepted in their children's school. There was intensity their tones in expressing compassion, concern, and humanity, in providing support to their children at school.

### **Subquestion 1c**

Subquestion 1c: What educational and non-educational interactions do noncustodial African American fathers describe in classifying as influences in the academic successes of their children?

Noncustodial African American fathers took part in a variety of interactions with their children. The participants openly expressed involvement collectively at both educational and social events. The themes that emerged related to promoting exposure to educational and extra-curricular activities.

Participant 01 volunteered as a coach with his son's football league and participated in school activities such as ROTC events with his children. He acknowledged that extra-curricular activities are an instrumental part of academic achievement for his children. Participant 01 also conveyed involvement with ROTC has been challenging for his son but has brought about an increase of self-discipline.

Participant 02 attended his daughter's Daddy/ Daughter dance and expressed that the event provided a humbling experience. He felt being supportive is vital to his children progressing academically. Participant 02 also engaged in family game nights and attended track meets; he described his commitment to encouraging his children to do well.

Participant 03 talked about involvement with the athletic department at his children's school, and that he was pleased with his son's accomplishments. He

acknowledged his son achievements and the discipline he has gained from being a part of both basketball and football teams. He supported the idea that involvement in sports strengthens the academic achievement of his children.

Participant 04 conveyed that he volunteers in his children's class and attends educational events; he is delighted to engage in activities by being a role model and providing support to his children's peers. He believed his presence influenced his children to perform well in school.

Participant 05 is a devoted volunteer at his children's school, and he disclosed he enjoys being around the kids in his children's class. He expressed he is "good with kids," he wants to get to know his children's classmates, and their parents.

Participant 05 believed that supporting his children by volunteering created positive relationships which are a part of achieving academic success.

Participant 06 shared his contribution to spelling bees at his child's school; he felt a sense of accomplishment when he prepared and attended this event with his children. He acknowledged after school studies required the parental support of coaching, which allowed him to experience just how committed and talented his child was to be selected for the spelling bee.

Participant 07 explained he participated at a "big Dad's day," at his son's school. He was immensely proud when his son got up and spoke about "what he thinks a good dad is." He expressed with excitement how his son spoke of his involvement with him at school and with sports.

Participant 08 revealed he participated in PTA meetings; he feels that those meetings provided him opportunities to be informed of school proceedings and provide him the chance to have input in any upcoming events at the school. Participant 08 also affirmed a commitment to participating in field trips, fundraisers, or anything the school needed.

Participant 09 described how he “stays on his son,” he does not allow him to befriend just anyone, and he knows his son’s friends. Participant 09 stated, “I stay on his back about schoolwork.” He was actively present as he chaperoned field trips, attended PTA meetings, and if the school calls for anything, he was available.

Participant 10 said he engaged in academic and extra-curricular activities his daughter is a part of. He described frequent participation at his daughter’s band events, saying that they both share similar interests in music. The sharing of their love for music honored Participant 10 as he feels that this fuel positive hobbies, interests, and academic achievement in his daughter.

The final theme described the varied shapes of noncustodial African American fathers’ parental support in several ways. The fathers indicated their lived experiences explicitly with detailed descriptions of routine rituals, practices, and behaviors that impacted the academic progress of their children. There was a commonality among the fathers’ levels of behaviors that validated patterns of consistency in the data obtained from the interviews.

## Summary

The purpose of this research study was to identify and understand noncustodial African American father's individual historical and current experiences and practices as it related to involvement with their children. The study was based on one research question and three subquestions to present themes related to noncustodial African American father's parental involvement in their children's academic success.

Research Question 1: How do noncustodial African American fathers describe their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress? The study findings indicated noncustodial African American fathers engaged in customary activities that contributed to academic success of their children by way of commitment in activities for exposure to producing well rounded individuals other than to exclusively aid in academic success.

Subquestion 1a: What educational strategies do noncustodial African American fathers describe to encourage academic success of their children? The results revealed noncustodial African American fathers in this study applied strategies of proofreading, setting systemic agendas for completing homework, and planned educational outings.

Subquestion 1b: What experiences do noncustodial African American fathers describe that impede or promote their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress? The results disclosed participants accounts was to some degree different in the way the information was communicated but remained fixed in regard to noncustodial African American view of being accepted in their children's school.

Subquestion 1c: What educational and noneducational interactions do noncustodial African American fathers describe as influences in the academic successes of their children? The study findings showed noncustodial African American fathers lived experiences clearly detailed portrayals of routine rituals, practices, and behaviors that influenced the academic progress of their children.

In Chapter 5 the purpose of the research and implications of the results are organized with the theoretical framework. Recommendations for further research and implications for social change are provided with an evaluation of current research related to noncustodial African American father's involvement in their children's academic achievement.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

This chapter details a summary of the findings of this study. Implications for current educational procedures and future research based on the theoretical framework and the literature are also reviewed. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore noncustodial African American fathers' perspectives of their contribution to the academic progress of their children. The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory. Data were collected within a phenomenological research design and observations. One research question and three subquestions guided this study:

**RQ1.** How do noncustodial African American fathers describe their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1a: What educational strategies do noncustodial African American fathers describe to encourage academic success of their children?

Subquestion 1b: What experiences do noncustodial African American fathers describe that impede or promote their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress?

Subquestion 1c: What educational and noneducational interactions do noncustodial African American fathers describe as influences in the academic successes of their children?

The key findings in this study were that noncustodial African American fathers had positive practices, with learning in the home, open communication, and exposure to

positive educational and extra-curricular activities being key influences in their children's academic achievement. The study participants were cooperative and enthusiastic in sharing their experiences regarding their children and were hopeful that their contributions would help change the way other fathers are positively involved with their children academically.

### **Interpretations of the Findings**

Parental involvement played a fundamental role in noncustodial African American fathers' perspectives of their children's academic achievement in this study. Overall, the noncustodial fathers had a vested interest in their children's education. Doyle et al. (2015) presented in Chapter 2 of the literature review focused on the large number of African American children residing in households without the presence of their fathers and indicated that there has been an absence of research of African American fathers' involvement with their children's academic achievement (Caldwell et al., 2014). The data from the participants in this study were comparable to the research with the general population identified in Chapter 2 provided by Kim and Hill (2015) regarding the absence of research of African American fathers' involvement with their children academic achievement. This indicated factors that influence involvement of parents in their children's academic achievement included confidence about the advantages of their parental engagement, confidence in their children's capabilities in educational activities, and elevated expectations regarding their children's education. Kim and Hill (2015) also indicated that in the home, participants applied routines, habits, and practices that involved actively contributed to academic achievement, as well as provided emotional

and social support to their children to aid in the development of self-esteem. Coates and Phares (2014) addressed several activities that resulted in positive academic outcomes of children, including parents being engaged in school-based activities, parents helping with homework, and parental supervision of their children. This research study results indicated that noncustodial African American fathers saw their physical presence as the foundation of their engagement with their children and to develop positive educational outcomes and experiences.

The first research question addressed noncustodial African American fathers' lived experiences regarding their participation in their children's school experience and educational progress. Several findings emerged from participants' descriptions including required commitment, facilitating academics, hobbies and interest, and positive forms of encouragement. Ransaw (2012) indicated that African American men are involved in raising their children, although in ways that are different than the conventional ideas of fatherhood. This concept aligned with the theoretical framework of the ecological systems theory, and the research explored the familial behaviors of noncustodial African American fathers. The participants did not conform to traditional parenting techniques as indicated by Ransaw (2012), as they did not reside with their children, participants oftentimes created unique routines, practices, and rituals. The participants' descriptions of their educational involvement with their children included influencing academic achievement and motivating them for academic excellence. They indicated that maintaining contact and routines of engagement in primary subjects were the most effective techniques to promote academic excellence. Most of the participants

emphasized interactions that addressed homework completion and monitoring content of assignments. Extra time was also set aside to develop positive habits such as reading daily, tutoring, and monitoring of reading comprehension. The participants also described interconnected leisure activities that promoted discipline and better academic performance. The participants expressed commitments to active forms of engagement with their children and reported that their commitment to being engaged in their children's social interests increased their children's academic achievement.

Subquestion 1a addressed the educational strategies that noncustodial African American fathers described regarding their lived experiences in encouraging academic success of their children. Ogbu (1981) contended that "certain populations possess unique instrumental competencies that meet their societal needs, and they adapt their child-rearing techniques to inculcate these needs" (p. 417). The participants in this study endorsed involvement in leisure and educational activities in the home with the intention of enhancing skill sets that lead to academic success. Many of the participants reported customary routines that involved critical thinking, which utilized all areas of cognitive, emotional, and social development, and aided in promoting academic achievement of their children. Many of the activities they engaged in promoted learning competencies and appeared to be fun and entertaining. The participants noted that relationships with their children allowed for easy communication and engagement, which contributed to increased academic outcomes. Participant 10 enjoyed participating in musical activities with his daughter, an interest they both shared because he is a music teacher. Sharing

similar activities, pursuits, hobbies, and interests was contributing to positive academic outcomes.

Subquestion 1b addressed lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers regarding what might be impeding or promoting their involvement with their children's school experience and educational progress. There was a consensus from the participants that they felt welcomed in their children's school. Several participants reported their presence in the school aided other parents who were unable to provide involvement due to undisclosed reasons. Wood (2012) established that family support systems that connect the home and community have a marginal impact on African American children's academic success. However, in the current study, participants reported their involvement in school-related activities provided a feeling of fulfillment and were perceived as being related to academic success. Some of the participants who were unable to be present for volunteer services provided financial assistance for their children and their classmates. Some fathers reported their work schedules or other obligations impeded their ability to be involved as they would like, but they attempted to find other opportunities to volunteer. The participants indicated that assisting in coaching opportunities, engaging in event-centered programs, and participating in field trips, provided alternative forms of involvement that accommodated their individual schedules.

Subquestion 1c addressed the educational and noneducational interactions that noncustodial African American fathers described as influences in the academic successes of their children. Many of the African American fathers reported they expose their children to educational and social activities related to their interests. The participants

shared their experiences of visiting museums, participating in school-sponsored events such as parent-oriented dances, PTA meetings, and class scheduled parties, and visiting the local space center. Jeynes (2012) theorized that educational success of students was better when the parents had a longing to be involved in the education of their children and sought opportunities to become involved. In the current study, participants perceived that engagement in a broad range of activities increased their ability to support their children's academic and noneducational programs. Robinson and Harris (2014) described a beneficial school as one in which the responsibility of educating children is a collective agreement among parents and teachers. The participants in the current study affirmed Robinson and Harris's description by reporting experiences that emphasized the relationship between parents and schools.

I explored participants' experiences and found a pattern of behaviors that promoted academic achievement based in parental involvement of participants with their children. These findings supported the recommendations of Doyle et al. (2015), who indicated that attention should be given to parenting customs of African American fathers to develop father-focused prevention interventions to aid in positive outcomes for African American fathers, families, and children. In the current study, participants perceived that their parental involvement promoted positive outcomes in their children's education.

The phenomenon of parental involvement presented from self-reports of the participants included behaviors promoting their children's academic achievement. Findings were consistent with results from previous studies addressing engrained cultural viewpoints regarding the role of family in education and the different experiences

promoting academic achievement (Hill & Torres, 2010). The results suggest that noncustodial African American fathers' behaviors, beliefs, and interests are directed toward the overall development of positive characteristics in their children to be academically successful.

The current study findings may increase awareness of the perspectives and experiences of noncustodial African American fathers regarding their children's academic success. The recurring description of the relationship between achievement and engagement indicated that increased parental engagement is perceived and experienced to increase children's school performance in agreement with research previously conducted by Collie and colleagues (2015).

The results of the study coincide with Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979), supporting the benefit of studying children in multiple environments, specifically focusing on components of their academic achievements. The experiences of noncustodial African American fathers in this study highlighted their contributions that contributed to their children's academic attainment. The ecological theory framework provided the significance of fostering positive relationships for fathers with their children in home, school, and community settings.

### **Limitations of the Study**

A limitation of the study was geographical, and the results may not be generalized to noncustodial African American fathers across the country because the participants were recruited from a specific area. In addition, many of the participants were of similar socioeconomic status, which may not be a clear representation of noncustodial African

American fathers in either higher or lower socioeconomic statuses. Nevertheless, in the process of data analysis I took care to clearly describe context for greatest reliability of conclusions (see Connelly, 2016). The results of this study were from a small sample size of lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers. Trustworthiness of the results was augmented through data triangulation from data collected from the participants' interviews.

### **Recommendations**

The results of the current study revealed noncustodial African American fathers are involved in their children's academic achievement. A considerable limitation of this study was the small sample size within a geographical area, which limited the generalizability of the study results. However, the notable findings merit further consideration and provide an opportunity to expand this study in different directions. Future research could increase the number of participants to increase generalization of the results. The results obtained from a larger number of participants could expand on the perceptions of African American noncustodial fathers' involvement academically with their children.

In addition, future research of noncustodial African American fathers' involvement in schools is needed to increase understanding of education experiences of African American children through contributions of noncustodial parents assisting their children to navigate through the range of education experiences, and educators' efforts to boost the education experiences for African American children and their academic performance. These recommendations for future research can be addressed by

researchers conducting further studies that examine how noncustodial African American fathers' participation develops throughout their children's preschool through high school experiences. Future contrasting research that includes larger samples of noncustodial African American fathers' whose children are not engaged and succeeding in school might provide a more full and thorough description of what is not helping some African American students thrive like others. Research regarding the role that fathers' relationships with their children's mother plays in the degree of their involvement in their children's education might also prove useful. Lastly, comparisons among and within different rural, suburban, and urban school communities, and differing socioeconomic circumstances in the United States of America is another way to strengthen the existing literature with future research.

### **Implications**

Researchers have expressed that single-parent African American family structures, though increasing in number, have remained unexplored. This has left uncertainty in understanding for engaging African American families with the school (Weiss et al., 2009). The findings of this research are of importance for families, educators, and school administrators for beginning to better understand engagement from noncustodial African American fathers.

Noncustodial African American fathers in this study presented explicit descriptions of engagement with their children, depicting practices that promoted academic excellence. Also, fathers in this study realistically expressed engagement in a variety of settings with dedication to ensuring academic expectations were met, and

promotion of resilience and emotional competence for their children. This is similar to research findings of Doyle et al., (2015) in which African American fathers identified definite parenting rituals that were vital to their children's academic competence.

Lastly, school administrators could implement training programs that aid families with struggling students. The results from this research indicated that participants in this study engaged in routines that aided their children with skills to achieve academic excellence. The development of training programs for these sorts of practices could help families develop study habits, engage in extra curricula activities, and tutoring services offered by schools. School administrators can support parents by establishing collaborative efforts to cultivate education by incorporating programs that involve parents in a variety of capacities, and which this study indicates are seen as successful strategies and being used by African American nonresident fathers. Educators would be able to work in partnership with parents guiding and encouraging strategies that aid their children achieving academic success.

### **Conclusion**

This research study has identified a need for more in-depth, qualitative research focusing on the lived experience of noncustodial African American father's parental involvement in their children's academic success. This qualitative research study concentrated on lived experiences of the noncustodial African American fathers and relied on in-person semi-structured interviews as a methodology to provide a phenomenological description of their lived experiences. This research has acknowledged clear characteristics of parenting roles, cultural and environmental

influences of African American fathers similar to that of Doyle et al. (2015). However, the evidence from the literature review reveals rare research exists specifically on the lived experiences of noncustodial African American fathers. Therefore, raising awareness of the needs of noncustodial African American fathers is important in order to encourage positive social change. This research study sought to provide noncustodial African American fathers' descriptions of their lived experiences that promote academic success for their children. Neither noncustodial African American fathers nor educators may be aware of the identified practices being used to encourage academic success and strategies that are useful to encourage involvement in school activities. With evidence, educators, community leaders, and African American families may be better able embrace concrete and meaningful ways to purposefully engage noncustodial African American fathers with trainings, implementation of policies, and resources that would aid them in securing academic achievement for their children.

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## Appendix A: Interview Questions

- 1) How many children do you have and what are their ages?
- 2) Are there things that you do with your children to inspire your children to excel in school?
- 3) Do you participate in activities with your child?
- 4) What types of school related activities do you believe are important for your child to be successful in school?
- 5) What are some of the things you do at home to support your child?
- 6) Do you feel welcome in your child's school?
- 7) What could the school do differently that would make you feel welcome?
- 8) What do you do to ensure your child does well in school?
- 9) Do you do anything at the school to support your child or help the school?
- 10) What factors would have influenced you as a parent volunteering or participating in school activities?
- 11) What have been the most useful parent involvement activities that you attended and/or participated in?
- 12) What are some of the struggles you faced with increasing your child's academic success?

## Appendix B: Demographic Information of Participants

**Are you a noncustodial biological father?**

**Date of Birth**

**City**

**State**

**Age of Children**

**Grade of Children**

**Number of Children**

**Economic Income Status**

10,000-19,000

20,000-29,000

30,000-49,000

50,000-59,000

60,000-69,000

70,000-79,000

80,000-^

**Education**

Less than high school

High School or GED

Some college

Graduate or professional degree