Walden Dissertations and Doctoral Studies

2015

Black Caribbean American Parents' Home-Based Literacy Activities for K-2 Religious School Students

Maureen Hyacinth Moncrieffe
Walden University

Walden University

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Maureen H. Moncrieffe

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Jennifer Seymour, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. James Thomasson, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. James Valadez, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer

Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2015

Abstract

Black Caribbean American Parents' Home-Based Literacy Activities for K-2 Religious

School Students

by

Maureen H. Moncrieffe

MA, Grand Canyon University, 2005

BS, Andrews University, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April 2015

Abstract

Research has shown that parental involvement plays a crucial role in the academic achievement of students. A parent's involvement in the child's literacy development, especially in the Black Caribbean American community, is important because it helps the child become a life-long reader. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to investigate the at-home literacy involvement of Black Caribbean American parents with K-2 children in a small private religious school. Based upon Epstein's work on parental involvement, as well as Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's role construction theory, the current study explored these parents' at-home literacy activities with their children, perception of barriers to further involvement, and their receptivity to school support to overcome those barriers. Eight parents were interviewed. Inductive analyses, including repeated reading, color coding, and generating themes, were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed positive parental support in at-home literacy activities. Parents read to and played literacy games with their children, assisted with homework, and used a variety of materials including books and technology. Parents indicated a lack of communication between them and the school regarding what literacy instruction was being provided at school. Social change can come about by providing this information to the school staff and having them take action that assists all parents to become more effectively involved in their children's at-home literacy activities. This involvement may, in turn, result in improved reading skills and overall academic performance.

Black Caribbean American Parents' Home-Based Literacy Activities for K-2 Religious

School Students

by

Maureen H. Moncrieffe

MA, Grand Canyon University, 2005

BS, Andrews University, 1997

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

April 2015

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my husband, Orlando Moncrieffe, thank you for putting up with my frustrations, but most of all, thank you for believing in me, for supporting me, and encouraging me when I was ready to give up my dream, and for praying for and with me throughout this entire process. To my children who were my cheering squad, I thank you for your constant prayers and encouragement. I love you all dearly.

Acknowledgments

First, I give all thanks and praise to my Heavenly Father for His undying love, mercy, and grace. I thank Him for being by my side throughout this process, and for giving me the strength and the mental acumen to accomplish my dream. My deepest appreciation to my committee members: Dr. Jennifer Seymour, committee chair; Dr. James Thomasson, second committee member, and Dr. James Valadez, URR member. Dr. Seymour, you are the best motivator, advocate, and facilitator ever. I greatly appreciate everything that you have done for me to make this dream a reality.

To my husband, Orlando, this has been a long, hard road but you were always there by my side through the disappointments and the successes. You felt my pain when I wanted to quit, but your prayers and encouragement lifted me. I am eternally grateful that you stuck it out with me.

To my children who kept checking on my progress, I thank you. To my daughter Noelle, who took days off from work to be with me and walk me through statistics, I thank you. To my tech savvy son and daughter, Marlon and Davya, who assisted me from time to time with technological problems, I thank you. To Orlando, Jr. and Wentworth, thank you for your listening ear.

To my dear friends Arthorine Walker and Beverly Hollingsworth who stuck with me through to the end. Thank you both for believing in me and encouraging me to achieve my dream.

Finally, a great, big, thank you to the participants who took time out of their busy schedule to make this research possible.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Section 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Home-based parental involvement contributes to students' academic success (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Benson & Mokhtari, 2011; Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hawes & Plourde, 2005), thereby impacting children positively (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Fan & Williams, 2010). More specifically, the home environment and the parents' at-home involvement in literacy activities greatly affect the child's success at school (Bonci, Mottran, & McCoy, 2010; Fawcett, Padak, & Rasinski, 2013).

The engagement in home-based reading activities positively impacts the child's performance in comprehension skills, attention to reading, and a positive disposition and inclination towards reading at school (Bonci et al., 2010). In addition, the at-home literacy resources also enhance the child's growth in more global mental processes including perception, memory, judgment, and reasoning (Midraj & Midraj, 2011). Clearly, at-home literacy is an essential piece of a quality education that will increase the likelihood of a positive future social and economic status for each student.

Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007) described parental involvement as *school-based* and *home-based* activities performed by parents. Parents assist their children in their academic careers by being involved at school through parent-teachers meetings, sports, and volunteering in the classroom (Epstein, 1988), and in home-based activities such as "monitoring and reviewing student work, encouraging student effort, offering help with assignments, and responding to teachers' suggestions for specific learning support activities" (Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010, p. 61). Hoover-

Dempsey and Whitaker further suggested that home-based parental involvement can be defined by four different types of activities:

1. "Communication with their children about their personal and family values, goals, expectations, and aspirations for children's learning" (p. 61).

2. The support for student learning given through "involvement activities at home" such as "talking about school" and "expressing interest in student learning" (p. 61).

3. "Family-school communications" (p. 61).

4. "Parents' *involvement at school*" (p. 61).

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) asserted that a major factor, which affects the level of parental involvement, is the parents' beliefs regarding the importance and nature of their involvement. They further claimed that parents' actual involvement is influenced by what they believe the meaning of this role to be, how they view the process of child-development, and their beliefs about what their role should be regarding their involvement in their children's education.

Not only is parental participation important in the child's development, but also in the child's literacy development which leads to the children becoming life-long readers (Martini & Sénéchal, 2012; Yemeh, 2007). Research indicated that positive home-based literacy activities performed by parents included reading books with children, learning songs, learning rhymes, and participating in art work at home (Midraj & Midraj, 2011; Phillips & Lonigan, 2009; Raban & Nolan, 2005; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007). In addition,

it also helped if parents were reinforcing lessons learned at school (Epstein, 1992), as well as supervising and monitoring homework assignments (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Midraj & Midraj, 2011).

Against the background of the overwhelming evidence of the link between parental literacy activity with their children at home and children's development of literacy skills, Morrison, Bachman, and McDonald-Connor (2005) made a poignant appeal to schools. They recommended that schools strive to promote the parenting practices that have been shown to enhance children's language, cognitive and literacy skills. This was because the specific focus on parents' at-home behavior was so vital to enhancing children's literacy skills and ultimate school success. This was particularly significant for Black parents because low-income black parents were specifically mentioned in the general call for more parental involvement (Robinson, 2007). Indeed, parental involvement may be of greater value to Black students than their European American counterparts because the former are more likely to live in environments that adversely affect their academic pursuits (Hill et al., 2004).The goal of this phenomenological research study was to investigate the parental, at-home literacy involvement of Black and Caribbean K-2 children in a small private religious school.

Problem Statement

The Goal 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 both placed much emphasis on the need for greater parental involvement and called for schools to work with parents in order to achieve increased parental participation. Researchers have shown that parental involvement was lower in

low-income communities (such as the community where the school under investigation was located) than high-income communities (Epstein, 1995; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Also, in the appeal for greater parental involvement, low-income black parents were specifically identified as falling short of expectations (Robinson, 2007).

Few researchers have examined parental involvement in denomination's schools. For example, while the educational philosophy of the denominational school system to which this school belonged emphasized parental involvement in their children's education (Powell & Wood, 1999), it was acknowledged that there was a general lack of parental involvement in these schools (Powell & Wood, 1999; Shull, 1998).

This literature, however, which was more than a decade old, focused largely on school-based involvement, and does not specifically address black parents at home with their children. This research on the home-based aspect of Black parental involvement in the denomination's elementary school system added information on an area that had not been studied recently. In terms of addressing the local problem, the results can help this and other schools to increase parental involvement in home-based literacy in Black families.

In an attempt to increase the level of parental involvement, some schools implemented family literacy programs in the lower elementary grades. These were directed at helping the parents to be in a position to assist their children in a more substantial fashion by involving themselves at home in their children's reading activities (Chance, 2010). In the absence of any such family literacy program at the particular school on which this was research focused, the teachers' observations were similar to the

results of a study conducted by Chen (2008). Chen (2008), Hemphill & Tivnan (2008), and Hoff (2006) raised concerns that the low reading competency for some of the minority students may be linked to the level of literacy activities provided by parents at home.

The school under investigation was a private school, thus parents had already demonstrated a vested interest in their children's schooling by paying for their private education. However, there was concern among the teachers that some of the parents did not provide a commensurate level of assistance to them academically at home, especially in reading activities. Some of the teachers at this school reported a lack of parental involvement, specifically a lack of parental support for children's homework, including literacy. My goal in this research was to identify what elements inhibited greater parental involvement and which types of home-based literacy activities promoted greater parental involvement. With this information, the school personnel can develop strategies to help these and other Black parents become more involved in their children's literacy development.

Nature of the Study

In this study, I used a phenomenological approach to discover the perspectives and actions of Black parents of Kindergarten through Grade 2 African/Caribbean/American students, regarding the parents' home-based involvement in their children's literacy activities. Data were collected using qualitative semistructured interviews (see Appendix C) of the Black parents at the respective school site.

Based on this approach, I designed an interview protocol for parents in the study. There was a small total number of parents (15) representing the three grades to under study, and I was able to conduct interviews with eight parents who consented to be in the study. These eight parents, who agreed to participate in this study, were the focus of person-to-person in-depth interviews.

The interviews were used to discover and understand the perspectives of parents regarding their home-based involvement in the literacy activities of their children, as well as what materials were needed to promote increased involvement. In these interviews, I focused on (a) their beliefs about the significance of their involvement, (b) what their actual activities with their children at home were, (c) what were the barriers to their being more involved, and (d) how receptive they were to receiving support from the school that can assist them in overcoming the barriers to greater involvement in their children's at-home literacy activities.

Parents were also asked about their receptivity to receiving different types of support from the school to aid them in overcoming any barriers to home-based involvement in their children's literacy activities. The collected data was analyzed according to Creswell's (2009) six steps of analysis to gain more specificity, and coded to uncover themes. Each interview ran approximately for 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to investigate the at-home literacy involvement of Black parents with their grade K-2 children who attended an urban religious elementary school. In addition, the purpose was to determine as well as the factors, if any, that

adversely affected the parents' involvement. Researchers such as Jeynes (2005, 2007) and Pomerantz et al. (2007) examined the effects of parental involvement on student achievement in general. There was also research conducted on religious schools (Jeynes, 2002, 2003), such as the Catholic school system, which revealed that minority students (Blacks and Hispanics), ranging from lower elementary to high school at religious schools, usually attained academic achievement superior to that of their peers in the public school system, in part because of the encouragement of parental involvement. However, such research had not been done on any school in this Protestant denomination. The current research study was conducted with Black/Afro Caribbean parents of students in a Protestant school system whose home-based parental literacy activities had not been researched before.

This research broadened the literature by delving into the home-based literacy support provided by Black parents to their children in Kindergarten through Grade 2 at this urban religious elementary school. Throughout this study, I sought to identify from the parents' perspectives, their self-described involvement in their children's at-home literacy activities. In addition, I asked the parents what prevented them from being more involved in at-home literacy activities, as well as how receptive they were to materials and program support from the school in dealing with these barriers.

The findings could provide the school personnel with information on the perspectives and practices of the Black parents' home-based involvement in literacy activities, as well as identify what the obstacles were to greater home-based parental involvement. This information could assist the school's leadership to formulate a plan to

help parents deal more effectively with what the parents reported as obstacles that limited

parental involvement in the early reading development of their children. The research

data also revealed the current level of parents' receptivity to support from the school to

deal with these obstacles, and thus enabled the school's leaders to be more effective in

providing useful assistance. The findings, therefore, placed the school personnel in a

better position to provide specific suggestions on how teachers and school programs

could encourage and support these Black parents. With this information, parents could

more effectively engage in literacy activities at home that will enhance their child's

reading development.

Parents need encouragement and persuasive proof that they should be involved in

their child's academic career (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Comer (2005) asserted that when

parents and educators build better rapport and communication with each other, parents

are encouraged to become more involved and incorporate effective literacy activities into

at-home interactions. This results in increased academic success for the children of those

parents. Examples of literacy activities that teachers could provide for parents to use at

home are: sight word bingo, noun and verb silly sentences, long and short baseball

vowels, and compound word match.

The success of a program designed by Comer (1986, 1988) to improve interactive

involvement between low-income Black parents and school personnel confirmed the

effectiveness of such activities provided by educators for Black parents . The

implementation of the program resulted in increased parental involvement and

improvement in their children's performance (Comer & Haynes, 1991). The intent of this

study was to build on this success while paying attention to the perceptions, barriers, and receptivity of the Black parents in this particular community.

Theoretical Framework

This research was set within the framework of established and widely-accepted theories that have significance for the home-based involvement of Black parents in the literacy activities of their children in Kindergarten through Grade 2. I chose two theories to guide the discussion of parental involvement. These theories were: Hoover-Dempsey and Jones' (1997) parental role construction theory and one of Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement – learning at home. These theoretical frameworks provided both the parameters that guided the study and the pathways that facilitated its pursuit.

The primary theory that I used to frame this research was parental role construction theory. This theory, described in detail in Section 2, stated that roles are the expectations set by society regarding how members of society should behave (e.g., a school's expectations for the behavior of parents; Hoover-Dempsey & Jones, 1997). Parents are members of many different groups in society, such as a family group, school group, or ethno-cultural group (such as African Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Caribbean Americans). These groups all have varying expectations, and this study explored the expectations of one such group, the Black family.

The second theoretical framework that I used to support this study is Joyce Epstein's (1992, 1994) six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, making decision, and collaborating with the community. After more than 25 years of research, Epstein developed this theory which enabled

educators at all levels to promote parental and community involvement. The type of involvement highlighted in this study was the fourth: learning at home.

The common thread that connected these theories and made them relevant to this study was their focus on parental involvement and/or elements in a child's experience at home that facilitated the acquisition of literacy skills. Hoover-Dempsey and Jones's (1997) assertion of the pivotal role and broad range of parental involvement in children's academic development, and Epstein's (1992, 1994) inclusion of parents' role in facilitating learning at home as a major part of parental involvement, both demonstrated the significant role parents play in their children's reading and other areas of academic development.

<center>**Definition of Terms**</center>

The following is a list of terms used in this study and their definitions.

Reading achievement: Level of attainment in any or all reading skills, usually estimated by performance on a test such as the IOWA Test.

Parent modeling: Parental modeling is a process by which the child learns through observation of the parent's behavior. This course of action acts as a stimulus which results in a similar behavior in the child (Berger, 2000).

Parental involvement: Parental involvement is defined as the actions of parents taking an involved role in their child's educational future such as frequently discussing school-related matters with their child and encouraging and nurturing their child's educational career (College Preparation, Kauffman Scholars, Inc., 2008).

At-home parental involvement in literacy activities: At-home parental involvement is the at-home participation by parents in their children's learning activities. It includes creating a home environment that facilitates learning and reinforcing what their children are taught at school (Epstein, 1992). Some of the literacy activities that parents can participate in at home are reading aloud a book then making real-life connections from the story with their child, teaching the child a song or nursery rhyme, taking a picture-walk through a book and predicting how the story unfolds, or using magnetic letters to make words by adding or taking away letters. At-home parental involvement also involves establishing a daily study routine with their children, displaying interest in their homework, and actively tutoring them at home (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Private religious school: "Parents choose to send their children to a private school where parents have to pay tuition for their children, the school is affiliated with religion, and the school may be or may not be in their neighborhood" (Hsieh, 2000, p. 48).

Assumptions

In this research, I investigated the at-home literacy involvement of Black parents' with their Kindergarten through Grade 2 children who attended an urban religious elementary school, as well as the factors, if any, that adversely affected their involvement. I assumed that the information gathered from the interviews was representative of the parents' involvement in a typical literacy activity. I also assumed that, based on the report of the teachers, there was indeed inadequate home-based

involvement on the part of the Black parents in the literary activities of the Kindergarten through Grades 2 students at the school under investigation. In addition, I assumed that materials, resources, and relationships with the school were likely deficient. I also assumed that the participants shared authentic experiences, and were truthful, sincere, and straightforward in their responses during the interviews.

Limitations

A limitation to this study was that the parent sample population was not randomly selected for the study, but was purposefully selected since it was expected that they would have volunteered to participate in the study. Additionally, the sample taken from the selected site would neither be a verified representation of the other nine elementary schools owned and operated by this religious organization, nor of the general population of students in public schools within the Northeast region of the United States.

Scope and Delimitations

The phenomenological design involved Black parents of students from one religious private school in a Protestant school system. This research explored parents' involvement at home in literacy activities. The total population of this school was approximately 60 students from pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade. The research was limited to only three grades (K-2) in this K-8 elementary school. The student population of these three grades (K-2) was approximately 17 students, 15 of which were Black. The sample pool consisted of one parent per student who self-selected to volunteer for participation in the interviews.

<div align="center">**Significance of the Study**</div>

Application to Local Problem

Many researchers (e.g., Foster et al. 2005; Morrison, Bachman, & McDonald-Connor, 2005; Raban & Nolan, 2005; Yemeh, 2007) have consistently found a positive correlation between home-based parental involvement in children's literacy activities and student success. Schools expect parents to pull their weight and assist in their children's learning experiences by doing their part at home. The NCLB stated in no uncertain terms that parents must have a voice in their children's education (NCLB Action Brief, 2004) and parents, themselves, believe that their involvement positively impacts their children's academic experiences (Weigel et al., 2006).

Despite all these expectations and beliefs, however, researchers have shown that between, 1992 and 2007, young Americans' reading abilities, and their habit of reading, have declined dramatically (Bauerlein, Sullivan, Nichols, Bradshaw, & Rogowski, 2007; Howard, 2007). Because researchers have shown that parents generally have great influence over their children's educational achievement, it is necessary to explore the barriers preventing some of these parents from assisting their children more at home in reading activities.

The results of this study provided previously unknown information about home-based parental involvement among Black parents. This placed this school in a better position to identify, from the parents' perspectives, the type of support these Black parents gave to their children in home-based literacy activities, what the obstacles were to greater involvement, and what parents wanted the schools to do to support at-home

literacy activities. With this information the school is better able to develop and implement activities and materials that will support current at-home activities and help parents overcome barriers.

Professional Application

In this research, I identified and analyzed the diverse views, perspectives, and practices of these Black parents with respect to home-based involvement in their children's literacy activities. It was my intention to secure from the collected data information regarding barriers to these parents' involvement in home-based literacy activities. Based on the findings, it was also my goal to provide the school personnel with data that would enable them to formulate a plan to assist the parents in increasing their involvement in literacy activities at home. This increased parental involvement would contribute to improved student performance in reading (e.g., Anderson, 2000; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2000).

Positive Social Change

The findings of this study were not intended to be indiscriminately generalized, but may provide significant benefits to the local school. Educators, in general, may also use these findings in the development of policies and practices that address the specific needs of parents and students in various minority groups in the United States of America. Such an application of the findings of this study would significantly enhance the implementation of the NCLB, which emphasizes the need for parental involvement in the process of providing every child with a solid academic foundation. Education, of which

reading competence is such an important component, is the great social equalizer. The role of parental involvement in the area of literacy development is crucial, and so any policies developed to enhance minority parental involvement in response to the findings of this study could result in positive social change for Black and other minority families.

The findings from this study could enable the school leadership to develop and implement programs and provide materials, based on the parents' expressed needs and receptivity. The materials may assist these parents to become more effectively involved in their children's at-home literacy activities, resulting in improved reading skills and overall academic performance. This experience of success may, in turn, enhance the self-esteem of both parents and students, and produce positive change in their family relationships, as well as in the wider community.

<div align="center">

Summary and Transition

</div>

Reading is the basis of all academic pursuits. Therefore, if students from the beginning of the earliest literacy stages are provided with sound reading instruction and develop good reading habits, they will do better in school. Indeed, students who have good reading habits are more likely to experience success and competency in many academic areas, and are, therefore, better equipped to make a significant future contribution to society (Bonci, Mottran, & McCoy, 2010) .

Children are at risk of failing in their succeeding grades if they are not given a good foundation in reading in the early grades (Prins & Toso, 2008; Saint-Laurent & Giasson, 2005). For students to succeed, it is vital for educators to help children make the necessary connections between the early exposure to literacy students are receiving at

home and the literacy learning they are obtaining at school. It is also essential for parents

to be involved in the home-based literacy activities if students are to experience success

in reading and other academic pursuits.

In this study, I investigated the perspectives and practices of Black parents

regarding home-based parental involvement in their students' reading development.

Specifically, I focused on Black parents of students from Kindergarten to Grade 2 in one

religious private school in a Protestant school system were the participants in this

research. In these interviews, I focused on (a) their beliefs about the significance of their

involvement, (b) what their actual activities with their children at home were, (c) what

were the barriers to their being more involved, and (d) how receptive they were to

receiving support from the school that can assist them in overcoming the barriers to

greater involvement in their children's at-home literacy activities.

I used two theories to shape this research study. Hoover-Dempsey and Jones'

(1997) parental role construction theory provided an outline of the expectations of the

home-based and school-based role of parents. In addition, I used type four of Epstein's

(2001) six types of parental involvement – learning at home – was used to demonstrate

how home-based involvement enhanced the children's reading achievement.

In Section 2, I review the literature on home-based parental involvement as it

pertains to this study. Following this review, in Section 3, I present the phenomenological

methodology that I used in the study and describe my data collection and analysis

processes in detail. Section 4 includes a discussion of the findings, and in Section 5, I

present the interpretation of the findings, implications for social change, and

recommendations for action and future research.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Early literacy development is a critical determinant of a child's future academic success (Bruns & Pierce, 2007; Missall & McConnell, 2010). Literacy instruction, in general, is viewed as the foundation of education reform; consequently, the early, foundational stage of reading instruction is seen as particularly significant for the ongoing development of reading skills (Baroody & Diamond, 2012; Xue & Meisels, 2004). Other researchers have indicated that reading achievement is the foundation for all instructional practice (e.g., Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2007; Richardson, Morgan, & Fleener, 2012), and that parents' involvement in their children's literacy activities prepares these students for reading acquisition and leads to subsequent academic success (e.g., Desforges & Abauchaar, 2003; Foster, Lambert, Abbott-Shim, McCarty, & Franze, 2005; Hill & Tyson, 2009; & Sukhram & Hsu, 2012). In addition, Hernandez (2011) reported that reading proficiency by Grade 3 is a fundamental benchmark for children's educational success.

Researchers have indicated that educators need to provide a high quality of instruction for their students in the lower grades – from preschool to grade two (Gewertz, 2011) –in order for children to achieve the desired proficiency in reading by grade three (as measured by the IOWA Tests, for example). In addition, researchers have shown that teachers can increase student readiness for achieving reading competence not only by their effective methodologies and techniques in reading instruction, but also by finding ways to encourage and support parents in how to continue the instruction in reading at

home (Hornby, 2011; Padak & Rasinski, 2006). Egbert and Salsbury (2009) conducted a funded project with 14 volunteer teachers, one librarian, and two building principals from the eastern part of the state of Washington. They focused on teachers assisting parents to become involved in children's literacy activities. Results showed that the one-on-one interaction between parents and their children at home, using teacher-assigned literacy activity, contributed to the students' success as well as students' enjoyment of the assigned activities.

Researchers have also provided strong evidence that the home environment plays an important role in developing children's positive literacy interests and dispositions (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011). For example, when parents provided books and engaged their children in learning activities, they enhanced their children's literacy skills and prepared them for academic success (Foster et al. 2005; Ginsburg-Block, Manz, & McWayne, 2009). Also, a home environment that facilitated learning was very important for a child's academic success (Epstein, 1992).   Indeed, such a home environment played a more significant role than socio-economic and social status (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). For these reasons, I have focused this literature review on the issue of home-based parental involvement, especially in Black families.

Research on Black families is particularly important because they are the largest of many socially disadvantaged minority groups in the United States of America (Hill et al., 2004; Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz, & Bowman-Perrott, 2011). The expectation is that researchers could determine what strategies educators may employ to enable Black parents in particular to engage more intentionally in their children's literacy activities in

order to improve their reading skills. Given that the acquisition of reading competence, in

which parents play such a crucial role, is the platform for the level of future academic

success that generates positive social change and facilitates the attainment of upward

social mobility, a focus on the Black ethno-cultural group could make a significant

impact on American society as a whole.

 While researchers (e.g., Jeynes, 2003; Epstein, 1991; & Hoover-Dempsey &

Sandler, 1997) alluded to the nature and benefits of parental involvement, my focus with

this review was on research related particularly to the home-based, rather than school-

based, aspect of parental involvement. There is literature available on parental

involvement in the Black community (e.g., Howard & Reynolds, 2008), as well as in the

private religious schools, such as the Catholic school system (e.g., Bauch, 1987;

Donovan, 1999). That line of research has not been conducted on the schools of the

particular protestant denomination which operates the school under investigation. This

denomination has a unique philosophy of education, which it follows in all the schools in

its system. This philosophy is summed up in the assertion that true education:

> means more than the perusal of a certain course of study. It means more
>
> than a preparation for the life that now is. It has to do with the whole
>
> being, and with the whole period of existence possible to man. It is the
>
> harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual
>
> powers (White, 1952b, p. 13).

 Therefore, research was needed on the level of home-based parental involvement

of Black parents in a protestant religious private school system that attends to the

physical, mental, and spiritual aspects of their student population. Teachers at this school had reason to believe that these parents were not adequately engaged in at-home literacy activities. The school needed to provide them direction on what they could do to overcome the barriers to at-home literacy activities.

<div align="center">**Search for Literature**</div>

The literature search for this study was conducted through many avenues. I initiated searches in the Walden University Library, including through online databases such as: EBSCO Host, Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), Education Research Complete, Education: a SAGE full-text database, Academic Search Complete/Premier, Google Scholar, Thoreau, and ProQuest Central. I also consulted a Walden Library librarian for additional heal on search strategies and obtaining articles. Additionally, I gathered information from textbooks, other hard copy books, and eBooks that I obtained from the Walden Library. Finally, I conducted a search in Google Scholar, which resulted in a number of current articles.

Terms that I used in the search for literature included: *parental involvement, parent participation, home-based parental involvement, benefits of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement, parental involvement in religious schools, parental involvement in private schools, Black parents' involvement, read-alouds, early literacy, reading achievement,* and *reading achievement of Blacks*. I chose these topics because they speak directly to the primary research question which sought to investigate what Black parents from an urban religious school reported about their parental involvement activities at home, as well as what barriers prevented them from giving full support to

their children. In reviewed 194 articles, along with textbooks and eBooks, for this literature review.

In Section 2, I discuss some of the definitions attributed to parental involvement and how these definitions were interpreted. I also describe some of the benefits to parental involvement, and what barriers prevented parents from being as involved at home as they should. Additionally, there is discussion of how parental involvement was encouraged in private religious schools. I also show what research had disclosed about school-based involvement and its effectiveness, as well as home-based parental involvement, especially with regards to literacy activities. Further, I explore the literature regarding how the involvement of parents affected the academic success of students from Black families and those from foreign countries. I also provide a brief review of the two theoretical frameworks chosen to guide this study. Finally, I conclude Section 2 with a summary.

Defining Parental Involvement in Children's Academic Activities

Parental involvement in children's academic activities traditionally involves both school and home activities (Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, Taliaferro, DeCuir-Gunby, & Allen-Eckard, 2009). Taliaferro et al. (2009) described school-based parental involvement as being *formal*, and home-based involvement as *informal*. They described school, or formal involvement, as parents being present at the school, assisting in the classroom, and participating in school governance (Hornby, 2011; Taliaferro et al. 2009). Conversely, they portrayed home-based, or informal involvement, as parents providing their children with ample space for studying, assisting them with homework,

talking about the children's school activities, having the children read for the parents, and instructing their children at home.

In my review of the literature, I found that there is not much agreement on how to define the phenomenon of parental involvement (e.g., Fisher, 2009; Lopez & Stoelting, 2010; Ringenbery, Funk, Mullen, Wilford, & Kramer, 2005,). For example, Anderson and Minke (2007) theorized that parental involvement should be defined in broad terms and noted that it involves both home- and school-based activities. Jeynes (2007) defined parental involvement as parents' participation in their children's educational activities and experiences. Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2011) described involvement as parents' investment of various resources in the academic pursuits of their children. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) depicted parental involvement as parents' cognitive, school, and personal engagement in their children's education. Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, and Van Voorhis (2008) described it as comprising of six different components: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. In spite of wide range of perceptions regarding what constitutes parental involvement, one common element is found in all of them – the great importance of the involvement of parents in their children's academic pursuits.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) proposed a model of parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler theorized that there are five dimensions described here. First, parents decide to become involved in their children's education because of the parents' beliefs or according to the role that parents thought they ought to

play in regards to their children's education. These parents also exhibit a high sense of self-efficacy for assisting their children in academic activities.

Second, parents choose different ways to be involved such as through the utilization of a specific skill or knowledge, the amount of time they spent with their children, or response to specific invitations from teachers or demands of their children. Third, parents influence student outcomes in different ways such as through modeling, reinforcement, and instruction. Fourth, parents use mediating variables in their involvement, employing developmentally appropriate strategies to assist their children, as well as finding a match between parents' involvement and the expectations of the school. Fifth, are children's outcomes, which include the skills and knowledge that they have acquired, and their sense of self-efficacy for doing well in school.

As I demonstrated with the above definitions, parental involvement is a complex issue. However, in spite of its complexity, it consists primarily of two categories: home-based and school-based involvement (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Perkins, Syvertsen, Mincemoyer, Chilenski, Olson, Berrena, Greenberg, et al. 2013; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). The NCLB defined parental involvement with an emphasis on the *school-based* aspects, such as being actively involved in their children's education at school and engaging in the decision-making processes related to the education of their children (NCLB Action Brief, 2004). The focus of this literature review is on the *home-based* aspect – those activities parents engage their children in at home that foster learning, prepare them for school, and facilitate later academic success, particularly in reading (Cooter et al. 1999). Basic requirements of home-based parental involvement

include shared book reading in the preschool years (Chomsky, 1970; Garfield & Snow, 1984; Wells, 1985), encouraging student effort, and helping with homework assignments during the school years (Hoover-Dempsey & Whittaker, 2010).

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Paulson and Khadaroo (2010) reported that the 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) compared the Nation's school report cards for fourth graders and eighth graders in reading. Interestingly, for the first time there, was a difference in the achievement results of both grades. According to this Paulson & Khadaroo's report, for the first time since 2003, eighth graders across the national spectrum had just begun making some improvement in reading. In contrast, the fourth graders had begun to fall behind. One of the NCLB (2001) goals is for all students to be able to read at sufficient level by the third grade, yet fourth graders nationwide have fallen behind in reading. For students to achieve reading competency by third grade, not only were educators required to be accountable by instructing students in reading activities at school, but parents were expected to be involved in their children's education. Schools in general were encouraged by the NCLB (2001) to reach out to parents to be active participants in their children's educational activities and also to become partners with them with the view that they can help all children to succeed.

This call for collaboration between parents and teachers is reminiscent of Coleman's (1988) social capital theory, which essentially asserts that just as there is need for financial capital to enable and facilitate the development of any commercial enterprise, there is need for social capital in the education of our children. Coleman

(1988), in defining social capital, which he regarded as resident in the social structure of relationships among people, asserted that:

> it is not a single entity, but a variety of entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether person or corporate actors – within the structure. (p. S98)

Social capital, therefore, enables the actors to achieve goals that they would not be able to attain without it.

For Coleman, social capital has two main forms – the social relations within the family and those in the wider community. However, Coleman (1991) asserted that family is the first provider of social capital, which consists of more than mere presence of adults in the home, but their actual involvement in the children's learning. He regarded parents' assistance with their children's homework as a reflection of the social capital within the family (Coleman, 1998).

Tzanakis (2013) examined the empirical evidence that supports or challenges the social capital theory as formulated by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (1993a, 1993b).Tzanakis (2013) found much support for the role of social capital within the family in enhancing children's school performance. Based on these findings, Tzanakis concluded that if parental involvement is a reliable measure of their social capital—as Coleman, (1988) asserted—then the evidence shows that parental social capital does have a significant impact on children's academic performance.

Researchers have confirmed that there are benefits of parental involvement, such as increased academic success accompanied by developed literacy skills (Garcia & Hasson, 2004). Additional benefits include improved behavior and attitude on the part of the students (Coutts, Sheridan, Kwon, & Semke, 2012; Schecter, Ippolito, & Rashkovsky, 2007). A side benefit is the enhanced partnership between teachers and parents (Murray, 2009; Prior & Gerard, 2007).

Researchers (e.g., Epstein, 2001; and Prior & Gerard, 2007) posited that there can be improvement in students' academic achievement, especially math and reading, when parents are involved. Higher grades, improved school attendance, students' improved mental health, and fewer suspensions provide evidence of the increased academic achievement resulting from parental involvement (Hornby, 2011; Jones, 2001; Quigley, 2000). For this reason, Rothman (2000) encouraged parents to participate in their children's learning experience by helping them with their schoolwork, talking to and reading stories to their children daily, attending parent-teacher conferences and school programs, and fostering a partnership with the teachers.

One of the factors that impact the level of parental involvement with their children in at-home literacy activities is the educational status of the parents. In research conducted in the United States on the impact of education on Mexican mothers, Crosnoe and Kalil (2010) concluded that the mothers who had completed or even attempted a four-year college degree were more likely to have connected with their children's school during the time these parents attended college.

Another factor that affects parents' decisions to become involved in their children's academic lives is their perception that it is likely to have a positive outcome for their children (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). It is very important that parents believe that their involvement will positively affect their children's learning and lead to success in school (Anderson & Minke, 2007).

The evidence that parental involvement has a tremendous impact on students' academic attainments and that most parents have a vested interest in their children's learning success is indisputable. In spite of this, however, there are a number of factors which are barriers that inhibit the desired level of parental involvement.

Barriers to Family Involvement

A large number of school administrators have concluded that the lack of parental participation is the single most valid explanation for students' low academic achievement (Kelley-Winstead, 2010; Ryan & Cooper, 2007). There are several obstacles that can affect parents' ability to effectively participate in their children's learning experience. Some of the barriers to effective parental involvement include difficulty for low socioeconomic and culturally diverse parents in obtaining the opportunity to participate in the schools' educational process (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Many parents' working conditions affect the flexibility of their schedules (Harris & Goodall, 2008). The impediment of poverty and poor housing conditions (Feiler, 2010) is a constant challenge, which is related to the level of education of the parents (Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling, 2011). All of these factors can make it difficult to develop parent-teacher

relationship (Harris & Goodall). These are just a few of the obstacles that parents face and which prevent them from participating as they should in their children's education.

The Center for Public Policy Priorities (1999) reported that among the barriers preventing parents from involving themselves as they should, the following were the most important:

1. Differing perceptions held by both parents and teachers of what constituted parental involvement.

2. Feeling unwelcome in the classroom as well as at the school.

3. The school's inability to communicate effectively with parents.

4. Teachers not reaching out to parents as they should.

5. Lack of parental skills and the level of parents' education.

6. Time constraints

7. Pressures from job

8. Language barriers

In a study Turney and Kao (2009) conducted on immigrant parents, they found that parents did feel overwhelmed by all the hindrances they encountered on a day to day basis. The parents in the study experienced similar barriers as mentioned above. In addition, they identified the inconvenient scheduling of parent conferences, the absence of child care, their concern for the children's safety when going to school, and the lack of transportation as added elements preventing them from involving themselves in their children's home- and school-based activities.

Regarding the relationship of parents and teachers, Harris and Goodall (2008) reported on a study that Williams, Williams, and Ullman (2002) conducted on how parental involvement affects the education of children. The results showed that some parents were wary of overstepping some perceived restriction on their relations with teachers. Many parents, who want to be involved in their children's educational lives, feel limited by their lack of knowledge regarding the expectations that educators have for parents (Berthelson & Walker, 2008). Others just do not know how to be helpful or supportive to their children at home (Risko & Walker-Dalouse, 2009). Auerbach (2007) asserted that when parents are able to have a better relationship with teachers and know what the educators expect of them, then the prospect of more involvement by the parents ensued.

A study conducted by Griffin & Galassi (2010) with twenty-nine parents of seventh graders from a middle school in the South, compared the barriers identified by at-risk and economically successful parents. Successful parents mentioned barriers including personal and home life circumstances that prevented their students' academic success. Interestingly, the findings showed that the successful parents were not sure whether they should assist the children with their homework or just see to it that the homework was done. The at-risk parents were greatly hampered by the lack of support from family and other parents, time issues, discipline issues, and not knowing what resources were available for them to assist their children. Clearly, these constituents have different barriers for their children's academic success.

Brock and Edmunds (2010) reported that the results from their study of 245 parents of seventh and eighth grade students from two schools in Ontario, Canada, revealed that time and parents' work schedule were two of the main barriers to the parents' involvement. This finding is crucial for schools that plan for increased or improved involvement of parents. Brock and Edmonds (2010) suggested that in order to accommodate parents' schedules, schools should schedule meetings on parents' days off or later in the evenings.

Brock and Edmunds (2010) also proposed that the development of a school web site is another way to reach parents whose time and work schedules prevented them from effectively involving themselves in their children's educational career. They further suggested that most parents today have access to computers, either at the workplace or at home, and are able to communicate more efficiently with the teachers through the medium of email, rather than visiting the school or even using the telephone.

Even though hindrances to efficient parental participation exist, there is hope for parents to renew their partnership with the school to ensure their children's academic success. Comer (2005) described a school development program, consisting of nine frameworks, which was developed to enable parents to work towards a change from their paralytic attitude. He stated:

The framework is based on the theory that student academic performance, behavior, and preparation for school and life can be greatly improved when the adult stakeholders work together in a respectful, collaborative

way to create a school climate or culture that supports development, good

instruction, and academic learning. (p. 39)

To summarize, while most parents experience some level of limitation to

their involvement in their children's learning experience, some minority groups

are particularly affected by socio-economic elements that inhibit the extent of

their involvement. Yet some programs demonstrate that there is hope for change

for all such parents and students.

Socio-economic Status and Parental Involvement

Research has established that parental involvement is an important factor in

academic achievement (Jeynes, 2012), yet research indicates differences across socio-

economic groups (Fan & Chen, 2001; Stacer & Perrucci, 2013). Equity in parental

involvement across all socio-economic levels is very important when considering how

parental involvement affects students' academic success (Smith, 2006). Research shows

that middle- and high-income parents are more involved than low-income parents

(Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008; Smith, 2006). Consequently, low-income students

are not reaping as many rewards from parental involvement as their counterparts (Smith,

2006; Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Jeynes (2010) described parental involvement programs as school-sponsored

initiatives designed to encourage parent's participation in the education of their children.

However, in their zeal to increase parental involvement, policy-makers and school

administrators seem to overlook the importance of the socio-economic status of the

families involved, and instead just focus on how best to boost student achievement

(Smith, 2006). In 2004, Smith conducted a study with parents of students from a newly built elementary school, as well as school administrators and teachers from the Pacific Northwest. The group responsible for building the school specifically bore in mind the needs of the low-income families in the poverty-stricken area. The project not only included the building of a new school, but also the development of new and improved parental involvement programs. In 2003, 99% of the 182 students at the school were eligible for free lunch. The make-up of the student body included 5% American Indian, 3% Asian, 7% Black, 19% Hispanic, and 67% White. The purpose of the study, as described by Smith, was to explore the effect of parental involvement in a low-income school.

Smith, (2006) used interviews, observations, and document reviews to collect qualitative data from the participants. The findings of the study revealed that across the board, both parents and school personnel welcomed the change reflected in increased parental involvement. This study showed that if concerted efforts, such as the parent involvement program in this study are made to provide specific assistance for families of low economic levels, success can be achieved.

In another study conducted by Cooper (2009) with participants from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort during the fall of 1998 and spring of 1999, qualitative data was collected from parents. In addition, quantitative data was collected from teachers during the fall of 1998, and from administrators during the spring 1999. Additional data was collected in the form of student assessment during the fall 1998. In all, there were 19,375 parents and children participating in the study. The

purpose of the study was to determine the degree to which three factors affect school-based parental involvement and family poverty. These three factors were: parents' education, teachers' qualifications, and the connection between school and families. Family economic status was described as poor (at or below 100% of the federal poverty line); low-income (101% - 200%); and non-poor (200% and above).

Comparative results from Cooper's (2009) study revealed that the correlation between school-based parental involvement and family poverty, which was primarily negative, varied from family to family. However, it was directly correlated to the three factors outlined above – parents' education, teachers' qualification, and the connection between school and families. When both parents and teachers were well educated, the negative correlation between parental involvement and poverty was not as prominent. The results of the research also indicated a correlation between these three factors and school attendance, which is a significant indicator of parental responsibility and involvement. The study revealed three levels of school attendance: 1) non-poor students with a high level of parental involvement were most likely to attend school; 2) low-income students with an average amount of parental involvement were less likely to attend school; and 3) poor students with little or no parental involvement at all were least likely to attend school. To summarize, parental involvement in academics may also boost attendance, which clearly impacts how much a student learns.

Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz, and Bowman-Perrott (2011) conducted a study on the impact that parental involvement had on student achievement as it relates to race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES). It revealed that among families with high

SES, the Caucasian parents were more likely to engage in school-based activities and had

higher expectations for their children to graduate from high school, than did their

counterparts, the Black (African American) parents. However, the study showed that

there was a gradual lessening of the differences between the two groups as the level of

the SES decreased. Nevertheless, other researchers, including Strasser & Lissi (2009), as

well as Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, and Ortiz (2008), found a positive correlation between

SES and greater parental involvement. They observed that the level of the parents'

involvement, which depended upon the parents' SES, predicted the literacy development

of their children.

Finally it is interesting to note an international comparison. Straser and Lissi

(2009) researched the effects of literacy on kindergarten children in Chile compared to

kindergarten children from the United States. They found that the Chilean children

performed at a lower rate than their counterparts in the United States. Specifically, only

53% of all the Chilean children were able to write their names on entry to kindergarten

compared to 54% low-SES and 74% high-SES kindergarten children from the United

States, as reported by Neuman (2006). It was interesting to note that a third of the

classrooms serving the participating Chilean children had parents whose income was in

the top 25% of the Chilean population indicating that the Chilean participants were not

only low-SES, but included high-SES also. So 53% of a mixed-SES Chilean children

were slightly less able than our low-SES American children. Therefore Chilean children

are the same as the American poor in terms of writing their names. Yet approximately

20% more of the high SES cohort could write their names correctly than the low SES cohort showing clearly that SES matters.

Parental Involvement in Private Religious Schools

Parental involvement in children's academic pursuits has been shown to positively affect student achievement (Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2012; Prior & Gerard, 2007; Topor, Keane, Shelton, & Calkins, 2010). Not only is this so across the spectrum of the various school systems, but research has demonstrated that students in private schools tended to outperform their counterparts in the public schools by measures such as standardized tests scores and graduation rates (Coleman, Hoffer, & Kilgore, 1982; Fenzel, 2013; Hallinan, 2002; Jeynes, 2012; Thayer & Kido, 2012). Also, parents with children in private schools and showed greater involvement in their children's academic pursuits (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Lavenda, 2011, Muller, 1993). Mulligan (2003) asserted that the superior performance of students in private schools is mainly due to the fact that parents who were financially able and chose to send their children to private schools were usually far more involved in the academic lives of their children than those parents who sent their children to public schools. Therefore parental involvement was important to private school pupils as well.

The superior performance of students in private schools in general is also evident in religious schools, where students attain academic accomplishments superior to that of their counterparts in public schools, in part because of parental participation (Jeynes, 2002, 2003, & 2011). More specifically, Jeynes noted that research conducted on religious schools revealed that minority students (Blacks and Hispanics) from lower

elementary to high school usually outperform their peers in the public school partially because parental involvement is encouraged.

Goldring and Phillip (2008) examined the qualities of parents from the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools who sent their children to private schools. The study compared the differences in parental involvement in Nashville parents who sent their children to private schools and those who did not. The factors considered in the comparison included race, education, socioeconomic status, level of satisfaction with child's prior school, involvement in child's school, the parents' social networks, and parents' choice of school. These researchers found that there was a pull towards sending children to private schools because of the perceived level of parental involvement opportunities available in private schools.

The decision to send their children to a private school can motivate parents to assume a greater role and demonstrate more involvement in their children's education (Quie, 1987). Paying for their children's education could be a sign of parental interest and may even be considered to be itself a type of parental involvement (Coleman, Schiller, & Schneider, 1993). However, this freedom to choose can have an adverse impact on parental involvement, particularly in religious schools. In this case parents may view the school, which shares their values, as having a greater share of the responsibility that usually devolves on parents for their child's development in terms of both academic and spiritual areas (Bauch, 1987). One study by Buckley (2007) revealed that parents who chose to send their children to private religious schools experienced less involvement in

volunteering and other school activities compared to parents who chose the traditional private schools for their children.

Different religious schools certainly have different levels of parental involvement, and one area is related to the child's spiritual or religious education. Milot's (2005) study investigated what effect parental involvement had on students' religious education. Using Epstein's (1995) six types of parental involvement the study focused mainly on the community and volunteering aspects of parent involvement. Milot looked at how best to collaborate with the outside community in the interest of the students. He was also concerned with how best to incorporate volunteering as a measurable component of parental involvement as it is directly related to the religious education of the students. Volunteering, in the Catholic Church, is described by the Institute for Catholic Education in their book *Curriculum matters: A resource for catholic educators* (1996) as a social responsibility that involves engaging in activities that contribute to the common good.

In Milot's (2005) study, six hundred and eighty-nine parents of children in grades three, five, and seven from the thirteen schools in the diocese were surveyed. Two hundred and eighty-nine parents responded. The results indicated that parental involvement does positively impact the religious education of the students, but it is tempered by how much as the parents themselves are involved in their own religion.

Parental Involvement in School-based Activities at Private Religious Schools

Aside from investigating how parental involvement affects student achievement in religious education, Catholic schools are also interested in parental involvement from a school-centric point of view. Donavan (1999) conducted a study within the Scranton, Pennsylvania Diocese to determine the roles that parents play in school-based activities such as policymaking, textbook selection, and fundraising. Donavan also investigated what the perceptions were of the parents and school personnel regarding the level of parental involvement in parental programs that were in place.

Twenty-five participants from a small K-8 Catholic school were involved in Donavan's (1999) case study – the principal, six of the nine full-time teachers, and eighteen parents who were chosen randomly. The three teachers not included were first-year teachers who had very little experience with the school's parental involvement program. Results from this case study showed that the parents were satisfied with their level of involvement, and in general, did not think themselves as equals to the teachers, but rather as subordinate to them. These results were reflected in 88.8% of the parents who believed that consultation with parents was necessary regarding their children's promotion; and 94.4% thought that parents should be involved in school events. However, only 27.7% of parents believed that they should be involved in activities such as evaluation of teachers and administrators, while 38.8% believed that they should be involved in policymaking activities (Donavan, 1999).

It is evident that there are myriad ways and means by which parents choose to participate, and those that do get involved improve the educational outcomes for their

children. Indeed, if only by participating in their faith, paying tuition for a private school, and showing school pride, they have at least some positive effect on their child's education.

How Parental Involvement Affects Communication with Parents at Private Religious Schools

There are other categories of parental involvement that are emanating from the technology revolution. Ellis (2008) has demonstrated that communication between educators and parents is also of importance, because both parents and teachers are working towards the same objective – the success of the students. Ellis investigated this topic within the Metuchen, NJ Diocese. Fourteen of the forty-one schools in the diocese participated in this mixed-methods research. The aim was to determine how effectively teachers communicated with parents through the utilization of an internet-based program designed to share students' assignments and grades online with parents. The findings indicated that the teachers felt that the implementation of the communication system was valuable both to the teachers and to parents. This new means of communication allowed for parents to view the progress of their child on a daily basis, so that the parents were better able to assist their children at all times. Additionally, parents were better able to communicate with the teachers by email. Therefore technology served as an effective means of involving parents in their children's education.

Church-based schools are interested in, among other things, how best to serve parents, how to enhance communication with parents, and also how to involve parents in their children's academic endeavors, either through school-based or home-based

activities (Thayer & Kido, 2012). Parents' involvement with their children's schools, allows these parents to participate not only in at-home activities, but also in decision-making processes, impart ideas, and make professional contributions to the schools.

How Both Public and Private Schools Encourage Parental Involvement

A positive partnership between parents and schools often results in improved student achievement (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Wanat, 2010). Epstein (1990) speaks about the interrelated spheres of influence on children -- a relationship between parents helping children at home, and the involvement of both school and the community. She further asserts (2007) that families who remain informed about and involved in their children's education increase their students' success in school.

Most researchers (Fan & Chen, 2001, for example) argued in favor of parental involvement and its benefit to students, and Wee (2002) contended that not enough attention had been given to parents as partners with teachers, but that the focus had been on teachers being the primary players in the student's educational development. However, some researchers take a different position. Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, and Kayzar (2002) posited that parental involvement programs are of little influence on student academic success.

Despite the differences in the views held by both parents and educators regarding the value of parental involvement in improving student performance, it is becoming more evident that parents and schools need to join forces for the sole purpose of positive student educational outcomes (Carrasquillo & London, 2013; Eccles & Harold, 2013).

Parents' collaboration or partnership with schools has many benefits such as increased

school attendance, enhanced parent-child communication, improved student attitudes and

behavior, and greater parent-community support for the schools (Radzi, Razak, & Sukor,

2010). Collaboration between parents and schools has become of greater importance as

society recognizes the need to help parents with the difficult task of playing their part

effectively in educating their children (Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005).

Parents partnering with schools involve themselves in many different types of

activities, one of which is volunteering at school. One of the requirements in the *No Child*

Left Behind Act of 2001 is that parents be given the opportunity to volunteer at school to

promote their children's education. Volunteering can be done on class trips, during

fundraisers, and particularly in the classroom. Machen, et al. (2005) emphasizes the

importance of volunteering in the classroom by stating that:

> When parents get involved in the classroom they send a valuable message to their
>
> child. They show that they truly care about the children's success and the
>
> resulting benefit is that students feel more confident. (p. 14)

Even though parents volunteering in schools may indeed be a benefit, and

schools are supposed to make this activity available to parents, unfortunately, this

practice is not always carried through by parents. Wang and Fahey (2011)

conducted a study examining whether or not parental volunteerism grew

following the implementation of the legislation in the *No Child Left Behind Act* of

2001. One hundred and seventy thousand, five hundred and sixty-nine parents

were chosen from a cross-sectional pool to participate in this study in 2002, 2004,

2006, and 2008. The demographics for these parents show that they were taken from different regions of the United States (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West), different metropolitan areas, both genders, diverse ethnicity (European-Americans, non-Hispanic Blacks, and non-Hispanic-Asians), varied immigrant status (native born, naturalized citizens, and non-citizens), different family income (40k – 75k), and varying marital status.

The findings from the above mentioned study indicated that parental volunteering decreased from 14% in 2002 to 12.80% in 2008. The results from the study indicated that even though the practice of volunteerism is mandated by legislation, not enough parents are making use of this required activity. The study also revealed that the parents who live in the Midwest region and non-metropolitan areas were more likely to volunteer at their children's schools. Additionally, Hispanic parents from the Western region of the United States were more likely to volunteer in their children's schools than their counterparts from the Northeastern and Southern region of the United States (Wang & Fahey, 2011).

In another study regarding parent involvement through the medium of volunteering, Graves, Jr., and Brown-Wright, (2011) examined European-American and African-American parents and their kindergarten children who had previously participated in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K; US Department of Education, 2005). The results of this study revealed that African-American parents were more likely to be involved in school-based parental

involvement activities such as volunteering, while the European-American

parents were more involved in home-based literacy activities.

While volunteering is a wonderful way of inviting parents into the school to

encourage participation in school-related activities, it also has its drawbacks. On the

positive side, Keller (2008) reported that in Ann Arbor, Michigan, a teacher had

previously worked at a Head Start Center, and had developed techniques to get parents to

volunteer in her classroom. She transferred those same techniques to the new school at

which she was now teaching a kindergarten class. For example, at the beginning of the

school year she created a roster of varied opportunities for which parents can volunteer

once, weekly, or monthly. However, on the negative side, there are parents who

misunderstand volunteering as a way to observe the teacher and to hover over their own

child. Keller describes such a situation with the same teacher. While conducting writing

workshops with the kindergartners, she noticed that the volunteering parent did not really

participate in the activities at hand, but rather was there in the class observing how the

teacher taught and hovering over her own child. The teacher intervened by gently

refocusing the parent, and referring her to the curriculum for the writing workshop which

contained detailed goals. This indicates a need for training for parents who volunteer.

Rah, Choi, and Nguyen (2009) conducted a study about the Hmong refugee

population in the State of Wisconsin, and noted that the influx of both refugee families

and undocumented immigrants to the United States had drastically increased over the past

decade. They also noted that most of this population is composed of school-age children.

The Hmong parents expected their children's educational needs to be met by the schools.

The purpose of the study was to examine how the educators in the Wisconsin public schools paved the way for refugee parent involvement. The main strategy that these researchers found to be beneficial to the parents and teachers was the implementation of a parent liaison position within the Wisconsin public schools, which allowed for cultural sensitivity as well as being able to forward pertinent information to the parents.

This strategy of using a liaison gave allowance for several positive things to occur. First, the schools added a Hmong voicemail message to the school's voice mail message, thus creating a direct connection with the Hmong families and the schools.

Second, the school's liaison communicated with the Hmong families through the medium of the telephone to relay important messages such as parent-teacher conference meetings. Additionally, the school scheduled workshops for the parents and conducted them in the form of evening literacy classes. The Hmong parents were able to discuss any topic that was of interest to them. Third, the liaison was also able to conduct community services for these refugee parents by providing clothing and food for them. These different activities that the Wisconsin schools provided for the Hmong families helped the parents tremendously to form a deeper level of involvement in their children's educational lives.

Another means schools use to encourage parental involvement is collaboration and communication between the home and school. Wanat (2010) posited that collaboration with teachers resulted in students' positive academic results. He further contended that in order for collaboration and positive communication to take place, there needed to be a balance between parents and schools.

Wanat (2010) conducted a study with twenty parents, thirteen with positive experiences, and seven with negative experiences, from one K-12 public school district in the United States. The purpose of the study was to determine what schools did to encourage parental involvement. Results from parent interviews and observations revealed that the thirteen parents, who expressed satisfaction with the school, were often involved in school activities such as active involvement in Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) meetings and volunteering at school. On the other hand, the seven parents who had negative experiences, participated in more home-based and extra-curricular involvement than school-based involvement.

Wanat's (2010) study revealed that the parents who were satisfied with the school interpreted parental involvement to mean that they should volunteer at school. They often felt that, as parents, they were not doing enough, even though some of them actually volunteered every day. Conversely, the seven parents with negative experiences with the school felt that the same set of parents were doing everything and they, the dissatisfied parents, were not invited to participate in any school-based activities. As a result, they instead choose to demonstrate a high level of involvement in home-based and extra-curricular involvement, rather than school-based involvement.

The difference in the level of involvement in volunteering and other school-based activities demonstrated by the two groups of parents - those with positive and those with negative experiences - is a direct indication of these parents' perceptions of the teachers' attitude towards them. Those parents who thought that the teachers communicated with them well volunteered more. Meanwhile the parents who felt a lack of communication

and interaction with the teachers came to the school to communicate with the teacher only if there was a complaint against their children or they had a complaint against the school.

<div align="center">**Home-based Parental Involvement**</div>

Parental involvement, in general school activities, offers little benefit to the student (Cheung, Lwin, & Jenkins, 2012; Okpala, Okpala, & Smith, 2001). Sui-Chu & Willms (1996) contended that parents simply being at the school has little effect on individual attainment. Research shows that some elements of home-based parental involvement have a stronger improvement on student achievement than school-based involvement (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2004; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) and Youngblom and Daniel (2014) asserted that while there is empirical evidence of a notable positive correlation between general parental involvement and student achievement, it is parental engagement in learning *at home* that has the most significant effect.

Among similar lines, Harris and Goodall (2008) asserted that "while involving parents in school activities has an important social and community function, it is only the engagement of parents in learning *in the home* that is most likely to result in a positive difference in learning outcomes," thus making the "greatest difference in student achievement" (p. 277). They go on to aver that schools need to prioritize encouraging parental engagement in learning *in the home.*

Home-based parental involvement, which consists of supporting and facilitating children's learning experience at home, includes elements such as engaging them in

activities that stimulate learning, discussing school issues, and articulating academic

expectations and goals (McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004; Suizzo,

Pahlke, Yarnell, Chen, & Romero, 2014). Home-based parental involvement includes

creating a home environment that facilitates learning and reinforcing what children are

taught at school (Epstein, 1992). It also has to do with establishing a daily study routine

with their children, displaying interest in their homework, and actively tutoring them at

home (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Home-based parental involvement not only impacts the academic success of

young children, but older children in middle and high school as well. This is evident from

Mena's (2011) study in which 137 ninth grade Latino students from the Northeast United

States were examined to find out the effect that home-based parental involvement had on

the students' academic achievements. Results indicated that the parents' home-based

involvement positively influenced the children's attitude to school, thereby resulting in

the children making positive plans to pursue their academic career.

Aside from the ultimate benefit of student success in school and the motivation

for further academic pursuits, there are other benefits that the child derives during home-

based parental involvement. For example, an analysis of *The Early Childhood*

Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K), sponsored by the U.S.

Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)*,* revealed that

children from a literacy-rich home environment that is filled with children's books,

audiotapes, and CDs, developed greater reading competence. Furthermore, when their

parents often read to them and told them stories, the children demonstrated greater

proficiency in reading skills and knowledge upon entering kindergarten, during kindergarten, and in 1st grade (Tourangeau, Lê, and Westat, 2005).

In Foreign Countries and Among US Families from Foreign Countries

While the major elements and benefits of home-based parental involvement transcend national borders and ethno-cultural boundaries, there are national and ethnic cultural factors that impact the nature and extent of parents' involvement at home with their children's learning activities. A consideration of home-based parental involvement in foreign countries and in families from foreign countries residing in the United States draws attention to some of these national and ethno-cultural variables. These considerations serve to set the stage for the study of home-based parental involvement among Blacks, with their unique ethno-cultural setting within the overall American social landscape.

In a longitudinal study involving the mothers of 1,529 kindergartners in Finland, Silinskas, et al. (2010) investigated how the reading-related home activities, such as shared reading, teaching letters, and teaching reading, related to the development of reading skills in the kindergartners. The results confirmed that of the three home activities engaged in by the mothers, teaching reading was the most successful in helping the kindergarten children develop reading skills. There were two other interesting findings. First, the results showed that those kindergartners who developed good reading skills at the beginning of the kindergarten year had an increase in the amount of teaching of reading at home by mothers that a child subsequently receives. Second, the results also demonstrated that girls, firstborns, and children whose mothers were more highly

educated were also more likely to become good readers by the end of the kindergarten year.

Lau, Li, and Rao (2011) conducted a study on parents in China to determine how Chinese parents were involved in their young children's learning, as well as what relationship there was between the Chinese parents' involvement and the children's school readiness. They surveyed the parents of 431 kindergartners and found that the Chinese parents were more involved in home-based parental involvement activities than they were with school-based involvement. The home-based involvement activities included instruction by the parents, language activities, and parents' involvement in the children's homework.

In another study which focused on home reading and parent teaching, Kim (2009) conducted a study with 192 Korean children and their families. The purpose of the study was to examine how home literacy activities affected the growth of early literacy skills such as vocabulary, letter-name identification, and phonological awareness. The results indicated that there was a positive correlation between frequent parental reading at home to these Korean children and their early literacy acquisition. However, unlike the findings of the study by Silinkas et al. (2010) with students in Finland, which showed that teaching reading was the most successful home-based literacy activity, the results of Kim's study showed that frequent parent teaching at home resulted in low scores in phonological awareness. The parents' home teaching was evidently having a negative impact on the learning of letter sounds.

Positive home-based parent involvement in literacy activities depends on different variables such as motivation, education, and the socio-economic status of the parents.

Holloway, Yamamoto, Suzuki, and Mindnich (2008) conducted a study with 97 Japanese mothers who had children in the second grade. These researchers investigated the demographic and psychological variables that shaped Japanese mothers' involvement in their children's academic endeavors.

The demographic factors that were taken into consideration were family income, mother's education, family size, mothers' employment status, and the sex of the child. The psychological factors considered were the mothers' aspirations for their children, parental self-efficacy, and parent perceptions of the school. The results indicated that parent aspirations and parent self-efficacy were highly related to positive home-based parent involvement. One interesting finding was that the more highly educated and wealthier mothers did not necessarily invest their personal time in home-based involvement, but rather provided supplementary lessons, such as tutoring, for their children. This latter finding is in contrast to that of Silinkas, et al. (2010) Finland study which showed that the children of the more educated mothers were more likely to become good readers by the end of kindergarten because of the parents' involvement in literacy activities at home.

Parental Involvement in Black Families

In the context of the urgent call for greater parental involvement, and with specific reference to this proposed research which focuses on the home-based involvement of Black parents in their children's literacy activities, the findings of

Calzada et al. (2014); Howard and Reynolds, (2008); Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, and

Weiss (2006); Englund, Luckner, Whaley, and Egeland (2004); and Hill et al. (2004) are

particularly important. In their studies on parents' involvement in children's schooling,

they gave significant attention to its effect among children who were academically at risk

because of their families' socio-economic status, level of academic achievement, or

ethnicity. Hill et al. (2004) suggested that parental involvement may be of greater benefit

to Black students than their European American counterparts because the former were

more likely to live in environments that adversely affect their academic pursuits. Some of

the negative factors often include crime, poverty, and less equipped schools.

In Black families, the parents' socio-economic status, as well as their level

of academic achievement, played a part in the level of their involvement in their

children's educational pursuits and attainment. Yan (1999) and Louque (1999)

and Calzado et al. (2014) agreed that more research needs to be focused on what

factors influence Black families to encourage academic achievement in their

children.

One of the unknown factors might be what Watkins (2006) found in his

research. He argued that the mere existence of the black middle-income family

was the result of the use of education to rise out of poverty. Watkins further

illustrated this point in the results of a case study he conducted with two mothers,

one married and one single, who had limited education, but were able to

encourage their children to become high academic achievers. Watkins found that

although their lives were impacted by their struggles to survive and escape their

poverty, they refused to let poverty define them and fix their destinies. Both families regarded education as a means of empowerment and a base for upward social mobility.

According to Watkins' (2006) study, these two mothers practiced positive parental involvement by instilling in their children the need to achieve by transmitting their own behavior patterns that they had developed when they were children. This included instilling in their children the value of a good education, just as their parents had done for them. In order for their children to grow up and appreciate what a good education was, these mothers began to instruct their children in literacy activities very early in life.

Regarding parents' limited education and their children's academic achievement, Bonds (1998) described his experience as a child with poor, uneducated parents. His father did not go beyond first grade and his mother had only a sixth grade education. However, in spite of these limitations, Bonds had the opportunity to learn from his parents in a way that was unexpected. His mother provided a print-rich environment for Bonds by subscribing to magazines, and encouraged him to use what little phonetic knowledge he had learned in school to assist his parents with reading car repair manuals, food labels, and writing grocery lists and letters to members of his family. As a result of engaging in those activities and learning all those words, Bonds developed a love of reading and vocabulary.

Robinson (2007) noted that with the increased emphasis on students' early literary development (National Institute of Health and Human Development, 2006) and on improved reading in schools (Sadoski & Willson, 2006), school administrators and education policy makers have called for a greater level of parental involvement, especially in low-income African American families. Comer (1986, 1988) designed a program to improve interactive involvement between low-income Black parents and school personnel. Participation in the program resulted in increased parental involvement and improvement in their children's academic performance (Comer & Haynes, 1991).

Research that focused on low-income Black parents (Cooper, 2009; De Gaetano, 2007) and have often generalized their findings, implied that all Blacks, regardless of income level, are uninvolved with their children's academic pursuits. This flaw has been corrected somewhat by studies on the parental involvement of middle-income Blacks, conducted by Scanzoni (1971) and Robinson (2007). Scanzoni, in a longitudinal study reflecting three generations found that these black middle-income parents' involvement included stressing upward mobility and economic success. Both researchers discovered that whereas low-income Black parents have a poor track record for parental involvement, middle-income Black parents were actively involved in both home and school activities.

Robinson (2007), who focused on parental involvement at home and literacy development, in his investigation of parental perceptions and practices, concluded that

being in the middle-income bracket enabled parents to be more actively involved in both home and school activities. Robinson goes on to explain that this is so because middle-income parents had the disposable income to purchase the necessary materials and supplies for their children, and the time to participate more fully in their children's education and schooling.

Other research on middle-class Black parents revealed that they have a unique approach to parenting, which is strict and controlling, yet warm and responsive (Gonzales, Cauce, Friedman, & Mason, 1966). More specifically, Black mothers, especially the more educated, employed a structured, direct approach to teaching their children (Harris, Terrel, & Allen, 1999; Hess & Shipman, 1965), while European American mothers had a less direct and controlling teaching style, which allowed the children a high level of autonomy (Harkness, Super , & Keefer, 1992; Richman, Miller, & Solomon, 1988).

Comparative studies showed that African American parents rank at the top for reported frequency of home-based involvement (Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Jeynes, 2003). Fan (2001), after controlling for social and economic factors, found that Blacks have the highest aspirations for their off-springs' academic achievements. Harris (2008) argued that Blacks have stronger beliefs about education and want more for their children academically.

With regards to home and school involvement, Diamond, Wang, and Gomez (2006), conducted a study of the involvement of African-American and Chinese-American parents and found that the African-American parents embraced

both home and school-based involvement and would intervene at school on behalf

of their children. This type of involvement of the Blacks was regarded as a

"front-stage or activist" type of involvement. On the other hand, the Chinese-

American parents adopted the home-based involvement on a larger scale.

An important element that affected the involvement of Black parents,

regardless of income level or any other factor, was the significant role religion

played in the Black family. Billingsley (1992) stated that among Black family

values, education and religion were two of the most cherished. The connection

between the two, as well as their impact on parental involvement, was elucidated

by Robinson (2007) who asserted that religion was the thread that connected

Black parents' beliefs regarding parental involvement.

Theoretical Perspectives

Several theories presented in research focused on the subject of parental

involvement. Each addressed a different aspect of this phenomenon. I gave particular

consideration to four of these theories for inclusion among the theoretical perspectives for

this study. I chose only two of them to form the frameworks for guiding this study.

One of the theoretical frameworks considered was James Coleman's (1988)

theory of social capital, which included parents' expectations and perceived obligations

regarding the education of their children.

This theory was not included because it subsumes the parental dimension within

the broader context of community networking and educational expectations in a way that

prioritizes the community, and thus does not lend itself to the study of a minority group within the general community.

Another theoretical framework that I considered was Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the influence of pre-school learning on all later learning experiences. This theory highlighted the significance of pre-literacy parental reading activities at home, which sets the stage for literacy acquisition at school. This theory was not included because it related exclusively to pre-school activities, while this study is about students in kindergarten to Grade 2.

The two theories selected to guide the discussion of parental involvement in this literature review, because of their specific relevance to the study, were: Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler's (1995) parental role construction theory (specifically the first level of the five-level model of parental involvement) and Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement, especially the fourth type – learning at home.

Parental Role Construction Theory

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1995) presented their research on parental involvement which offered explanations regarding "(1) why parents choose to become involved in their children's education, (2) what forms their involvement will take, and (3) why their involvement influences their children's educational outcomes" (p. 329). With respect to the question of why parents chose to become involved, they identified three components: 1) parents' understanding of their role; 2) parents' sense of efficacy for assisting their children to become successful in school; and 3) parent's perception of the

opportunities and demands for parental involvement as presented by both the children and the school.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) asserted that a primary reason parents become involved is that they develop their own personal construction of a parental role that includes participation in their children's education. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler defined parents' role construction as the belief parents hold regarding what roles parents should play or what they are responsible to do regarding their children's education. The term "role" is defined as "a specific or acceptable pattern of behavior expected from those in a certain social status, profession, etc." (Webster's Pocket Dictionary, 1998).

Parents, being members of different types of groups in society, such as the family and school, developed roles that are played out in children's academic lives. These roles lead to different kinds of involvement activities that were shaped by the environment (home or school) where the involvement took place (Lavenda, 2011). Some parents considered these involvement activities to be important and necessary actions with and on behalf of children (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997).

Parents became involved in their children's educational career because they believed that being involved was what they were supposed to do, it was their job to be involved, a role to be played as a parent (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Parents' level of involvement occurred based on the beliefs that they had and the opportunities afforded them by the school to help their children (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Hence, parents with a high level of belief about what their role was in their children's educational career usually had a high level of involvement (Anderson & Minke).

Another important aspect of role construction theory is parents' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is described as "a person's belief that he or she can act in ways that are likely to produce desired outcomes" (Ice & Hoover-Dempsey, 2011, p. 6). Researchers Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997; Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009) suggested that in the context of parental involvement, self-efficacy implies that parents make a conscious decision to be involved based on what they perceive the outcomes of their involvement will be.

While Parental Role Construction Theory provides a solid framework for investigating issues such as what parents believe their role to be, their sense of competence for assisting their children, and the opportunities and demands of parental involvement in general, it lacks specificity with respect to the various dimensions of parental involvement. Epstein's delineation and description of six types of parental involvement fills this void by providing helpful supplementary information that enhances the precision, and hence the value, of the research.

Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement

The second theory that I used to inform the research problem is Epstein's six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, making decisions, and collaborating with the community. A description of each type is given below. I used the fourth type, learning at home, to inform the research problem. 1. Parenting includes helping families with parenting skills by providing information about children's developmental stages and home environment considerations that support children as students (Epstein et al., 1997).

2. Communicating means providing information effectively with families about student progress, school services and programs, and also provide opportunities for parents to communicate with the school (Epstein et al., 1997).

3. Volunteering involves finding ways to recruit and train volunteers for the school and classroom. Try to accommodate parents' schedules to maximize support for students and programs. This category also includes opportunities for parents to attend events at school in which their children participate (Epstein et al., 1997).

4. Learning at Home includes sharing ideas with families to improve students' homework strategies and other kinds of at-home learning, and provide information about the kinds of skills students are required to learn (Epstein et al., 1997).

5. Decision Making is including families as partners in school decisions. Recruit members for school organizations, advisory groups and committees (Epstein et al., 1997).

6. Collaborating with the Community includes creating two-way connections between the school and community that encourage businesses and other groups to take an interest in schools and offer students and their families ways to contribute to the well-being of the community (Epstein et al., 1997).

A closer look at the above-mentioned types of parental involvement as described by Epstein et al. (1997) reveals that involvement by parents in children's academic lives does not exclusively consist of any one type of involvement, but rather a combination of different types of involvement. Epstein et al. outlined three dimensions of involvement – involvement at school, involvement at home, and involvement in the community – and referred to them as overlapping spheres of influence on students. They further asserted

that the more these spheres (school, parents, and community) overlap and produce an educational partnership, the more students will eventually benefit academically.

Epstein et al. (1997) placed parenting as the first of the six types of parental involvement because parents need all the help and support they can get in developing the parenting skills necessary to deal with and understand their children's development and support their learning as they progress through the grades (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004). The second type of parental involvement, communicating, is most essential for full parental support at the schools. Epstein (2001) posited that when schools effectively communicate with parents regarding procedures and policies, the schools have a greater chance of obtaining the full support of the parents in this regard. Volunteering is the third type of parental participation as described by Epstein et al., and involves having the parents contribute their time and talents at the school. For example, parents may volunteer in the classroom, or act as chaperones on field trips, as well as participate in fund raising events, and support sports activities.

Learning at home is the fourth type of involvement and this entails the activities that either the parent or child intiated (Radzi, Razak, & Sukor, 2010). Radzi, Razak & Sukor further averred that in these learning-at-home or home-based involvement activities, parents have the opportunity to initiate academic activities with their children or to assist their children with their homework, which was designed by teachers to encourage children to share and discuss with their parents (Epstein & Jansorn, 2004).

In the fifth type of parental involvement, decision making, parents have the opportunity to become involved in the school's operations through organizations such as

Parent Teachers' Associations and also through parent councils (Anthony, 2008).

Anthony further asserted that students benefit from parents being involved in the day-to-

day decision-making processes of the school. A major benefit of parents being involved

in the decision-making process of schools is that teachers become more aware of the

importance of parents' perceptions regarding school policies and governance.

The sixth and final type of parental involvement is collaborating with the

community. In this type of involvement, schools are encouraged to align themselves with

the community by creating partnerships with businesses in the community (Epstein et al.,

2009) with a view to enhance student achievement and parent participation through

activities such as reading, writing, and math workshops (Epstein & Salinas, 2004).

Another benefit to the students and schools, specifically, is that in learning communities

where schools, parents, and communities come together for the betterment of the child,

all three help students focus on their plans for future studies and careers (Epstein &

Salinas).

Parental involvement is an important aspect of a child's academic career.

Epstein's six types of involvement allow parents, schools, and communities to create an

educational partnership that fosters academic achievement for the child. When parents are

fully involved in their children's education, parents are not only able to assist them at

home or participate in school-based activities, but they also have the opportunity to be a

part of the decision-making process of the schools. However, it is the fourth type,

learning at home, that is the most relevant to this study and constitutes the second pillar

of the theoretical frameworks that inform and guide the study.

Methodological Considerations

The research questions for this study guided the search for determining the most appropriate methodology. An exclusively quantitative approach, defined by McMillan & Wergin (2009), is numerical data that is used to explore the relationships among various traits was not chosen because, among other things, there is not an experimental dimension to the study.

However, there have been researchers who have utilized a quantitative approach to conduct their research regarding parental involvement. For example, Radzi, Razak, & Sukor (2010) used a quantitative research for a two-fold purpose. First, they investigated the features of parental involvement that primary school teachers preferred; and second, they looked into the types of parental involvement that parents (from the teachers' viewpoint) preferred. The findings of the study indicated that the teachers preferred parenting and communication as aspects of parental involvement, and the parents (from the teachers' perspective) also favored parenting and communication. Another researcher who used a quantitative approach was Jeynes (2007) in his meta analysis of 52 studies to determine what effect parental involvement had on students' academic outcomes in urban secondary schools. Other researchers who used quantitative research were Maduekwe & Adeosun (2010). These researchers surveyed 200 parents from 10 basic schools (public and private) in Lagos, Nigeria to determine the types of parental involvement were used in the literacy development of young children.

For this study, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were considered. However, another reason a quantitative approach was not chosen is that it cannot provide

the complete data needed to answer the research questions, which call for exploring the perceptions of parents regarding their home-based involvement in literacy activities with their children. A survey as a data collection instrument was not used because it only gives a numeric data of the attitudes or opinions of the participants (Creswell, 2009, and does not allow for in-depth interactive feedback. This type of data also allows the researcher to use a sample and generalize the findings to a population (Creswell). Experiments are also used to single out a sample and generalize the findings to a population (Creswell). Because quantitative research is statistical in nature, and only provides numeric data (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009), the required in-depth process of acquiring meaning and understanding (Merriam, 2009) from the collected data that this research requires, would not be realized.

On the other hand, I selected a qualitative approach because this methodology explores the meaning participants give to a problem (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, in a qualitative approach the researcher is seeking to understand how people interpret their experiences and what meaning they attribute to them (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative methodology allows for the use of different forms of data collection than quantitative methodology, such as, but not limited to, interviews, observations, and documents. The use of qualitative interviews as a data collection method enabled the researcher to acquire what Patton (2002) described as detailed descriptions of people's activities and behaviors, in order to formulate answers to the research questions for this study, through coding and developing themes.

Researchers on parental involvement who have used the qualitative approach include Smith (2006). Smith used a case study design to explore the phenomenon of parental involvement within a low-income school. Smith conducted interviews, made observations, and utilized document reviews as means of collecting data. Urdan, Solek, and Schoenfelder (2007) also used a qualitative approach when they interviewed 47 high school seniors to determine what kind of influence the high school seniors' families had on the students' academic motivation. Harris & Goodall (2008) also used a qualitative design to explore the relationship between student achievement and parental involvement.

I considered a number of qualitative methodologies but did not use them because their primary goal was not to focus on the meaning of a phenomenon and explore the lived experiences of the participants, which is the aim of this study. For instance, even though this study focuses on Black parents, I did not employ an ethnographic strategy because this study is not about a cultural group within a natural setting (Creswell, 2009). Neither was a grounded theory used because the researcher is not trying to do what Creswell describes as deriving a general, abstract theory regarding a process. I also considered a case study approach to be inadequate because, according to Creswell (2009), that methodology is limited by time and activity. I did not use a narrative research approach because it tries to get the participants to provide stories of their lives (Creswell, 2009), which was not my objective.

I chose a phenomenological approach because my aim was to explore the perceptions and experiences of parents pertaining to their home-based support and

involvement in literacy activities with their children, as well as the parents' perceptions of what factors negatively affected their involvement. The main focus of this phenomenological research, as described by Creswell (2009), is to investigate the phenomenon and develop the qualitative findings.

A phenomenological methodology inquires about "the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). In describing the experiences, participants reflect inward as they recall and complement their experiences with additional information giving way to a deeper exploration of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Since this study seeks to explore the lived experiences of parents regarding their home-based involvement with their children in literacy activities, the phenomenological model of the qualitative methodological approach was the most appropriate to be used in this study. This was be accomplished by gathering in-depth qualitative data through semi-structured interviews.

I used an interview as a data collection instrument with a qualitative approach, which required me to be a good listener (Hatch, 2002). However, I did not use informal interviews because they are conversations that lack structure and cannot be used as the primary data collection tool. Additionally, during informal interviews the researcher does not always use a recording device (Hatch). I also considered, but did not employ standardized interviews, because I would have to prepare a set of questions that would be asked of each participant in the same order, using the same words, in order to compare the answers systematically (Hatch, 2009). Ultimately, I chose a formal or semi-structured interview because I set an established time for the interview, come prepared to lead the

interview with guiding questions, but follow the lead of the interviewee with probing questions to gather in-depth information, and record the interview Hatch (2009).

Summary

The review for this proposed phenomenological study includes literature related to topics such as benefits of and barriers to parental involvement, home-based parental involvement, parental involvement in religious schools, parental involvement in Black communities, and the type of methodology to be used in this research.

The literature review revealed that a specific definition for parental involvement was difficult to achieve since this phenomenon meant different things to different people. Examples of this difference in thinking was evident in the varied definitions supplied by researchers such as Anderson & Minke (2007); Jeynes (2007); Ice & Hoover-Dempsey (2011); Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994); and Epstein (1992). Epstein (1995) and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997) point out that the bottom line is that parental involvement has two major dimensions – home-based and school-based.

Further review of the literature indicated that while parental involvement is beneficial to the enhancement of student achievement (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Prior & Gerard, 2007) many parents, nonetheless, encountered myriad barriers which contributed to a decrease in the level of their involvement, and ultimately resulted in students experiencing low academic achievement (Ryan & Cooper, 2007).

A review of related literature revealed that a positive home environment is essential to the development of children's literacy skills (Harris & Goodall, 2008). It also

showed that parents should provide a print-rich environment and engage their children in literacy learning activities (Foster et al., 2005). Harris and Goodall further posited that it is only the involvement of parents in learning *in the home* that is most likely to have a positive effect on learning outcomes.

Because the school under investigation is a private religious school, I examined related literature pertaining to parental involvement within religious schools. The literature revealed that generally, students who attend private religious schools tend to out-perform their peers from public schools (Jeynes, 2002, 2003). However, the literature further revealed that minority students (Blacks and Hispanics) especially, who attended private religious schools such as Catholic schools, were found to also out-perform their peers because parental involvement is highly encouraged by these schools (Jeynes).

The literature also showed that Blacks, specifically, are at risk academically because of the parents' low socio-economic status as well as level of education (Hill et al., 2004; Dearing et al., 2006). However, Hill et al. further noted that Black students stand to gain more from parental involvement than European Americans simply because Blacks generally live in areas that negatively affect the students' academic success. The school under investigation is in an area similar to that described by Hill et al. (2004) and does include some of the negative factors such as a high crime, poverty, and under-equipped schools. Finally, I review the research data collecting methodologies I considered for the study.

In summary, Section 3 expanded on and clarified in greater detail the use of a phenomenological approach to this study by focusing on the perceptions and perspectives

of the participants' lived experiences through the use of qualitative semi-structured

interviews.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences and perspectives of the parents regarding their home-based support and involvement in their children's literacy activities. I used a phenomenological approach to this research and, in this section, I define and describe the rationale for this method. I also explain the measures for ethical protection, role of the researcher, selection of participants, data collection procedures, data analysis strategies, and reliability and validity of the research. I also include a discussion of my own personal values and biases..

In this study, I explored the phenomenon of parental involvement in literacy activities at home, such as reading. Reading is important to a child's academic success (Xue & Meisels, 2004), and in at-home activities, especially, contribute to students' academic achievement (Saint-Laurent & Giasson, 2005). Therefore, I investigated the type of support and involvement parents gave at home regarding their children's reading activities. In addition, I also explored what roadblocks might be preventing them from giving the needed support, such as giving instructional assistance, providing a print-rich environment, engaging in shared reading, and reading aloud to their children (Huang & Dolejs, 2007).

Phenomenological Research Design and Approach

I chose a phenomenological research design, using in-depth interviews (e.g., Creswell, 2009) for this research in order to gather detailed information from the parents of grades K-2 students. This design enabled me to investigate the parents' involvement in

their children's literacy activities at home, as well as what barriers prevented them from greater involvement.

I considered other design approaches but did not employ them because they did not apply to this type of research. For instance, I did not chose a quantitative approach because it uses surveys to determine "numeric description of trends" (Creswell, 2009, p. 145) and does not provide "a complex picture of the problem or issue under study" (p. 176) which is achieved through in-depth qualitative interviews of the participants (Creswell). Furthermore, I did not use a quantitative strategy because it not only is statistically oriented, but is also utilized when conducting experimental research by "providing a specific treatment to one group and withholding it from another and then determining how both groups scored on an outcome" (Creswell, 2009, p.12) and this research did not conduct an experiment.

I also considered a mixed-methods design with a sequential exploratory approach, but did not choose it because this design included a quantitative aspect in the data collection process. With this approach, the researcher would have to "survey a large sample so that the researcher can generalize results to a population" (Creswell, 2009, p. 14). As I noted above, the quantitative approach yields statistical results and does not focus on the views and perspectives of the participants as the qualitative approach does; therefore this mixed-method design was not selected.

Qualitative research is defined as the process of collecting data about a social or human problem in a natural setting through the views of its participants (Creswell, 2007). Stake (2010) further elaborated by stating that qualitative research relies much on the

personal experiences of its participants. He also noted that, even though the research may not necessarily be about human activities, it is still the perspectives of the human participants that are explored. As I explained previously, I considered several qualitative design approaches such as an ethnography, grounded theory, and case study for this research, but I did not chose any of them because they would not provide the required rich description of the participants' lived experiences. These descriptions are essential for providing the type of information needed to answer my research questions.

For these reasons, I selected a phenomenological approach for this study. Phenomenology is an inductive qualitative research methodology, with two main branches: Husserl's (descriptive) and Heidegger's (interpretive). Husserl's eidetic phenomenology is epistemological and uses reflective intuition to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and formulated in conscious awareness (Husserl, 1970). For this study, this meant that I needed to listen carefully, observe body language and tone, and try to make sense of what it is like to be each parent in order to improve the data analysis process.

I chose a descriptive phenomenological approach for this study because phenomenological enquiry is particularly appropriate to address meanings and the experiences of the participants (Joyce & Sills, 2009). The main concern of phenomenological analysis is to understand from the perspective of the participants (Cresskill, 2012). It focuses on descriptions not only of what people experience, but how it is that they experience what they experience. The goal is to identify essence, commonalities in the human experience, in the shared experience that underlies all the

variations in a particular experience (Patton, 2002). In employing this approach, I followed Creswell's (1998) clearly-delineated proposal for the procedures for employing descriptive phenomenological research methodology.

Researchers engaged in phenomenology enquire about the essence of lived experience, focusing in-depth on a particular aspect of experience (Rossman & Rallis, 1998), searching for essence, the pivotal underlying meaning of the experience (Cresswell, 1998). While phenomenology is a study of essences that provides a direct description of participants' experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1996), Husserl (1970) indicated that the phenomenon is not abstract, but that essences or fundamental meanings are. A researchers can see, feel, and touch the phenomenon itself, but can only know an essence based on his or her own meaning-making perceptions.

Descriptive phenomenology is a particularly useful methodology for this study. According to Giorgi (1997), the descriptive approach "offers a method for accessing the difficult phenomenon of human experience" (p. 238). Phenomenological research is used to determine and describe what an experience means for those who have lived it, and derive from the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings, that is, the essences of structures of the experience (Cresswell, 1998). Thus, phenomenological research not only describes the lived experience, but also articulates the meaning that participants derived from the experience from their perspective (van Manen, 1990). However, it is how the participants elucidate their experiences of the phenomenon, which helps to identify what the common threads are within the phenomenon.

Another reason that descriptive phenomenology was the best methodology for this study on Black parents' perceptions of home-based involvement in the literacy activities of their children, is that it emphasizes understanding the everyday experience of the participants. According to Ray (1994), phenomenology "is not isolated to the number of participants in a study… Rather it demonstrates a powerful representation of unity of meaning of belongingness and interconnectedness to the whole of the human condition" (p. 124). Consequently, the researcher may study a small number of participants to construct patterns and relationships (Moustakas, 1994), because the main concern in a qualitative study is quality and not quantity (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

In order to capture these lived experiences of the participants, I used semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. According to Patton (2002), semistructured interviews provide in-depth responses about people's experiences, perceptions, feelings, and knowledge, as well as enable the researcher to grasp and capture the points of view of other individuals. Qualitative questioning further enabled me to gather data regarding the type of support Black parents gave as home-based alliances with their children, and what types of strategies and materials are needed to assist these parents to be more effective in their home-based activities with their children. The collection of qualitative data helped me to establish what the existing barriers are that may prevent improvement in the level of involvement Black parents provide, as well as the variety of ways these parents already exhibited involvement at home.

Research Questions and Sub-questions

The overarching question which guided this research was: What do the Black parents of children in kindergarten through grade two in an urban religious elementary school do for at-home literacy activities?

The following were the subquestions:

1. What do these Black parents report about their at-home support of their children's literacy development?

2. What kind of materials do these Black parents use at home with their children during literacy activities?

3. Do these Black parents experience barriers to their being more involved at home in their children's literacy activities, and if so, what are the barriers?

4. What kind of support from the school, including potential materials, would these parents accept and prefer to help them in overcoming the barriers to greater involvement in their children's literacy activities?

Context for Study

The focal point of this study was to investigate Black parents' home-based involvement in the literacy activities of their kindergarten through grade two students who attended a private religious school in Northern New Jersey. Also, the study sought to ascertain what roadblocks these parents encountered in trying to support their children in their academic endeavors at home.

The selected site was a very small school, and one of ten private schools owned and operated by a religious organization. There are approximately 60 students in grades

K-8 at the selected site, who are 90 percent Blacks. The school has four Black teachers (all females) and utilizes multi-grade classrooms. One teacher teaches Pre-K and K; one grades 1-2; one grades 3-5; and one grades 6-8.

In grades K-2 there were approximately 17 students, and the parents of these students were the potential study participants. I anticipated that the participants would disclose rich, verbal descriptions of their views and experiences regarding their home-based involvement. Additionally, I expected the parents to voice any roadblocks they experienced at home in trying to support their children in literacy activities.

Measures Taken for Protection of Participants' Rights

Immediately after obtaining permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) with Approval # 04-28-14-0139057 to collect data, I gained permission from the principal of the school to recruit Black parents of the K-2 students to participate in the research study. I explained to the principal what the research was about, the proposed method of data collection, how ethical standards would be maintained, as well as how the participants would be protected. I answered all questions and addressed any concerns that the principal had regarding the proposed research.

After securing the principal permission, I posted a flyer describing the research on the school's main notice board. I handed a package containing a copy of the flyer to the parents as they dropped off their children in the morning. I also did so at pick-up in the afternoon, to ensure that I handed one to any parent I may have missed during drop-off in the morning. My contact number and email address were included on the flyer, which invited volunteers to contact me if they would like to be a participant. I was available at

drop-off and pick-up times for the next two days, in order to give the flyer to absent

student's parents, as well as answer questions any parents might have.

Communicating with the parents about the research in this manner helped to

minimize any feeling of coercion on the part of the parents, because there was no threat

to them to participate, but rather an invitation. They had the option to respond privately

by phone or email without anyone else knowing, except me. Participation was solely their

free choice. Through the medium of a flyer, I informed the participants of the study, its

purpose, and how much time was allotted for each interview. Information on the flyer

outlined any possible risks and described the benefits of participation in general terms,

and specifically regarding compensation for their time. Also, I included on the flyer

information regarding participants' rights, assurance of full confidentiality throughout the

process, and the need for volunteers to participate.

When parents contacted me and showed willingness to participate in the study, I

emailed an electronic version of the informed consent form to those prospective

participants with email access. These parents replied by email with the words "I consent".

Those participants without email addresses received the consent form at the time of the

interview. Also, at this initial contact, the time (preferably after school hours) and place

(such as a library study room, a community center meeting room, or at a restaurant) were

set. The arrangement was a mutual agreement between me and each volunteer participant,

based primarily on his/her convenience.

At the time appointed for the interviews, I again discussed with each participating

parent the purpose of the proposed study and explained to them that their participation

was purely voluntary. I reminded them of any risks to them for participating, and that they had the option of withdrawing from the study at any time they wished. We also discussed any concerns that the parents had regarding the study. Before the interview began, the participants without an email address signed the consent form in my presence and turned it in to me. I was the only one with access to the signed document. All participants received their compensation for the interview at the end of the member checking process.

In order to provide confidentiality to the participants, the names of the parents who have willingly volunteered to participate in the research were not divulged to the principal, the school board, or anyone else. For further guarantee of confidentiality for the participants, in the presence of the participants, I put the signed document in a locked pouch. Only I had access to the pouch, which has been placed in a locked box at my home.

I provided additional protection for the participants by transcribing the interviews myself, behind closed doors, in my office at home. Also, I did not write the actual names of the parents on the transcribed interviews, but rather, gave each participant the opportunity to choose a pseudonym for himself/herself from a group of possible names I supplied. Possible pseudonyms were Hatty Duke, Richard Here, or Angelina Bolie, etc. Additionally, I assigned a color code to each transcribed interview, which was recognizable only by me. In order to provide anonymity and confidentiality for the parents, when reporting the data, no parent's name or contact information was used. All collected data has been stored in a locked file box or on a removable usb drive at my

home. Only I have access to the data, which will be destroyed after it has been held for 5 years.

Role of the Researcher

In a qualitative research, the researcher is typically the one that is in constant contact with the participants (Creswell, 2009). In this research, there was no difference since I, as the researcher, was the one to interact with the participants. As researcher, my role called for me not only to be in direct contact with the participants, but also to be the data collector and person responsible for the analysis of the data.

I had worked at one of the ten similar elementary schools in the school system of which the specific elementary school used this study is a part. The schools are operated by the same religious organization of which I am an active member. As such, it was expected that I would bring certain biases to the research study, such as my perception of what home-based parental involvement should be and also how involved the parents ought to be. In spite of these preconceived ideas that I, as the researcher may have had, Merriam (2009) posited that the "researcher usually explores his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions" (p. 25.) Moustakas (1994) referred to this course of action as *Epoche*. He further averred that in Epoche the "everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and the phenomena are revisited" (p. 33).

This putting aside of my judgments about the phenomena, in order to minimize my biases, is referred to as *bracketing*. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz

(1991) in describing *bracketing*, posited that as researchers we "work to become aware of our own assumptions, feelings, and preconceptions, and then, that we strive to put them aside—to bracket them—in order to be open and receptive to what we are attempting to understand" (p. 50). Therefore, in bracketing my thoughts and feelings on the topic, I minimized any bias of preconceived ideas relayed to it that I may have had, so that I may allow the participants to articulate themselves fully in relating their lived experiences about the phenomenon.

Population Sample and Setting

The population of interest in this study included the Black parents and/or guardians of students enrolled in the three lower grades (K – Gr. 2) at an urban private religious K-8 elementary school located in Northern New Jersey (approximately 30 parents). This school is one of ten schools owned and operated by a religious organization. It has one principal (who teaches three grades), one teacher who teaches two grades, and two teachers teaching three grades each, and a secretary. Demographically, the student body is 90 percent Black and falls within the middle to low-income socio-economic level.

The fact that the student population in this private school in which fees have to be paid includes students with low-income parents can be explained by (1) the educational philosophy of this particular denomination, and (2) the level of commitment of its adherents to ensuring that their children receive Christian education no matter what the cost. The denomination's view is that education means more than just academic pursuits, but involves the harmonious development of the entire being -- physical, mental, and

spiritual -- and is a preparation for life both in this world and in the world to come (White, 1952b, p. 13).

I chose a purposeful sampling strategy for this study. Purposeful sampling is described as one that is involved in selecting information-rich cases for the purpose of an in-depth study (Patton, 2002). The purposeful sampling I used involved all parents of students enrolled in kindergarten through grade two, who were willing and available to participate in the research. Patton further explained that information-rich cases are "those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 46) and "yields insights and in-depth understanding" (p. 230) from a small number of participants.

Demographically, the parents of these students were Black, single and two-parent families, middle to lower socio-economic level, whose educational background varied from primary through college education. This sampling provided the needed data showing the perspectives and practices of home-based parental involvement on student achievement in reading in Black families. The strategy for getting participants was to post a flyer describing the research on the selected school's main notice board. I also handed out packages containing a copy of the flyer to the parents (all of whom are Black) of K-2 students at as they dropped off or picked up their children. Parents who responded to the flyers were the participants in the study

Instrumentation and Materials

The instrument used in this study was a researcher-designed. semistructured, in-depth interview protocol, based both on the theoretical framework as outlined in Section

1 and also on the research questions. The interview questions solicited information from the parent participants regarding their perspectives on parental involvement, specifically involvement at home in their children's literacy activities, as well as what barriers prevented them from being actively involved with their children. These interviews served to "capture participant perspectives" and "get informants talking about their experiences and understanding" (Hatch, 2002, p. 102) through conversations in which I guided the participant into further dialogue (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I chose the semistructured interview because this format allowed me to come with guiding questions, but follow the lead of the participant during the interview, and build rapport (Hatch, 2002). The participant had the freedom of self-expression without predetermined expectations.

Data Collection

The goals of qualitative research vary and depend on the purpose of the study (Saldana (2011). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to "synthesize the commonalities" (Saldana, 2011, p. 8) of parents' lived experiences regarding their home-based involvement in literacy activities with their children. In order to achieve this purpose data was collected. Polkinghorne (2005) stated that the purpose of collecting qualitative data is to present evidence of the participants' lived experiences that are being investigated. (Creswell (2012) further elaborated on data collection and described it as "gaining permissions, conducting a good qualitative sampling strategy, developing means for recording information both digitally and on paper, storing the data, and anticipating ethical issues that may arise" (p. 145).

However, before any type of permission could be granted, I needed to decide on who the participants would be and where the research would be conducted. Creswell (2012) suggested that when a researcher studies his/her own place of employment, questions may arise as to whether the data is good, and the data collection process may result in a "power imbalance" (p. 151) between the researcher and participant. He further described the use of data collected from one's own workplace as "dangerous knowledge" (p. 151). For this reason, I did not conduct the research at the school at which I taught, but at another private religious school which was also one of the ten schools in the organization. The demographics of both schools are similar. The parents were unfamiliar to me, the researcher, but I did have rapport with some of the teachers at the selected school. While I was employed at one of the schools in the system, the teachers from the selected site and I attended professional development seminars and annual conferences.

During the course of this research, I collected data over a period of 7 weeks. In the first two weeks of the summer break of 2014, I conducted three interviews. I dedicated the third week to transcribing and coding the data. During the first five weeks at the beginning of the new school year (2014-2015), I conducted and transcribed five other interviews, I used the sixth week to conduct member checking. In each of the following weeks I interviewed one of the latter five participants. I immediately transcribed the data in my office at home in her office. I did member checking during the sixth week. Participants had the option to discontinue participating in the study, without coercion, if it became too stressful, overwhelming, or for any other personal reason.

Interview

Eight parents willingly volunteered and made themselves available to participate in the research. These parents were purposefully selected by asking only the parents of the k-2 children at this school, all of whom were Black, to be participants. The participant sample was then one of convenience, because it only used the parents who were willing to participate in the interview. At a location mutually agreed upon between each participant and myself, I interviewed these parents after school hours. Each face-to-face interview was conducted separately for a period of 45 – 60 minutes. I prepared an interview guide with questions based on the research questions. These interview questions were geared towards eliciting rich descriptions of the participants' experiences of home-based involvement in literacy activities with their children. As the participants responded to the interview guide questions, I asked other probing questions to garner in-depth responses from the interviewees. I audio-taped and transcribed each interview. I also compared the results and looked for saturation. The results were not significantly different among the parents, so no additional participants were added to the study.

Each interview lasted for approximately forty-five minutes to one hour because qualitative interviews are used to "delve into important personal issues" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 3). At the appointed time for the interview I again explained to the parents what the research was about, that it was purely voluntary, that there were no risks to them for participating in the research, that the session had to be recorded, and that they could opt at any time not to continue participating. The participants either signed their informed

consent forms on line or turned in their signed informed consent forms to me at the time of the interview.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to ascertain from parents the type of support and involvement in their children's literacy activities at home, as well as what barriers, if any, did exist that limited their ability or availability to assist their children with at-home literacy activities. In order to achieve this, I employed a phenomenological approach with a purposeful sampling.

The data for this phenomenological qualitative study was analyzed concurrently while other qualitative data was being collected (Creswell, 2009). Creswell further posited that data analysis is an ongoing process, since the researcher will be involved in continual reflection of the data. This is so because data analysis "is a systematic search for meaning . . . so that what has been learned can be communicated to others" (Hatch, 2002, p. 148). Hatch further contended that analysis of data is the organization of data which reveals patterns, categories, themes, and makes interpretations.

Creswell (2009) described data analysis as "collecting open-ended data, based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by participants" (p. 184). A number of steps were outlined by Creswell as being important in the analysis process:

1. "Organize and prepare the data for analysis" (p. 185).

2. "Read through all data . . . to obtain a general sense of the information and reflection its overall meaning" (p. 185).

3. "Begin a . . . coding process" (p. 186).

4. "Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting . . . as well as categories or themes for analysis" (p. 189).

5. "Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative" (p. 189).

6. Make an "interpretation or meaning of the data" (p. 189).

I incorporated all the above steps in preparation for the process of coding the transcripts. I extracted the qualitative data from the interview with the parents and coded it for themes as they became apparent. Rubin and Rubin (2005) described coding as that which allows the researcher to classify statements by concept, theme, or event, rather than by the participants. The process of coding allowed me to acquire themes and incorporate concepts (Hatch, 2002). This gathering of themes helped me to develop patterns leading to an inductive analysis.

In preparation for the coding process, I broke the collected data down into different categories and themes. These were informed by the research questions as well as the two theories, Hoover-Dempsey's parental role construction theory and Epstein's six types of parental involvement, which framed this research. The categories included, but were not limited to, parent's role, parental involvement, home environment, learning at home, barriers to involvement, and support for greater involvement. I assigned each of the above categories a different color and letter for easy identification. In response to the research questions, I searched the participants' answers for the existing categories, as

well as similarities and differences. I used the following codes, among others, in the

arrangement of the following categories:

1. PR – Parent's role

2. PI – parental involvement

3. HE – home environment

4. LAH – learning at home

5. LA – literacy activities

6. BI – barriers to involvement

7. SGI – support for greater involvement

After transcribing the interviews, I read all the transcripts to get a feel or to get a

general sense of what each participant was saying (Creswell, 2009). Then I searched data

to see if it fits the predetermined categories and also searched for emerging categories

and assigned a label to each of the discovered categories (Creswell). I searched all data

for similarities and differences in the views expressed by the participants, and then

separated them into themes.

In the predetermined categories, parent's role referred to the role that the parents

play in their children's educational lives. Parental involvement referred to parents'

participation with their children in their academic activities. Home environment is the

kind of atmosphere that the parents have set for their children at home, which impacts the

attainment of academic success. Is it conducive for learning? Learning at home referred

to the learning activities that parents are involved in with their children at home. Do they

read to them, or have the children read to the parents? Do parents assist their children

with their homework? Barriers to involvement are what roadblocks parents encountered that prevented them from greater involvement. Support for greater involvement referred to the kind of support parents would like from the school in order to enhance their involvement at home.

Validity

Bush (2007) aptly described validity as judging "whether the research accurately describes the phenomenon that it is intended to describe" (p. 97) from the perspectives of the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, Creswell (2009) contended that validity, one of the strengths of qualitative research, is based on ascertaining whether the results are correct from the standpoint of both the researcher and the participants. The level of validity was achieved through the triangulation of different methods. Triangulation is the comparison of two or more approaches or cross-checking of different types of data in order to establish accuracy and improve validity (Bush, 2007). Similarly, Creswell (2007) described triangulation as the use of a combination of different data collection methods to construct themes which helps to validate the study. The reduction of research bias is an important step towards achieving trustworthiness of this study. Therefore, I employed member checking as a means of increasing trustworthiness and credibility. In addition, after every two interviews, I used non-peer debriefing with my committee chair.

The first means of establishing trustworthiness was the use of member checking. Usually, this process is a one-time event where participants verify the transcripts and their interpretation (Carlson, 2010). Curtin & Fossey (2007) describe member checking

as a "way of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants' experiences" (p. 92). The researcher will "determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (Creswell, 2007, p. 191). Determining the accuracy of the transcribed data will ensure the reduction of the "risk of bias" (Scott & Morrison, 2006) and "significant errors that may have an impact on the quality of the transcript and, as a result, on the quality of the entire research" (Mero-Jaffe, 2011, p. 234).

In this study, as a means of establishing credibility and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I gave the participants the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the data after it was transcribed and themes and categories were developed. Trustworthiness was achieved by the participants validating the transcribed data by making corrections and clarifying any issues that arose (Mero-Jaffe, 2011).

The second method of verifying consistency and trustworthiness was the two debriefing exercises. A non-peer debriefing with my committee chair after every two interviews and initial coding took place in order to discuss emerging codes and the usefulness of the initial coding scheme.

The third method of verifying trustworthiness was by means of peer debriefing. Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggested that this method keeps the researcher "honest" with a view to achieving accuracy. Therefore, for this study, trustworthiness was further derived by engaging the services of an experienced professional, who is an educator in a similar school to play devil's advocate by reviewing and asking questions "about the qualitative

study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher" (Creswell, 2007, p. 192).

Summary and Transition

The purpose of this study was to investigate Black parents' at-home literacy involvement with their kindergarten to grade two children, including the factors that adversely affected their involvement. I conducted this investigation through the use of a qualitative phenomenological study. Merriam (2009), in describing qualitative research, stated that it is understanding people's experiences, while Moustakas (1994) posited that phenomenology is "the aim to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it" (p. 13).

I gave a description of the type of adherence to ethical conduct regarding the rights of participants, as well as an explanation of my role as the researcher. I described the sample and population, the instruments and materials, the data collection, the data analysis, and the process of establishing reliability and validity of the study. Section 4 outlines the process of the study of the available participants at the selected site. The study did not convene until I had received approval from the IRB. I presented a letter of approval to the principal, at which time I requested permission to conduct the research at the school. Section 5 includes a discussion of the findings from the study, the interpretation of the findings, the implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further research.

Section 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the at-home literacy involvement of Black parents of K-2 children who attended an urban religious elementary school. Additionally, I was interested to explore the factors that may have adversely affected parents' involvement.

In the first pages of this section, I give an account of how data was generated, gathered, and recorded. I also present the different methods used to track all collected data, such as consent forms, interview transcripts, and researcher's reflective journal log. The other half of this section is dedicated to presenting the discussion of the analysis of the research findings, discrepant cases, nonconforming data, and evidence of quality.

The Generating, Gathering, and Recording of Data

The participants in the study were parents of children in K-2 classrooms at a religious private school. Participants signed consent forms (see Appendix C) either by email, or in person at the time of the interview, thereby giving their permission to participate in the study. Additionally, prior to the beginning of the interview, the participants filled out a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). Participants came from a variety of education and economic statuses. Table 1 describes the characteristics of the participants in this study, including pseudonyms for each. They are listed from lowest education and economic status, to the highest.

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants

Participants	Marital status	Educational Status	Economic status	Grade of child
Patricia	Married	High School or less	Median	K
Sadie	Married	Some College	Median	1st
Joyce	Single	Some College	Median	1st
Mary Jane	Divorced	College Grad	Median	2nd
Sharon	Single	College Grad	Median	1st
Lucy	Married	College Grad	High	1st
Marsha	Married	College Grad	High	K
Penny	Married	College Grad	High	1st

As the table shows, all participants who volunteered were women. Four were married, two were single, and one was divorced. Five of the women were college graduates, two had participated in some college, and only one had not. Five were of median income level ($30,000.00 – 74,999.00), and three were high income level ($75,000.00 and higher). This was based on their self-report. Two had kindergarten age children. Four had first grade children. Only one had a second grade child.

The participants were asked to respond to questions from the prepared interview guide (see Appendix E). The responses revealed the participants' lived experiences while supporting their children at home in literacy activities. Each participant received a small

compensation of a $15 Barnes and Noble gift card after the member checking process was completed.

I used semistructured interviews to collect data for this phenomenological study. Each personal interview consisted of questions derived from the research questions, the interview guide, follow-up questions, and probes. Each interview session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Three participants responded to the invitation to volunteer in the study, and these interviews were conducted in the three weeks following the close of school for the summer break. There were no other responses for the remainder of the summer, so I extended an additional invitation to the parents in the fall at the beginning of the new school year 2014-2015. For the five participants who responded during the fall, one interview was conducted each week over a 5-week period. A total of six interviews were conducted face-to-face, and two were rescheduled and conducted by phone. The phone interviews were done because these two parents had a conflict and cancelled the face-to-face interview.

I conducted six person-to-person, one-on-one interviews, each at a location chosen by the participant. I emailed the consent forms to four of the participants before their interviews, and each of the four participants responded favorably with the words 'I consent.' The other four participants signed the consent form in my presence at the time of the interview. Arrangements such as date, time, and place to conduct the interviews were made with each participant by telephone. Additionally, during each telephone conversation, general information regarding the study, the purpose and the process of the interview, and issues of confidentiality were discussed. I also took the opportunity during

the telephone conversation to thank each participant for the willingness to participate in

the study.

At the meeting for the interview, I initially greeted each participant and engaged

in "polite conversation" (e.g., Hatch, 2002) to set the individual at ease. Before actually

beginning the interview, I thanked the participant for the willingness to participate in the

research. I reminded the participants of the process of the interview, which included

taping the interviews, and assured them of its confidentiality. During the interview, I used

a notepad to record my thoughts regarding any concerns the participants might have had,

register my reactions to a particular answer that the participant gave, or to make note of

something that needed clarification later (Merriman, 2009).

Systems Used for Tracking of Data

All relevant and necessary tools needed for the study, such as digital tape

recorder, notepad, consent forms, demographic information sheets, and all printed word

documents (transcriptions) will be kept in a locked filing pouch and stored in a locked

filing cabinet in my home office. The computer, where I will store all word documents

regarding the study, is also locked with password protection.

Some participants chose a pseudonym from a list that I presented to them, while I

assigned others a pseudonym. I also assigned each participant a number along with the

pseudonym (e.g., Participant #1 – Julie). This was to protect the participants' identity,

ensure confidentiality, and lessen the likelihood of confusion while I was analyzing the

data. Within 2 working days after each interview, I completed transcribing the recorded

interview. At the end of the coding process, I arranged with the participants to meet for the member checking.

In addition to the transcription of the interviews, which were kept in a binder, I kept a note of the date, time, and location of each interview. I recorded any ideas that came to mind before, during, and after the interviews on the interview guide sheet. The participants' consent forms and demographic information, as well as any other pertinent information relating to the participants were stored in a locked filing pouch.

I manually coded all the recorded data collected in the interviews. Each transcription was color-coded to reflect the different themes that emerged as I read and re-read the documents. Once I was able to discern the different themes and patterns emerging, I created a table in Microsoft Word of the different themes, subthemes, and the frequency of their appearance in the text. The use of this table allowed me a clearer vision of how the themes and subthemes were related. It also gave me the opportunity to compare of the themes. This table is stored on my computer with a password.

I used Creswell's six steps of data analysis (Creswell, 2009) to analyze the data. First, I transcribed the data, then did a thorough first reading of the transcription, in order to gain a general sense of the information gathered. I did two to three additional readings of the transcriptions before beginning the coding process. Different themes and categories were generated in preparation for analysis. Through this process, I was able to think about how I was going to represent the findings in the narrative, and finally, extract meaning from the data.

One way that I ensured that my collected data were reliable, was to conduct two

debriefing sessions with my chair while conducting the interviews. Together we went through the transcriptions, examined the questions that were asked, conferred about the collected data, and compared and contrasted our coding of a transcript, as well as our thoughts regarding the process. Because of these debriefing sessions, I sought advice on how best to proceed with the interview process and to reflect on my feelings and questions about the emergent findings.

To ensure the validity of my findings, I conducted member checks both in person and on the phone. These member checks occurred soon after I had transcribed and coded the recorded interviews. Prior to emailing the transcripts to each participant, I made contact both by email and phone to arrange for another face-to-face meeting to review the transcript. Of the eight parents interviewed, two parents cancelled the face-to-face meeting and requested to have the member checks done by phone. All participants agreed with the transcriptions and analyses and reported that the information was correct.

I captured all collected data from the interviews on a digital recorder. The data were transcribed manually into Microsoft Word using a computer. All derived codes in the interviews were color-coded. I also assigned a letter code to each theme identified in the transcribed interview (e.g., PS – Parental Support). I identified the themes by comparison of data gathered from the interviews, research questions, and the literature review. I discovered a total of six overarching themes, each of which was identified in at least one sub-research question. A catalog of the themes relating to the research questions is included in Table 2.

Table 2

Derived Themes

Six main themes	Research questions
1. Parental Support/Involvement	1
2. Role of parent	1
3. Literacy activities	2
4. Literacy Materials	2
5. Barriers experienced by parents	3
6. School-Parent Literacy Relationship	3 & 4

BOOKS
Religious
Leveled
Board
Chapter
Series
Fantasy
Library
Educational
Books on tape

4.MATERIALS

Tools
Charts
Flash cards
DVDs/CDs
Magnetic letters
Board games
Boggle

Tech Gadgets
Smart phones
Kindle
Tablets
Leap Frog
Computer

5.BARRIERS
Time
Child's Attitude
Job Schedule
Child not focusing
Tiredness
Health
Lacks skills in framing
questions
Parent's accent
Mom gets home late

6. WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO TO SUPPORT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/SUPPORT

Be patient with child
Give handouts
Conduct workshops
Communicate with parents what is
being taught at school

1.PARENTAL SUPPORT

Library Books
Reads to child
Assists with homework
Literacy games
Print rich environment
Tutoring
Summer Program

CODING THEMES

3. PARENTS' ROLE
Motivator
Role Model
Reinforce what was
taught
Facilitator
Encourager
Teacher

Perception of PS
Parents must be up
front and personal
in child's education

2. LITERACY ACTIVITIES
Rhyming games
Hooked on Phonics
Hide & seek with words
Bingo
Kumon activity work sheets

Reading

Benefits
Child builds self-esteem
Child builds self-
confidence
Parent bonds with child
Child makes progress
Child has a leg up over
other children in the class

Child Reaction
Boredom
Excitement
Enjoyment
Argumentative
Pride
Confidence
Pleasure
Interested

Parent Reaction
Feels good
Rewarding
Has fun with child
Happiness

Music

Singing out story
Singing Nursery
Rhymes

Language

Phonics
Writing sentences
Word families
Word recognition
Spelling
Syllabication
Word meaning
Picture/word assoc.
Grammar activities

Read aloud
Story telling
Interactive
Read road signs
Parent reading big
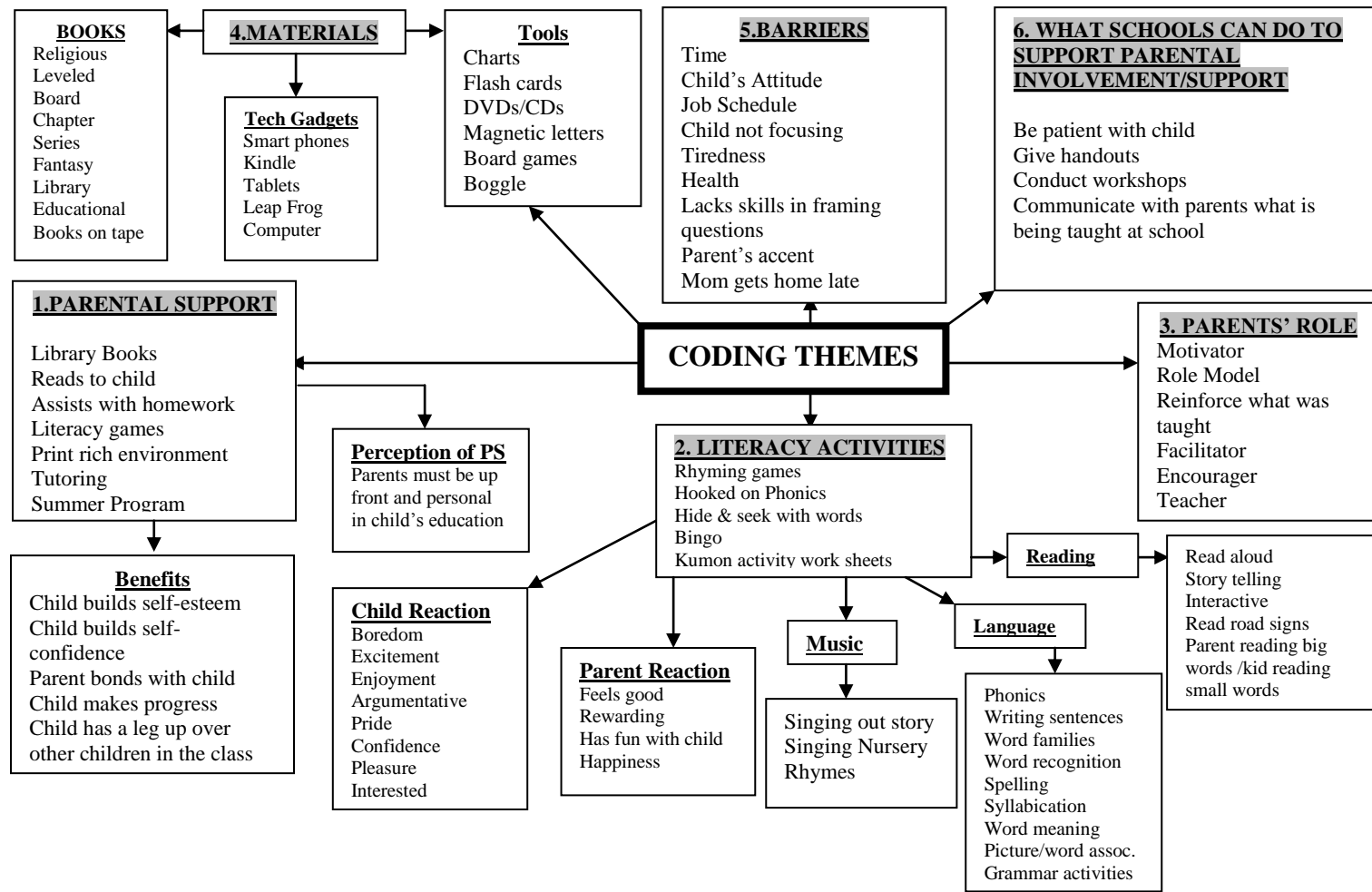words /kid reading
small words

Figure 1. Coding Themes.

As a result of discovering these themes and their frequency of occurrence, I organized the

sub-categories under each theme with this information, as can be seen in Figure 1.

I began constructing the themes for data analysis after the third transcribed interview

when I began to see the patterns emerge. The findings for each theme are presented in the

following section, along with direct quotes from participants that support these themes.

Findings

The phenomenological research method does not only depend on the number of

participants in a study, but also on the meaning of the "whole human condition" (Ray,

1994, p. 124). As a result, I studied a small number of participants and as I saw patterns

in the data, I organized them into themes and sub-themes as suggested by Moustakas

(1994). As displayed in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 1, there were six main themes

(which are underlined and grey highlighted in the figure). There were also a total of 10

subthemes that are upper and lower case and underlined. Under parental support there are

two sub-themes: beliefs of and perception of parental support. Under literacy activities

there were five subthemes including parent reaction, child reaction, music, language, and

reading. Parent role had no subthemes. Materials had three subthemes; books, technology

gadgets, and tools. Barriers had no subthemes. The last theme was the school-parent

literacy relationship.

The most obvious main themes and subthemes that became apparent while coding

the interview transcripts are discussed in this section (see Figure 1). Specifically, under

each research subquestion are listed the themes that came out of the coding. Themes

generally came about from the structure of the questions, and sub-themes were the clusters of different answers participants provided for each of the themes.

For each of the themes and subthemes there is an explanation regarding their emergence from the data. Also, for each of the themes that had subthemes, the subthemes are then listed and explained under their own headings. The next section includes this discussion, beginning with Research Subquestion 1. I then describe each theme. Then under each theme, the subthemes are discussed. This is repeated until all themes and subthemes are listed and explained. For a visual depiction of this structure please refer to Figure 1.

Research Subquestion 1

What do these Black parents report about their at-home support of their children's literacy development?

Five sub-themes which were directly related to the first research question materialized from the coding process: First, parental support at home with the two sub-themes of parents' perception of parental involvement and the benefits of parental support. These are illustrated in the bottom left corner of Figure 1.

Main theme one: Parental support. The findings from the collected and coded data reflect the participants' description of their experiences relating to their involvement at home in literacy activities with their children. The first interview question focused on the support that the parents gave their children at home in literacy activities. The general response from each parent reflected the different areas in which support was given.

Most of the parents supported their child by providing a print rich environment at home. Others had their child join the library as a means of helping the child to develop reading skills and to develop a love of books. All participants reported that they assisted their child with homework, some read to and with the child, played literacy games with their child, or enrolled child in a summer program or in a tutoring program.

Regarding support with library books, Participant #7 stated that "we would go to the public library and choose five books for his age group, then every evening before bedtime, he would read and I would read with him." Participant #8 voiced similar sentiments regarding reading books from the library when she reported that, "everyone has to get two books to read for the week."

Additionally, seven out of the eight parents who were interviewed explained that they involved themselves in reading activities with their child. The data showed that when the parents read with their child, the activities varied. Some parents read to the child, while others engaged in a more interactive reading activity. Yet, other parents allowed the child to do the reading.

According to Participant #4, when she got involved in a reading activity with her child she would sometimes "read one line and he'll read the next line." Participant #4 also reported that she would gently ease herself out of reading the whole story as she would "slowly stop reading to him during the reading session and encourage him to read more of it and as he gets more into the story, he's more willing to read whatever there is." Another parent, Participant #8 reported that in order to make the reading activity fun and exciting, she had the child "act out or pretend" she was the character in the story.

Participant #8 also encouraged her child to engage in reading with her younger sibling. This was evidenced in her statement that "the older take turns and read to the younger girls."

Another area of support was assisting the child with homework. All eight parents reported that they involved themselves in the child's homework. All of the parents stated that they allowed the child to work independently, but only intervened if the child had a problem. Participant #7 commented that "if he has any problems, he'll call me and I come and help him."

Other areas of support included participating in literacy games with the child, providing a print-rich environment at home, tutoring services offered to the child and enrolling child in summer programs. Seven of the eight participants testified to the literacy games that they were involved in with their child and further suggested that there were benefits to the child accrued from these activities. For instance, regarding the types of literacy activities done at home, Participant #8 stated, "I ask her to draw her own pictures of how she would put herself into the story." Participant #5 used online activities to enhance her child's literacy skills. She said, "I like to put my child on the computer to do activities on ABCMouse.com. While Participant #7 claimed that to have her child do additional work from books she bought is also an act of engaging in literacy activities. Participant #7 reported:

> I go into the bookstores and I buy my own first grade book. This is not part of his
> school work or anything, so when he is finished with his school assignments, then

we go into the book . . . and sometimes I do a lesson that coincides with what his homework was about.

The provision of a print rich environment also contributed to the support given by the parent and also to the child's knowledge base. For example, Participant #4 stated, "in his bedroom there is a bookshelf with all sort of books." Participant #5 also posited, "I have a library and I have different buckets where I have assigned different books." For Participant #1, aside from having a library of books, she reported that she has "charts with words on the wall."

Only one parent reported that she provided added tutoring support for her child by enrolling him in Kumon to assist him with his reading skills and another parent registered her child in a summer learning program. The Table below presents a breakdown for the tasks parents performed while giving support to their child in literacy activities at home.

Table 3

Parental Support

Tasks	No. of participants
Child joins library	6
Reads to child	7
Homework	8
Literacy games with child	7
Print/rich environment	7
Tutoring	1
Summer program	1

Parental Support Sub-theme 1: Parents' perception of parental involvement.
Joyce & Sills (2009), affirmed that phenomenological enquiry is particularly appropriate
to address meanings and the experiences of the participants since the main concern of
phenomenological analysis is to understand from the participants' perspective (Cresskill,
2012). The interviews were focused on soliciting descriptions of the participants'
experiences and how they perceived these experiences. All the participants agreed that
being involved in their child's academic endeavors was vital to the child's educational
career. In discussing what the parents perceived parental involvement to be, two
participants voiced their perception of what parental involvement or support involved.
Participant #7 passionately expressed her beliefs about parental involvement when she
stated:

> Parental involvement is being up front and personal in the education of their
> children. When it comes to reading, they should be up front, the driving force
> behind the child's ability to read, and to comprehend what they read. I know the
> school does their part, but without the input of the home, then the child does not
> have a complete, all-rounded reading experience. Whatever one lacks the other
> picks up.

Participant #6 maintained that parental involvement meant "knowing your child,
and to work with the teachers."

*Parental Support Sub-theme 2: Parents' perception of benefits of parental
involvement.* The second sub-themes of the main them Parental Support on Figure 1 is
Benefits Parental Support. The consensus from all the parents was that both parent and

child benefited from working together in literacy activities at home in one way or another. Although there was evidence of some parents noting that their child lacked focus or had a bad attitude, the underlying tone of the responses suggested that the child showed improvement academically and demonstrated "excitement," "enjoyment," "pleasure," and other positive emotions when performing the literacy activities at home. Additionally, the parents felt "good," "had fun with my child," experienced "happiness," and felt that working with the child and seeing positive results was "rewarding." For example, Participant #4 mentioned that "reading together brings us closer." According to Participant #6, reading with her child "bonds me with him. We have a nice time together as mother and son." Additionally, Participant #3 revealed that "my daughter builds her self-confidence in reading."

Main theme two: Literacy activities performed at home. There were many types and a large quantity of literacy activities that parents performed with their children. They are organized into five sub-themes in Figure 1: (1) Child's reaction, (2) parent's reaction, (3) Music, (4) Language, and (5) reading. Most of the parents were quite excited to relate the types of literacy activities that they used to support their child at home. As I searched for patterns and themes, the activities that most parents reported that they used were reading aloud (parent reading aloud with the child or child reading aloud to the parent), reading interactively (parent reading one sentence and child reading another sentence), and performing comprehension skills. Participant #7 noted that "after our devotion, he would read and I would read with him. Most of the words he did not know, but I would read with him." Participant #8 described her activity with the child reading to

her when she said that, "sometimes I allow her to read the story to me." Participant #6

reported that "I will read a sentence and have him read the other sentence."

Other literacy activities included games. Participant #7 reported, "If we are in the

car or the supermarket, I try playing rhyming games with him." Music was also used as a

means of teaching nursery rhymes. Participant #2 reported, "in the car we listen to Old

McDonald and things like that." Parents also used comprehension activities as a means of

building the child's literacy skills. Participant #5 noted that after reading, she would ask

the child questions such as "what was the story about?" or "what do you like about the

story?"

Main theme three: Parents' role. This is a main theme that has no sub-themes

but does have a list of roles in the box in Figure 1 on the right side, middle. One of the

themes that emerged as I coded the transcripts was the role that parents played in the

academic lives of their children. Six of the eight parents commented that they considered

their role to be that of a facilitator. An example of how Participant #4 facilitated her

child's learning was evident in her statement "I help with the homework that she has."

Other roles that emerged were that of a motivator, a teacher, a reinforcer, a role model,

and encourager (see Appendix F). In reference to the role that a parent played in the

educational development of the child, Participant #7 stated that "I'm the number one

teacher" and yet Participant #3 noted that "it's my responsibility to reinforce what the

teacher taught at school." Parents showed that when their child had doubts about their

abilities to read, encouragement and motivation were tools used to propel the child to

success. For example, Participant #7, in response to her child who doubted himself,

commented: "You tell yourself you can't read, but you can." Further encouragement was

evidenced when she stated that "from there, I took him, and we kept going and going.

Words he didn't know, I would tell him over and over and over and over until he got it."

Research Sub-question Two

What kind of materials do these Black parents use at home with their children

during literacy activities?

Theme four: Materials. All the parents reported that a wide array of materials

was used at home with their children in literacy activities. I organized them into three

sub-themes including books, technological gadgets, and tools in Figure 1. In each sub-

theme, I was able to further distinguish the different types of books and technological

gadgets that were used. A detailed breakdown of the types of materials used is in Figure 1

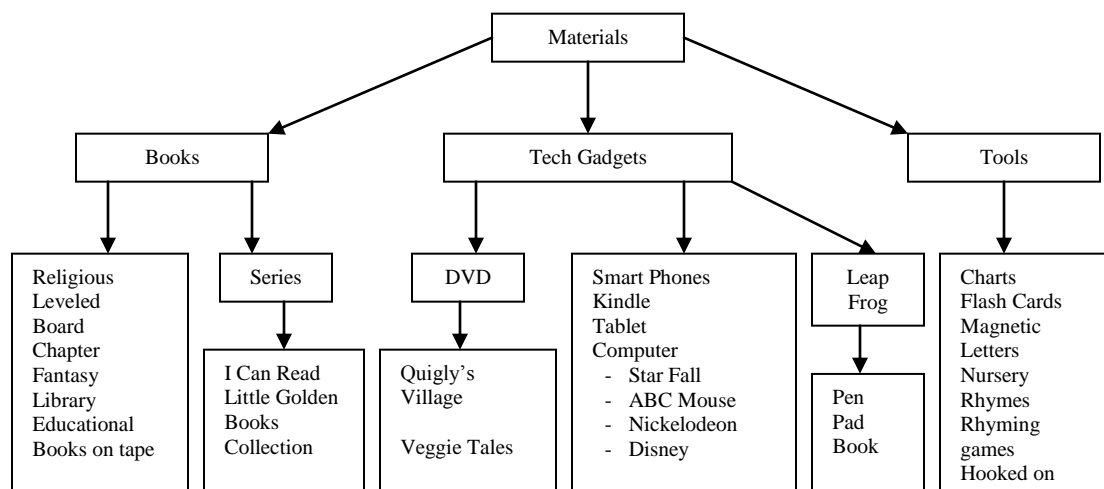above, and more specifically in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Materials used in literacy activities.

With regards to the type of books that parents used, Participant #5 stated, "I have a lot of books on tape." Participant #6 said that she had "a library of books." Not only books were used to support the child's literacy activity at home, but technological gadgets were also used. Examples of some of the gadgets used by the parents were described in the following quotes. Participant #5 said, "I have a computer where he goes into Starfall.com website." Participant #2 added, "I have a Kindle to read stories." Finally Participant #1 shared that they have "one of those Leapfrog set where you have the tag, the pen that reads the words in the book." Other materials used included charts, puzzles, Hooked on Phonics board game, magnetic letters, and flash cards.

Research Sub-question Three

Do these Black parents experience barriers to their being more involved at home in their children's literacy activities, and if so, what are the barriers?

Theme five: Barriers to parental involvement. The parents were quite open and forthcoming in reporting the types of barriers to involvement that they were experiencing. Time, tiredness, and job schedule were the three barriers that affected the parents the most. Participant #7 reported that "when I come home from work it was minutes to nine and I found me not being able to spend quality time with him in the evenings." Participant #1 noted that "it's the time constraints" that prevent her from doing more with her child. According to Participant #4, "being too tired" keeps her from helping her child sometimes, while Participant #1 in describing how her job schedule prevents her from doing as much as she would like, lamented that "Dad and I, we're trying. It's not an everyday thing, to be honest . . . because we work nights." Two parents reported that

health issues played a role in inhibiting their full involvement, while other barriers such as the child's lack of ability to focus and the child's attitude towards the parent were cause for parents' low involvement. Figure 3 below outlines in detail the different barriers experienced by the parents.
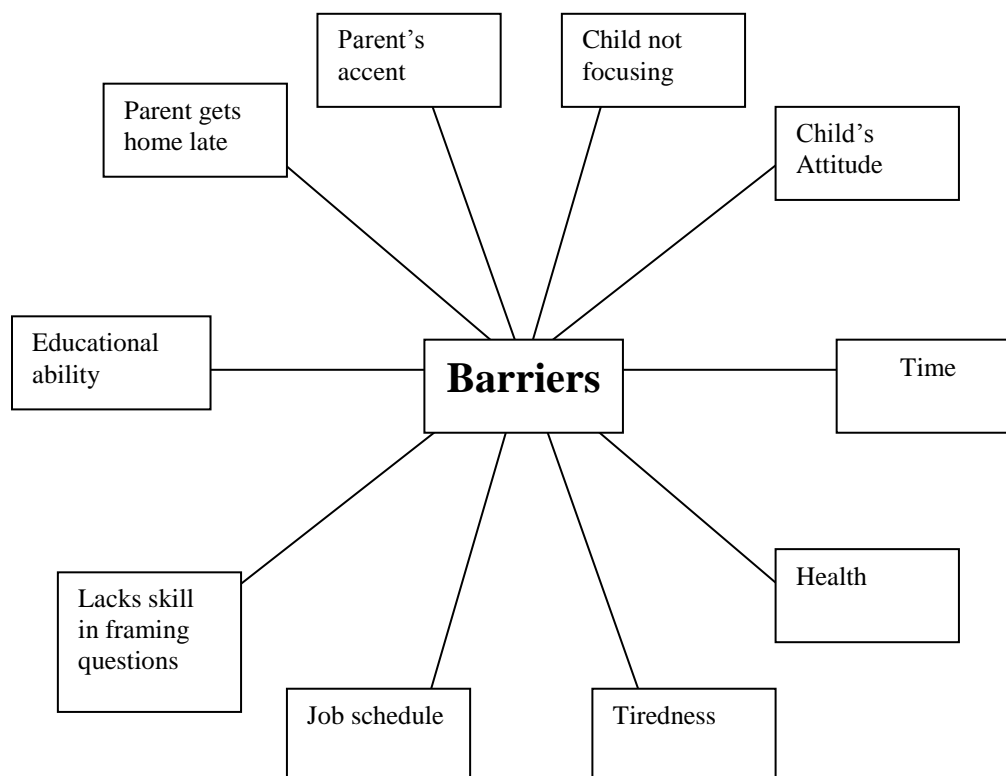

Figure 3. Barriers to parental involvement.

Research Sub-question Four

What kind of support from the school, including potential materials, would parents accept and prefer to help them in overcoming the barriers to greater involvement in their children's literacy activities?

Theme six: What the school can do to support parent involvement at home. This, the final theme, is located in the top right corner of Figure 1 and does not have any subthemes. Most of the parents felt that there was nothing that the school could do to alleviate the barriers they experienced, such as tiredness, job schedules, and lack of time. However, the parents felt very strongly that the school could do more to help parents to better assist their child at home in literacy activities. For instance, Participant #1 stated:

> If I don't know what the teacher is doing during the days, I don't know how to reinforce that at home. So, I would like for the teachers to tell me what was taught or if my child had a problem with a particular concept or idea, and so when I come home in the evenings I can help.

Participant #6 said, "I think if the teacher told me more of what she is doing in the classroom . . . it would help because I might be showing him a different way than the teacher is doing." Additionally, Participant #8 stated that she would like to see the school "communicate with parents about what is being taught at school."

In summary, it appears that parents would like to know more about and better understand what is happening for reading instruction at the school. They want information about at school, not literacy support for at home.

Most of the parents maintained that they did not receive any type of support from the school in terms of assisting the child at home. However, the parents affirmed that they would be receptive to any such type of support. One parent shared that she would like to receive "the day to day schedule, a timetable" so she could know ahead of time what subjects her child is expected to do for any specific day. Another parent was open to attending "workshops" and receiving "handouts."

Discrepant Cases and Nonconfirming Data

There was one instance of non-confirming data that was quite broad; the parents did not need help from the school, but the school could do some things to help. On the one hand, participants said they were comfortable with doing literacy activities and didn't need help from the school. On the other hand, when I explicitly asked the parents what the school could do to help, they had several ideas.

The participants in this study were very vocal about the role they played in the academic development of their child in literacy activities at home. These parents also reported on the wide array of materials their child had at his/her disposal. It is important to note that the parents stated that they had no problem assisting their child at home with materials and that there was nothing that the school could do to help them with additional literacy materials.

However, when the parents responded to the interview question about what other kind of help they would like to get from the school to help with the child's reading; the parents said they would like some literacy materials in the form of handouts explaining the concepts taught at school. Other materials that parents would like to receive from the

school included literacy activity work sheets. For example, a worksheet focusing on a specific sound, such as "sh" or "ch" so parent and child can work on that concept at home also. Additionally, sending home little leveled readers for the child to practice to read would also be helpful.

Some responses revealed that the parents did not need any type of assistance from the school because "I have all that I need at home." Another reason for not wanting help from the school was the fear of "extra cost." In summary it appears that the parents were content with the literacy activities they have at home, but if the school was going to send home materials they had some ideas about what would be helpful.

Evidence of Quality

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), central to establishing trustworthiness, is the act of determining credibility. In order to achieve trustworthiness, I ensured that I achieved credibility of the study by means of several processes. Before I collected any data, the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and assessed all aspects of this research study such as the methodology, the data collection procedures, and all instruments (consent forms, interview guide questions, demographic questionnaire, etc.) to be utilized in this study. Receiving consent from IRB with approval number 04-28-14-0139057 to conduct data collection, served to validate my proposed methods and procedures thereby guaranteeing credibility of the research.

To gain the trust of the participants, before each interview began, I engaged each participant in light, pleasant conversation to break the ice and make them feel welcome, at ease, and comfortable. For each interviewee, I reviewed the content of the consent

form, reminding them of their rights, ensuring their confidentiality, and explaining the risks and benefits of the research study. The participants either signed the consent forms in my presence or signed online and sent to me by email with the words "I consent."

I audio-taped and personally transcribed all the recorded data. I listened to the taped interviews once completely before beginning the transcription. I read and re-read the transcribed interviews several times to ensure that I transcribed the content verbatim. If I was not sure of any portion of the transcription, I would listen again to the taped interview while following along with the transcription to ensure accuracy of content. After the coding process was completed, and I began to analyze the data, I used rich descriptions to depict the meaning of the participants' perspectives, practices, and experiences. This process was evident in the quoted narratives included in the analysis.

Another means of ensuring credibility was the utilization of member-checking. Member checking or "respondent validation" (Merriam, 2009, p. 217), was used to request feedback from the participants on the transcribed interview. Merriam posited that the use of member checks is vital to validating the data and discovering any biases that the researcher may have because it helps to "rule out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on." (p. 217).

Next, I engaged in non-peer debriefing sessions with my chair during the interviewing process. My chair and I reviewed and discussed the transcripts, examined the interview guide questions and probes, coded a transcript so we could compare notes, and expressed our thoughts about the process. These debriefing sessions gave me a

clearer vision of the coding process, where I was doing well and where I fell short. The sessions also allowed me to reflect on what I had done previously and how to proceed from thereon.

All relevant instruments used in the study, such as letters of permission, consent form, researcher-generated semi-structured interview guide questions, and demographic questionnaire, are provided in the appendix.

Summary

This section focused on the qualitative process of gathering, generating, and recording the data, the tracking of the data, the findings, and analysis of the data. The analysis revealed nine themes reflecting the participants' perspectives and experiences: parental perception of parental involvement, parental support/involvement, benefits of parental support at home, role of the parent, literacy activities done at home, materials used at home, barriers experienced by parents, what schools can do to help parents, and receptivity of parents to help from the school. I used direct quotes from the participants to support the findings in this section. In Section 5, the interpretation of these findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be discussed.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendation

Overview of Study

Researchers (e.g., Anderson & Minke, 2007; Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hawes & Plourde, 2005) have confirmed that home-based parental involvement benefits students academically. Research has been conducted on parental involvement in the Black community (Howard & Reynolds, 2008), and in the private religious schools, such as the Catholic school system (Donovan, 1999), but there has not been any research conducted on Black and Caribbean parents who have children in schools from the specific protestant denomination under investigation. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the at-home literacy involvement of Black and Caribbean parents with their grade K-2 children who attend an urban religious elementary school, as well as the factors, if any, that affected their involvement.

The overarching research question which guided this research was: What do the Black parents of children in kindergarten through grade two in an urban religious elementary school report about their at-home literacy activities with their children, their perception of barriers to further involvement, and their receptivity to different forms of school support to overcome the barriers?

The following were the subquestions:

1. What do these Black parents report about their at-home support of their children's literacy development?

2. What kind of materials do these Black parents use at home with their children during literacy activities?

3. Do these Black parents experience barriers to their being more involved at home in their children's literacy activities, and if so, what are the barriers?

4. What kind of support from the school, including potential materials, would parents accept and prefer to help them in overcoming the barriers to greater involvement in their children's literacy activities?

I used a phenomenological approach to gather information about the experiences and perceptions of the parents relating to the home-based literacy activities engaged in with their children. The sample was comprised of the parents of students in Grades K to 2 in a private urban religious elementary school who were of 18 years or older and were willing and able to participate in the study. I used semistructured interviews to collect data. The data analysis which included the six suggested analytical techniques by Creswell (2009) as well as use of a coding system, provided answers to the research questions.

Nine main themes reflecting the participants' perspectives and experiences emerged from the analysis. Figure 1 provides a useful visual summary of the theme and subtheme structure. There were four main themes related to parental support including parental perception of parental involvement, parental support/involvement, benefits of parental support at home, and role of the parent. There were two main themes that had many subthemes, altogether 8 subthemes regarding activities and materials. Finally, the last three subthemes are on the topic of what help parents need to be more engaged in literacy activities with their children including: the barriers parents needed to overcome, what schools can do to help parents, and receptivity of parents to help from the school.

The information uncovered from the interviews showed that all the parents actively engaged themselves in one form or other of literacy activities with their children at home. Most parents had a wide variety of materials at their disposal to use with their children in literacy activities; and furthermore, they all thought that their children benefited both academically and emotionally, from these activities. In the following subsection, I discuss the interpretation of the findings.

Interpretation of Findings

Looking at the data as a whole, it seems clear that the sample of participants all valued literacy education for their children and engaged them in activities with a variety of materials. The primary barriers they faced were time, job schedule, and tiredness. The support the parents would welcome from school included workshops on how to assist their children with literacy activities and handouts on any specific literacy skill that was being taught at school. In the following sections, I will interpret the findings in terms of each of the six main themes from this research: parental support, literacy activities, parent's role, literacy materials, barriers to literacy at-home learning, and the parent-school literacy education relationship.

Themes from the Study

Theme one: Parental support. The study also aptly reflected the stance and viewpoints of current and seasoned researchers as well as theorists such as Anderson and Minke, (2007), Bonci, Mottran, and McCoy, (2010), Epstein, (2001), Hoover-Dempsey and Jones, (1997), and Jeynes, (2007). The literature mirrored the perspectives and upbeat attitudes of the parents to the home-based support in literacy activities with their

children. The parents reported that the learning at home activities that they engaged in with their children resulted in academic success. Furthermore, most of the parents' responses as to why they felt it was important for them to support their children at home, reflected the theoretical framework of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1995) role construction theory which stated that parents felt obligated to be involved because "they develop a personal construction of the parental role that includes participation in their children's education" (p. 310).

Parents felt they had to assist their children at home because they believed that it was their job to be involved. Participant #7, in response to what role she played in her child's educational life, stated, "it is my responsibility to help him, to encourage him. As his mom, that is what I need to do." The high level of involvement that most of the parents reported in literacy activities with their children reflected Anderson and Minke's (2007) argument that parents with a high level of belief in what their role was in their children's educational career displayed a high level of involvement.

Radzi, Razak, and Sukor, (2010) posited that learning at home involved activities that either the parent or child initiated. In this study, sometimes the parent would ask to read and in others the child would. Participant #7 later disclosed that as a result of consistent reading with her child, his reading abilities and literacy skills improved. This statement resonated with results from a study conducted by Manz and McWayne, (2009) which revealed that when parents provide books for their children and engage them in reading activities, the result is enhanced literacy skills.

In keeping with the thought of encouraging parents to engage themselves in reading activities with their children, as well as the urgent need to have children read fluently by the third grade, programs have been set in place to encourage young parents to begin reading with their newborns with a view to building the child's vocabulary from a very early stage. Barbara Bush's Foundation for Family Literacy launched the Love Read Learn literacy program in October, 2014. This literacy program included a baby journal for new parents for the promotion of literacy. The intent of issuing these free journals to the new mothers was to encourage the parents to begin reading to their babies at a very early age.

The types of parents that participated in the study (listed in Table 1) included parents who reported annual household incomes ranging from median to high. The findings of this study revealed that the participants were quite involved with their children especially with assisting with homework, participating in literacy games, and providing appropriate literacy materials for their children. This evidence coincides with the findings of Strasser and Lissi (2009) and Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff, and Ortiz (2008) which found that medium to high socioeconomic status (SES) positively related to a higher level of parental involvement.

Further, findings from the literature also revealed that middle- and high-income parents (as were these parents in the study) tend to be more involved with their children's schooling than low-income parents (Rowan-Kenyon, Bell, & Perna, 2008). Participant #7 who had two jobs, and whose husband also worked, reported her SES as high. However, her second job schedule prevented her from coming home on time to spend quality time

with her son. The nanny took care of him until both parents returned home at night. Participant #7 reported that there was not enough time and effort given to literacy activities after school. As a result of this, the parent made the decision to give up her second job so she could focus on spending time with her son and engaging with him in literacy activities at home.

Findings from Henderson and Berla (2004) indicated that parents' participation at home with their children was expressed through the provision of teaching the child at home, showing interest in the child's homework, and importantly, instituting a set routine for the child after school. For the most part, the participants shared that they created a learning environment for their children and the established a daily routine for when the children got home from school in the evenings. Additionally, the parents provided tutoring for the child when needed, whether it is at home or with an outside entity. This is consistent with Epstein (1992) who also found that parent involvement included creating the type of home environment that assisted in the child's learning experience and helped to reinforce what the child learned at school.

Theme two: Literacy activities. The findings of this study suggested that the at-home literacy learning activities performed by the some of the parents and their children had contributed to the children preparing themselves to read at school. Evidence of this was reflected in a parent's report of how she took action when, in her estimation, her son was not performing as he should. Her voice exemplifies the conviction these parents have about their role in literacy education of their children; they are in charge.

Research in the literature review has indicated that the children benefit with increased academic success as a result of parental involvement at home (Garcia & Hasson, 2004; Hill & Tyson, 2009; & Neuman, 2013). Along similar lines, most of the parents agreed that engaging with their children in reading and other literacy activities accrue benefits to the child. A question posed to the parents about how their efforts in literacy instruction at home benefited her child, their response suggested that their children did very well in school and some even helped other children with reading.

Theme three: Role of the parent. Even though parental involvement normally includes activities performed at school and at home (Taliaferro, DeCuir-Gunby, & Allen-Eckard, 2009), this study primarily focused on involvement at home, especially in literacy activities. The perspectives that the participants communicated supported the theoretical frameworks used to inform this study -- Hoover-Dempsey's & Jones' (1997) parental role construction theory and one of Epstein's (2001) six types of parental involvement, specifically learning at home.

Theme four: Literacy materials. The most common type of materials the participants used in this study to achieve the success of their children was books. These participants reported different kinds of literacy activities that they were involved in with their children as a result of the reading activities. Participant #8 reported that she asked her daughter to put herself in the story and draw which character she would like to be. Participant #6 said that she engaged in comprehension activities by asking her son to recall what the story was about. The results revealed from an analysis of *The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99* (ECLS-K) which was

sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) declared that children who came from a print rich environment and who were read to often exhibit greater proficiency in reading skills when they began school in the early grades. Another study conducted by Silinkas et al. (2010) also found that the most successful tool used at home was reading activities performed by parent and child.

The parents reported that they were involved in different types of literacy activities at home, such as read alouds, rhyming games, hide and seek with words, story telling, singing nursery rhymes, writing sentences, and spelling games. An assortment of materials at the parents' disposal included, library, religious, educational, and chapter books; technological gadgets such as smart phones, kindle, computers, and tablets; and other miscellaneous items such as charts, flash cards, magnetic letters, DVDs, and board games.

Theme five: Barriers to literacy at-home learning. In spite of all the tools the parents' had at their disposal to engage in such a wide range of activities, there were indications of some challenges that they faced while attempting to support their children at home. Several challenges such as "working night shifts," "child not focusing," "health," "child's attitude," and "parent's accent" were reported by the parents; however, the main challenges experienced by the participants were job schedules, time constraints, and tiredness. In the literature, Harris & Goodall, (2008) reported that the parents' working conditions, which in turn affect job schedules, were barriers to effective parent involvement at home. Two of the parents identified with this type of barrier quite a bit. The Center for Public Policy Priorities (1999) also stated that time constraints was

another challenge that parents encountered in trying to be involved in literacy learning at home with their children. Not having enough time to spend with the child was one of the main obstacles that the parents encountered.

Most of the participants reported that while there were challenges to overcome, there were also benefits to working with their children at home in literacy activities. For example, one parent reported that a benefit that she saw from engaging with her child, was that "my son is interested in reading." Another parent claimed that working with her child "bonds me with him." Other benefits reported by parents included the child being successful at school, and the personal enjoyment of "seeing the excitement" when the child has grasped the concept taught by the parent.

Theme six: Parent-school literacy education relationship. Inasmuch as most parents reported having adequate materials to teach or tutor their children at home, as well as being able to assist them with homework, there were evidences of a need for something that would further facilitate their efforts. Participant #7 stated that she would like to receive the "day-to-day schedule," so she could see when each subject was being taught, and also if "one period was designated for reading." Participant #6 said that if the teacher explained to her the specific skill taught to her son, then she would be better able to assist him at home. Henderson & Mapp (2002) and Wanat (2010) affirmed that when parents and schools have a positive partnership, then the student experiences success. The participants related that there indeed was communication with the school, but the lack of collaboration was apparent. Findings from Wanat's (2010) study revealed that when parents and teachers collaborated, the results were positive academically for the children.

Another area that parents were concerned about was not having the class teacher reach out to the parents to ascertain if they were able to properly assist their children at home. Epstein & Jansorn (2004) both confirm that parents need all the help and support they can get in order to understand the development of their children as they strive to assist them in their learning experience. The literature review also suggested another way to help parents better support their children at home is by having the parents volunteer in the classroom. Epstein et al. (1997), in outlining the six types of parental involvement, recommended that parents volunteer at school as one way to bridge the gap between parents and teachers in this literacy shortfall. The literature also showed that one of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) is that schools should encourage parents to volunteer at school to support their children's education. Furthermore, Epstein et al suggested that teachers should find ways to recruit parents and train them to assist in the classroom to share their time and talent. This would help the parents do a better job at home.

To further enhance this collaboration between parent and teacher to further the child's literacy development, other studies also argued that the schools should find ways to encourage and support parents at home in assisting their children in reading (Hornby, 2011; Padak & Rasinski, 2006). In light of this need of the parents to obtain help from the school, additional research conducted by Egbert & Salsbury (2009) revealed that when teachers had assigned literacy activities that involved parents for the children to take home, they benefited positively because of the one-on-one interaction between parents and their children at home.

Summary: Parental Perceptions of Parental Involvement

All the parents vigorously, and sometimes quite passionately, reported how they supported their child at home in literacy activities. Specifically, each of the eight parents stated that both parent and child participated in one form or other of reading activities, such as reading aloud, interactive reading, or acting out a story. The parents perceived that involving themselves in these types of activities not only helped to build the children's reading skills, but their self-confidence also. Additionally, both parent and child enjoyed being together and bonded during these activities. Overall, the study showed much commonality between the perspectives of Black parents and that of the wider socio-cultural spectrum of parents, as revealed in the studies of established researchers and theorists, yet it revealed some dimensions that are specific to this ethno-cultural group.

Implications for Social Change

Education, of which reading competence is a critical component, effects positive changes in society by facilitating upward social mobility, particularly for minorities. The research findings can be used by the school under investigation to develop policies and practices that assist these Black parents to become more involved at home in their children's literacy activities, so that their socially and culturally disadvantaged children can, through the early acquisition of literacy skills, receive a sound academic foundation, a key building block for positive social change.

Even if the school does not develop the policies and practices that the findings of the research findings indicate need to be put in place, the study will still increase the

capability of these Black parents to provide their children with the kind of literacy environment at home that will assist them in the early acquisition of reading skills, thus increasing the likelihood of their getting a good education. The shared success in this academic enterprise and the prospect of the upward mobility it makes possible will strengthen the family relationship between parents and children and enhance their self-esteem as individuals and as a family unit. As these families become more self-aware, empowered, and socially viable, the result will be significant improvement in the quality of life within the society at large, as a community is only as strong as the families of which it is comprised.

Recommendations for Action

The findings of this study revealed that the parents believed that involvement in literacy activities at home with their children was beneficial to the children's academic careers. The parents also reported that providing support at home to the child and assisting with the teaching is a major responsibility because, as one parent stated, "I am the number one teacher."

However, some parents believed that the school could do more to assist the parents with information regarding what the planned reading program will be for the ensuing term. Therefore, I recommend that (a) the teachers distribute the reading curriculum to the parents at the beginning of each term, (b) the teachers institute a volunteer reading program whereby parents can come in on a regular basis and lead out in reading sessions in the classroom, (c) the school organizes literacy workshops for the parents so they can be aware of the types of literacy activities in which students are

engaged in the classroom, and learn how to help their children at home with these activities; (d) distribute to parents handouts pertaining to specific literacy skills that are being taught at school, so that the parents can be aware of what is happening in the classroom and be in a better position to assist the child at home, either through assisting with the homework or reinforcing the concept taught at school.

Recommendation for Future Study

This study was limited to only one school in a religious school system and to one location. One recommendation for another phenomenological study would be to include more, if not all ten schools, in the religious school system. With a larger number of participants from a wider range of locations, as well as a broader spectrum of SES, inclusive of individuals in the lower bracket, there is the likelihood of having broader, fuller, and more diverse accounts of the parents' experiences and perspectives.

The second recommendation would be to conduct a phenomenological study that includes school-based parental involvement, as well as the teachers' perceptions regarding how involved parents are in literacy activities with their children, both at home and at school. A third recommendation for future study would be to conduct a quantitative study inclusive of all ten schools. The results of this quantitative study would then be generalizable to other schools outside of the religious school system used in this study.

A fourth recommendation would be to institute a parental involvement program across all ten schools for one term. Then conduct a qualitative study to find out from the teachers how they communicated with the parents regarding homework, class work, and

other areas that directly involve the parents; how effective was the program, what changes were evident, and if the program made a difference in the lives of the parents.

Reflection

My purpose for conducting this research was to explore how parents supported their children at home in literacy activities. I accomplished this by inviting the parents to divulge the type of literacy activities they engaged in with their children, as well as what materials were at their disposal for use while performing the activities. A phenomenological approach proved to be the ideal methodology to gather this type of information.

As I reviewed the literature for this study, there were so many articles speaking to the benefits of home-based parental involvement that resonated with me because of my deep beliefs in the phenomenon. I was a parent who provided a print rich environment for my children and I was my children's first and only teacher for the first seven years of their lives. That role continued through to two of my grandchildren. Therefore, I believe that being an involved parent and grandparent, coupled with my deep-seated conviction as well as being a preschool teacher, possibly evoked biases toward the advantages of home-based parental involvement. However, one of the lessons I learned as I conducted the research was to bracket my biases and not influence the participants' responses. Because of my beliefs, on the one hand, I expected the parents to give glowing reports of their involvement, but on the other hand, I thought that the findings would yield more negative results. However, I must say, I was happy amazed and felt satisfied at the level

of involvement of the parents and how passionate they felt about being involved at home with their children in literacy activities.

After gaining permission from IRB to collect data, I was somewhat disappointed that only three parents contacted me initially. However, in the fall I repeated the invitation and five other parents consented to participate in the study. These eight parents fell within the parameters of the suggested number of seven to ten participants for the study. The participants expressed the joys they felt as well as the challenges they faced in supporting their children at home in literacy activities. Another aspect of the research process that gave me great satisfaction was to see how the findings of the study supported the research questions and also reflected on the literature. However, I would have liked to have had a couple of the participants from the lower end of the SES scale to give me added information.

The whole process of interviewing the participants, coding, analyzing, and interpreting the data, has helped to strengthen my confidence in interview techniques, and helped me to become a better researcher. I am happy to see that, in spite of the challenges that some of the parents experienced, and having not received any support from the school regarding literacy materials, yet, they were quite passionate about the support they were able to give their children to propel them on to academic success.

Conclusion

The results of this study confirmed that the findings were consistent with the literature which revealed that home-based involvement in literacy activities greatly

enhanced the child's academic career (Bonci, Mottran, & McCoy, 2010). Additionally,

the views expressed by the parents echoed the importance they placed on supporting their

children at home in literacy activities. These Black and Caribbean parents reported that

the use of books, the material most used by them, as well as the types of literacy activities

that they engaged in with their children, consistently aligned with the literature as being

the ideal methods to propel their children on to academic success. Even though the

parents did not receive support from the school in the form of literacy materials, most of

them nevertheless were successful in helping their children to learn. Schools need to find

ways in which they can provide parents with the necessary tools to help them effectively

assist their children in literacy activities at home.

References

Anderson, K. J., & Minke, K. M. (2007). Parental involvement in education: Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. *Journal of Educational Research, 100*, 311-323. doi:10.3200/JOER.100.5.311-323

Anderson, S. A. (2000). How parental involvement makes a difference in reading achievement. *Reading Improvement. 37*(2), 61-86. Retrieved from http://www.highbeam.com/publications/reading-improvement-p4454

Anthony, C. M. (2008) Parental Involvement: An Examination of Barriers, Perceptions, and Strategies that Effect the Relationship between Parent and School. Walden University Dissertation, Publication No. 3320684.

Arnold, D. H., Zeljo, A., Doctoroff, G. L., & Ortiz, C. (2008). *Parent involvement in preschool: Predictors and the relation of involvement to preliteracy development.* Retrieved from: http://www.questia.com/reader/action/open/5026857164

Auerbach, S. (2007). From moral supporters to struggling advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education, 42*(3), 250-283. doi:10.1177/0042085907300433

Baroody, A. E. & Diamond, K. E.(2012). Links among home literacy environment, literacy interest, and emergent literacy skills in preschoolers at risk for reading difficulties. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 32*(2), 78-87. doi: 10.1177/0271121410392803

Bauch, P. A. (1987). Family choice and parental involvement in inner-city catholic high schools: An exploration of psycho-social and organizational factors. Paper

presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research
Association (Washington, DC). Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Bauerlein, M., Sullivan, S., Nichols, B., Bradshaw, T., & Rogowski, K. (2007). *To read or not to read: A question of national consequence.* National Endowment for the Arts, Research Report #47.

Benson, L., & Mokhtari, M. (2011). Parental employment, shared parent-child activities and childhood obesity. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues, 32*, 233-244. doi:10.1007/s10834-011-9249-0

Berger, E. H. (2000). *Parents as partners in education: Families and schools working together.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Berthelsen, D. & Walker, S. (2008). Parents' involvement in their children's education. *Family Matters,* (79), 34-41. Retrieved from http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/fammats.html

Billingsley, A. (1992). *Climbing Jacob's ladder: The enduring legacy of African American families.* New York: Simon and Shuster.

Bonci, E., Mattran, A., & McCoy, E. (2010). *A review of the research evidence underpinning partners in literacy.* London: National Trust Literacy.

Bonds, C. W. (1998). Did my parents know about whole language? *Reading Teacher, 52*(2), 136-137. Retrieved from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1002/%28ISSN%291936-2714

Bourdieu, P. (1986). 'The Forms of Capital' in J. G. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education,* New York: Greenwood Press, 241-258.

Bower, H. A., & Griffin, D. (2011). Can the Epstein model of parental involvement work with high minority, high-poverty elementary school? A case study. *Professional School Counseling, 15*(2), 77-88. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Brock, S. & Edmunds, A. L. (2010). Parental involvement: Barriers and opportunities. *EAF Journal, (21)*1, 48-59. Retrieved from: http://www.worldcat.org/title/eaf-journal-journal-of-educational-administration-and-foundations/oclc/60627346

Bruns, D. A., & Pierce, C. D. (2007). Let's read together: Tools for early literacy development for all young children. *Young Exceptional Children, 10*(2), 2-10. doi:10.1177/109625060701000201

Buckley, J. (2007). Choosing schools, building communities? The effect of schools of choice on parental involvement. Education Working Paper Archive. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Burgess, S. R. (2011). Home literacy environments (HLEs) provided to very young children. *Early Child Development and Care, 181*(4), 445-462. doi:10.1080/03004430903450384

Bush, T. (2007). Authenticity in research – Reliability, validity and triangulation. In Briggs, A. R. J. & Coleman, M. (Eds.), *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management. 2nd Ed.* (91-105). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Calzada, E. J., Huang, K-Y., Hernandez, M., Soriano, E., Acra, C. F., Dawson-McClure, S. . . . Brotman, L. (2014). Family and teacher characteristics as predictors of parent involvement in education during early childhood among Afro-Caribbean and Latino immigrant families. *Urban Education*, 1-27. doi:10.1177/0042085914534862

Carlson, J. A. (2010). Avoiding traps in member checking. *Qualitative Report, 15*(5), 1102-1113. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Carrasquillo, A. L. & London, C. B. (2013). *Parents and Schools: A Source Handbook.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Center for Public Policy Priorities. (1999, June 28). *Texas kids count project: Measuring up: The state of Texas education: Parental involvement in education.* Retrieved from http://www.cpp.org/kidscount/education/parental_involvement.html

Chance, R. (2010). Family literacy programs -- Opportunities and possibilities. *Teacher Librarian, 37*(5), 8-12. Retrieved from http://www.teacherlibrarian.com/

Chen, J. J. (2008). Grade-level differences: Relations of parental, teacher and peer support to academic engagement and achievement among Hong Kong students. *School Psychology International, 29*(2), 183-198. doi:10.1177/0143034308090059

Cheung, C., Lwin, K., & Jenkins, J. M. (2012). Helping youth in care succeed: Influence of caregiver involvement on academic achievement. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(6), 1092-1100. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.01.033

Christenson, S. L., & Sheridan, S. M. (2001). *School and Families: Creating Essential Connections for Learning.* New York: Guilford.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital." *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (supplement): 95–120. Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org/page/journal/amerjsoci/about.html

Coleman, J. S. (1991). *Parental involvement in education*. US Dept. of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Programs for the Improvement of Practice.

Coleman, J. S., & Hoffer, T. (1987). *Public and private high schools: The impact of communities*. New York: Basic Books.

Coleman, J. S., Hoffer, T., & Kilgore, S. (1982). Cognitive outcomes in public and private schools. *Sociology of Education*, *55*(2), 62-76. Retrieved from: http://soe.sagepub.com/

Coleman, J. S., Schiller, K. S., & Schneider, B. (1993). Parent choice and inequality. In B. Schneider & J. S. Coleman (Eds.), *Parents, their children and schools*. Bouolder, CO: Westview Press, 147-182.

Comer, J. P. (1986). Parent participation in the school. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 67, 442-446. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Comer, J. P. (1988). Educating poor minority children. *Scientific American, 259*(5), 42-48. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Comer, J. P. (2005). The rewards of parent participation. *Educational Leadership 62*(6). 38-42. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Comer, J. P. & Haynes, N. M. (1991). Parent involvement in schools: An ecological

approach. *Elementary School Journal,* 91, 271-277. Retrieved from:

http://eric.ed.gov/

Cooter, Jr., R. B., Mills-House, E., Marrin, P., Mathews, B. A., Campbell, S., & Baker,

T. (1999). Family and community involvement: The bedrock of reading success.

Reading Teacher, 52(8), 891-897. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Cooper, C. W. (2009). Parent involvement, African American mothers, and the politics of

educational care. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 42*(4), 379-394.

doi:10.1080/10665680903228389

Coutts, M., Sheridan, S., Kwon, K., & Semke, C. (2012). *The Effect of Teacher's*

Invitations to Parental Involvement on Children's Externalizing Problem

Behaviors: An Examination of a CBC Intervention (CYFS Working Paper 2012-

3). Lincoln: Nebraska Center for Research.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five*

approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & research design: Choosing among five*

approaches (2nd Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*

approaches. 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five*

approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Crosnoe, R., Kalil, A. (2010). Educational progress and parenting among Mexican immigrant mothers of young children. *Journal of Marriage & Family, 72*(4), 976-990. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00743.x

Curriculum Matters: A Resource for Catholic Educators. (1996). Ontario, Canada: Institute for Catholic Education.

Curtin, M., & Fossey, E. (2007). Appraising the trustworthiness of qualitative studies: Guidelines for occupational therapists. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, *54*(2), 88-94. doi:10.111/j.1440-1630.2007.00661.x

Davis-Kean, P. E., & Sexton, H. R. (2009). Race difference in parental influences on child achievement: Multiple pathways to success. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 55*, 285-318. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H. B. (2006). Family involvement in school and low-income children's literacy: Longitudinal associations between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(4), 653-664. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

De Gaetano, Y. (2007). The role of culture in engaging Latino parents' involvement in school. *Urban Education, 42*(2), 145-162. doi:10.1177/0042085906296536

Desforges, C. & Abouchaar, A. (2003). The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review, Report Number 433. *Department of Education and Skills*.

Diamond, J., Wang, L., & Gomez, K. (2006).Harvard Family Research Project. *African-American and Chinese-American parental involvement: The importance of race,*

class, and culture. Cambridge, MA: Retrieved from

http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/

Donavan, J. A. (1999). *A qualitative study of a parental involvement program in a Catholic elementary school* (K-8). Proquest Dissertation, Temple University, 9938662.

Eccles, J. S., & Harold, R. D. (2013). Family Involvement in Children's and Adolescents' Schooling. In Alan Booth and Judith F. Dunn (Eds.), *Family-School Links: How do They Affect Educational Outcomes?* (pp. 3-34), Mahwah, NJ: Routledge.

Egbert, J., & Salsbury, T. (2009). "Out of complacency and into action": An exploration of professional development experiences in school/home literacy engagement. *Teaching Education, 20*(4), 375-393. doi:10.1080/10476210902998474

Ellis, A.K. (2008). Teacher's perception on the impact of student academic achievement and parental involvement through the PowerSchool™ program in a Catholic school diocese. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, 72*(1-A), 159. ProQuest Information and Learning.

Ely, M., Anzul, M., Friedman, T., Garner, D., & Steinmetz, A. C. (1991). *Doing qualitative research: Circles within circles.* New York: Falmer Press.

Englund, M. M., Luckner, A. E., Whaley, G. J. L., & Egeland, B. (2004). Children's achievement in early elementary school: Longitudinal effects of parental involvement, expectations, and quality of assistance. *Journal of Educational Psychology. 96*(4), 723-730. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.96.4.723

Epstein, J. L. (1988). How do we improve programs for parent involvement? *Educational Horizons, 66*(2), 58-59. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Epstein, J. (2010). School and family connections: Theory, research and implications for integrating sociologies of education and family. *Marriage & Family Review, 15*(1-2). 99-126. doi:10.1300/J002v15n01_6

Epstein, J. L. (1991). Effects on student achievement of teachers' practices of parent involvement. In S. B. Silvern (Ed.), *Advances in reading/language research: Literacy through family, community, and school interaction,* 5, 261-276). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Epstein, J. L. (1992). School and family partnerships. In *Encyclopedia of Educational Research,* ed. M. Alkin. New York: MacMillan.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9)*,* 701-712.

Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Epstein, J. L. (2007). Connections count. Improving family and community involvement in secondary schools. *Principal Leadership, 8*(2), 16-22. Retrieved from: http://eric.ed.gov/

Epstein, J. L., Coates, L., Sallinas, K., Sanders, M., & Simon, B. S. (1997) *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, Corwin Press, Inc.

Epstein, J. L., & Jansorn, N. R. (2004). School, family, and community partnerships link

the plan. *The Education Digest 69*(6),19-23. Retrieved from: http://eric.ed.gov/

Epstein, J. L., Salinas, K. C. (2004). Partnering with Families and Communities.

Educational Leadership, *61*(8),12-17. Retrieved from:

http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership.aspx

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Sheldon, S., Simon, B. S., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., &

Williams, K. J. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your

handbook for action.* 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, M. G., Salinas, K. C., Jansorn, N. R., &

VanVooris, F. L. (2008). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your

handbook for action* (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fan, X. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A growth

modeling analysis. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 70*(1)*,* 27-61.

Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Fan, X. T., & Chen, M. (2001). Parental involvement and students' academic

achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review, 13*, 1–22.

Retrieved from: http://eric.ed.gov/

Fan, W., & Williams, C. M. (2010). The effects of parental involvement on students'

academic self-efficacy, engagement and intrinsic motivation. *Educational

Pschology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology,

30*(1), 53-74. doi:10.1080/01443410903353302

Fantuzzo, J., McWayne, C., Perry, M. A., & Childs, S. (2004). Multiple dimensions of family involvement and their relations to behavioral and learning competencies for urban, low-income children. *School Psychology Review, 33*(4), 467-480. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Fawcett, G., Padak, N., & Rasinski, T. (2013). *Evidenced-based instruction in reading : A professional development guide to family involvement*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Feiler, A. (2005). Linking home and school literacy in an inner city reception class. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy. (5)*2, 131-149. doi:10.1177/1468798405054582

Fenzel, L. M. (2013). Achievement in Faith-Based Schools. In John Hattie and Eric M.Anderson (Eds.), *International Guide to Student Achievement*. (pp. 128-130), New York: Routledge.

Fisher, Y. (2009). Defining parental involvement: The Israeli case. *US-China Education Review, 6*(11), 33-45. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Flouri, E., & Buchanan, A. (2004). Early father's and mother's involvement and child's later educational outcomes. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 74*, 141-153. doi:10.1348/000709904773839806

Foster, M.A., Lambert, R., Abbott-Shim, M., McCarty, F. & Franze, S. (2005) 'A model of home learning environment and social risk factors in relation to children's emergent literacy and social outcomes'. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 20: 13–36. doi:10.1016/j.ecresq.205.01.006

Galindo, J., & Sheldon, S. B. (2012). School and home connections and children's

    kindergarten's achievement gains: The mediating role of family involvement.

    Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 27(1), 90-103.

    doi:10.1016/j.ecresq2011.05.004

Gambrell, L. B., Malloy, J. A., and Mazzoni, S. A. (2007). "Evidenced-based best

    practices for comprehensive literacy instruction" in *Best practices in literacy*

    instruction. (2007), 3rd Ed. Gambrell, L. B., Morrow, L. M., & Pressley, M.

    Guilford Press, New York, NY.

Garcia, D. c., & Hasson, D. J. (2004). Implementing family literacy programs for

    linguistically and culturally diverse populations: Key elements to consider.

    School Community Journal 14(1), 113-137. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Gewertz, C. (2011). P-2 Years targeted to achieve grade 3 reading proficiency.

    Education Week, 02774232, *30*(36). Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Ginsburg-Block, M., Manz, P. H., & McWayne, C. (2009). Parenting with families to

    foster early achievement in Reading and Mathematics. A. L. Reschly, S.

    Christenson (Eds.). *The Handbook on School Family Partnerships for Promoting*

    *Student Competenc*e. Oxford, UK: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Groups. 176-

    203.

Giorgi, A. (1997). The Theory, Practice, and Enrollment of the Phenomenological

    Method as a Qualitative Research Procedure. *Journal of Phenomenological*

    Psychology, 28(2), 235-260. Retrieved from:

    http://1/dx.doi.org/10.1163/156916297X00103

Goals 2000: Educate America Act. (2002). Retrieved from

    http://lamar.colostate.edu/~hillger/laws/goals-2000.html

Goldring, E. B. & Phillips, K. J. R. (2008). Parent preferences and parent choices: the

    public-private decision about school choice. *Journal of Education Policy 23*(3),

    209-230. doi:10.1080/02680930801987844

Gonzales, N. A., Cauce, A. M., Friedman, R. J., & Mason, C. A. (1996). Family, peer,

    and neighborhood influences on academic achievement among African American

    adolescents: 1-year prospective effects. *American Journal of Community*

    Psychology, 24, 365-387. Retrieved from:

    http://www.springer.com/psychology/community+psychology/journal/10464

Graves, Jr., S. L., Brown Wright, L. (2011). Parent involvement at school entry: a

    national examination of group differences and achievement. *School Psychology*

    International, 32(1), 35-48. doi:10.1177/0143034310396611

Griffin, D., & Galassi, J. P. (2010). Parent perceptions of barriers to academic success in

    a rural middle school. *Professional School Counseling, (14)*1, 87-100. Retrieved

    from http://eric.ed.gov/

Grolnick, W.S., & Slowiaczek, M.L. (1994). Parents' involvement in children's

    schooling: A multidimensional conceptualization and motivational model. *Child*

    Development, 65, 237-252. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Hall, R. (2008). *Applied social research: Planning, designing and conducting real-wold*

    research. Australia: Palgrave MacMillan.

Hallinan, M. (2002). Catholic education as a societal institution. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice, 6*(1), 5-26. Retrieved from: http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce/vol16/iss1/2

Harris, A. and Goodall, J. (2008). Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. *Educational Research, 50*(3). 277-289. doi:10.1080/00131880802309424

Harris, A. L. (2008). Optimism in the face of despair: Black-white differences in beliefs about school as a means for upward social mobility. *Social Science Quarterly (Blackwell Publishing Limited), 89*(3), 608-630. doi:10.1111/j.1540-237.2008.0051.x

Harris, Y. R., Terrel, D., & Allen, G. H. (1999). The influence of education context and beliefs on the teaching behavior of African American mothers. *Journal of Black Psychology, 25,* 490-503. doi:10.1177/0095798499025004002

Harkness, S., Super, C. M., & Keefer, C. H. (1992). Learning to be an American Parent: How Cultural Models Gain Directive Force. In R. G. D'Andrade and C. Strauss (Eds.). *Human motives and cultural models,* 163-178. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hawes, C. & Plourde, L. (2005). Parental involvement and its influence on the reading achievement of 6th grade students. *Reading Improvement*, *42*(1), 47-57. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Hemphill, L. & Tivnan, T. (2008). The importance of early vocabulary for literacy achievement in high-poverty schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 13,* 426-451. doi:10.1080/10824660802427710

Henderson, A., & Berla, N. (Eds.). (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is Critical to student achievement.* Cambridge, MA: National committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A. T. & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family and community connections on student achievement.* Annual Synthesis. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Hernandez, D.J. (2011). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. *Annie E. Casey Foundation*. ERIC Document ED518818. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Hess, R. D., & Shipman, V. C. (1965). Early experiences and the socialization of cognitive modes in children. *Child Development, 36*(4)*,* 869-886. Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1126930

Hill, N. E., Castillino, D. R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J. E., Pettit, G. S. (2004). Parent-academic involvement as related to school behavior, achievement, and aspirations: Demographic variations across adolescence. *Child Development, 75*(5), 1491-1509. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00753.x

Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Development Psychology, 45*, 740-763. doi: 10.1037/a0015362

Hoff, E. (2006). Environmental supports for language acquisition. In D. K. Dickinson & S. B. Neuman (Eds.), *Handbook of Early Literacy Development,* (2, 163-172). New York: Guildford.

Holloway, S. D., Yamamoto, Y., Suzuki, S., Mindnich, J. D. (2008). Determinants of parental involvement in early schooling: Evidence from Japan. *Early Childood Research & Practice, 10*(1). Retrieved from: http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v10n1/holloway.html

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. & Jones, K. P. (1997). Parental role construction and parental involvement in children's education. *Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association*. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teacher College Record*, *97*(2), 310-331. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Sandler, H. M. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research, 67*(1), 3-42. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., & Whitaker, M. C. (2010). The parental involvement process: Implications for literacy development. In K. Dunsmore and D. Fisher (Eds.), *Bringing Literacy Home* (pp. 53-82). Newark, DE: IRA Publications.

Hornby, G. (2011). *Parental Involvement in Childhood Education: Building Effective School-Family Partnerships.* New York, NY: Springer Science+Business Media, LLC. doi:10.1007/978-1-4419-8379-4

Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An exploratory model. *Educational Review, 63*(1), 37-52. doi:10.1080/00131911.2010.488049

Howard, J. (2007). Americans are closing the book on reading, study finds. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 54*(14), 12. Retrieved from: http://chronicle.com/cgi-in/printable.cgi?article=http://chronicle.com/da..

Howard, T. C. & Renolds, R. (2008). Examing parent involvement in reversing the underachievement of African American students in middle-class schools. *Educational Foundations, 22*(1-2), 79-09. Retrieved from: http://eric.ed.gov/

Hsieh, C. L. (2000). *A study of parental characteristics and school choice.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo.

Huang, G., & Dolejs, B. (2007). Reading Theatre, Parents as Actors: Movie Production in a Family Literacy Workshop. *Reading Improvement, 44*(2), pp. 87-98. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Husserl, E. (1970). *Logical investigation.* New York, NY: Humanities Press.

Husserl, E. (2002). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Ice, C. L., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. (2011). Linking parental motivations for involvement and student proximal achievement outcomes in homeschooling and

public schooling settings. *Education and Urban Society, 43*(3), 339-369.

doi:10.1177/0013124510380418

Jeynes, W. H. (2002). A meta-analysis of the effects of attending religious schools and

religiosity on black and hispanic academic achievement. *Education and Urban*

Society. 35(1). 27-49. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Jeynes, W. H. (2003). A meta-analysis: The effects of parental involvement on minority

children's academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 35,* 202-218.

doi:10.1177/0013124502239392

Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relationship of parental involvement to

urban elementary school student academic achievement. *Education and Urban*

Society 40(3). 237-269. doi:10.1177/0042085905274540

Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban

secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Urban*

Education 42(1), 82-110. doi:10.1177/0042085906293818

Jeynes, W. H. (2010). *Parental Involvement and Academic Success.* New York:

Routledge.

Jeynes, W. H. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental

involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education, 47*(4), 706-742.

doi:10.1177/0042085912445643

Jones, R. (2001). How parents can support learning. *American School Board Journal*

188(9), 18-22. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Joyce, P., & Sills, C. (2010). *Skills in Gestalt: Counselling & Psychotherapy.* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.

Kauffman Scholars, Inc. (2008). College Preparation. Retrieved from: http://www.kauffmanscholars.org/college-prep/glossary.html#parental_involvement

Keller, B. (2008). Schools seek to channel parent involvement. *Education Week, 1*(17), 11-15. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Kim, Y. S. (2009). The relationship between home literacy practices and developmental trajectories of emergent literacy and conventional literacy skills for Korean children. *Reading and Writing, 22*(1), 57-84. doi:10.1007/s11145-007-9103-9

Larocque, M., Kleiman, I., & Darling, S. M. (2011). Parental involvement: The missing link in school achievement. *Preventing School Failure, 55*(3), 115-122. doi: 10.1080/10459880903472876

Lau, E. Y. H., Li, H., & Rao, N. (2011). Parental involvement and children's readiness for school in China. *Educational Research, 53*(1), 95-113. doi:10.1080.00131881.2011.552243

Lavenda, O. (2011). Parental involvement in school: A test of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model among Jewish and Arab parents in Israel. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*(6), 927-935. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.12.016

Lefebvre, P., Trudeau, N., & Sutton, A. (2011). Shared storybook reading context to enhance language, print awareness, and phonological awareness in at-risk

preschoolers. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, 11*(4), 453-79.

doi:10.1177/10534512030390020401

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE

Publications.

Lopez, G. R., & Stoelting, K. (2010). Disarticulating parent involvement in Latino-

impacted schools in the Midwest. In M. Marsh & T. Turner-Vorbeck (Eds.),

(Mis)Understanding families: Learning from real families in our schools, (19-36).

New York: Teachers College Press   .

Louque, A. (1999). Factors influencing academic attainment for African American

women PhD recipients: an ethnographic study of their persistence. *The Negro*

Educational Review, 50(3-4), 101-108.

Machen, S. M., Wilson, J. D., & Notar, C. D. (2005). Parental involvement in the

classroom. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 32*(1), 13-16. Retrieved from

http://eric.ed.gov/

Maduekwe, A. N., & Adeosun, O. (2010). Parental involvement in children's literacy

development in Nigeria: Empirical findings and improvement strategies. *US—*

China Foreign Language, 8(4), 29-38.

Martini, F., & Sénéchal, M. (2012). Learning literacy skills at home: Parent teaching,

expectations, and child interest. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science, 44*(30,

210-221. DOI:10.1037/A0026758

Mattingly, D. J., Prislin, R., McKenzie, T. L., Rodriguez, J., & Kayzar, B. (2002). Evaluating evaluations: The case of parent involvement programs. *Review of Educational Research, 72*(4), 549-576. doi: 10.3102/00346543072004549

McMillan, J. H. & Wergin, J. F. (2009). *Understanding and evaluating educational research*. 4th Ed. Saddle River, NJ: Merrill-Prentice Hall.

McWayne, C., Hampton, V., Fantuzzo, J., Cohen, H., & Sekino, Y. (2004). A multivariate examination of parent involvement and the social and academic competencies of urban kindergarten children. *Psychology in the Schools*, *41*(3), 363–377. doi:10.1002/pits.10163

Mena, J. A. (2011). Latino parent home-based practices that bolster student academic persistence. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 33*(4), 490-506. doi:10.1177/0739986311422897

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1996). *Phenomenology of perception*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishe.

Mero-Jaffe, I. (2011). 'Is that what I said?' Interview transcript approval by participants: An aspect of ethics in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 10*(3), 231-247. Retrieved from: http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/article/view/8449/9010

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass Publishers.

Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary (11th ed.). 2008. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.

Midraj, J., & Midraj, S. (2011). Parent involvement and grade four students' English

    reading achievement. *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies,*

    12(1), 41-56. Retrieved from

    https://www.questia.com/library/p408829/international-journal-of-applied-

    educational-studies

Milot, G. A. (2005). *The relationship between parental involvement and religion*

    academic achievement of students in Catholic elementary schools in Diocese of

    Fall River. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from Proquest Dissertations and

    Theses, (Accession Order No. AAT 3213964).

Missall, K. N., & McConnell, S. R. (2010). Early literacy and language IGDIs for

    preschool-aged children. *Individual Growth and Development Indicators. Tools*

    for Monitoring Progress and Measuring Growth in very Young Children, 181-

    201.

Morrison, F. J., Bachman, H. J., & McDonald-Connor, C. (2005). *Improving literacy in*

    America: Guidelines from research. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE

    Publishers.

Muller, C. (1993). *Parent involvement in education and school sector.* Paper presented at

    the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta,

    GA. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Mulligan, G. M. (2003). Sector differences in opportunities for parental involvement in the school context. *A Journal of Inquiry and Practice 7*(2), pp. 246-265. Retrieved from: http://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce/vol7/iss2/7

Murray, C. (2009*).* Parent and Teacher Relationships as Predictors of School Engagement and Functioning Among Low-Income Urban Youth. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 29*(3), 376-404. doi:10.1177/0272431608322940

National Institute of Child health and Human development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read: An evidenced-based assessment of the scientific research on reading and its implications for reading instruction. Reports of the Subgroups.* Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

Neuman, S. B. (2006). The Knowledge Gap: Implications for Early Education. In D. Dickinson & S. B. Neuman (Eds), *Handbook of early literacy research, 2,* 29-40. New York: Guilford Press.

Neuman, M. (2009). More than just storybooks: Promoting emergent literacy skills in the home. *Association for Childhood Education International Summer, 2009*.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Public Law No. 107-110, Stat 1425.

No Child Left Behind Action Brief. (2004). Parental Involvement. Retrieved from: http://www.ncpie.org/nclbaction/parent_involvement.html

Okpala, C. O., Okpala, A. O., & Smith, F. E. (2001). Parental involvement, instructional expenditures, family socioeconomic attributes, and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Research 95*(2), 110-115. doi**:**10.1080/00220670109596579

Padak, N., & Rasinski, T. (2006). Home-school partnerships in literacy education: From rhetoric to reality. *The Reading Teacher,60*(3), 292-296. doi:10.1598/RT.60.3.11

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative research and evaluation methods. (3rd. Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Paulson, A. & Khadaroo, S. T. (2010). US 'report card' on reading: 8th-graders gain, 4th-graders don't. *The Christian Science Monitor.* Retrieved from: http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2010/0324/US-report-card-on-reading-8th-graders-gain-4th-graders-don-t

Perkins, D. F., Syvertsen, A. K., Mincemoyer, C., Chilenski, S. M., Olson, J. R., Berrena, E. & Spoth, R. (2013). Thriving in School: The Role of Sixth-Grade Adolescent–Parent–School Relationships in Predicting Eighth-Grade Academic Outcomes. *Youth & Society*, *XX*(X). 1-24. doi:10.1177/0044118X13512858

Phillips, B. M., & Lonigan, C. J. (2009). Variations in the home literacy environment of preschool children: A cluster analytic approach. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 13*(2), 146-174. doi:10.1080/10888430902769533

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 137-145. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137

Pomerantz, E., M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007). The how, whom, and why of parents' involvement in children's academic lives: More is not always better. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(3). 373-410. doi:10.3102/003465430305567

Powell, N. D., & Wood, T. L. (1999). Partnerships: Connecting parent involvement and

    student achievement. *Journal of Adventist Education 62*(1), 16-20. Retrieved

    from: http://circle.adventist.org//files/jae/en/jae199962011605.pdf

Prins, E. & Toso, B. W. (2008). Defining and measuring parenting for educational

    success: A critical discourse analysis of the parent education profile. *American*

    Educational Research Journal, 45(3), 555-596. doi:10.3102/0002831208316205

Prior, J. & Gerard, M. R. (2007). *Family involvement in early childhood education:*

    Research into practice. United States: Cengage Learning Inc.

Putnam, R. D. (1993a). The prosperous community. *The American Prospect, 4*(13), 35-

    42. doi:10.1234/12345678

Putnam, R. D. (1993b). What makes democracy work? *National Civic Review, 82*(101-

    107. DOI: 10.1002/ncr.4100820201

Quie, A. H. (1987). More "choice" is key to public-school reform. *Education Week*,

    Retrieved from: http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/1987/05/20/3-

    34quie.h06.html?qs=More+choice+is+key+to+public+school+reform.

Quigley, D. D. (2000). *Parents and teachers working together to improve third-grade*

    achievement: Parents as learning partners (PLP) findings. Los Angeles

    Compact on Evaluation, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards,

    and Student Testing/University of California, Los Angeles.

Raban, B. & Nolan, A. (2005). Reading practices experienced by preschool children in

    areas of disadvantage. *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 3: 289-98.

    doi:10.1177/1476718X05056528

Radzi, F. A. M., Razak, M. N. A., & Sukor, N. H. M. (2010). Parental involvement in school to improve academic achievement: Primary teachers' views. *The International Journal of Learning, 17*(9), pp. 259-270. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Rah, Y., Choi, S., & Nguyen, T. S. T. (2009). Building bridges between refugee parents and schools. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 12*(4), 347-365. doi:10.1080/13603120802609867

Ray, M. A. (1994). The Richness of Phenomenology: Philosophic, Theoretic, and Methodologic Concerns. In J. M. Morse (Ed.). *Critical issues in qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Richardson, J. S., Morgan, R. F., & Fleener, C.E. (2012). *Reading to Learn in the Content Areas.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Ringenberg, M. C., Funk, V., Mullen, K., Wilford, A., & Kramer, J. (2005). The test-re-test reliability of the parent and school survey. *The School Community Journal, 15*(2), 121-134. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Risko, V. J., & Walker-Dalouse, D. (2009). Parents and teachers: Talking with or past one another – or not talking at all? *Reading Teacher, 62*(5), 442-444. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Robinson, E. S. (2007). *African American Middle-Income Parents: How are they involved in their children's Literacy Development?* United States: Information Age Publishing Inc.

Rodriguez, E. T., & Tamis‐LeMonda, C. S. (2011). Trajectories of the home learning environment across the first 5 years: Associations with children's vocabulary and literacy skills at prekindergarten. *Child Development*, *82*(4), 1058-1075. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01614.x

Rossman, R. B., & Rallis, S. F. (1998). *Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data. 2nd Ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data. 3rd* Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ryan, K., & Cooper, J. M. (2007). *Those Who Can, Teach.* USA: Cengage Learning, Inc.

Sadoski, M. & Willson, V. L. (2006). Effects of a theoretically based large-scale reading intervention in a multicultural urban school district. *American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 43*, 137-154. doi:10.3102/00028312043001137

Saint-Laurent, L., & Giasson, J. (2005). Effects of a family literacy program adapting parental intervention to first graders' evolution of reading and writing abilities. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*. *5*(3), 253-278. doi:10.1177/1468798405058688

Saldana, J. (2013). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: Understanding qualitative research.* 2nd Ed., New York: NY, Oxford University Press, Inc.

Scanzoni, J. H. (1971). *The black family in modern society.* Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Schecter, S. R., Ippolito, J., & Rashkovsky, K. (2007). Giving parents part of the PIE. *Educational Leadership*, *64*(6), 69-71.

Scott, D., & Morrison, M. (2006). *Key ideas in educational research*. London: Continuum.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences. 3rd Ed.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Shull, J. L. (1998). Tackling your parent problems. *Journal of Adventist Education 61*(2), 37-40. Retrieved from:

http://circle.adventist.org//files/jae/en/jae199861023704.pdf

Silinskas, G., Parrila, R., Lerkkanen, M., Poikkeus, A., Nieme, P., & Nurmi, J. (2010). Mothers' reading-related activities at home and learning to read during kindergarten. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 25*(2), pp. 243-264. doi:10.1007/s10212-010-0014-9

Smith, J. G. (2006). Parental involvement in education among low-income families: A case study. *School Community Journal, 16*(1), 43-56. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative Research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Strasser, K., & Lissi, M. R. (2009). Home and instruction effects on emergent literacy in

    a sample of Chilean kindergarten children. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 13*(2),

    175-204. doi:10.1080/10888430902769525

Sui-Chu, E. H. (2010). Social capital and education. Retrieved from:

    "http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2427/Social-Capital-

    Education.html">Social Capital and Education

Sui-Chu, E. H., & Willms, J. D. (1996). Effects of Parent Involvement on 8th-grade

    achievement. *Sociology of Education 69*(2), 126-141. Retrieved from

    http://eric.ed.gov/

Suizzo, M-A., & Stapleton, L. M. (2007). Home-based parental involvement in young

    children's education: Examining the effects of maternal education across U.S.

    ethnic groups. *Educational Psychology, 27*(4), 533-556.

    doi:10.1080/01443410601159936.

Suizzo, M. A., Pahlke, E., Yarnell, L., Chen, K. Y., & Romero, S. (2014). Home-Based

    Parental Involvement in Young Children's Learning Across US Ethnic Groups

    Cultural Models of Academic Socialization. *Journal of Family Issues*, *35*(2), 254-

    287. doi: 10.1177/0192513X12465730

Sukhram, D. P., & Hsu, A. (2012). Developing reading partnerships between parents and

    children: A reflection on the Reading Together Program. *Early Childhoold*

    Education Journal, 40, 115-121. doi:10.1007/s10643-011-0500-y

Taliaferro, J. D., DeCuir-Gunby, J., Allen-Eckard, K. (2009). 'I can see parents being

    reluctant': Perceptions of parental involvement using child and family teams in

schools. *Child and Family Social Work, 14*(3), 278-288, ISSN: 1356-7500. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2008.00594.x

Thayer, J., & Kido, E. (2012). Cognitive Genesis (CG): Assessing academic achievement and cognitive ability in Adventist Schools. *Journal of Research in Christian Education, 21*: 99-115. doi:10.1080/10656219.2012.698826

The New International Webster's Pocket Dictionary, New Revised Edition. (1998). Trident Press International.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Handbook. (2010). Retrieved from: http://www.adventistyearbook.org/default.aspx?page=SearchForm&Year=2010

Topor, D. R., Keane, S. P., Shelton, T. L., & Calkins, S. D. (2010). Parent involvement and student academic performance: A multiple mediational analysis. *Journal of prevention & intervention in the community*, *38*(3), 183-197. doi:10.1080/10852352.2010.486297

Tourangeau, K., Lê, T., & Westat, C. N. (2005). Early childhood longitudinal study, Kindergarten class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) Fifth grade methodology report. Retrieved from: http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006037.pdf

Turney, K., & Kao, G. (2009). Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged? *Journal of Educational Research, 102*(4), 257-271. doi**:**10.3200/JOER.102.4.257-271

Tzanakis, M. (2013). Social capital in Bourdieu's, Coleman's and Putnam's theory: empirical evidence and emergent measurement issues. *Educate~, 13*(2), 2 - 23. Retrieved from http://www.educatejournal.org/index.php/educate/article/view/366

Urdan, T., Solek, M., & Schoenfelder, E. (2007). Students' perceptions of family influences on their academic motivation: A qualitative analysis. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 22*(1), 7-21. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Van Manen, J. (1990). *Researching lived esp34i3nd3; Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* Albany, NY: State University if New York Press.

Van Velsor, P. & Orozco, G. L. (2007). Involving low-income parents in schools: Communitycentric strategies for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 11*(1), 17-24. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wanat, C. L. (2010). Challenges balancing collaboration and independence in home-school relationships: Analysis of parents' perceptions in one district. *The School Community Journal, 20*(1), 159-186. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/

Wang, L., & Fahey, D. (2011). Parental volunteering: The resulting trends since No Child Left Behind. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarlerly, 40*(6), 1113-1131. doi:10.1177/0899764010386237

Watkins, A. P. (2006). The pedagogy of African American parents: Learning from educational excellence in the African American community. *Current Issues in Education, 9*(7). Retrieved from: http://cie.asu.edu/volume9/number7/index.html

Wee Beng Neo. (2002). School and Family Partnership in Primary Schools in Petaling

    District, Selangor. *Jurnal Penyelidikan Pendidikan*, Kementerian Pendidikan

    Malaysia.

Weigel, D. J., Martin, S. S., & Bennett, K. K. (2006). Mothers' literacy beliefs:

    Connections with the home literacy environment and pre-school children's

    literacy development. *Journal of Early Childhood. 6*(2),191-211.

    doi:10.1177/1468798406066444

White, E. G. (1952b). *Education*, Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press.

Williams, B., Williams, J.,& Ullman, A. (2002). *Parental Involvement in Education*.

    London: Department for Education and Skills.

Xue, Y., & Meisels, S. J. (2004). Early literacy instruction and learning in kindergarten:

    Evidence from the early childhood longitudinal study – kindergarten class of

    1998-1999. *American Educational Research Journal*, *41*(1), 191.

    doi:10.3102/00028312041001191

Yan, W. (1999). Successful African American students: The role of parental

    involvement. *Journal of Negro Education, 68*(1), 5-22. Retrieved from

    http://eric.ed.gov/

Yemeh, N. (2007). Role of the family in literacy of elementary pupils. *International*

    Journal of Multicultural Education, 1(1), 57.

Yin, R. K. (2010). *Qualitative research from start to finish.* New York: The Guilford

    Press.

Youngblom, R. K., & Daniel, H. (2014). Family involvement in the schools of Belize. *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 3*(1), 1-6. doi:10.11114/jets.v3i1.601

Zhang, D., Hsu, H., Kwok, O., Benz, M., & Bowman-Perrott, L. (2011). The impact of basic-level parent engagements on student achievement: Patterns associated with race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES). *Journal of Disability Policy Studies, 22*(1), 28-39. doi:10.1177/1044207310394447

Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

May 12, 2014

Mrs. Maureen Moncrieffe
Walden University Doctoral Student
███████████████

Bergenfield, NJ 07621

Dear Mrs. Moncrieffe:

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "The Black and Caribbean American Parent's Perceptions of Home-based Parental Involvement in the Literacy Activities of their Kindergarten to 2nd Grade children: A Phenomenological Exploration" at a school within the ████████ ████████████████████ School System. As part of this study, I authorize you to invite the principal of ████████████ Academy, one of the schools in the ████████████ ████████████ school system, to have her school participate in your research. At the end of such research, you will inform the school system's K-12 committee of your findings. The individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. Additionally, I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

████████████████

Superintendent of Schools

Appendix B: Principal's Letter of Cooperation

May 13, 2014

Mrs. Maureen Moncrieffe
Walden University Doctoral Student
███████████

Bergenfield, NJ 07621

Dear Mrs. Moncrieffe:

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "The Black and Caribbean American Parent's Perceptions of Home-based Parental Involvement in the Literacy Activities of their Kindergarten to 2nd Grade children: A Phenomenological Exploration" at ███████ Academy. As part of this study, I authorize you to invite parents and/or guardians of students who are enrolled in grades K through 2 to participate in your research. At the end of such research, you will write a letter to inform the administration of ███████ Academy of your findings.

I understand that my responsibilities include giving you permission to conduct research at this school, to gain access to the specified parents for research purposes. I also understand that both the school and the potential parent participants reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change, and that the parents' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting. Additionally, I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Authorization Official
Contact Information

Appendix C: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of home-based parental involvement in literacy activities from the perspective of the Black and Caribbean American parent. The researcher is inviting parents of children who are currently enrolled in Kindergarten through Grade Two, who are willing and available to participate in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Maureen Moncrieffe, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to investigate and explore the Black Caribbean American parents' at-home involvement in literacy activities with their kindergarten to grade two children who attend an urban religious elementary school, as well as what factors adversely affect their involvement.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Attend one person-to-person audio-taped interview for approximately 45 – 60 minutes to answer questions regarding your views on parental involvement at home in your children's literacy activities.
- Attend one person-to person meeting for approximately 45-60 minutes for collaboration of data to determine accuracy.

Here are some sample interview questions:

1. What do you understand parental involvement at home to mean?

2. Can you describe to me the role you believe parents should play in helping their child learn to read?

3. How does your child react when you read a children's story to him/her before bedtime?

4. Could you give examples of the type of support your child's school provides for parents which can help them overcome difficulties at home which prevent greater participation in your child's reading activities?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at any of the organization's schools or at the selected site will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind during or after the study. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some amount of risk encountered in daily life, such as stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would pose no risk to your safety or wellbeing. The researcher will be the only one interacting with you from the beginning of the research until the end. Your participation in this study will benefit other parents and inform school personnel regarding the kinds of positive home-based involvement that can enhance students' literacy achievement. Also, this research can alert the school to the types of difficulties parents face when trying to support their children at home in literacy activities. This will give the schools an opportunity to devise programs that can possibly assist parents in overcoming these difficulties, and hence, become more greatly involved in their child's academic lives.

Payment:

There will be a small monetary gift ($15.00 Barnes & Noble gift card) provided to you for participating in the study. Additionally, a thank you card will be sent to you for your contribution to the research. More importantly, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that your participation will assist parents and schools to enhance students' learning in the Black community.

Privacy/Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Instead, pseudonyms will be assigned to you so that the researcher can identify which data belongs to whom. Data will be kept secure by filing away all transcribed data and any other documents used in the study in a lock box or on a USB drive which will be kept safely in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher any time via phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at xxxx@xxxx.com. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-xxx-xxxx, extension xxxxxxx. Walden

University's approval number for this study is **04-28-14-0139057** and it expires on **April 27, 2015.**

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By replying to this email with the words 'I Consent' or if I have been given a paper copy, by signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

PLEASE DO _NOT_ WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

SEX: [ ] Male   [ ] Female

AGE GROUP: [ ] (18 – 30)   [ ] (31 – 49)   [ ] (50 – 69)   [ ] 70 or older

MARITAL STATUS: [ ] Married [ ] Single [ ] Separated [ ] Divorced

NUMBER OF CHILDREN YOU HAVE IN THE GRADES LISTED BELOW?

GRADE: [ ] Kindergarten   [ ] 1st Grade   [ ] 2nd Grade

WORK EXPERIENCE:

[ ] Employed   [ ] Unemployed
    ( ) Single job
    ( ) Multiple jobs

LEVEL OF EDUCATION:
  [ ] High school graduate or less

  [ ] College Graduate

  [ ] Some college

  [ ] Graduate Degree
    ( ) Masters degree
    ( ) Doctoral degree

  [ ] Current Grad Student

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME:

[ ] Less than $30,000   [ ] $30,000 - $74,999   [ ] $75,000 or more

Appendix E: Parent Interview Guide Questions

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Introduction

State my name, job position.

Background/Purpose of Interview

1. I appreciate your taking the time to help me with this research. In times like these when parents have so many responsibilities, I am interested in how parents read with their young children and if schools can help the parents have more productive and enjoyable reading experiences with their children.
2. I am interested in your stories
3. Your experiences will certainly be appreciated.

Procedure of Interview

1. Inform about background of the study with interviewees
2. Participation is voluntary
3. Review procedures:
   - The interview will be recorded
   - Face-to-face interview
   - Collaborate data (member checking)
   - Peer debriefing

Rights of Human Subjects

1. Participants' privacy will be ensured
2. Review any risks (psychological, economic/professional, and physical) and benefits of participating in study
3. Review Anonymity/Confidentiality
4. Review opt-out option of research

Introductory Questions

1. Tell me something about yourself
2. How many children do you have in this school?
3. Which of the three grades (K-2) being used in the research is your child in?
4. Tell me a little about your child who is in one of the three grades (K-2).
5. How old is your son/daughter?
6. What does your child like to do?

Prologue: Literacy Activity:

The term "literacy" refers to a combination of reading and writing. Literacy activities, which are used in the classroom everyday, help the child to unite reading and writing in a way that makes the experience enjoyable, interesting, and fun. The benefits of using these literacy activities include increasing reading skills, developing a love of reading, and improving general academic growth and learning.

1. Sing nursery rhyme songs with your child, and include chanting and clapping to the rhythm.
2. Teach the nursery rhyme "Humpty Dumpty" by using felt cut-outs. After you have taught your child the rhyme, show your child how to tell the story with the felt cut-outs on a felt board.
3. Use the Leapfrog DVD to teach your child how to use silent 'e' to make new words, e.g. "tap" to "tape" or "rat" to "rate."
4. Give your child index cards with words with short sounding vowels, e.g. short 'a,' and show him/her a picture which includes items spelled with the particular short vowel sound. Ask the child to write two sentences about what he/she sees in the picture, using the short vowel sound you chose.

Ice-breaker Question

Can you tell me some things that you like to do with your child?

Research Question 1

What do these Black parents report about their at-home support of their children's literacy development?

*Interview Questions***:**

1. What types of books does your child have and which ones do you like?

2. What is your child's favorite children's book?

3. After you read with your child, describe the types of literacy activities you do to make the reading experience fun and exciting.

4. When your child gets home from school, what kinds of literacy activities do you both do together, or your child does alone?

5. Describe in detail your experience of a bedtime reading activity with your child.

6. What kind of literacy activities are you engaged in with your child on the weekend?

7. Think of a time when you and your child are engaged in a literacy game or a reading activity, describe that experience in as much detail as possible.

8. What importance do you attach to doing these activities with your child?

9. How important do you think literacy activities are tin the educational development of your child?

Research Question 2

What kind of materials do these Black parents use at home with their children during literacy activities?

Interview Questions
1. What type of preparations, including the use of materials, have you made at home to facilitate your child's literacy learning experience?

2. Aside from books, what other types of materials have you used to help your child learn to read?

3. What was your child's reaction to using these literacy materials? Did he/she learn from it?

4. Retell in detail, what the experience was like when you and your child participated in the use of any one of the literacy materials you mentioned previously.

5. The following are some suggestions of literacy games that can be used to teach your child to read. Which of these games would you use, and explain how these games can help you to overcome any barriers that you may have with regards to helping your child learn to read?

Literacy Games

a. Use of educational DVDs (letters, letter sounds, sight words, word families, numbers)

b. Playing educational video games

c. Go to the library. Let your child choose a book (picture book or other kind) and have your child read the book to you (1st or 2nd grade). For Kindergartener, choose

a picture book and have the child tell you the story from the pictures.

d. Play a rhyming game using your child's first name, or mother's first name, or daddy's first name, etc.

e. Play rhyming game using specific word families, e.g., "at" "an" "in" "ed" etc.

f. Have your child "teach" you to spell using simple word families. Example: "Mommy, I know how to spell 'cat' c/a/t. Bet you cannot spell hat".

g. Look for objects at home or at the store or on the road that begins with the first letter of the child's first name.

h. Playing picture bingo game

i. Playing sight word bingo

j. Teach your child nursery rhyme songs by singing, chanting, and clapping to the rhythm.

Research Question 3

Do these Black parents experience barriers to their being more involved at home in their children's literacy activities, and if so, what are the barriers?

*Interview Questions***:**

1. What challenges, if any, do you face when you are trying to read with your child at home?

2. What are the possible barriers, if any, that limit your involvement in your child's reading activities at home?

3. Can you describe to me the greatest challenge you presently face in assisting your child with his/her reading activities?

4. How can the school help you to overcome some of the challenges you are faced with such as limited reading material or inability to provide literacy instruction?

5. In your opinion, which of the suggestions on this list is the best solution to lessen any challenge you might have, and explain why you believe that your choice would be the best solution for you.

Suggestions to lessen challenges:

a. "School providing literacy workshops for parents"
b. "Giving handouts on strategies to be used at home"
c. "Teachers communicating to parents clear instructions about how to provide literacy instruction to their children at home"
d. "School's book-lending program"
e. "Literacy nights- come play take-home games with your child with the teachers' help.

Research Question 4

What kind of support from the school regarding overcoming the barriers to create involvement in their children's literacy activities are the parents receptive to?

Interview questions:
1. In your opinion, what is the most important thing the school could do to help you overcome barriers to greater involvement in literacy activities with your child?

2. Has there ever been a time when the school has helped you overcome some of the challenges you have had while helping your child learn to read? If so, describe that experience for me.

3. Tell me about a time when you have used any type of support or service your child's school had provided?

4. What other kind of help would you like to get from the school so that you can be better able to help your child in reading?

Appendix F: Coding Scheme

Themes	Subthemes	Participant frequency
Parental support / involvement	Has child join the library	1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9
	Reads to child	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,
	Assists with homework	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Plays literacy games with child	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Provides a print rich environment	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9
	Outside tutoring - Kumon	8
	Outside summer program	1
Materials	**Books**	
	- religious	1, 3, 4, 8
	- leveled	7
	- board	7
	- chapter	7
	- series	
	- I Can Read	8
	- 1st Gr. Skills Books	8
	- Little Golden Book Collection	9
	- fantasy	1, 4
	- educational	3, 7, 8
	- library	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Kumon classes	7
	Tech gadgets	
	Smart phones	1, 3, 6, 7
	Tablet	2, 9
	Kindle	3, 6, 7, 8
	Leap frog	
	- pen	2, 7
	- book	1, 7
	- leap pad	2
	Computer	
	- starfall.com	5
	- ABCMouse.com	1,3, 5, 6, 7, 8

(table continues)

Themes	Subthemes	Participant frequency
	- Nickelodeon	3
	- Disney	3
	- Hooked on Phonics	2
	- Other	
	Charts	1
	Flash cards	1, 2, 4, 7, 8
	DVDs	
	- Quigley's Village	2
	- Veggie Tales	2
	Nursery Rhymes **CD**	1, 2, 5
	Magnetic/Paper Letters	2
	Scrabble	3, 7
	Super Why board game	2
	Books on tape	5
	Boggle	7
Literacy activities done at home	Story telling (retelling)	1, 3, 4
	Acting out story	4
	Parent reading aloud	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Child read aloud	3, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Interactive reading	3, 5, 6, 7
	Nursery rhymes	2,
	Comprehension/questioning	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	Literacy games	1, 5, 7, 8
	Picture/word association	5, 9
	Hooked on phonics	2
	Reading road signs	1, 4, 7
	Phonetic skills	5
	Singing out the story	5
	Word families	5, 8
	Writing sentences	1,5
	Word recognition	5, 8
	Hide/seek with words	5
	Bingo	5
	Grammar activities	5
	Spelling	1, 5, 7
	Syllabication	1, 4
	Child reading to younger siblings	3, 4, 8
	Word meaning	4

(table continues)

Themes	Subthemes	Participant frequency
	Kumon literacy activity sheets	7
	Parent reading big words/child reading small words	8
Barriers	Time	1, 2, 4, 7, 8
	Child's attitude	3
	Job schedule	1, 2, 7, 8
	Child not focusing	2
	Mom gets home late	3, 7, 8
	Tiredness	1, 3, 4. 8
	Health	3, 9
	Lacks skills in framing questions	3
	Parent's accent	3
Parents' role	Motivator	2, 5, 8
	Role model	4, 5, 8
	Reinforce what was taught	4, 8
	Facilitator	2,3, 4, 5, 7, 8
	Encourager	2, 5, 7, 8
	Teacher	1, 3, 8
Child's reaction to doing activities	Bored	3
	Excitement	2, 4, 5, 8
	Enjoyment	5, 8
	Argumentative	3
	Pride	5, 8
	Confident	5
	Interest	4, 5
	Pleasure	5
Benefit of PI support & Literacy activities done with child	Builds self-esteem	4, 5, 7, 8
	Builds self confidence	4, 5, 7, 8
	Parent bonding with child	4, 7, 8
	It gives child a leg up over the other kids	7
	Child makes progress	4, 5, 6, 7, 8

(table continues)

Themes	Subthemes	Participant frequency
What school can do to help PI	Continue to be patient with child	2
	Need information of what is being taught at school and also how it is being taught so parent can help child at home	3, 4, 7, 8, 9
Parent's feelings when doing activities with child	Feels good	4, 5, 7, 8
	Rewarding	5
	Fun	7
	Happy that child is learning	5, 6, 7
Parent's perception of Parental Involvement	Knowing child's capability & working with the teachers	6
	Being up-front and personal in the education of the child	7