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The Perspectives of African American Parents' Decisions to Homeschool Children with Autism in New Jersey

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Walden University

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College of Psychology and Community Services

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Shannalee Stephenson

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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

The Perspectives of African American Parents' Decisions to Homeschool Children with

Autism in New Jersey

by

Shannalee Stephenson

MS, Walden University, 2020

BA, Bloomfield College, 2018

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Educational Psychology

Walden University

2025

Abstract

New Jersey is an autism epicenter and may indicate future trends in the United States. The population of American families opting to homeschool is growing, especially among African-American families in New Jersey. The purpose of this narrative inquiry study was to examine the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children with autism in New Jersey through storytelling. The conceptual framework used was the model of parental involvement developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 homeschooling African-American parents using a basic qualitative approach. The results were organized into five themes. One theme was the educational considerations; another theme was social and emotional well-being; theme three was educational outcomes and progress. The fourth theme was parental involvement and empowerment, and the final theme was a personalized learning environment. This qualitative study promotes positive social change by increasing our understanding of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism; such knowledge has the potential to contribute to increased advocacy and awareness within the broader African American community.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this accomplishment to my father, Alfred Lloyd Stephenson. Although you transitioned from this earth at an early age, your little girl has made you proud. You are forever in my heart. I love you, Daddy.

This work will open hearts and minds to all homeschooling African American family's past, present, and future. It reignites the love for your dedication to education because our children, our communities, and the world deserve it.

Acknowledgment

As I reflect on this incredible journey, I am overwhelmed by recollections of encouragement and support. I share my accomplishments with all those who contributed time and effort to my path. Collectively, we celebrate. I want to thank my sisters, Nicola and Alicia, who inspired me to embark on this adventure. To the remarkable woman in my life, my mother Velma, who taught me determination and believing in dreams because they do come through. This project would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of numerous individuals. I am thankful to Dr. Masiello. I appreciate your assistance and patience throughout my dissertation path. I would also like to thank Dr. Zentella, my second committee member, for being an extraordinary person who has demonstrated her expertise in this subject matter. My committee instilled in me the obligation and discipline connected with establishing myself as a researcher through constant renegotiations and countless drafts.

Thank you, all.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

New Jersey is an autism epicenter and may indicate future autism (ASD) trends (Shenouda et al., 2023). Autism prevalence in New Jersey is 3.6% overall but higher in one region (5.4%) and in multiple areas, approaching 7.0% (Shenouda et al., 2023). There is significant variation in ASD prevalence by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), and school district size. Mapping prevalence in smaller, well-specified regions may be helpful to understand better the true scope of ASD, disparities in ASD detection, and the factors impacting ASD prevalence estimation (Shenouda et al., 2023). To determine autism spectrum disorder (ASD) prevalence in 2006 in New Jersey and to identify the changes, prevalence, or characteristics of the children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), research was conducted between 2002 and 2006. The cohorts included 30,570 children born in 1998 and 28,936 in 1994, residing in Essex, Hudson, Union, and Ocean counties, New Jersey. Point prevalence estimates by sex, ethnicity, autism spectrum disorder subtype, and previous autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis were determined (Baio et al., 2018). For 2006, a total of 533 children with autism spectrum disorder were identified, consistent with a prevalence of 17.4 per 1000 (95% confidence interval = 15.9–18.9), indicating a significant increase in the autism spectrum disorder prevalence ($p < 0.001$), between 2002 (10.6 per 1000) and 2006. The rise in autism spectrum disorder was broad, affecting major demographic groups and subtypes. Boys with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) outnumbered girls by nearly 5:1. Autism spectrum disorder prevalence was higher among European American children than among children

of other ethnicities (Zahorodny et al. 2014). The rise in autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) is significant to this study and the African American population because of the variation in ASD prevalence in New Jersey using population-based data from an active ASD surveillance system. New Jersey is one of the epicenters of ASD, which makes this state different from the other states and an important contribution to the literature.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a heterogeneous, multi-factorial developmental disability in which an unusual development pattern occurs during the infant and toddler years (Joon et al. 2021). According to the DSM-5, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a combined phrase for a family of complex developmental disabilities inclusive of Autistic Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), and Asperger's Disorder (Joon et al., 2021). Children living with ASD are also at greater risk of school exclusion, with over 45 % experiencing it (Ambitious About Autism, 2016). ASD is characterized not only by persistent impairments in reciprocal social communication and social interactions but also by restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities (Joon et al., 2021). autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is one of the fastest-growing developmental disorders in the United States, with a prevalence rate of one out of 68 children (Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 2016). In addition, autism is a developmental disorder observed in early childhood.

The Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network is an active surveillance program that estimates the prevalence and characteristics of ASD and monitors the timing of ASD identification among children aged 4 and 8 years. In 2020, a

total of 11 sites (located in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, Tennessee, Utah, and Wisconsin) conducted surveillance of ASD among children aged 4 and 8 years and suspected ASD among children aged 4 years (Shaw et al. 2023). In 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported a higher prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in New Jersey, one of the wealthiest states in the United States, than in other surveillance regions. Reasons for the higher ASD prevalence in New Jersey were not apparent (Thomas et al. 2012; Shenouda et al. 2023).

Children in New Jersey have a higher rate of autism than their peers nationwide. Current data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) put the rate of autism in New Jersey, which is one in 45 children, higher than the national average of one in 68 children (Kelly et al. 2016). The State of New Jersey had one of the highest prevalence rates reported, with 20 out of 1000 8-year-old children having an autism spectrum disorder. This prevalence rate was second only to Utah out of 11 reporting sites. Moreover, according to the most recent surveillance studies, government studies have shown an overall increase in prevalence of 23% from 2006 to 2008. Due to the widespread prevalence and rising rates of this disorder, further studies on its cause are of paramount importance, which shows the gap in the literature and lack of studies unexplored, under-explored, or outdated (Maramara et al., 2014; Maramara et al. 2021). The potential social implication of the study will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of homeschooling trends for students with disabilities and provide information that can be used to assist parents in better serving their homeschooled

children. Not all children will have the skills to learn in a classroom setting. Another potential social implication of this study would be an increase in the overall quality of care for children diagnosed with autism and an improvement in their abilities to learn at home.

African-American parents in New Jersey have complained that traditional schooling is ineffective in meeting their children's learning needs (Maramara et al., 2014; Maramara et al., 2021). Parental perspective data on homeschooling can potentially improve everyone's knowledge and understanding of homeschooling (Maramara et al., 2014; Maramara et al. 2021). In this narrative inquiry study, I examined the lived experiences of African American parents' perspectives on decision-making to homeschool their children diagnosed with ASD. The prevalence and rising rates of autism among African-American children and the lack of resources in the schooling arenas are forcing African-American parents to homeschool their children.

I conducted this study to examine African-American parents' perspectives on the decision to homeschool. My goal was to understand the homeschooling population, especially African Americans. This chapter includes the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the conceptual framework, and the nature of the study. The chapter also includes the definitions of terms, assumptions, the scope and delimitations, limitations, the study's delimitations, and the significance of the study.

Background

Home-based learning or homeschooling was a top choice for parents until compulsory education laws and the teaching profession entered society in the 1870s (Basham et al., 2007; Gaither, 2017; Knowles et al. 1992). In American history, home-based learning or homeschooling was rooted in society through homestead teaching or elite tutoring (Knowles et al. 1992).

Knowles et al. (1992) stated that studies in the early 1900s revealed how the home was the center of learning in typical Judeo-Christian homes and North America's upper echelon of the 17th and 18th centuries. Throughout the years, mandatory education laws created many public schools across the United States, and the truancy laws stopped homeschooling (Houston & Toma, 2003). Homeschooling then declined in popularity until the 1960s, when the ideological versus pedagogical themes of homeschooling came to the forefront of media and gained widespread interest from parents (Basham et al., 2007; Knowles et al., 1992; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Educational reformers catalyzed homeschooling's growth in the 1960s and 1970s. The start of the 21st century marked a renewed shift towards homeschooling due to a rising concern with the public school systems. The home and family educational sources familiar to America 40 years earlier quickly grew into a reaction against the public education system (Collom, 2005). The challenges faced by students with autism have led African-American parents to feel that they have no choice but to withdraw them from the school system to be home-educated (Kendall & Taylor, 2016). The number of children being homeschooled in North

America is growing. There are 2.5 million home-educated children in the United States, with an estimated increase of 2%–8% per annum (Ray, 2019).

The gap in knowledge in the discipline showed that with the rise of ASD in children, there is a lack of research in New Jersey about the homeschooling populace, particularly in the arena of African-American children with disabilities being homeschooled. The gap in knowledge in the discipline of autism and homeschooling showed that an increasing number of parents are making the decision to home-educate their children diagnosed with autism, yet this remains an under-researched area (Daniels, 2017), especially amongst minority groups in American society. Limited research has been conducted to examine the population of African-American parents' perspectives on their decisions to homeschool children with autism.

Although the prevalence of autism in New Jersey has been rising in recent years, disparities in diagnosis remain. Within the last decade, and in response to these challenges, many African-American parents assumed full responsibility for educating their children through homeschooling (Anderson, 2018; Huseman, 2015; Mazama, 2016). This study contributes to the understanding of homeschooling trends for students with disabilities. It provides information that can be used to assist educators in better serving students and ultimately keep them homeschooled. African-American parents in New Jersey have been complaining that traditional schooling is ineffective in meeting their children's learning needs. However, African American parents have, as an additional concern, the factor of deep-rooted inequalities. As recognized by Dennison et al. (2020), their response to institutions and systems with historical roots in inequality have

intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated inequitable outcomes for their children. This study was needed to inform African American parents that they are not forgotten and that there are homeschool resources for their children to succeed.

One of my goals for this study was to bring awareness to the African-American community of homeschoolers and educate parents on the benefits/advantages of pulling their children from traditional schooling. I examined African American perspectives on their decision-making to homeschool their children.

There is limited literature on African American parents and their decisions to pull their children from mainstream education. In New Jersey, ASD diagnosis is high; for many African American parents, one of the challenges of public or private school systems is not meeting children's educational or learning needs.

According to O'Hagan et al. (2021), mainstream education can be difficult for children diagnosed with autism, given their social communication difficulties, highly focused interests, and sensory sensitivities associated with autism. An increasing number of African American parents are making the decision to home-educate their children with autism, yet this remains an under-researched area (O'Hagan et al. 2021). This study was needed to uncover the perspectives of African American parents to homeschool their children diagnosed with ASD. While a review of the literature showed the lives of African American homeschooling families, this study was necessary to inform the field of education of the recent trend within the homeschooling and autistic communities.

Problem Statement

Educating children at home is a viable alternative to charter, public, private, or parochial schools for an increasing number of African-American families. The problem is that many African-American parents no longer trust the public education system (Kunjufu, 2014; Mazama & Lundy, 2014; Neuman and Guterman, 2016). As the number of African-American homeschoolers rises, there is a subsequent reduction in public school enrollment. However, in the limited body of literature published over the last 3 decades, no large-scale longitudinal, empirical, or qualitative studies have been conducted to examine the thousands of homeschooled African Americans. Very few researchers have targeted this population of homeschoolers to examine their reasons for homeschooling.

There is a lack of research for explanation or theorizing of the complex rationale behind African-American parents choosing homeschooling instead of traditional public schooling (Isenberg, 2007). Despite homeschooling's individual and customizable nature, most research is limited to qualitative studies about the reasons for homeschooling. These studies fail to address the complexities and interconnected factors of an African American family's decision to homeschool (Gaither, 2017; Noel et al., 2013; Ray, 2018; Wang et al. 2019). The high growth in homeschooling may suggest that parents want to create their ideal school environment because their existing educational options do not offer flexibility or meet their children's needs (Krause, 2012).

Existing research fails to adequately address the complex decision-making process of African Americans regarding homeschooling. The research problem is that

many perspectives exist on African-American Parents' decisions to homeschool children with autism. In New Jersey, research has shown an estimated ASD prevalence of 36 children per 1,000 in most regions but more significant than 70 per 1,000 in multiple school districts in the state. The national average of children with ASD is 2%.

The rise in prevalence rates for children with autism (CDC, 2023; NCES, 2020a) presents various issues, including funding needed services. The rapid increase in students identified with autism spectrum potential has an economic impact regarding the demand for scaling up service models and training and securing providers to meet the increased demand (Chambers et al. 2004); (Powers and Uhing, 2023). Many African American parents have lost faith and trust in public education due to low school safety, lack of quality education, and social/emotional issues with public schools (Billingham & Hunt, 2016; Waitoller, 2020). With documented educational processes and theories to explain African American home education experience, processes, and premise, the general homeschool population could be positively impacted by those who use research to enact legislation and regulation and make suppositions upon which a limited view of education skews the research.

A gap exists in the limited research exploring the population of African American parents' perspectives on decisions to homeschool children with autism. This lack of research in New Jersey contributes to a poor understanding of the homeschooling populace, particularly in the arena of children with disabilities being homeschooled (Shenouda et al. 2023). Although the prevalence of autism in New Jersey has been rising in recent years, disparities in diagnosis remain. Within the last decade, and in response to

these challenges, many African-American parents assumed full responsibility for educating their children through homeschooling (Anderson, 2018; Huseman, 2015; Mazama, 2016).

This study contributes to understanding the homeschooling trend for students with disabilities. It includes information that can be used by educators to better-serve students and ultimately keep them homeschooling. African-American parents in New Jersey have complained that traditional schooling is ineffective in meeting their children's learning needs. Furthermore, these claims have been for all races in which parents from all backgrounds are experiencing similar problems in public and private schools. However, African American parents have, as an additional concern, the factor of deep-rooted inequalities.

As recognized by Dennison et al. (2020), parents' responses to institutions and systems with historical roots in inequality have intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated inequitable outcomes for their children. The problem is a paucity of literature on African American parents in New Jersey choosing to educate their children with autism at home. There are limited theories to explain the phenomenon of African Americans homeschooling their children diagnosed with ASD. This study was significant because I examined the perspectives of African Americans who home school and assessed the home education experience, decisions, and processes. This information could positively impact legislation and regulation.

Purpose of the Study

The concepts that I addressed in this study were homeschooling, the perspectives of African-American parents, and the decision-making process for their children diagnosed with ASD. Narrative inquiry is the process of gathering information for research through storytelling (Clandinin and Caine 2013). My goal was to understand the perspectives of African American parents and their decisions to homeschool their children with ASD in New Jersey. Homeschooling, the phenomenon of interest, is a growing option in the school choice arena, and African American parents in New Jersey are participating in school choice of homeschooling. However, little is known about the factors contributing to this ever-increasing option. I asked parents to share the factors that influenced their decision. The findings of this study contribute to existing research literature about African American parents of youth with ASD, a growing group of the homeschooling population.

Research Question

Research Question (RQ): What are the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism?

Conceptual Framework

I used the model of parental involvement as the conceptual framework of this study. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) created this model to depict the parental involvement process as beginning with parents' decisions about their involvement in their children's education, translating into better student outcomes. Hoover-Dempsey and

Sandler (1995) provided a conceptual model which defines parental involvement according to three main points:

1. why do parents become involved in their children's education
2. how parents choose specific types of involvement
3. why parental involvement has a positive influence on students' educational outcomes.

The parental involvement model incorporates parents' beliefs about what they should do about their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Parents' beliefs about child-rearing and development and appropriate home support roles in children's education influence role construction. The parental role construction also grows from parents' experiences with individuals and groups related to schooling and is subject to social influence over time (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

This model can be applied to African American parents' beliefs about child-rearing and development and appropriate home support roles in children's education influence role construction. African American parents are very much involved in their children's lives, in which they can identify the educational needs that are not met. The logical connections between the Model of Parental Involvement and the nature of this study on the effects of African American parental involvement will show a consistent, positive relationship between parents' engagement in their children's education and student outcomes.

The model of parental involvement I used this framework as the guiding lens in this study to explore African American parents' stories to understand how these parents make sense of their experiences and perspectives on decisions to homeschool their children with autism.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative study, I used narrative inquiry to answer my research question. I used this approach to examine participants' experiences with a social phenomenon within the context of a bounded situation or episode (see Mueller, 2019). I allowed parents to tell their stories and express the everyday perspectives of homeschooling their children and what led to the decision to homeschool. Because my goal was to gather detailed information from parents, a narrative inquiry was best suited to the in-depth questioning and details I wanted in this study.

The key concepts that I investigated in this study were homeschooling, the perspectives of African American parents, and the decision-making process for homeschooling their children diagnosed with ASD.

Researchers using interviews attempt to employ a thorough inquiry and communicate study participants' lived experiences. According to Polkinghorne, (1995), for a researcher, the basic source of evidence about the narratives is the interview. I gathered information from 12 parents through semi-structured interviews via Zoom. The data were analyzed through codes from reoccurring themes used from the collected data.

Narrative inquiry methodology is commonplace because human beings live and tell stories about their lives. These lived, told, and talked about stories are ways we create

meaning in our lives and enlist each other's help in building our lives and communities (Clandinin, 2006). Episodic narrative interviews recorded the perspectives of African American parents' choices to homeschool in New Jersey. The proposed study filled a gap in the literature by examining the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism. The proposed study is unique because it focused on African American parents of elementary-age children 6-11, which covers most of the homeschooling population. This qualitative method gathered detailed information from each parent regarding their decision to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism.

Definitions

Homeschool/Home school/Home education: Parents take direct accountability for their children's education by teaching them at home (Griffith, 1999).

Special Education: The passing of special education laws such as PL. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act established rights for students with disabilities in 1975, stating that they have the right to FAPE. The result of this historic legislation meant all children with disabilities were guaranteed education in the public school system, with considerations to be made at annual IEP meetings (Turnbull, 2005; PL. 94-142).

African American: An African American is an American of Black African descent. Also, African Americans are an ethnic group of Africans with total or partial ancestry from any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Dumas & Ross, 2016).

Autism: Autism is a diverse neurodevelopmental condition that encompasses a continuum of abilities ranging from mild to severe difficulties with social communication and interaction and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities (DSM-5; APA, 2013).

Assumptions

All data acquired through research must be credible (Fleming et al. 2021; Gehlbach & Robinson, 2021; Patall, 2021). Assumptions are important in a study because they guide and craft the study process to generate evidence and a conclusion from the study (Nkwake, 2012). Aspects of this study that are believed but cannot be demonstrated to be true are: I assumed that African American parents are going to provide in-depth answers to the interview questions because they are the ones experiencing the changes in the traditional school systems. Individuals' memories, perceptions of the phenomenon, and recollections of an event might not be aligned with what happened and might create a lack of reliability in results (Birt et al. 2016). I assumed the participants would be genuinely interested in the study.

I assumed I would gain the participants' trust by being truthful and accurate. A final assumption was that African American parents would have the necessary information and experience to provide information about their decisions on homeschooling their children with autism. The researcher assumed that participants would openly communicate and answer interview questions honestly. I also assumed parents would understand and truthfully acknowledge that their child must meet the criteria for homeschooling.

Within the context of this study, the assumptions were necessary as they informed the choices of the framework guiding the research while the researcher collected and analyzed the data. To reach a coherent picture of the information provided by participants, I conducted data analysis using In-Vivo coding software and organized themes and commonalities among participants' responses. By identifying these perspectives, the assumptions for homeschooling students with ASD can be replaced with evidence-based data that can be used to inform and educate parents in the homeschooling arena.

Scope and Delimitations

The research problem addressed in this study was the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children. The study examined the perspectives that cause parents to decide on their children's education. This specific focus was chosen to understand the decision-making process of African American parents on homeschooling. The researcher should provide clear and concise details of the steps in the research process so that other researchers can similarly conduct the study (Herzog et al. 2019). I provided clear and concise detailed descriptions of the procedures and findings from the study. I conducted individual interviews with each participant, created detailed notes, and recorded the interviews to be transcribed for data analysis with the participants. The research study's findings can be applied to other contexts, states/countries, times, and populations. One of the conceptual frameworks most related to the area of this study that was not investigated is the Curriculum Theory originally developed by Bruner (1966). Bruner (1966) developed this theory to explore schooling

organization, and it was conceptualized as having a relationship to informal education. Bruner's focus on informal educators served as the conceptual lens for the development of curriculum theory.

This conceptual framework was not used because this research did not focus on curriculums. This research focused on parents' perspectives on decisions to homeschool. The Six Types of Parental Involvement Model is another conceptual framework most related to the area of this study that was not investigated. This framework was created and introduced by Epstein (1995), a well-known researcher on the issue of parental involvement. It is also another conceptual framework that was not used. This framework was used because it did not align with the RQ and the problem statement. Transferring the research results others perform can help us develop and modify these practices. However, research readers must know that results cannot always be transferred; a result in one situation will not necessarily occur in a similar situation (Barnes et al. 2005). In this research, I obtained in-depth information through primary and follow-up interviews to obtain detailed descriptions with deep insights concerning the phenomenon of the study (Peoples, 2021; Vagle, 2018). As a result, potential transferability can be established by providing readers and researchers with evidence that the research study's findings could apply to other contexts, situations, times, and populations.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The study included twelve African American (12) parents of children diagnosed with ASD who are homeschooled at the elementary level. The study included African American parents who resided in New Jersey. The study included males and females over

the age of 21. The exclusion criteria were non-African American parents, children without autism, parents or children not enrolled in a homeschooling school for at least one to two years, and unwillingness to volunteer to participate in an interview.

Limitations

This study included limitations regarding the method, design, and data collection (Creswell, 2017). This is a narrative inquiry study with a small sample. Since the data was gathered from parents in the scope of the study, this may limit the dependability and transferability of the findings. To address transferability, the focus was on the setting, participants' lived experiences, and variations in their demographic characteristics. In addition, an audit trail enhances the consistency of findings and addresses dependability (Ravitch and Carl, 2016). As Peoples (2021) stated, detailed documentation with a thorough explanation of the research process is key to achieving dependability. In addition, a limitation of this study was that I gathered experiences from a limited number of people within the study, so 12 of the outcomes may only be considered a typical experience of some African American parents, which cannot be generalized to the larger group of African American parents homeschooling their child with ASD. However, this study's results represented the participants' experiences. The probability is that the participants may have had unknown biases before providing a response that will influence their understanding of the questions during the interview process.

Another possible limitation of this study was the researcher's bias toward the participants. I am an African American female and a therapist in New Jersey. Therefore, some bias can affect how the interviews will be conducted and perceived and how the

transcripts will be analyzed. Due to my shared relatedness, I may have personal experiences that did not align with the participants' experiences, which may have allowed greater empathy for the research participants. It is vital to recognize a researcher's views of the world and discern the presence of a personal lens to accurately listen and analyze the participants' reflections on the data collected during the study (Fusch and Ness, 2015). As the researcher, I maintained a journal to bracket the preconceived ideas about the topic before conducting the interviews. To avoid personal bias, the interview questions were created before the interview process and were delivered verbatim to all participants during the interview (Creswell, 2017; Fusch and Ness, 2015). Qualitative designs are used to develop sensitizing concepts, which can be useful in developing a deeper understanding; however, the data obtained lack structured, formal, specific details that can be tested through predication or planned operations, such as with quantitative designs (Sale and Thielke, 2018). Without testable theory, statistical descriptions, or relative hypotheses to prove (through quantitative methods), the grounded theory of qualitative study is nothing more than speculative. Therefore, to overcome this limitation, an extensive literature review was conducted that substantiated the topic's value and the importance of this study (Burnside et al. 2017).

Significance

Changes in society can occur by clarifying why parents are choosing to take on the responsibility of their child's education because more information would be available. Parental perspective decisions on homeschooling can potentially improve the knowledge and understanding of everyone in the homeschool arena. Potential contributions of this

study that will advance knowledge in the discipline are interviews of each parent explaining their decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with ASD. Each finding adds to the literature on homeschooling. Potential contributions of the study that advance the practice of homeschooling will encourage researchers to develop and refine studies to analyze and understand the homeschooling population, especially African Americans. There is limited data within the literature to explain how homeschooling occurs (Murphy, 2014). The significance of this study was that it has the potential to equip African American parents with information on how to decide on homeschooling their children. African American parents should utilize resources, peer influence, and personal experience when choosing to homeschool. As a result, African American parents will eventually start stepping up the home support for their children, filling the existing gaps. In addition, the potential findings will help African American parents understand and learn about homeschooling. The findings will reach the parents via the Internet, the homeschooling community, and the New Jersey Education Department. Finally, this study can be used as a secondary information source as it will lend itself to filling significant gaps in the knowledge on African Americans' decision to homeschool their children with autism.

Summary

A study of this nature is timely because African Americans are underrepresented in the literature on homeschooling and, even more specifically, homeschooling their children diagnosed with autism. The problem statement states that the rapid increase in students identified with ASD has potentially an economic impact regarding the demand

for scaling up service models and training and securing providers to meet the increased demand of their needs (Chambers et al. 2004); (Powers and Uhing, 2023). African American parents in New Jersey are forced to remove their children from the traditional schooling arena to homeschooling, where their educational needs can be met. The call for research on homeschooling, specifically regarding the education of students with disabilities at home, has been consistently documented (Arora, 2006; Duvall et al. 2004). The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine African American parents' life experiences through storytelling. The proposed study can help fill a gap in the existing research literature by providing new evidence and insights that contribute to the advancement of African American parents, homeschooling, and the autism field. The research question for this study was the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism. The narrative inquiry was used to examine this phenomenon because it offers nested narrative accounts of participants' experiences with a social phenomenon within the context of a bounded situation or episode (Mueller, 2019). Connelly and Calandinin (1990) first used narrative inquiry as a research design to explore the perceptions and personal stories of teachers.

The narrative inquiry has a long intellectual history both in and out of education; it is increasingly used in studies of educational experience (Connelly and Calandinin (1990). One theory in educational research holds that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world. This general concept is refined into the view

that education and educational research are the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers and characters in their own and others' stories. In this paper, the researcher briefly surveys forms of narrative inquiry in educational studies and outlines certain criteria, methods, and writing forms, which we describe in terms of beginning the story, living the story, and selecting stories to construct and reconstruct narrative plots. The narrative inquiry methodology allowed parents to tell their stories and express the everyday perspectives of homeschooling their children and what led to the decision to homeschool. African American parents are very much involved in their children's lives, in which they can identify their children's educational needs that are not met. The logical connections between the conceptual framework, the Model of Parental Involvement, presented by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995), and the nature of this study include research on the effects of African American parental involvement in the decision-making process of where they want their child to be educated, which has shown a consistent, positive relationship between parents' engagement in their children's education and student outcomes. This study's findings may provide knowledge of parents' perceptions and decisions on homeschooling their children. The implication for positive societal change impacting the lives of students with disabilities is a significant focus. Chapter 2 will provide information in two sections. The first section reviews the conceptual framework, Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler Parental involvement (Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler, 1995). The second section consists of a literature review of the concepts and provides a comprehensive overview of the current scholarly literature regarding the phenomena of

interest in African American parents' perspectives on decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this study, I examined the perspectives of African American parents' who decided to homeschool their children with autism in New Jersey. The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study examined parents' perspectives on homeschooling decisions through storytelling. Many African-American parents believed private and public schools lacked character and moral binding, contributing to low expectations among African-American children diagnosed with autism (Alsauidi, 2016; Ray, 201). Homeschooling is currently one of the adopted modalities with application guidelines and is received by parents of children with disabilities. Research estimates that the homeschooling population in the United States reflects upwards of four million students in total, roughly 7% of the entire student population in the United States in 2020 (Ray, 2022). Research suggests that past perspectives on the homeschooled population in the United States have been based on limited experience (Ray, 2005). The demographic variety among homeschooling families rapidly increased during the 2000s to the point that in 2016, 41% of homeschool students were of ethnic minority background, with about 79% of those living in non-poor households and with parents' formal education levels similar to national averages 2021 (Ray, 2022).

In this chapter, the current relevant literature was reviewed for the following concepts: (a) homeschooling African American children with autism, (b) homeschooling disparities among States, (c) New Jersey Homeschooling Requirements, (d)

homeschooling involvement, (e) parents' rights to homeschooling, and (f) closing the achievement gap.

This literature review is divided into three sections. The first section consists of a review of the conceptual framework (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005): the model of parental involvement. The second section consists of a literature review of the concepts. The third section includes a summary of the key findings from the literature reviewed and a transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

I located the majority of my sources for this literature review using the Walden University library and the following databases: MEDLINE/PubMed, CINAHL, APA PsycInfo, APA PsycArticles, SocIndex, ScienceDirect, Academic Search Complete, Education Source, ERIC, IEEE Xplore, Emerald Insight, Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest. The Google Scholar search engine, which provided substantive information about relevant articles, was used to gain additional resources. The initial keyword and phrase searched were (*Autism or ASD or autism spectrum disorder or Asperger's or Asperger's Syndrome or Autistic Disorder or Asperger's*) AND (*Homeschool or Home School or Home Education*) AND (*African Americans or Black Americans or Blacks*). In addition, peer-reviewed scholarly articles published within 5 years were used. I also accessed books and literature from prominent agencies and government sites affiliated with the subject matter and was well-versed in it.

Conceptual Framework

I used the model of parental involvement as the framework of this study. This theory was first proposed and developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) and captures the influence of parental involvement to herald student achievement. The model of parental involvement describes the parental involvement process beginning with parents' decisions about their involvement and how these translate into resulting student outcomes. The model consists of five levels; these levels illustrate parents' beliefs, motivations, and behaviors to explain their reasoning and actions in their level of participation in children's academic pursuits (Hoover- Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005; see also Williams-Johnson & Fields-Smith, 2022). All five levels can be applied to African American parents.

Within the five levels of the model, there are three questions, the answers to which Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005) noted would help educators and other stakeholders understand parents' motivation for involvement and the impact their involvement had on students' success':

1. why do parents choose to become involved in their children's education
2. what forms their involvement will take
3. why their involvement influences their children's educational outcomes"

(Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, p. 40).

In the initial Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995), Level 1 focused on parents' decisions to be involved with one central overarching concept, which contained

three main sections. The purpose of implementing the first level of the model was to identify parents:

1. personal motivations concerning understanding their parental role
2. abilities to support their children academically in school
3. perceptions about school personnel and their children's invitations for their involvement in school activities outside of classrooms (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; 1997).

Level 1 can be applied to African American parents' perceptions that have led them to partake in meaningful and pertinent activities to their children's education. Role construction is parents' beliefs about what they are supposed to do concerning their children's schooling. Related to African American parents' motivation to become involved is their level of confidence in their abilities to help their children with schoolwork—an activity that allowed their children to succeed (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2004). Self-efficacy for helping their children succeed in school refers to parents' beliefs about whether their involvement will positively influence their children's education.

Level 2 of the model focused on what influenced parents to select specific types of involvement. Levels 1 and 2 aligned in that both concentrate on types of invitations extended to African American parents and from whom the invitations came. Life context variables can be applied to African American parents' perspectives on decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with ASD. Parents' understanding of their skills and knowledge influences their thinking about the kinds of involvement activities they take

on. Level 1 also identified “parental time and energy” as a demand that influenced parents’ choice towards involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, p. 4). Level 1 can be applied to African-American parents because African Americans take pride in their children’s education.

Level 2 learning mechanisms consist of “encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction,” through which parents influence their children’s learning outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997, p. 4). Implementing and using learning mechanisms from Level 3 to Level 4 helped African American parents provide appropriate support for their children diagnosed with autism and acceptable involvement in homeschooling activities. Level 2 of the model argues that parents influence students’ attributes necessary for school success.

Level 3 learning mechanisms consist of “encouragement, modeling, reinforcement, and instruction,” through which children are influenced by their parents’ outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997, p. 4). Level 3 asserts that these mechanisms remain inert unless students perceive their parents’ actions. Level 3 can be applied to African American parents’ homeschooling their children with ASD, in which student perceptions of their parents’ use of the four mechanisms are an essential channel through which parents’ beliefs and behaviors are translated into attributes that lead to academic success.

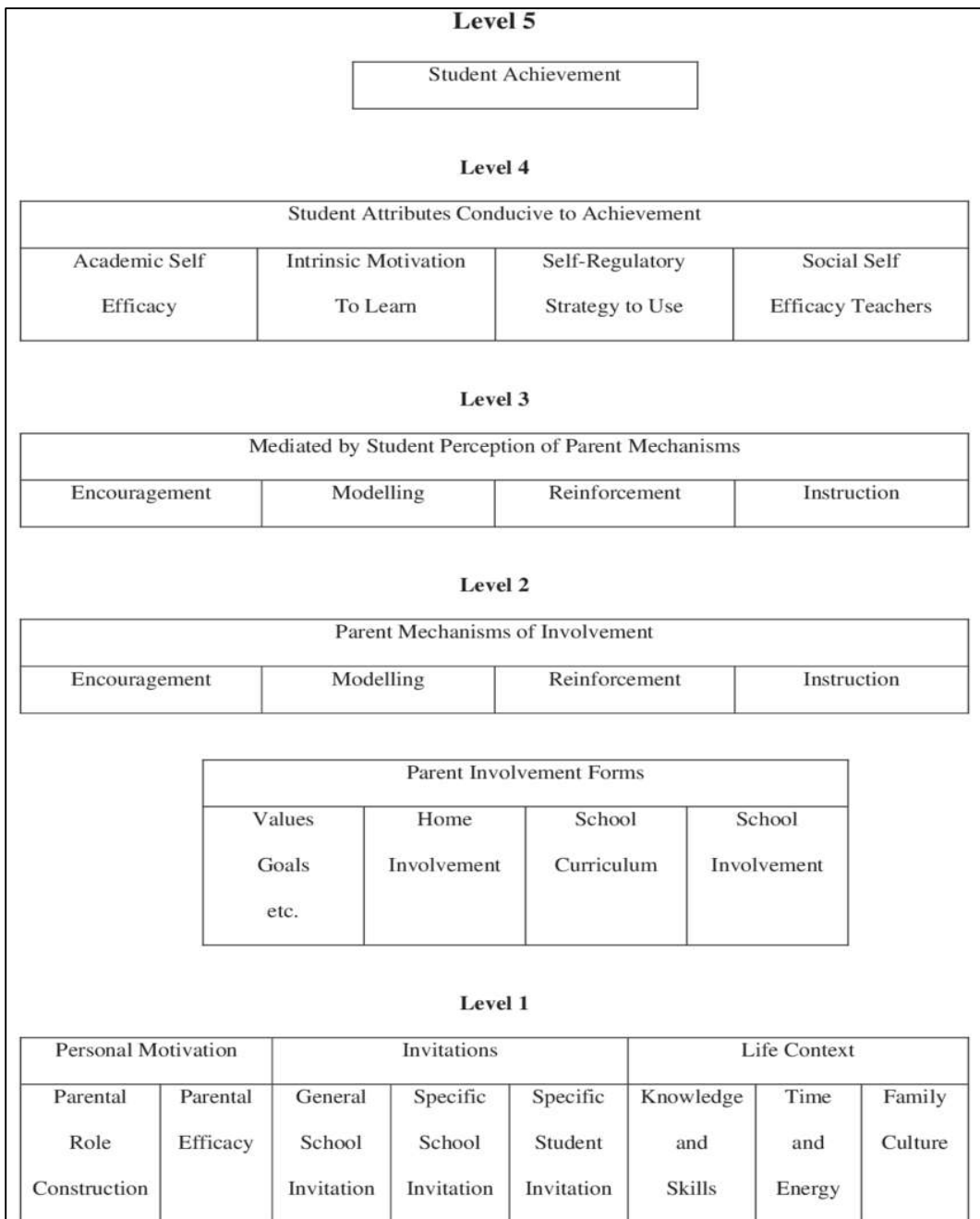
Level 4 can be applied to African American parents homeschooling their children. One belief that is important to achievement is academic self-efficacy. When children believe they can learn, they tend to persist in the face of new and sometimes challenging

academic work (Whitaker, 2019). If they do not hold this belief, they are less likely to persist or have intrinsic motivation to learn. Highly effective learners are genuinely interested in mastering the content, and this curiosity sustains children's engagement in learning at home (Whitaker, 2019). Also, in Level 4, student attributes conducive to achievement include self-regulatory skills. Children learning at home will behave in ways that support their learning, including managing time well, setting goals, and monitoring their progress. Successful students know how to ask for help when confused and work cooperatively with others in the classroom. These attributes are important to academic success (Whitaker, 2019).

At Level 5, African American parents' ultimate goal is student achievement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model asserts that parent involvement, as described at each level of the process, influences and, to some degree, predicts student outcomes (Whitaker, 2019).

Figure 1

Model of Parental Involvement Process



Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM)

The rapid increase of ASD and what was once considered a rare disorder among children (ADDM-CDC, 2007b; Maenner et al., 2021), today has become one of the most common childhood disorders with estimates approaching 7% in some communities (Shenouda et al., 2021). Still, even worldwide averages show rising estimates with many variations between countries (Chiarotti and Venerosi, 2020). The debate continues regarding the increase of ASD in New Jersey. However, whether it is increasing, or recognition has improved, the rising prevalence estimates indicate that ASD is an urgent public health concern. The number of children diagnosed with autism experiencing instruction in homes has expanded since the rise of home education.

New Jersey was one of the initial Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) sites surveyed in 2000 (ADDM-CDC, 2007b). While the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) prevalence was 0.7% in 2000, New Jersey had a higher prevalence rate of 1%, the highest rate among all Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) network states at the time, and this trend persisted throughout most Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) surveillance reports from 2000-2016 (ADDM-CDC, 2007a, 2007b, 2009; Baio et al., 2018a; Christensen et al., 2019; Maenner et al., 2020; Zahorodny et al., 2014).

In the most recent Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) report published in 2020 for the surveillance year 2016 representing the 2008 birth cohort, New Jersey prevalence estimates were above 3%, increasing 3-fold in the 16-year

surveillance period (Maenner et al., 2020). As African American parents are fully responsible for educating their children at home, involving them in their children's learning process is crucial (Alfadhel et al., 2020). Homeschooling has been a highly customizable education option for families whose children have various learning needs (Neuman and Guterman, 2017). According to Mazama (2015), African-American parents struggled for years to obtain access to quality education for their children. Nevertheless, African-American children were at the bottom of the totem pole in terms of academic achievement, which created a concern for African-American parents. Researchers explored various reasons why African-American parents homeschool their children. Homeschooling is growing rampantly worldwide, and educational studies on homeschooling are lacking (Arora, 2006; Martin-Chang et al., 2011). While several studies and theories provide positive explanations for parents to homeschool their children, it is clear from the lack of research on African American parents living in New Jersey with children diagnosed with autism.

Homeschooling Defined

Homeschooling is a form of private education that is parent-led and home-based (Ray, 2017). Homeschooling does not rely on state-run public or institutional private schooling for a child's education. Homeschooling (home education) is parent-directed, family-based education and is typically not tax-funded, with parents choosing assistance from other individuals or organizations (Ray, 2022). Homeschooling is a growing trend in the education realm in the United States and worldwide. The appeal of the flexibility and personalization of homeschooling has drawn the attention of families from all

demographics (Thomas, 2019). Alfadhel & Aloraini (2020); focused on home education, also known as homeschooling, which means parents or guardians instruct their children at home. Alfadhel and Aloraini (2020) have found multiple reasons parents would lean toward homeschooling. Homeschooling is currently one of the adopted modalities with application guidelines and is received by parents of children with disabilities (Alfadhel & Aloraini, 2020). The number of children with disabilities such as autism experiencing instruction at home has expanded since the rise of homeschooling. African American parents are fully responsible for educating their children at home. This involvement is significant for families of children with ASD. The findings from this study underpin the necessity of this proposed research as their findings illustrate that there are perspectives on African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism.

Homeschooling African American Children with Autism

The number of children with disabilities experiencing instruction at home has expanded since the rise of home education (Fadare et al., 2021). Education plays an important role in the development of a country. If a country does not have proper education, it may be left behind (Fadare et al., 2021). According to (Fadare et al., 2021), this qualitative phenomenological study was conducted to explore parents' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms in homeschooling children with an autism spectrum disorder in the City of San Fernando La Union. The participants were eight parents with children clinically diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder during the School Year 2020-2021. The data gathered using a semi-structured interview guide was thematically

analyzed. It was found that the participants were fully involved in homeschooling their children. Difficulties in the area of rules and authority, schedules and procedures, behavior, and parental worry and stress were the challenges encountered by the parents during the home education process. However, parents addressed these transitional difficulties by capitalizing on a positive disposition, gaining support from family members, and through professional consultation. Therefore, it was concluded that a renewed Parent-School Partnership is deemed necessary for the learning continuity of children with autism (Fadare et al. 2021). Based on the findings, a colloquium scheme as a support program was developed to upskill parents' homeschooling of children with ASD. Researchers can also help by conducting comparative studies, for example, to compare the performance and progress of children living with families that received training and those who live with families that did not receive any training or assistance. This study provided additional information in filling the gap in the literature as it would be interesting to discuss which factors impact the children's progress (whether positively or negatively) other than their parents' training or the lack thereof, in addition to comparing stress levels between parents who received training and those who did not. Such information would also be valuable to parents and specialists (Fadare et al. 2021).

The primary reasons cited by parents for homeschooling children with disabilities include (a) discontent with academic instruction, (b) concerns regarding their child's safety, and (c) dissatisfaction with the learning environment, according to (Princiotta and Bielick, 2006). The home education of children is one 'choice' of provision that is often overlooked or unreported in the debate on inclusive education for children with

disabilities or special educational needs. Parsons and Lewis (2010) identified school, child, and parent factors that contributed to parents' decision to homeschool children with special needs, including ASD, in the United Kingdom. Such factors included dissatisfaction with education provision and accommodation of children's educational needs, adverse effects on the school, negative peer interactions, and parents' attempts to best provide for their child. Parsons and Lewis (2010) qualitative study aimed to access the views of these hard-to-reach home-educating families through an online survey. Twenty-seven parents with at least one child with special educational needs or disabilities/ being educated at home responded, and over two-thirds identified 'push' factors away from the school as their main reasons for educating their children at home, such as bad experiences with the formal provision and the perceived failure of schools to meet their child's needs adequately. Most children had been at a mainstream school at the time of the decision to home-educate, and 48% of the children were described as having an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. The finding showed that most parents indicated that they, sometimes in conjunction with a spouse, took responsibility for home-educating their children and had not been home-educated themselves. Home education could be improved; a majority mentioned the need for more resources either in the form of help with funding (e.g., for sitting formal exams) or through sharing facilities in the community, including libraries and schools. Some parents were keen that the option for home-educating was more widely promoted and seen as a positive choice, which was more widely accepted. All the parents in the present study wished for a more sensitive approach to supporting their children by recognizing their needs and shaping provisions

accordingly. It could be that developments in educational provision in line with the personalization agenda will deliver the sort of system that families require but find lacking.

The other study that supports homeschooling and autism was conducted by Kidd et al. (2017). In the study by Kidd et al. (2017), the number of families choosing to home-educate their children with disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD), has increased in Australia in recent years. However, our knowledge about parent's experience of implementing such programs is limited (Kidd & Kaczmarek 2017). Australia's diagnosis rate of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) has risen over the past decade (Leonard et al., 2010; Prior, 2003). In Western Australia, it has been reported that the rate of ASD in school-age children is 64 children per 10,000 primary-aged students, and for high school children, 79 per 10,000 (Buckley & Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia, 2006). As a result, parents have chosen to educate their children with ASD at home, an option that can benefit individuals with ASD. In an attempt to attend to the individual needs of the child and possibly to regain an element of control and governance in their child's education (Arora, 2006; Duffey, 2002; McDowell, 2000; Parsons and Lewis, 2010), parents are turning to an alternative teaching approach namely home education. This shift has been observed in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and, more recently, Australia (Arora, 2006; Duvall, Delquadri, Ward, & Greenwood, 1997; Reilly, Chapman, & O'Donoghue, 2002). In-home education, the parent(s) facilitate their child's learning, usually from a home base, and assume primary responsibility for their child's educational program (Jacob, 1991). The demographic

background of families who decide to home-educate children varies concerning their economic status, educational background, and prior professional experience (Arora, 2006). Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) qualitative study was designed to explore mothers' perspectives on home-educating a child with ASD. Ten mothers were interviewed using a qualitative research design within a phenomenological framework. A thematic content analysis identified three main themes: 'the school experience,' 'coming home,' and 'the mother's experience as an educator.' Mothers commented that educating their children at home improves their behavioral and psychological well-being. The experience of home education was influenced by the children's school experiences, parents' perceived choice of home education, and the level of educative and social support available. This study has implications for parents, educators, and healthcare professionals regarding the psychological and educational needs of children with ASD.

The reasons for mothers deciding to home-educate in this study were compatible with those endorsed by mothers' home-educating children with special needs (Kidd et al. 2017). A further implication of this research is that parents of children with ASD may benefit from being made aware of home education and that the stories and experiences of mothers' home education may assist other families in deciding whether to educate at home. Finally, the findings from this study may help enhance the knowledge of health professionals who work in the field of ASD of the benefits and challenges of home-educating children with ASD (Kidd et al. 2017). Knowledge about the educational and social benefits for the child, mother, and family can be helpful when working with parents contemplating this educative process. The present study has contributed to

investigating the psychological impact of home-educating children with ASD. Future research could employ a mixed method design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methodology to allow for generalization (Kidd et al. 2017). Indeed, this study provides a conceptual framework to guide a more detailed exploration of home-education children with ASD and suggests a platform for the cognitive theories of ASD to be investigated in relation to their impact on learning and education. While the perspective of the mothers has been extremely insightful, the perspectives of children and adolescents with ASD who are home-educated could provide additional information to be better able to isolate the characteristics of home education that are seen to lead to positive outcomes for these children (Kidd et al. 2017).

The number of children being homeschooled in North America is growing at an unprecedented rate, according to Martin-Chang et al. (2018). In this study by Martin-Chang et al. (2018), in the United States, the homeschooling population is above 1.5 million children (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Similarly, it has been suggested that homeschoolers account for almost 1% of all Canadian children; however, these estimates are likely too conservative. In addition to religious convictions, dissatisfaction with the public school system is the most prominent factor in homeschooling. The notion that homeschooling is superior to traditional education methods can be traced back to a few high reports funded by Home School Legal. In this qualitative study, a demographic questionnaire and a formal academic achievement demonstration of learning (including knowledge, understanding, and thinking skills) was attained by a student as measured by standardized academic achievement tests. In total,

74 children (37 homeschooled and 37 public schools) between the ages of 5 and 10 years participated in the study (Martin-Chang et al. 2018). The finding shows that homeschooled children function higher than traditionally schooled children in every grade (Martin-Chang et al. 2018).

The findings of (Martin-Chang et al. 2018) study suggested that structured homeschooling may offer opportunities for academic performance beyond those typically experienced in public school, filling the literature gap. Moreover, the design used in the current study suggests that differences in yearly family income or maternal education cannot account for the benefits of structured homeschooling. In summary, the increasing popularity of homeschooling is at odds with the need for more scientific research in this area, especially among African Americans. Despite its size, scarce homeschool data have impaired our understanding of even the most basic questions. In addition, practical restraints such as the heterogeneity of the population and difficulties in obtaining adequate sample sizes make homeschooling a challenging field of study (Martin-Chang et al. 2018). Practical restraints such as the heterogeneity of the population and difficulties in obtaining adequate sample sizes make homeschooling a challenging field of study. Nevertheless, further inquiry is required if parents are to make informed decisions regarding their children's education. Moreover, identifying the best practices associated with different types of education may facilitate teaching in both traditional and homeschool settings (Martin-Chang et al. 2018).

A growing school choice option exists for children with Special Educational Needs. According to Morse et al. (2018), the unexplained, rapid growth of

homeschooling over the past two decades provides the context for this quantitative study. For example, as an educational choice for African American children, homeschooling has seen a 74% increase in eight years, and the growth rate continues to increase annually (Morse et al. 2018). As a result, parental decisions to homeschool children with special education needs have increased. This approach is meaningful and has shown that parents' decisions to homeschool their children have helped their children succeed and excel in home education. More specifically, this study determined the proportion of homeschooling families who had children enrolled in public or private schools before deciding to homeschool and chose the proportion of homeschooling families in the sample who reported homeschooling a child with special educational needs (Morse et al., 2018). Homeschooling is a growing option in the school choice arena. In a research study by (Morse et al. 2018), of the 309 homeschooling families that responded to the survey, more than half (50.8%) had a child who attended public or private school before they decided to homeschool, and 60.6% of these families indicated they were currently homeschooling a child who had special educational needs (Morse et al. 2018).

Descriptive and inferential methodologies were used in this quantitative study. The online survey instrument contained five sections of questions with 33 questions. The questions were designed to collect qualifying and demographic data. The results of this study provided data that informed trends in parents' participation in school choice, specifically the choice of homeschooling, which should be of interest to school administrators. In addition, this research was helpful to those looking for background information on homeschooling, a growing school choice option for meeting special educational needs

(Morse et al. 2018). Morse and Bell presented a basis for this change and outlined its initial development. Thus, this study can be helpful in further trials when paired with more recent research about African Americans. According to Morse et al. (2018), future research should address the reasons for and prevalence of homeschooling for children who are gifted or who exhibit specific types of disabilities such as autism and ADHD. Additionally, researching the effect of learning environments on a child's academic success and the effect of parental and community involvement in the education process would be important.

Homeschooling has existed as one of the oldest forms of education (Hanna, 2021). With the rapid increase in the number of homeschooled children (estimated at 2,000,000 by the year 2008 (Ray, 2008) came a greater need to research and monitor the specifics associated with the movement, including demographics and parental motivation. The research occurred in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a city that has garnered media attention for its growing African American homeschooling population. With the rapid increase in the number of homeschooled children, there is a greater need to research and monitor the specifics associated with the movement, including demographics and parental motivation (Hanna, 2021). In light of the little existing qualitative research focusing on black homeschoolers' motivations, the study sought to draw attention to additional perspectives of black homeschooling families. This study showed a gap in the literature; it sought to draw attention to the diversity of hardships many African American families face when deciding to homeschool and how experiences with school-related marginalization often contribute to African Americans' decisions to homeschool.

The study was a nonexperimental descriptive research design in which the researcher gathered qualitative and quantitative data. A between-subjects approach examined the following: (a) the demographics of the homeschooling families within the study, (b) the methods/materials/curricular choices utilized by each homeschooling family for instruction, and (c) the motivation behind each family's choice of homeschooling to determine what similarities and differences existed. The data suggested that homeschoolers today choose precise methods and carefully selected materials for their children's instruction. Most are conducting business on a much larger stage than in the mid-1990s. Using the computer alone provides (a) an extensive variety of resources, (b) a wide range of curricula from which to choose, and (c) a much larger and readily accessible support base than existed in the 1970s, 1980s, or 1990s. Data generated within the interviews established several other reasons for the homeschooling choice, even though the interviewees believed that these were secondary to parents' primary motivations of improving the quality of their child's education and preserving and fostering moral values and family unity. Several of the secondary motivations were (a) assisting a special needs child, (b) attending to medical concerns, and (c) addressing safety and security issues. Over time, with standard-driven curricula regularly taught in local school districts, the implications for homeschooling instruction will be boundless. For this study, all indications suggest that this population is growing by leaps and bounds and has brought its children, methods, and materials into the 21st century.

As increasing numbers of researchers, parents, and youth are rethinking the traditional school system as the default educational option in the United States,

homeschooling is growing in size, philosophical scope, and demographic diversity. According to this study conducted by Puga, (2019), the growth of homeschooling in the United States raises questions about the trends and motivations contributing to its broad appeal. African Americans, particularly, have been one of the steadiest-growing homeschooling demographics (Puga, 2019). Among the few ethnographic accounts of black homeschooling families, youth perceptions tend to be overlooked. This article builds upon scholarship exploring racial injustices in education with qualitative research: observations and interviews with 15 African American homeschooling families living in Philadelphia (Puga, 2019). This research reveals a variety of motivations undergirding African American families' homeschooling decisions and perspectives, including commentary from youth homeschoolers. Previous research has critiqued homeschooling as a neoliberal exercise in privatization that entrenches the social reproduction of inequality or operates as a destabilizing threat to the public interest (Puga, 2019). Nevertheless, findings from this study complicate these assessments by examining how African American homeschoolers enmesh themselves within educational reform conversations, some viewing homeschooling as a form of political protest. Despite the institutional and structural challenges permeating the traditional U.S. school system, many parents carefully weigh educational options and consider the ideological, logistical, financial, relational, and emotional sacrifices that homeschooling entails before deciding. Understanding the scope of these challenges helps provide a comprehensive portrait of diverse homeschooling experiences among African-American families (Puga, 2019).

This study conducted by Fields-Smith and Wells Kisura (2013) highlights the primacy of agency among black homeschooling families. Thus, contrary to the negative depictions of black families as disengaged from the educational pursuits of their children, we evoke Hooks' (1990) notion of homeplace to argue that black home education represents a vehicle of resistance to institutionalized racism and ideological mismatches between black families and their children's educational needs. Many parents also recognize their struggles in overcoming deeply-held beliefs about homeschooling as a white trend and the stereotypical notion that homeschooling would socially disservice their children. Some families feel torn, grappling with the decision to leave an institution symbolically representing a major Civil Rights victory due to the hard-fought battle for racial integration (Fields-Smith and Wells Kisura, 2013). Many negative perceptions and stereotypes surround homeschooling, adding an extra burden upon African-American homeschooling families to prove their legitimacy in a context where their parenting and educational choices are already subject to question (Fields-Smith & Wells Kisura, 2013). In Fields-Smith's Metro-Atlanta qualitative study, the author conducted interviews and focus group sessions with 36 black home educators over two years, each representing a different family. The 36 black home educators who resided in Metro Atlanta included three single-parent families. Participating home educators also ranged from having no college education to having a professional degree, but most (17) parents held undergraduate degrees. Black home educators ranged in age from 26 to 54 years old, and the mean age of participating home educators was 40 overall. The three single-parent black home educators were 26, 34, and 44 years old. Families represented in this study

have been homeschooled from less than one year to up to 18 years. In the Kisura qualitative study, the author conducted interviews and one focus-group session with 29 black home educators, each representing a different family. The author collected the data between April 2005 and November 2005. Sixty-two percent of the Metro-DC home educators (n = 18 out of a possible 29) returned surveys by mail. Seventeen percent of all families represented one-parent households (n = 3), whereas 83% (n = 15) represented two-parent households. Concerning educational attainment, participating home educators ranged from having no completed college degree to having a doctoral or professional degree. This study is important to my study as it suggests that homeschooling continues to increase among black families. However, research on contemporary Black homeschooling remains scarce. Given the Black educational history, the phenomena of Black families choosing to homeschool over public and private schools in the post-desegregation era is worthy of investigation. Further, documenting how black homeschool families engage their children in learning will inform the need for black education in conventional schools, public and private.

New Jersey Homeschooling Requirements

Stedrak and Kelchen (2015) examined the state of New Jersey as the setting through a quantitative study that involved educational finance. The analysis examined the local education board regarding reviewing and approving curriculum. The findings concluded that public funding priorities for PK-12 and higher education were being reduced, providing homeschooling parents additional motivation to homeschool and ensuring their children received quality education (Stedrack and Kelchen, 2015). The

researchers discovered that parents were solely responsible for a child's educational outcome, and New Jersey was considered the most lenient state regarding homeschooling regulation. Stedrak and Kelchen also examined the statutes of the New Jersey State Board of Education statutes. They discovered that parents were not required to establish a record of a child being homeschooled. New Jersey did not require a homeschooled child to participate in the public and private school curriculum or extracurricular activities (Stedrak and Kelchen, 2015). Dill (2015) used a theoretical lens of Afrocentricity; findings suggested within the article that African-American homeschooling parents homeschooled primarily due to issues of racial identity. Not all homeschooling African-American parents wanted their children to learn about what it means to be African-American, along with the inconvenient truth about the U.S. racist founding taught in traditional schools.

Homeschooling Involvement

Homeschooled students are school-age children (ages 5–17) in a grade equivalent to at least kindergarten and not higher than 12th grade who receive instruction at home instead of at a public or private school (Planty et al., 2009). Home-based education was nearly extinct in the United States by the 1970s. However, it proliferated during the 1990s from about 2.6 million K–12 homeschool students in March 2020 to about 5 million in March 2021. The demographic variety among homeschooling families rapidly increased during the 2000s to the point that in 2016, 41% of homeschool students were of ethnic minority background, with about 79% of those living in non-poor households and with parents' formal education levels similar to national averages (Ray, 2022). More

White students were homeschooled than Black or Hispanic students or students from other racial/ethnic groups, and White students constituted the majority of homeschooled students (77 percent). White students (3.9 percent) had a higher homeschooling rate than Blacks (0.8 percent) and Hispanics (1.5 percent) but were not measurably different from students from other racial/ ethnic groups (3.4 percent). As a result, homeschooling is on the rise, particularly concerning the education of students with autism. A large number of studies have also documented race-based disparities supported by lower ASD prevalence estimates among Non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic children and supported further by late diagnosis among marginalized populations (Aylward et al. 2021; Shenouda et al. 2021; Wiggins et al. 2020). Autism spectrum disorder is a term used to describe a constellation of early-appearing social communication deficits and repetitive sensory-motor behaviors associated with a vital genetic component and other causes (Lord et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, there is a lack of research on African American homeschooled children with autism. According to national surveys, approximately 52% of homeschooled children in the United States are female (Wang et al., 2019). The percentage of children who are homeschooled is relatively similar across kindergarten (3.5%), grades 1–3 (2.4%), 4–5 (3.4%), 6–8 (3.3%), and 9–12 (3.8%; Wang et al., 2019). Some 79% of homeschooling families live above the poverty threshold, 25% have two parents in the labor force, 80% reside with two parents, and 22% live in a rural area. In addition, most parents and guardians of homeschooled children have either completed some college, received a bachelor's degree, or attended graduate or professional school (~70%; Wang et al., 2019). Mothers (78%) are usually directly responsible for homeschooling (Cui &

Hanson, 2019). Although most homeschoolers are non-Hispanic White (59%), homeschooled families are increasingly ethnically and racially diverse (Wang et al., 2019). Approximately 2% of African American students are homeschooled, doubling from 1999 to 2016.

According to (Dennison et al. 2020), many families elect to educate their children at home rather than enroll them in school. Whereas each family maintains its reasons for deciding to homeschool, a factor for some families, including families of color, may be found in their response to institutions and systems that have historical roots in inequality and that have intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated inequitable outcomes for their children (Dennison, 2020). This article considers the decision to homeschool in terms of families' efforts to regain agency and self-determination. Implications for school psychologists are discussed, and recommendations for policy and practice are provided (Dennison, 2020). We recognize that the decision to educate children at home is complex, varied, and multi-dimensional. Financial, religious, political, cultural, and psychological factors may impact any family's decision-making process regarding selecting the most appropriate way to educate their children (Dennison, 2020). Moreover, some families undoubtedly invest more time, energy, and thought in such decisions than others. We maintain that the decision to homeschool children deviates from the norm and implies divergent family consideration and independent thought. Others might interpret a family's decision to homeschool as a critique or rejection of public education. This characterization may overlook a critical component of homeschooling: the family's desire to exercise control over their children's education. Homeschooling can be seen not as a

movement that aims to disparage public education but as an indicator of empowerment, self-reliance, and autonomy. Upon reviewing existing empirical studies and theoretically based literature on homeschooling, it became evident that homeschooling is an underresearched area and that the ability to assert its role is weakened by a lack of empirical data (Dennison, 2020). There are several natural limitations in exploring variables in diverse samples of homeschooled youth: the difficulty of locating such a sample because of their sparse presence across wide geographies, the diverse instruction, and curricula inherent in homeschooling practices, and the difficulty of comparing these to public school practices. Despite these difficulties, we advocate for urgent action to serve diverse families through public education systems better. We urge future investigators to use a strengths-based lens in which scholars recognize, value, and respect participants' internal, interpersonal, and community resources and assets (Dennison, 2020).

Homeschooling Disparities Among States

Each state, and sometimes even individual school districts, sets its own rules regarding homeschooling requirements. As a result, accurate data about the number of homeschoolers in America is not currently available. A contributing factor to this delimitation is the erratic reporting of homeschoolers to local school districts in each state. No federally regulated reporting system is currently in place for homeschooling families. United States homeschool legislation was mainly enacted in response to court decisions and in light of highly contentious school-choice and accountability-related policies (Renzulli et al. 2020, p. 297). Homeschooling is legal in all 50 states (Watson,

2018). The United States federal government does not provide oversight of homeschooling. States maintain jurisdiction over education laws (Carlson, 2020). States range in the strictness of their laws (Watson, 2018). The requirements for each state vary and can change based on modifications enacted through state legislation each year. State laws vary in the degree of oversight concerning notifying the state or local school district about the intent to homeschool, parental education requirements, required subjects, and assessments. Each state regulates the notification requirements of intent to homeschool. The ten states without annual notification requirements are Alaska, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, and Oklahoma (Carlson, 2020; Huseman, 2015). A one-time notification was required in 10 states: Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oregon, and Texas (Carlson, 2020; Huseman, 2015). The remaining 30 states required annual notification (Carlson, 2020; Huseman, 2015). The educational requirements of parents varied by each state. Two states, California and Kansas, required that the parents be capable of teaching, but the laws were vague on the definition of capable (Huseman, 2015; Karinen, 2016).

The following eight states: Georgia, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Virginia, required parents to have a high school diploma; however, waivers could be granted (Huseman, 2015; Karinen, 2016). Two states allowed parents to homeschool based on the approval of the local school board or superintendent, West Virginia and Washington (Huseman, 2015; Karinen, 2016). Washington had three additional options: (a) certified person-supervised parents, (b) parents had a minimum number of college credits, or (c) parents took a course in home-

based education (Huseman, 2015). The remaining 38 states did not have parental education requirements (Huseman, 2015). Seventeen states had no subject requirements for homeschooling (Huseman, 2015). These included Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and West Virginia. The remaining 33 states had subjects required by the homeschooling statutes (Huseman, 2015). Subject requirements were determined by the state legislature, which could change with each legislative session. Therefore, state homeschool legislation should be consulted for up-to-date subject requirements. Assessment requirements vary by state. The assessments could be conducted annually or periodically, such as in specific grades. Assessment forms included standardized tests or evaluations of a portfolio (Carlson, 2020; Huseman, 2015). The 13 states that required annual assessment were Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington (Carlson, 2020; Huseman, 2015). The eight states that required periodic assessment include Colorado, Maryland, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Tennessee (Carlson, 2020; Huseman, 2015). In addition, Massachusetts allowed the local school district to choose the assessment and evaluation requirements for homeschoolers (Carlson, 2020; Huseman, 2015). The remaining 28 states did not have an assessment requirement (Carlson, 2020; Huseman, 2015).

Parents' Right to Homeschool

Neuman and Guterman's (2016) qualitative methodology findings indicated that individualization was a significant aspect of homeschooling. These findings added to determining parents achieving goals related to socialization and acculturation in children's education. Jonsson (2016) used a qualitative research study in which findings discovered that homeschooling met the educational needs of African-American children. The findings also explored parental decision-making regarding the parent's choice and decision to homeschool. According to (Alfadhel et al., 2020), the number of children with disabilities experiencing instruction at home has expanded since the rise of home education. As the parents are fully responsible for educating their children at home, involving them in the whole learning process is crucial. Family involvement has been related to several positive results for children with ASD, including higher academic achievement levels, lower challenging behaviors, and improved social-emotional skills (Alfadhel et al., 2020). This involvement is significant for families of children with ASD. Homeschooling, considered a non-traditional approach to primary and secondary education since the spark of the industrial revolution, was rapidly increasing in popularity. While African American caregiver approaches to homeschooling in the USA have evolved, it is now well known that an increasing number of African American caregivers are choosing various homeschooling approaches as a more viable alternative for their children's academic needs over institutionalized education settings in the greater community (Ray, 2018). Data from qualitative studies of Black families suggest the presence of push and pull factors as motivators for homeschooling (Fields-Smith, 2017;

Wang et al., 2019): Experiences of racial discrimination and biased teaching practices in schools are factors that push Black families out of the school setting, whereas the ability to teach about families' cultural backgrounds are factors that pull Black households toward homeschooling (Fields-Smith, 2017). Many Black families enjoy homeschooling but face unique challenges, such as finding culturally relevant materials, identifying with overwhelmingly White homeschooling support groups, and dealing with the lack of same-race homeschooled peers (Mazama and Musumunu, 2015).

Closing the Achievement Gap

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was signed into law by President George W. Bush (Murphy, 2013). The findings suggested that, within the 10-year time gap, the educational reforms were not working, and students needed more learning competencies (Neuman & Guterman, 2016). NCLB worked in conjunction with the Education and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. Neuman and Guterman's research revealed that public school educators and all educators nationwide should be held accountable for the nation's children's educational achievement or lack thereof. Dumas and Ross (2016) qualitative conceptualized study suggested that homeschooling was a viable alternative for African-American parents. Nevertheless, findings concluded that homeschooling parents faced financial disparities compared to parents who chose charter or private schools. Despite the financial disparities, homeschooling was considered the best alternative for most African-American children. There were problems and issues in traditional education for

all children; unfortunately, institutional racism within traditional schools forced many African-American parents to homeschool (Ray, 2015).

New Jersey legislation created obstacles for parents wanting to educate their children at home (Genao, 2014). Providing parents with the choice and option to homeschool assured those children received the best and most effective education possible (Mazama and Lundy, 2015). The rise in homeschooling has caused legislators to seek parents' qualifications to homeschool (Kunjufu, 2014). According to Marples's (2014) qualitative research study, many states were attempting to prevent parents from homeschooling their children unless the parent was a certified teacher. Richardson (2013) quantitative research study determined that this attempt to discourage homeschooling was not the first among lawmakers nationwide. Findings indicated that New Jersey did not require parents to be certified in education to homeschool. The homeschooling requirements in New Jersey were among the most relaxed in the United States (U.S.). King and Mays's (2016) phenomenological research study explored the difficult task of locating homeschooling parents within the African-American community. Many African-American homeschooling parents were fighting against the state legislative bodies and the local school system (Dill, 2015). The fighting against the state legislative bodies and the local school system and the failure of and disparity in reporting the intent to homeschool made it difficult for researchers to collect data (Mazama and Lundy, 2015). Findings within the phenomenological research study discovered that many African-American parents elected to conceal their homeschooling efforts due to fear of judgment.

There was constant disparity within the African- American community related to reporting homeschooling, which caused an issue with data collection.

Summary and Conclusion

The number of African-American homeschooling families has increased. A presumption is that the right to homeschool will become more of a challenge and will face more regulations in future years. According to the 1999 and 2003 homeschooling studies by the NCES, parents of all racial groups have increased the selection of homeschools as a viable alternative to conventional private, public, and charter schools in the United States. This demonstrates that additional research is needed in the area of cross-racial homeschoolers. Homeschooling shows that parents or guardians teach their children at home. The theme of the literature explained that African American parents are homeschooling their children diagnosed with autism. The literature review described the many perspectives on African American parents' decision to homeschool children with autism. The chapter also highlighted the conceptualizations of homeschooling, noting the conditions that must be met, as stipulated by the U.S. Department of Education (2022) and the New Jersey Department of Education, to achieve homeschooling status. In closing the achievement gap, African American parents are motivated to help their children achieve their education while traditional schooling is not provided. While there is an observable growth in the rate at which African American families choose to homeschool their children, what is not known in the discipline is that there is a general paucity in the empirical studies that represent African American parents homeschooling their children with ASD. In Chapter 3, the discussion focused on the methodological plan

and the role of the researcher. Chapter 3 also includes the descriptions of participants' recruitment, the procedures for selecting participants and collecting data, the data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to examine the decisions of African American parents to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. The problem was that many African-American parents lacked trust in the public education school system, which increased homeschooling within the African-American community (Kunjufu, 2014; Mazama & Lundy, 2014; Neuman & Guterman, 2016). In this study, I used narrative inquiry to allow parents to tell their stories of what led to their perspectives on decisions to homeschool. This chapter includes an introduction, research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodological procedures, and trustworthiness issues.

Research Design and Rationale

RQ: What are the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey?

In qualitative studies, researchers collect data to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena (Creswell, 2014; Bell et al. 2016). Qualitative research is understood as a method of acquiring and analyzing information on relevant variables in a systemic, methodical way to answer specific research questions and assess results (Kabir, 2016). In this narrative inquiry, I examined American parents' perspectives on homeschooling their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey.

The qualitative approach is more than data collection and analysis procedures, it is also a human worldview. Qualitative research design usually focuses on the “what” and the “how” in seeking participants’ experiences in their everyday lives (Kawamura, 2020; Percy et al., 2015). Qualitative research is used to understand the feelings, perceptions, and values in human behavior in their natural settings (Tenny et al., 2020). In this study, I used the qualitative method to develop a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena from the participants’ lived experiences in their natural settings.

In this study, I gave participants the opportunity to understand their experiences and communicate them. The findings of this study were not transferable to a broader population of African American parents; however, it was necessary to identify meanings and the leading emerging themes, which were the stepping-stones for data interpretation and theory-building.

Previous researchers such as Harrison (2014), Tedam (2014), who looked at the experiences of Black male students, and Langa (2019) who studied the perspectives of Black African parents and school history in post-apartheid South Africa, have used the narrative approach. The common thread that runs through these studies is that the researchers saw the narrative inquiry method as a way to promote Black voices in countries known for their histories of systemic racism (Harrison (2014); Tedam (2014)).

Narrative inquiry methodology is often used to examine how human beings live and tell stories about their lives. These stories are ways Blacks create meaning in their lives and enlist each other’s help building their lives and communities (Clandinin, 2006).

In this study, I used semi-structured interviews to interact directly with the respondents by asking central and probing questions. I used these interactions to construct themes about my findings. A key advantage of semi-structured interviews is their ability to discover what is previously poorly known (O’Keeffe et al. 2016).

Role of the Researcher

A qualitative researcher’s role is to interview the participants in their natural settings (Clark and Vealé, 2018). In addition, the researcher in qualitative research observes and interacts in various ways in the interview and data collection process (Clark and Vealé, 2018; Creswell, 2017). The role of the researcher is to determine a phenomenon of importance and then abstain from including the views of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher should address the phenomenon, perform reflexive self-examination, and bracket their biases, which requires maturity and honesty (Creswell, 2009; Endacott, 2005). The researcher must be cognizant of personal biases and have a process to ensure that their biases are set aside, suspended, or held at bay (Gearing, 2004).

One strategy to reduce or minimize bias is to be perceptive to how the researcher and the research process have shaped the data, which includes reflexivity, recognition of biases, values, and interests, and performing external checks such as member checking and an audit trail (Creswell, 2009; Endacott, 2005; Merriam, 2002). Polit and Beck (2014) stated that readers must understand the researcher’s role in the study and why the researcher chose the phenomenon under study, including sharing personal assumptions and the process the researcher used to address these explicitly throughout the study.

I assumed two roles in this qualitative study: researcher and researcher as a learner (Glesne, 1999). The contacts, semi-structured interviews, and data analysis occurred within the researcher-as-researcher role. The interpretation of this qualitative research was conducted through my lens as a human being; thus, my limitations, biases, and perceptions inevitably impacted the data analysis. To lessen the impact of my subjectivity, I kept in mind Glesne's advice: "When you monitor your subjectivity, you increase your awareness of the ways it might distort, but you also increase your awareness of its virtuous capacity.... Seen as virtuous, subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than exorcise" (Glesne, 1999, p. 109).

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988); I self-examined my training and biases and ensured that subjectivity did not impact the data collected. At the same time, being the researcher as the learner, self-awareness at the beginning of this study with continuous awareness of the biases and predispositions can cause curiosity "to learn from and with research participants" (Glesne, 1999, p. 41). Using a semi-structured interviewing method, I gained clarification through subsequent follow-up questions and conversations. As a researcher and a learner, I facilitated a rapport with participants, generating open communication with each family. I made observations during the interview process, including taking field notes (see Patton, 1998) and using reflective journals to capture the data points as they occurred throughout the data collection period specified. I kept a record of all the details related to all observable events in field notes and a field journal to keep track of the thinking,

feelings, and perceptions experienced throughout the research process (see Creswell, 2003).

As the primary instrument for data collection, I entered this research project as an in-home therapist for 4 years. This was instrumental in shaping my understanding of learning among various categories of children, including those diagnosed with autism and their parents. I was privy to some parents' sentiments about homeschooling their children. These factors significantly influenced my desire to investigate the topic systematically. I conducted a type of backyard research. (see Snounu, 2021). Backyard research usually occurs in the same environment where the researcher holds another role. I can be considered an insider (Greene, 2014), having considerable access to the target population. While this positionality comes with the benefit of access to recruit participants, it raises a question of possible bias, which I was concerned about since I had formed some preconceived notions about some of the reasons for the parent's choices. Having cited this possibility, I ensured that various measures were implemented to minimize the risk throughout the research process.

In addition to maintaining researcher reflexivity throughout the research process (see Palaganas et al., 2017; Watt, 2007), I used thick descriptions during the discussion of the findings. A thick description, a term borrowed from anthropology (Geertz, 1973; Geertz, 2000), ensures greater validity in qualitative discussion.

Finally, although I worked in New Jersey, I excluded any persons I had known personally or professionally. According to Moustakas (1994), bracketing is necessary for this process. Bracketing is used "to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon"

throughout a study (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 59-60). Reflexivity includes introspective awareness of the research and the participants and considering how the overall research process can shape the data (Endacott, 2005). A researcher's influence is lessened by choosing a neutral interview setting and soliciting volunteer participants. Before data collection in this study, I reflected on my values, principles, and expectations about my experience as an African American. I was cautious of her credence and assumptions based on biases or experiences (see Endacott, 2005; Polit & Beck, 2010; Polit & Beck, 2014). Another way I reduced my influence was by having a second reader who verified the categories and themes and conferred any variances.

Methodology

Participants

Every empirical study has a population from which the researcher will select a sample. As Walliman (2010) clarified, a population can broadly be the collection of cases such as people, objects, events, or organizations about one's study. For this study, the population was African American parents who homeschooled their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. The sampling frame, a derivative of the population, was all African American parents who homeschooled their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. However, the sample was limited to 12 parents. Samples in qualitative research tend to be small to support the depth of case-oriented analysis fundamental to this mode of inquiry (Vasileiou et al. 2018). Additionally, qualitative samples are purposive, selected by their capacity to provide richly textured information relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Vasileiou et al. 2018).

In this study, I gathered information from six mothers and six fathers who identified as African Americans. The sample size of qualitative studies can range from six to 12 participants (Kim, 2016). Similarly, Cresswell (2013) stated that "narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life of a single individual or the lives of a small number of individuals" (pp. 73-74).

Participants for this study were identified via Facebook and LinkedIn. To recruit participants, a flyer (Appendix C) was distributed on Facebook and LinkedIn, providing information about the purpose of the study to parents. The flyer (Appendix C) was circulated via public messages on Facebook and LinkedIn, as the prospective participants' emails will not be known beforehand. Upon receipt of participants' consent to participate in the study, I asked them to select convenient interview dates and times. In the flyer, my contact information, including my phone number and email address, was included. Parents interested in participating in the study were evaluated through a screening questionnaire (Appendix B) to ensure they met the participation criteria. If the participant was interested and met the criteria, I sent the informed consent form via email to the participant. In the informed consent, parents were notified that their participation would be voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time during the study. In the provided informed consent, the study's purpose, benefits, procedures, confidentiality, and the plan for disseminating results were disclosed to parents. After the parents reviewed the informed consent, they notified me to schedule an interview. Before starting an interview, the participant signed the informed consent form by sending an email stating "I consent" in the body of the email. Participants were reminded that their information

would be held in the strictest confidence and that their participation was voluntary. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions that they may have about the study or the interview process in that email. The prospective interviewees indicated where they preferred the interview location. The in-person or online interviews were done conveniently and with privacy. The respondents choose a convenient place or online for the interview during their available time. Additionally, parents were briefed on the format, duration, and their rights to withdraw at any time, and they were told that their identities and information would be protected. Ultimately, I gave all interviewees a \$20 gift card from Amazon, Walmart, or Target to compensate them for their time; each interview should be at least 45 minutes.

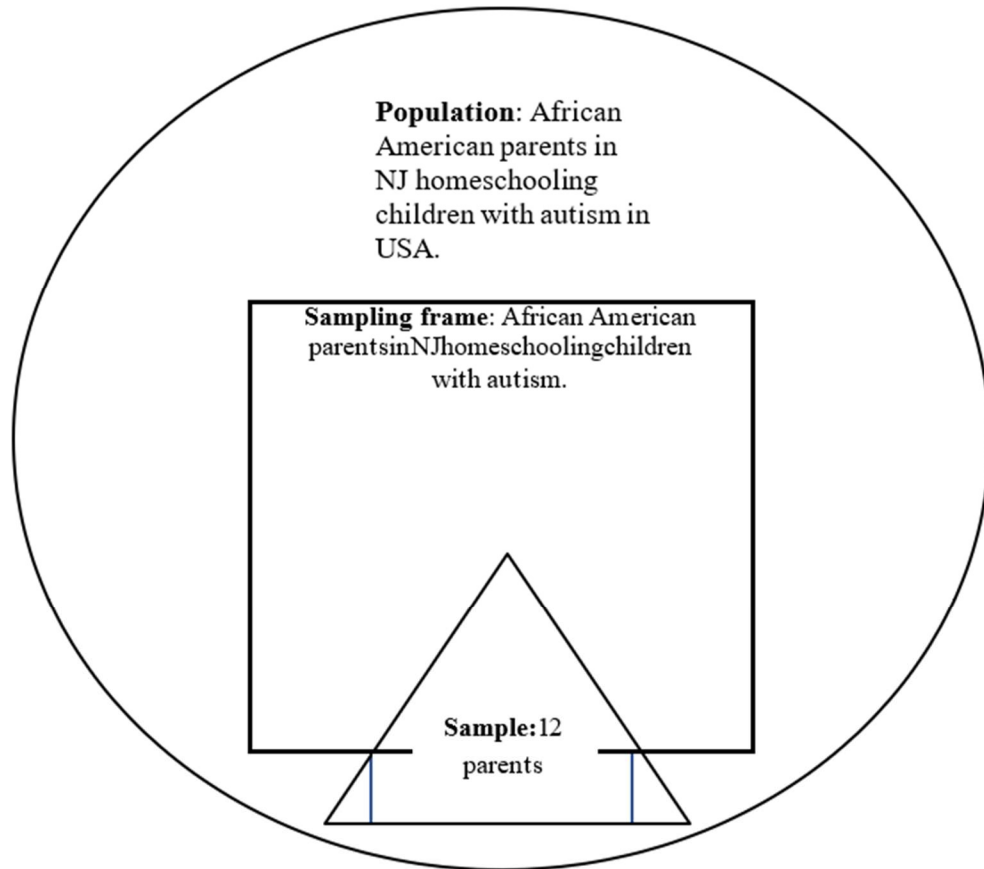
By responding to the postings on Facebook and LinkedIn, these African American parents demonstrated their trust in the research process. An IRB-approved email invitation to participate and an IRB-approved letter of consent were sent to each participant. I scheduled Zoom interview appointments for all participants. However, a few interviews had to be rescheduled due to the participants' busy schedules. As I communicated back and forth with the participants, it took nearly three weeks to schedule and complete each Zoom interview. Although each participant's schedule was flexible, the conflicts in scheduling the interviews also revolved around their daily activities.

The diagram below illustrates the sample in terms of the sampling frame and population.

(adapted from Walliman, 2010, p.94).

Figure 2

Relationship Between Sample, Sampling Frame, and Population



As illustrated by Figure 2, the sample was derived from the sampling frame. As mentioned, six males and six females were selected, creating a gender balance. As a qualitative researcher, a non-probability sampling technique was selected. The procedure for selecting them was a purposive sampling. The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses (Etikan et al. 2016). This sampling technique deliberately selected

respondents based on the characteristics that fit the topic of study. The respondents that suited the purpose of this study will not only be African American parents but, more specifically, those who have chosen to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism. It is a given that no other cohort of respondents were suitable to answer the questions that are going to be asked about the factors influencing them to choose to homeschool over other options. Data saturation was implemented within the research study, which means data was collected until no more patterns or themes emerged from the data. A lack of data saturation will have a negative impact on the research (Guest et al. 2013). The goal was to obtain detailed information from parents to cover this study's phenomena. In this qualitative study, there is no purpose for the generalization of results.

Protecting the rights of all study participants during the research's recruitment, participation, and data collection phases was crucial. Participant recruitment was one of the earliest actions in the research process and also one of the essential factors in ensuring that data collection is successful. Recruitment can be considered communication between the researcher and the potential respondents before the research (Patel et al. 2003). West and Pateman (2016) assert that recruiting suitable participants is vital to the study's success. Nevertheless, at least in its earliest phase, this process can appear daunting to the researcher. In alignment with the underlying purpose of the proposed study, the perspective of African American parents' decision to homeschool, it was necessary to identify the possible places where potential respondents can be located. As such, respondents were recruited from New Jersey-based Facebook Groups and LinkedIn with parents who homeschooled their children diagnosed with autism. Then, a combination of

purposive and snowballing techniques selected the respondents. The study participants must live in New Jersey and raise children with ASD in their households. The researcher audio-recorded participants' stories with an efficient recording device. All potential subjects were given a written explanation of the study goals and informed of their right to withdraw without penalty. I transcribed the interviews, then analyzed the transcriptions and generated a mind map to sort information (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Instrumentation

The study's data collection sources were face-to-face or semi-structured with selected participants via Zoom. An interview protocol that contained the main questions was used as the framework and source for the interview (Appendix A). The interview protocol contained a list of open-ended questions aligned with the study's research question and covered the study's main concepts of interest. A semi-structured interview permitted participants to engage in a conversation more than a structured interview would have (Baumann & Bason, 2004; Schostak, 2006). Semi-structured interviews are based on a semi-structured interview guide, which is a schematic presentation of questions or topics that need to be explored by the interviewer (Jamshed, 2014). The data collection tool used was a 15-point semi-structured interview divided into two sections. Section A gathered demographic information such as age, gender, years of homeschooling, and views and experiences on homeschooling. There is a total of seven questions. The second section focused on gathering data on the perspectives of parents' decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism. This section was comprised of nine questions. Questions eight to 14 examined the parents' perspectives on the decision to homeschool.

The semi-structured interview method allowed participants to elaborate in a conversational mode; this approach provided an opportunity to follow up with additional questions as necessary. There was adequate data from the 12 parents in the study to develop a robust and valid understanding of the study phenomenon. The frequency of data collection for each participant will be for 45 minutes. The instrument used in this study was interviews. The interview protocol contained the main questions used as the framework and source for each interview (Appendix A). The interview protocol contained a list of open-ended questions aligned with the study's research questions and covered the study's main areas of interest.

It was widely accepted that interviews exist on a continuum, ranging from highly flexible to highly structured. According to Harvey-Jordan and Long (2001), SSIs effectively explore people's perceptions, feelings, and attitudes and why they make certain decisions. While the interviews were fairly structured, they also have some flexibility, whereby the researcher can ask probing questions as necessary. Interviews were audio recorded for accuracy (and only where permission is given). Once collected, the data was immediately transcribed, coded, and thematized to identify the most salient categories of the findings using the Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS).

Published Data Collection Instruments

The qualitative semi-structured interview instrument developed by Hitchcock and Hughes in 1989 will be used in this study. Hitchcock and Hughes state that the semi-structured interview:

“Allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses. Some kind of balance between the interviewer and the interviewee can be developed, which can provide room for negotiation, discussion, and expansion of the interviewee's responses” (1989).

Semi-structured interviews were used for all participant groups. Kvale (1996) regards a qualitative research interview as an attempt to understand the world from the point of view of research subjects. The conversation is aimed at unfolding the meaning of their experiences and uncovering their lived world (Sewell, 2009). Content validity provides evidence about the degree to which elements of an assessment instrument are relevant and represent the targeted construct for a particular assessment purpose (Almanasreh et al., 2019). In this research, the content validity assessed the questionnaires to see if they covered suitable information for the study. Content validity was achieved when the researcher had input from experts on homeschooling and African Americans.

Researcher-Developed Instruments

Content validity was established to ensure the interviews would cover all relevant parts of the phenomenon to be measured. The content of the interview was suitable for African American parents. The questions were related to the phenomenon of homeschooling and measured the phenomenon it is intended to measure. The instruments I used in this study included demographic information from a list of guiding interview questions (Appendix A) and a reliable audio recording device recording all participant interviews. The researcher completed follow-up procedures by sending a thank you note

or email to participants who volunteered, completed, or had not completed their interview. Participants who did not complete their interview will be reminded to complete it by an estimated time. Participants who completed their interviews were emailed a \$20 Amazon, Walmart, or Target gift card. A pilot study was conducted. Pilot studies are a crucial element of a good study design. A pilot study is referred to as a feasibility study that comprises ‘small-scale versions of the planned study, trial runs of planned methods, or miniature versions of the anticipated research’ in order to ‘answer a methodological question(s) and to guide the development of the research plan’ (Prescott & Soeken, 1989, p. 60). A pilot study is a small-scale methodological test conducted to prepare for a main study and is intended to ensure that methods or ideas would work in practice (Jariath et al., 2000; Prescott & Soeken, 1989). A pilot study involves a small sample, often misused as a small sample study and misrepresented as an excuse for not having enough of a sample in some research (Lancaster et al. 2004; Perry, 2001). However, the key feature of the definition of a pilot study is a small-scale study designed to inform a main study (Jariath et al. 2000). The principal benefit of conducting a pilot study is that it allows researchers to adjust and revise the main study.

Procedures For Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

A letter (Appendix C) was used as a flyer to recruit participants. It was circulated via public messages on Facebook and LinkedIn containing information regarding the study's purpose and the criteria for participation. Parents interested in participating in the study were evaluated through a screening questionnaire (Appendix B) to ensure they met the criteria for participation. If the participant is interested and meets the criteria, I send

the informed consent form via email to the participant. In the informed consent, parents were notified that their participation would be voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time during the study. Also, the informed consent will include the research title, purpose statement, method of participation through the interview, duration of participation, potential minimal risks, procedures for ensuring confidentiality and data security, and my contact information. Participants who agreed to the content of the informed consent form were asked to send an electronic copy of the signed informed consent form to my email by indicating “I consent” in the body of their email. Once I received signed copies of the informed consent form, I contacted participants to schedule an interview.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom. The interviewing process consisted of six mothers and six fathers. Each interview was audio recorded with the participant’s permission. I reviewed the interview protocol with each participant at the beginning of the interview. I asked interview questions based on the interview guidelines. At the end of the interview, I allowed participants to ask questions. All interviews were conducted for 45 minutes. Once all participants had answered the interview questions, I transcribed the recording using Microsoft Word. All participants received a summary of the interview transcripts to review for accuracy and determine the coherency of the information. A member checking session was scheduled for each participant to receive participants’ feedback and clarification of information. The researcher interpreted the interview transcripts by coding the themes and such and then sharing the themes with the participants to see if they agreed with the interpretations of the interviews. If there was a

need for follow-up interviews, participants were contacted via email. To ensure confidentiality, no personal and identifying information of parents or their children was included in the interview.

Data Analysis Plan

Thematic analysis analyzed the data from the interviews and researcher notes. Thematic analysis is appropriate because the raw data will unfold and provide patterns identified through codes, categories, and themes, assigning meaning to daily experiences (Saldana, 2015). I needed a significant amount of data that would be useful in answering my research questions. The synthesis of these various data sources determined which data is useful for the research question of this study. The data analysis procedure for this study involved a thorough, open coding process in identifying the categories and themes most prevalent in the interviews. After transcripts of the interviews were completed, Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used to facilitate the analysis of field notes, transcriptions, and the themes that align with the RQ (Martens et al., 2017) used to scan the data for similarities in statements and create stratified groupings according to the central research question of lived experiences explaining the decision to homeschool. Field notes and transcriptions will be coded. In-vivo coding will be the type of coding used, and the procedure for coding will be done by identifying different themes and reoccurring themes in each response.

Through thematic analysis, I focused on identifiable themes and patterns that emerged from collecting data. Once the themes had been identified, I drew on the constant comparative technique to compare the themes across respondents to make sense

of the data by coding and analyzing them simultaneously (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Constant comparison assisted me in identifying significant patterns in the research questions, which would then be incorporated into the reporting of the findings. The constant comparative method “combines systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing” (Conrad, Neumann, Haworth, & Scott, 1993, p. 280). These findings were reported using direct quotations from the research participants that were interpreted and interwoven into the discussion. The coding process included identifying text passages, searching for concepts, and finding relationships between them.

Thematic analysis is historically a conventional practice in qualitative research that involves searching through data to identify any recurrent patterns or themes (Boyatzis, 1998). As a qualitative research method, thematic analysis is exploratory, based on the occurrence of themes and surface of patterns. A theme is a cluster of linked categories conveying similar meanings and usually emerges through an inductive analytic process that essentially characterizes the qualitative paradigm (Boyatzis, 1998). Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) that involves locating, condensing, describing, recapping, and assessing data (Lester et al. 2020). Researchers noted that the best way this can be done in qualitative research is to confirm that the data are reliable and credible (Bernard, 2017; Gall et al. 2003). To ensure that all participants were asked the same questions, I followed the interview guide; also, by examining the interview transcripts, data was analyzed correctly and reflected the

participants' responses after the data was collected. All participants have the opportunity to confirm their responses and make appropriate corrections if needed during the member-checking process (Creswell, 2017). Transparent reporting will be essential for including discrepant cases in this research. According to Moravcsik (2020), the transparency of reporting is the obligation to make data, analysis, methods, and interpretive choices underlying their claims visible in a way that allows others to evaluate them—as a fundamental ethical obligation. Member checking was done after the interviews. The researcher sent a summary of the transcripts. The researcher interpreted the transcripts by coding the themes and such, and the researcher shared those themes/categories with the participants to see if they agreed with the interpretations. The transcripts were sent via email to review and confirm an accurate copy of the participant's state to ensure the researcher correctly interpreted the participants' interviews.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the data has to do with the level of trust that can be placed in the data, interpretation, and methods of research (Connelly, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) are amongst the earliest qualitative researchers to establish acceptance criteria for judging the trustworthiness of research. These categories are credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

Credibility can be defined as “believability” (Fogg, 1999; Tseng and Fogg, 1999). Credible sources are described as “trustworthy” and having “expertise” (Self, 1996). To establish credibility, the researcher will take several actions. First, the researcher will

perform member checking (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). Member checking will be instrumental in locating any errors or misinformation in the interviews that will be transcribed. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider this technique to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). Next, the researcher kept a reflective journal to help with self-introspection and reflexivity throughout the data collection process. Triangulation is an essential process in this type of research as it develops trustworthiness and increases the validity of the study's results. According to Berg (2004), the triangulation process is a composition of multiple data sources, data-gathering techniques, and methods to investigate the same phenomenon. As such, in this study, methodological triangulation in the form of interviews and note-taking will be used. Methodological triangulation is one of four types of data collection. Triangulation for completeness is mainly used for less explored or unexplored research problems. To increase the dependability and confirmability of the study, a log with details of each day's activities and decisions was made during the data collection process. To establish the study's credibility, I first interviewed participants until data saturation occurred. Saturation will be determined once no new data provides any additional insights into the phenomenon of the study (Ravitch and Carl, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability is how the qualitative researcher demonstrates that the research study's findings apply to other contexts (Fischer and Guzel, 2023). The researcher used thick descriptions to show that the research study's findings can be applied to other contexts, races, and locations. While this study will not be able to generalize the findings

to the broader population of parents' perspectives of decisions to homeschool their children with autism, the results generated helpful information that can instigate social change and transform the related aspects of the education system. To deepen the transferability of the findings, the researcher described the study's context, people, and location without revealing any identifiers of the study participants. The next section discusses these ethical matters in research in greater detail.

Dependability

The researcher ensured that thorough, rigorous data collection techniques, procedures, and analysis were documented. Audit trails such as journals/records were kept of how the interviews will be conducted. Dependability is the extent to which other researchers could repeat the study, and the findings would be consistent (Fischer and Guzel, 2023). In other words, if a person wanted to replicate the study, other researchers should have enough information from this research report to obtain similar findings as this study did. A qualitative researcher can use an inquiry audit to establish dependability, which requires an outside person to review and examine the research process and the data analysis to ensure that the findings are consistent and can be repeated.

Confirmability

The degree to which other researchers could confirm the findings of the research study. Confirmability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination but derived from the data (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). Confirmability of qualitative data is assured when data are checked and rechecked throughout data collection and analysis to ensure findings would

likely be repeatable by others (Fischer and Guzel, 2023). I used reflexivity to establish confirmability and protect my study from potential personal bias (Nowell et al., 2017; Peoples, 2021). Reflective journaling helped me to be aware of my personal biases. It also helped me identify the projections that will be distractions for the study and may prevent me from better understanding the study phenomenon (Peoples, 2021). My goal was to revise my thoughts from questions created by my biases (Peoples, 2021). Using a hermeneutic circle through reflective journaling helps researchers revise the potential biases and replace their thoughts and conceptions with new meanings that align or make sense with the phenomenon of the study (Peoples, 2021). The researcher documented a coding schema identifying the codes and patterns in the analyses. The researcher ensured a thorough triangulation, member checking of the data, and conducting a bracketing interview. The researcher practiced reflexivity to confront potential personal bias. In other words, this means that the findings are based on participants' responses and not the researcher's potential bias or personal motivations. This involved ensuring that researcher bias did not skew the interpretation of the research participants' statements to fit a particular narrative. To establish confirmability, the researcher provided an audit trail, which highlights every step of data analysis that will be made to provide a rationale for the decisions made. The audit trail helped to establish that the research study's findings accurately portray participants' responses.

Ethical Procedures

The American Psychological Association (APA) (2010) provided Ethical Standards to guide the conduct of all psychological activities, including research. As the

researcher, I adhered to the APA Ethical Standards that include obtaining appropriate institutional approval before conducting a study; obtaining participants' informed consent, including consent for audio or visual recordings; informing participants of the nature of the study, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without retaliation (APA, 2010). I obtained the approval of Walden University IRB before conducting the study. The ethics of research has everything to do with the protection of human subjects. Approval from Walden University IRB was required prior to any data collection. All assurances were taken to ensure each participant willingly participated in the study. It can be challenging to recruit participants for qualitative research. Recruitment can be affected by factors such as systemic barriers and potential participants being reluctant to participate in research. Research can be time-consuming and burdensome because of the amount of time taken to complete an interview along with the interview questions. As a result, participants were rewarded for their time and effort. The consent form (Appendix D) was anonymous and did not require a signature; the lack of a signature will be for privacy purposes. A flyer (Appendix C) of invitation detailing the purpose of the study was sent to the respondents, after which persons will determine if they want to participate. The researcher's concern about the data collection activities is interviewing participants. The researcher can be affected by factors like fatigue, personality, knowledge, and levels of skill, training, and experience. As a result, the interview process was suggested in the morning. While these subjective factors are sometimes considered threats to validity, they can also be strengths because the skilled interviewer can use flexibility and insight to ensure an in-depth, detailed understanding of

the participant's experience. During the participation, participants may withdraw without any discrimination or penalty. I will maintain transparency about the study's objectives and how the data was used; no deception was introduced at any point in time. If they decided to participate, they were asked to sign a consent form, which will be stored for records. The researcher will not collect identifying information unless it is essential to the study protocol (Byrne, 2016). Protecting participants' identities in this study will be highly important because many African-American parents did not want to make it known that they are homeschooling; according to the New Jersey State Board of Education, parents were not required to report their choice and decision to homeschool. Potential threats to this study's validity included bias related to the interview questions (Appendix A). The interview questions were created with no leading questions, and every participant received the same questions worded similarly. A second possible threat is an error in data transcription; this particular threat will be minimized by having participants analyze the surveys for validity purposes. The respondents were reassured of the protection of their information and that none of it would be shared with any third party. To increase confidentiality and privacy, the data was securely stored in a space accessible only by the researcher. All paper-based data was secured in a filing cabinet, and electronic data was stored on a computer with cloud storage protected by passwords. Data such as demographic forms, consent forms, audiotapes, interview transcripts, and other materials were kept confidential in a file cabinet at my residence to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. Interview transcripts and all other electronic files related to the study were password-protected on a computer that will be password

protected. I am the only person with access to these files. To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, interviews were conducted online in a private location. Names associated with interview data were replaced with a number for identification purposes. All phone and face-to-face contacts and interviews with participants were conducted solely by me. After completion of this study, all research data will be kept for five years, after which they will be destroyed as outlined in Walden University's research protocol. Also, data from this study was stored and protected for five years, as a requirement of the university, and then destroyed by shredding any paper document and deleting electronic documents.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has provided detailed explanations of the methodological approach to the proposed study. A discussion on the research design and rationale established that I utilized the qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection instrument. Another motivation for choosing this approach is that it fits the overarching research objective: to gather in-depth information about the knowledge and experiences of African American parents who homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. The participants for this study were selected from a sampling frame of African American parents who chose to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism living in New Jersey. The data collection instrument was the semi-structured interview, which is flexible and helpful in collecting in-depth data from respondents. These were administered via Zoom under strict ethical standards such as confidentiality, transparency, and honesty.

The sample members were recruited via relevant Facebook groups and LinkedIn through purposive and snowballing techniques. Key advantages of the snowballing technique include that it is time-saving and allows the researcher to easily communicate with the sample members, given that they are associated with each other. Selection bias, however, is deemed to be of concern. Nevertheless, it assisted in gathering the data that are necessary to answer the research question. Once collected, the data was immediately transcribed, coded, and thematized to spot the most salient categories of the findings using the Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) or Qualtrics Compliance Management Software system. All efforts were made to increase the trustworthiness of the data and the findings. Chapters 4 and 5 analyzed the data and findings and provided recommendations for future research.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to examine the perspectives of African American parents' regarding their decisions to homeschool their children with autism in New Jersey. The problem was that African-American parents lacked trust in the public education school system, which increased homeschooling within the African-American community (Kunjufu, 2014; Mazama & Lundy, 2014; Neuman & Guterman, 2016). The study was conducted with African-American parents located in the state of New Jersey who shared their perspectives on their decisions to homeschool their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism.

The research question was: What are the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism? This chapter includes the study's process and findings. It also describes the setting, the participant's demographics, and relevant characteristics, reviews the data collection presentation and data analysis process, provides evidence of trustworthiness, and discusses the results with supporting data addressing the research question.

Setting

I conducted the interviews via Zoom. In this setting, I could interview participants in an environment that allowed the researcher to speak confidentially without interruption. The participants' locations were unknown except for the general demographic area. Participants selected a site that offered them minimum disruption. All participants had the convenience and freedom to interview in a suitable location.

Demographics

I recruited 12 participants (six African American mothers and six African American fathers) for the study using Facebook and LinkedIn. I posted the same flyer on Facebook group forums associated with homeschooling and autism in New Jersey. Potential participants contacted me via email, and I screened them to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria for participants were that they were African American parents homeschooling their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. African American parents selected for this study reported living in New Jersey and homeschooling for at least one year at the elementary school level. A pseudonym was assigned to each participant to protect the participants' identities and provide confidentiality and fidelity (see Table 3). My goal was to examine the perspectives of African American parents' who made the decision to homeschool their children with ASD in New Jersey. The participants and their reasons for choosing homeschooling are introduced in the next section in the order in which they were interviewed.

Table 1*Participants' Demographics*

Participants	Gender	Homeschooling Years	Age Groups
Participant 1 (JK)	M	1.5	21-30
Participant 2 (KP)	M	3	31-40
Participant 3 (JD)	M	3	31-40
Participant 4 (SM)	M	4	21-30
Participant 5 (SK)	F	2	21-30
Participant 6 (DD)	F	3	31-40
Participant 7 (GG)	F	2	31-40
Participant 8 (HM)	M	2	41-50
Participant 9 (FX)	F	3	31-40

Participants	Gender	Homeschooling Years	Age Groups
Participant 10 (TC)	F	4	41-50
Participant 11 (ES)	M	2	31-40
Participant 12 (OT)	F	1	21-30

Data Collection

Data were gathered through in-depth interviews. Qualitative narrative inquiry is a research approach that aims to understand individuals' experiences by analyzing personal stories and narratives. According to Johnson and Smith (2020), narrative inquiry is used by researchers to explore the complex interplay between personal narratives and broader sociocultural contexts. The idea of narrative inquiry is that stories are collected to understand experience as lived and told through both research and literature (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). This method results in a nuanced examination of how individuals construct their stories, the influences of culture and society on these narratives, and how storytelling shapes personal identities and understanding of the world. Through qualitative narrative inquiry, researchers can uncover rich, in-depth insights into the multifaceted nature of human experiences, providing a deeper

understanding of individuals' perspectives and the social landscapes that shape their narratives.

Twelve participants were interviewed as part of this study on Zoom. After several emails to participants, a time and day were set. After the interview, each participant was contacted once via email for a follow-up interview to discuss the researcher's interpretations. The interviews were recorded on Zoom and downloaded to a professional transcribing service. The transcribing service immediately provided a Word document of the transcript. The duration of the interviews varied from participant to participant. The time allotted for each interview was 45 minutes. I encouraged the participants to have the opportunity to answer the questions freely, without interruption; therefore, the length of time varied according to the participants' comfort level of expanding thoroughly upon the question. Some participants gave more simplistic, direct answers than waited for the following questions.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews are a valuable research method that allows for data collection flexibility and depth. In such interviews, researchers have predetermined questions but can also explore new avenues based on participants' responses, enabling a rich understanding of the research topic. According to Jones and Smith (2020), semi-structured interviews balance standardization and flexibility, allowing researchers to delve into participants' perspectives while maintaining consistency in data collection. Additionally, Brown et al. (2020) emphasized that these interviews facilitate rapport-building between the researcher and participant, leading to more in-depth and nuanced responses.

Data Analysis

To move inductively from coded units to larger representations, including categories and themes in a qualitative research study on the perspectives of African American parents who made the decision to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey, I used thematic analysis to analyze my data, following the six-phased approach specified by Braun and Clarke (2022). In Phase 1, I became familiar with the interview data by reading the interviews multiple times. To this end, I read each interview from start to finish to gain a holistic understanding of the data I collected and to gather my general impressions regarding the depth of the participant's answers to the interview questions. Next, I read responses to each interview question across participants. Specifically, I read each participant's response to Interview Question (IQ) 1, followed by each participant's response to IQ 14, until all IQs had been exhausted. During this phase, I carefully analyzed each participant's responses for any personally identifiable information in the transcripts that could be used to identify the participants. Phase 2 of Braun and Clarke (2022) thematic analysis involves categorizing the data into meaningful units called codes. I applied the codes to participants' ideas, perspectives, and opinions regarding their perspectives on decisions to homeschool. In Phase 3, I reviewed the codes and combined them to form categories.

In Phase 4, I refined the categories to extract themes. The categories were grouped into themes based on their similarity. The themes represent patterns and relationships presented in the interview data. During Phase 5, I examined the codes, categories, and themes using In-vivo coding to determine whether new themes emerged

or were redundant and needed to be combined. I also evaluated the data for discrepant cases. Braun and Clarke (2022) stated that a discrepant case is a code that can only be applied to one participant's interview. There were no discrepant cases in this data set. In the final data analysis phase, I reexamined the data by reviewing each interview transcript to ensure the participants' answers were explicitly related to the appropriate codes, categories, and themes. During this phase, I ensured the themes appropriately corresponded to the research question. After data analysis, I concluded that the participants' data addressed the research question because member checking was performed with the participants, and there were no changes to the data collected. According to Braun and Clarke (2022), member checking promotes the study's credibility by actively involving the participants in the data analysis process.

Thematic Analysis Coding

The coding process included coding each participant's responses, phrases, and quotes. A large number of words that produced commonalities were revealed. Once collected, the data was immediately transcribed, coded, and thematized using the Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). In-vivo coding was used to examine participants' words or phrases to describe their experiences. In the context of understanding African American parents' decisions to homeschool their autistic children, in-vivo coding captured the authentic perspectives and voices of these parents. These raw, unfiltered expressions provide rich insights into the thoughts and emotions that drove African American parent's decision-making process. Through in-vivo coding, the researcher identified the recurring themes and patterns in the parents'

narratives. This approach is used for a deeper understanding of the perspectives of African American parents' choices to homeschool their autistic children. Overall, in vivo coding is a way to authentically capture and honor the voices of African American parents in their own words, shedding light on the diverse perspectives, experiences, and motivations driving African American parents' decisions to homeschool their autistic children. In-vivo coding is a qualitative research technique that uses participants' words or phrases to describe their experiences (Manning, 2017).

The thematic analysis coding with sub-coding resulted in a comprehensive breakdown of African American parents' perspectives on their decisions to homeschool their children with autism. I examined the educational considerations, tailoring curriculum to children's needs, social and emotional well-being, educational outcomes and progress, parental involvement and empowerment, and personalized learning environment within the data, which has provided invaluable insights into African American parents' perspectives on the decision to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism.

I used thematic analysis, a systematic process of coding patterns and themes to examine a group's understanding of a particular issue (see Braun and Clarke, 2006). This involved finding units of meaning contained in single words, phrases, or entire quotes in the text and tagging these units with codes that captured their meaning. Consistent with Braun and Clarke (2006), the following data analysis steps were applied: familiarization with data, generation of initial codes, search for themes among codes, review of themes, and definition and naming of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a

flexible tool providing a qualitative, detailed, and nuanced data account (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method to analyze qualitative data. It involves the identification and reporting of patterns in a data set, which are then interpreted for their inherent meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Liebenberg et al. 2020; Xu & Zammit, 2020); these patterns can be found based on understanding the meaning of keywords used by participants (Naeem et al. 2023).

Themes

A total of five primary themes were identified across the participants' narratives. The number of participants who contributed to each theme is found in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of Participants for Each Theme

Themes	No. of participants
Educational Considerations	8
Social and Emotional Well-being	4
Educational Outcomes and Progress	7
Parental Involvement and Empowerment	12
Personalized Learning Environment	5

Theme 1: Educational Considerations

Educational considerations for children diagnosed with autism can be operationally defined as the deliberate and strategic planning, implementation, and adaptation of educational practices, programs, and interventions to meet the unique learning needs, strengths, and challenges of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This includes individualizing educational goals, curriculum modifications,

specialized instructional strategies, sensory supports, and behavioral interventions to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters academic success, social skill development, and overall well-being for children with autism (Denning and Moody, 2013). The crucial aspect of tailoring the curriculum to a child's learning needs is not just a passive process. However, it involves parents actively customizing the educational content, teaching methods, pace, and resources to suit the specific child's learning style, interests, strengths, and weaknesses. This approach, designed to address each student's unique requirements, enables them to learn more effectively, engage more actively, and help them achieve their full potential. By adjusting the curriculum to fit the child's needs, parents can provide a more personalized and engaging learning experience that caters to the student's specific learning preferences and abilities, enhancing their academic performance and overall educational experience.

According to Participant 1 (JK) (2024):

My perspective on my decision to homeschool was that I wanted to train and teach my child comfortably. With so many things happening in the public school system, my child feels safer at home and would learn better. My experience with homeschooling has been good experiences. My child is improving in grades, character development, and engagement.

According to Participant 2 (KP) (2024):

My perspective on the decision to homeschool my children was very personal. It includes the ability to tailor it to my child's needs and my child's ability to move at their own pace and create a supportive learning environment for my children. I

have made the right decision to homeschool. My child was struggling with their academics and anxiety, and all this stuff was causing my child to fall behind academically. The benefit of homeschooling is that my child can move at their own pace of learning and customize the curriculum to suit their needs.

Sub-code: “Tailoring Curriculum to Child’s Needs”

All the participants interviewed expressed a strong desire for a “curriculum tailored to their child’s academic needs.” This clear and consistent theme underscores African American parents’ deep understanding of their children’s unique learning requirements and unwavering commitment to providing the best possible education for their children. One key aspect of homeschooling a child with autism is developing an individualized curriculum tailored to the child’s specific needs and learning goals. Specialized curriculum should include systematic instruction in social engagement skills, including initiating and responding to social bids, appropriate recreational or leisure skills, and language comprehension and communication (Olley, 1999).

African American parents take proactive steps to “adapt the curriculum to their child’s interests, strengths, and challenges, incorporating therapeutic interventions and life skills training to promote holistic development.” Curriculum content and its instructional methods should be based on an individualized assessment of students and should consider the family’s preference for targeting goals (Olley, 1999). In addition, educators should consider the functionality of the skills targeted within the curriculum. Participant 3 (JD) stated, “One of the most significant benefits has been the ability to

move at my child's own pace of learning and customize the curriculum to suit my child's needs.”

Sub-code: “Frustration with Lack of Individualized Attention in Traditional Schools”

All participants were deeply “frustrated with the lack of individualized attention in traditional schools, a sentiment that strongly resonates with many African American parents in similar situations.” This frustration underscores the need for more personalized approaches in education for children diagnosed with autism. “My child has been to public school, just visibly because the teachers were not meeting my child's needs. Even in a mainstream classroom, lessons were taught in general, but there was no one-to-one interaction. I know the classroom size, but teachers need patience, or the schools need to limit the number of children in these autistic classrooms” Participant 12 (OT).

Theme 2: Social and Emotional Well-being

“Social and emotional well-being for children diagnosed with autism includes positive mental health, emotional regulation, social skills development, and overall psychological resilience.” This includes implementing evidence-based interventions, such as social skills training, cognitive-behavioral therapy, sensory integration therapy, and mindfulness practices, to support the emotional and social needs of children with autism (Mazurek and Kanne, 2010). The theme of supporting the social and emotional well-being of a child with autism is of paramount importance. It involves understanding and addressing their needs related to social interactions, communication, sensory sensitivities, and emotional regulation. This may include creating a structured and predictable environment, providing clear and consistent communication, offering sensory accommodations, and teaching

social skills in a supportive and understanding manner. It is crucial to recognize and respect the individual differences and strengths of each autistic child while providing them with the necessary tools and strategies to navigate social situations, manage emotions, and build meaningful connections with others. By prioritizing the social and emotional well-being of a child with autism, we can help them thrive, build self-confidence, and develop essential skills for a fulfilling life. “Homeschooling helps children who cannot cope with the class size because they are shy and have no choice. They need help learning and understanding but want a secure, safe space. It is to know and understand more, and I see homeschooling as something that can help children with autism. A secure environment is a perfect place for them to learn and understand. Many people say that the child will not be exposed. Nevertheless, I tell you, it is a lie because many people have been doing well in homeschooling. I have been doing well in homeschooling,” Participant 7 (GG).

Sub-code: Providing a Safe and Nurturing Environment

All participants were concerned about “wanting their children to be in a safe and nurturing environment.” For many participants, the public-school classrooms needed to be more conducive to learning. “My perspective on my decision to homeschool was that I wanted to train and teach my child comfortably. With so many things happening in the public school system, my child feels safer at home and would learn better” Participant 1 (JK).

Theme 3: Educational Outcomes and Progress

“Educational outcomes and progress for children diagnosed with autism can be operationally defined as the measurable academic achievements, skill development, and overall educational growth of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in various educational settings.” This includes assessing and monitoring progress in communication skills, social interactions, academic performance, adaptive behavior, and independent living skills (Anderson et al. 2014). Educational outcomes and progress for children with autism refer to the specific goals, achievements, and advancements targeted and measured in their educational journey. These outcomes include improved social skills, communication abilities, academic performance, behavior management, independence, and overall quality of life. Progress is often tracked through assessments, observations, and data collection to evaluate the child’s development in various areas and to determine the effectiveness of interventions and educational strategies. Setting individualized goals, implementing evidence-based practices, providing appropriate support and accommodations, and fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment are crucial in promoting meaningful educational outcomes and progress for autistic children. By monitoring and celebrating their achievements, caregivers can ensure that children with autism reach their full potential and experience success in their educational pursuits. “For me, it is a nice thing; you can see your child progress as if it is happening right before you. You get to monitor what your child learns. One of the best ways your child can get an education. So, for me, it is a good thing to see your child's progress. I see what my child does daily, just like you are part of the education itself” Participant 5 (SK).

Sub-code: Tracking Academic Progress and Achievements

“All participants were tracking their children’s academic progress and achievements.”

Theme 4: Parental Involvement and Empowerment

“Parental involvement and empowerment, which are key to a child's educational journey, can be operationally defined as the active participation of parents or caregivers in their child's education and the process through which they are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to advocate for their child's academic success and well-being.” This includes engaging in decision-making processes that affect their child's education (Henderson et al. 2002). Parental involvement and empowerment for children with autism refer to parents’ active participation, collaboration, and support in their child’s education, therapy, and overall well-being. This involvement may include attending meetings with therapists, implementing strategies and interventions at home, advocating for their child’s needs, accessing resources and services, and fostering a supportive and nurturing home environment. On the other hand, empowerment involves equipping parents with knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed decisions, navigate the complex support system, and effectively advocate for their child’s rights and best interests. By involving and empowering parents, children with autism can benefit from consistent and coordinated care, personalized interventions, and a strong support system that enhances their development, learning, and overall quality of life. All participants are involved in their child’s educational journey.

Sub-code: Taking Ownership of Child's Education Journey

“All participants enjoyed taking ownership of their children’s education journey. African American parents embarking on the homeschooling journey for their children with autism often engage in a thoughtful decision-making process.” This involves reflecting on their child’s unique needs and learning style, evaluating the adequacy of the school environment and support services, and considering the potential benefits of homeschooling as a personalized educational approach. “As an African American, I chose to home-school because I believed it was the right thing to do, and it still feels like the right thing even today. My child has autism, and I do not think the public school system is equipped and ready to enhance my child's future. Not only that, but I have also heard too many stories of African American children suffering in the school system. My child was treated poorly,” Participant 10 (TC). “The classroom environment was not for my child, and his educational needs were unmet. He should have been ahead of my child’s age, but my child was not at the level he should have been. So, I homeschooled,” Participant 11 (ES).

Sub-code: Building a Supportive and Collaborative Relationship with Child

“All participants continue to build a supportive and collaborative relationship with their children. Embracing challenges as opportunities for growth and reflection is a cornerstone of the homeschooling *journey* for African American parents.” Continuous learning, adapting to new circumstances, and planning for future success are key aspects of their commitment to providing a nurturing and supportive educational environment for autistic children.

Theme 5: Personalized Learning Environment

“A personalized learning environment for children diagnosed with autism can be operationally defined as an educational setting and approach tailored to the individual needs, strengths, and preferences of each child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).” This includes implementing personalized goals, accommodations, and instructional strategies to support the unique learning styles and challenges of children with autism to promote academic progress, social skills development, and overall well-being (Kagohara et al. 2013). A personalized learning environment for children with autism involves tailoring the educational setting, curriculum, teaching strategies, and support services to meet each child’s unique needs, strengths, and preferences. This theme recognizes that children with autism may have diverse learning styles, sensory sensitivities, communication challenges, and social differences that require specialized accommodations and interventions to optimize their learning experience.

In a personalized learning environment for children with autism, the parents work closely with their children. By providing a personalized learning environment, children with autism can receive the targeted and differentiated instruction they need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. This approach promotes a supportive and inclusive educational experience that honors each child’s individuality and maximizes their potential for growth and learning. Homeschooling is a personalized learning environment. All participants created a learning environment at home that was conducive to their child’s learning needs.

Sub-code: Creating a Structured Routine to Support Learning

“All participants created a homeschool environment conducive to their child’s learning needs. The homeschooling environment was structured, and parents supported students in their learning process.” “My child is improving daily. My child has been able to catch up with his studies, and I notice that the education we have at home is what we need to put him through, and he is in line with his studies. I also bring in what I want my child to learn and how I want it to be carried out” Participant 6 (DD).

Table 3: Participant Pseudonyms

Participant No.	Pseudonyms
Participant 1	JK
Participant 2	KP
Participant 3	JD
Participant 4	SM
Participant 5	SK
Participant 6	DD
Participant 7	GG
Participant 8	HM
Participant 9	FX
Participant 10	TC
Participant 11	ES
Participant 12	OT

Narrative Inquiry

The research delved into the rich and complex stories, experiences, and viewpoints of African American parents. According to Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 2000), narrative inquiry is the study of people in relationship with people, places, and things by researchers who are in relationship with people, places, and things. By employing a narrative lens, the researcher explored the emotions, challenges, and motivations that shape the decision-making process of African American parents in choosing homeschooling for their children with autism. Through narrative analysis, the researcher uncovered the unique narratives of African American parents, shedding light on the personal journeys, struggles, triumphs, and aspirations that underpin their decision to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism. These narratives revealed a deep sense of parental advocacy, resilience, and empowerment as parents navigate the intersection of race, disability, and education in their homeschooling endeavors. These stories may also illuminate the challenges faced by African American parents in accessing appropriate support services, navigating systemic barriers, and advocating for their children's rights within the education system. Ultimately, narrative analysis of the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children with autism offers a window into the lived experiences, voices, and agency of these parents. The personal narratives are the responses to the 14 interview questions for each participant.

Participant 1: Personal Narrative

My name is JK. I am a male and have homeschooled my child for about one and a half years. Homeschooling has taught my child what he needs to know and what is not being taught in public schools, as well as the responsibility to teach my child what is important. As a father, I have made the right decision to homeschool his child. I feel good about my decision. Looking back on the past, I have made the right decision to homeschool my child. My child has now gotten better. My perspective on my decision to homeschool was that I wanted to train and teach my child comfortably. With so many things happening in the public school system, my child feels safer at home and would learn better. My experience with homeschooling has been good experiences. My child is improving in grades, character development, and engagement. Despite facing challenges like racism and having to cope with being African American, I firmly believe I have made the right decision to homeschool my children and will continue to do so. I value public schools, but I prefer to educate my children at home because it offers many benefits, such as a good standard of education. The benefit of homeschooling is that I am giving my children a good standard of education. I confirm that I will continue homeschooling. "I am giving my child the standard of a good education."

Participant 2: Personal Narrative

My name is KP. I am a male and have been homeschooling for about three years. Homeschooling is excellent for someone with a passion for children. "It requires a lot of patience, love, commitment, and perseverance to pass on the information or knowledge that children need to learn and know. Looking back on the past, I have made the right

decision to homeschool my children, and I feel good because they have a future. They have a bright future ahead of them. I am helping them channel their little energies into the right path and making them also have a great life. It is commendable and something worth doing. I have made the right decision to homeschool my children. 100% yes.

Sometimes, you see the smiles on my children's faces, and I feel pleased. I have that inner joy and sense of fulfillment. I am helping transform lives, making the place a better place, and giving my children a chance to survive, fight, and stay relevant in society. I feel satisfied. I am experiencing many benefits from homeschooling, and many things are coming into today's society. These things that have, you know, I do not want them for my children, the things that are going on in the schools. I do not want some of those values passed from the school system to be passed down to my children. They are not part of the average syllables, and they are not even relevant that much. And then we can give them the extra attention. It is challenging for the teacher to be able to focus on depth and rely on students. We do not have enough teachers in charge of every child. So, the teacher does not know each student's strengths and weaknesses by heart." I will continue to homeschool my children. I would do my best, and that is the first reason. I see these children having hope. My perspective on the decision to homeschool my children was very personal. It includes the ability to tailor it to my child's needs and my child's ability to move at their own pace and create a supportive learning environment for my children. I have made the right decision to homeschool. My child was struggling with their academics and anxiety, and all this stuff was causing my child to fall behind academically. The benefit of homeschooling is that my child can move at their own pace

of learning and customize the curriculum to suit their needs. I will continue to homeschool because of its great advantage for my child.

Participant 3: Personal Narrative

My name is JD, and I am a male. I have been homeschooling for three years. Homeschooling is like everyone has a personal decision, and each family must make it based on their unique circumstances. Some potential benefits of homeschooling include tailoring the curriculum to suit your child's needs. Homeschooling has its disadvantages, but it also has one advantage. I could see an increase in my child's academics, the weight catch-ups, and my ability to give him a curriculum that suits his needs. I feel positive about my decision, and looking back, I know I have made the right decision to homeschool my child. Being an African American was one of the reasons that led me to homeschooling. My perspectives on the decision to homeschool were wanting the best for my child and tailoring it to my child's needs along with a supportive learning environment. My child was struggling and was falling behind academically. One of the most significant benefits has been the ability to move at my child's own pace of learning and customize the curriculum to suit my child's needs. "I see myself continuing; it is advantageous to my child."

Participant 4: Personal Narrative

My name is SM, and I am a male. I have been homeschooling for four years. With homeschooling, you must put in the time and work with your child. It is helpful when you try to learn a lot to raise and teach the child. I must teach myself before my child can grasp any concepts. It is a long time, and it is not very easy, and I have to put in the time

as a parent. I must also learn a lot to help my child. My perspectives on my decision and what led me to this decision was that a lot of African American children do not know about their culture, and most African American children do not know how to approach their elders. I have devoted my time to my child, which should be unique. I am teaching him how to cope with different situations. My experience with homeschooling my child has been good so far. Great.” I think I am making the right decision to homeschool my child for the better. Looking back, I know I have made the right decision to homeschool my child. I want my child to have a good education and be taught about our culture. So far, my child has been improving academically and culturally. I will continue to homeschool so my child will grow academically and culturally.

Participant 5: Personal Narrative

My name is SK, and I am a female. I have been homeschooling for two years now. Homeschooling is one of the best ways for a child to get an education in the US. So, it is a good thing you get to see your child’s progress. You get to see what the child does in school daily, just like you are part of the education itself. My perspective on homeschooling is that this is a wonderful thing to do because, as an African American parent, I get to be there to see my child’s progress happening right before me. I get to monitor what my child learns. Thus, my perspective on homeschooling is a perfect thing. My child ‘pushed’ me to help her. When I understood the homeschooling process, it became easy and understandable. I know I have made the right decision because of the benefits homeschooling offers my child. Looking back, I feel good. I am good at helping my child achieve his academic goals. It is expensive, but my child is getting the best

education. It is a very convenient place for my children. My child is learning, and I do not have to wake up and worry about my child getting to school late. Another thing for me is the monitoring aspect: I can monitor my child's progress. In public schools, nobody reports your child's progress. Once my child has a difficulty, I am there to listen, and I am very involved in my child's academics. In the public school, I had issues with the population. It was just so crowded for my child. I was so scared about my children's safety. With what was going on around me and the news about bullying and all, there was a day when my children came back from school crying. So, I have decided to continue to homeschool my child. I want my child to be with me like this. I do not feel confident sending my child to any public school. I want my child to be where I can monitor their progress.

Participant 6: Personal Narrative

My name is DD, and I am a female. I have been homeschooling for three years. I think that homeschooling is studying outside the usual school structure. As an African American, homeschooling has informed my decision to homeschool. As a result, I am homeschooling because my child faced discrimination and racism. So, because of my child's health condition, I decided to homeschool. I made an excellent decision to do that. Looking back, I feel good. I am good at helping my child achieve his academic goals. I do not regret it. My perspective on homeschooling is that I can help my child independently and design the schooling process how I want. I am having good experiences and bad ones as well. The good part is that I take my time and bring in what I want my child to learn and how I want it to be carried out. The bad experience is how the

child is not socialized. I still made the right decision, a 60% decision to homeschool my child. The decision that led me to home school was to educate and train my child in an environment conducive to learning. My child was faced with many things outside that did not help him. There are many benefits of homeschooling. I see my child's everyday improvements. My child has been able to catch up with his studies. The education we have at home is what we need to put him through, and he is in line with his studies. In the public school, there was a problem with the classroom. There was a kind of separation; my child seemed isolated. I always noticed him being isolated, which affected his mental health. Not only that, but my child did also not learn with others. My child required more time, attention, and sometimes extra time to catch up. With all these problems in public schools, I will continue to homeschool my child because I need a particular year before sending my child to a public school. So, when he reaches a certain age, I will let him return to the public school system so he can ask to share and learn with others; for now, I will continue to homeschool.

Participant 7: Personal Narrative

My name is GG, and I am a female. I have been homeschooling for two years. Homeschooling can help children who cannot cope with the large class sizes in public schools. Children with autism cannot learn and understand, but they want a secure, safe space to know and understand more. I see homeschooling as something that can help autistic children: security and that perfect environment for them to learn and understand. As an African American parent, I was pushed to homeschool my child because of the public school. I have always seen a few African American parents practicing

homeschooling. Homeschooling is something I have been seeing around and have been knowledgeable about. Back then, homeschooling was not practiced by all, and many children, especially those with special needs, were exposed to the schooling environment. So, then, we just had a few people practicing homeschooling. The reason was that the information was not rampant. A lot of African American people did not get to understand homeschooling. A lot of African American people did not know the importance of whether it was going to help, especially children with disability. Now, African Americans are practicing homeschooling. I have seen in this generation that many African American people know about homeschooling. Today, parents have looked into homeschooling and the importance it offers to children with autism. Homeschooling is the best decision any parent can make, especially if their child is diagnosed with autism. Homeschooling has helped shape the lives of children diagnosed with autism and also gives them a better education. Homeschooling has shaped my child's life; he gets everything he should 100%. He has achieved everything academically so far. So, I think homeschooling was one of the best decisions I have ever made. I have been saying I am proud of homeschooling lately, and my child is doing perfectly well. I have many perspectives on my decisions that pushed me to homeschool.

Firstly, I often talk to my child, especially when he returns from school. So, I learned how he is treated in the environment where he receives the lessons and the class. So, I get to talk to him and ask if he is okay with it. I get to see his performances. And I noticed that he was lagging. So, when I got to talk to him, he said he did not like the space where he was learning. He had many bullies because of his condition. He is not

learning as others should learn, and his teacher was complaining even when they knew her had a disability. When it comes to learning, I noticed his performance was terrible, so I got to talk to him, and I thought it would change. I had to let him learn for a year, during which I would constantly advise and encourage him to adapt to the environment.

However, I noticed that after the year, it became worse, and that was one of the reasons I was concerned about my child. So, I had to consider homeschooling a second option, and I noticed my child started to do well. My experience with homeschooling has been good. I made the right decision, and my child protested that because he always appreciated that I could introduce homeschooling to him.

The problem with the public school system was that these schools cannot set a standard for children with disability, so they get to consider the normal kids. The public-school systems do not have a guide for children with disability, not just autism. I thought public schools would have special needs classes for autistic students. I believe that is a huge problem, and you see teachers not getting to understand and know these children. When I see my child making progress with homeschooling, I feel proud. Seeing myself raising a child who will make the world smile and seeing a process shaping my child's life makes me want to continue homeschooling. Because of homeschooling, I could make him become someone tomorrow. I plan to consider homeschooling for a very long time.

Participant 8: Personal Narrative

My name is HM, and I am a male. I have been homeschooling for two years. I think homeschooling provides more personalized and individualized education for children diagnosed with autism. Homeschooling is tailored to children's specific needs

and also learning styles. I am just going to say it is helpful for children diagnosed with autism. Being an African American has influenced my decision to homeschool. Looking back, I feel good and sometimes bad. I am good at helping my child achieve his academic goals. I feel bad because I am denying my child the opportunity to socialize with other children of his age group. My experience with homeschooling has been very challenging. However, I have found out that homeschooling has allowed me to help my child become better and meet my child's academic needs while providing unique individual individualized instruction. I made the right decision. The one decision that led me to homeschool was that my child needed education. At some point, I learned that there was some discrimination. I just had to decide to homeschool my child myself. So, I can take the proper care of him. Now, I am getting the benefits of homeschooling. He is improving and understanding because I am the one schooling him. So, everything is easy. I want to continue homeschooling my child because I am educating my child to be the best.

Participant 9: Personal Narrative

My name is FX, and I am a female. I have been homeschooling for three years. Homeschooling has its advantages and disadvantages. Moreover, I feel like, as much as it is not perfect, I like it. There is so much I can concentrate on my child, and my child does not get to pass through much criticism from people. My child gets to learn face-to-face firsthand. So, based on the negative aspect, I feel like sometimes a child needs to communicate with other children. As an African American, I chose to homeschool because I do not want my child to be subjected to any criticism of any kind. Not only that, my child can be easily discriminated against for being an African American and also

having autism. This ability would also trigger more attention, so that is why I made my decision to homeschool. Looking back, I feel like my decision was good because my child gets to learn and learn a lot directly; when she is in the crowd, she might not learn as much. My perspective on my decision to homeschool was that I am giving myself the time to learn gradually. As a result, I have had both good and bad experiences.

Sometimes, when my child does not want to learn because she is so comfortable, I would have to 'force' her to learn. The home is a whole lot more relaxed. I feel like she experienced learning more at home. I have the time to review the lessons with her, ensuring she learns a particular thing. So, homeschooling is beneficial. I am happy I made the right decision, and the one decision that pushed me to homeschooling was bullying. My child was getting bullied in school, so it made me decide that homeschooling would be better for my child. One of the benefits is that I get to have a close eye on my child. I will continue homeschooling my child because I want to take special care of my child. I like to take care of my child effectively and look at what my child is learning.

Participant 10: Personal Narrative

My name is TC, and I am a female. I have been homeschooling for four years now. Homeschooling is teaching your child at home. It provides a better environment because children are in the comfort of their own space, where they can learn and develop. As an African American, this has caused me to choose to homeschool because it was the right thing to do, and it still feels like the right thing even today. My child has autism, and I do not think the public school system is equipped and ready to enhance my child's

future. Not only that, but I have also heard too many stories of African American children suffering in the public school system. My child was treated poorly. Looking back and thinking about the past, I have no regrets about my decision to homeschool my child. My perspective on your decision to homeschool is that I am the best for my child. Because my child has a disability, that does not mean my child will not learn. Every child can learn, but the public school my child attended did not consider my child's ability. So, I removed my child from the school. My experiences with homeschooling at first were rough, but as time went by, it got better. Now, we are doing great; I have no regrets. The one decision that led me to homeschool my child was the classroom environment and my child's unmet needs. As a result, I homeschooled my child, and there are many benefits from the whole homeschooling process. My child has been doing much better since we started homeschooling, and because of the many benefits of homeschooling, I will continue until high school.

Participant 11: Personal Narrative

My name is ES, and I am a male. I have been homeschooling for two years now. My thought on homeschooling is that homeschooling is teaching your child at home. As an African-American parent, many things informed my decision to homeschool my child. There are specific values and morals that only I can teach my child. The public school system is not teaching my child the values and morals of life. In as much looking back on the past, I feel happy about my decision to homeschool. I have made the right decision; my child is getting home training and teachings. My perspective on the decision to homeschool is that the school system cannot teach my child the importance of life. I am

the parent with the knowledge and information to teach my child. The excellent part of homeschooling is that my child is free and learning what is essential. The bad part is that they are missing out on the social aspect of life. Because they are homeschooled, they do not get to socialize with others in their age group. Nevertheless, I have made the right decision to homeschool. The one decision that pushed me to home school was that the classroom environment was not for my child, and his educational needs needed to be met. He should have been ahead of his age academically, but my child should have been at a lower level. The teacher needed to give my child the attention and care he needed. As a result, I will continue to homeschool my child; my child needs it. He needs the education at home. This education will help him with his future conduct and behaviors.

Participant 12: Personal Narrative

My name is OT, and I am a female. I have been homeschooling for about one year. The homeschooling process is needed to help our children with autism excel in their academics and other areas of their lives. My views on homeschooling are that it can be stressful and requires a lot of commitment, time, and energy. However, it has been based on consideration, and my child benefits from it. Being an African American, what pushed me to homeschool was my child's disability. I decided to homeschool to ensure my child's learning needs were met. My child found it very hard to interact at school. As a result, I homeschooled my child to avoid bullying from other children. Looking back, in retrospect, I am very happy because it has been a rewarding and successful experience for me. It helped me create bonds between my child and me. I am always there to talk to my child anytime; he is not always scared to speak to me. This relationship helps improve,

such as being a good parent or improving in general. My perspective on your decision is that homeschooling supports and allows for more one-on-one attention and support. I ensure I devote more time to my child and provide additional guidance and assistance as needed. At first, I looked at the time, the stress, and everything I would go through at home, but when I look at my child not improving, I have just felt maybe going for one-on-one. One-on-one schooling. He also found it very hard to interact with his school-teacher. So, I took it upon myself to homeschool, and I am seeing the improvements. I feel OK here. This is what let me devote my time to you and let us see how this goes. I know I made the right decision to take that step. I feel I have achieved something. I know my child is improving. I am getting many benefits right now. I have seen my child enhancing his learning skills, and there is a close bond between me and him. I want to continue here because of the improvement I am seeing. My child has improved, and more and more have seen the achievement and the goals.

In my analysis of African American parents homeschooling their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey, the absence of discrepant cases significantly contributed to the overall quality and clarity of the findings. This uniformity in the cases studied indicated a strong consensus among African American parents regarding their perspectives on choosing homeschooling as an educational option. The consistent narratives provided a solid foundation for identifying common themes, such as classrooms not conducive to learning, lack of individualized attention in classroom settings, safe classroom environments, tracking children's progress and outcomes, parental involvement, and a personalized learning environment.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The initial interviews shed considerable light on African American parents' perspectives on their decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. Parents could recall a significant amount of information regarding their perspectives on their decisions and explain the perspectives that led to their homeschooling decisions.

As stated in Chapter 3, any ambiguity was clarified by follow-up interviews. Additionally, interview transcripts were sent to the parents to verify the collected data's authenticity and accuracy. Sample questions to be posed in the interview were also given to the parents beforehand. Hence, they had significant time to prepare concise and relevant responses at the time of the interview. Instead of using an ad-hoc strategy and putting parents on the spot, they were given time to think about their responses properly and, hence, give accurate responses during the interviews. The interviews were conducted comfortably, and participants could withdraw from the study without stating cause.

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability is the degree to which a study's findings can be transferred to other settings or populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick, rich data descriptions can promote transferability in qualitative studies (Hays & McKibben, 2021). A third party transcribed the interviews, and the transcripts were sent to African American parents for verification that they captured what the participants wanted to convey. Only upon their approval were the interviews included in this study,

ensuring the accuracy of transcripts. The steps undertaken to conduct the interviews, including the consent form format and process of contacting prospective participants, have been carefully explained in previous sections, ensuring that other researchers can replicate the steps if required. An in-depth analysis of the data was carried out, which provided the results of the endeavor and explained in detail the interviews linked to the study. The last interview question asked African American parents if they would continue the homeschooling process. This question allows for further research on the prevalence of African Americans homeschooling their children.

The interviews were consistent with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) conceptual framework, the Model of Parental Involvement. The model of parental involvement depicted the American parental involvement process as beginning with African American parents' decisions about their involvement in their children's education, translating into better student outcomes. The parental role for involvement incorporates parents' beliefs about what they should do about their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2005). The parental role for involvement incorporates parents' beliefs about what they should do concerning their children's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey et al. 2005). This study is transferable to African American parents whose beliefs about child-rearing and development and appropriate home support roles in children's education influence role construction and children's success. This study is also transferable to other groups of individuals who share similar characteristics with the participants.

Dependability

The transcribed copies of the interviews were sent to the participants for verification, and they were encouraged to delete or edit any information that they felt did not effectively and accurately portray the discussions. The transcripts and analysis were also crosschecked to remove any further problems of accuracy or any personal bias and to ensure the data collected retained accuracy and avoided bias or misinformation. The number of interviews (twelve) was noted in the analysis report.

Confirmability

Confirmability was demonstrated by maintaining the audit trail. All African American parent's perspectives on their decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism were documented. Data collection methods, analysis processes, and interpretations were documented in detail and transparently. With a thorough record of the research journey, future researchers should be able to follow the steps taken and arrive at similar conclusions, ensuring the reliability and confirmability of the study findings. The interviews shed light on aspects of connectivism and constructivism in homeschooling environments. The parents could comprehensively explain their perspectives on their decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. The reliability and objectiveness of the data and analysis were ensured by using independent transcriptions, crosschecking, and verification by the participants themselves. In this way, I ensured that personal bias did not affect the findings and conclusions of this study.

Results

I organized the results by themes directly related to the research question. The research question addressed African American parents' perspectives on their decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. A total of 5 themes emerged from the data that aligned with the research question. Theme one was educational considerations, and it had two sub-codes. Sub-code one was tailoring the curriculum to the child's needs, and sub-code two was frustration with the lack of individualized attention. Theme two was social and emotional well-being. Theme two has one sub-code, providing a safe and nurturing environment. Theme three was educational outcomes and progress. Theme three has one sub-code, tracking academic progress and achievements. Theme four was parental involvement and empowerment. Theme four had two sub-codes. Sub-code one was taking ownership of the child's education journey, and sub-code two was building a supportive and collaborative relationship with the child. Theme five was a personalized learning environment. The sub-code was creating a structured routine to support learning.

Theme 1: Educational Considerations

The results showed that African American parents talked about their perspective on the decisions that led them to homeschooling, which was that traditional schools did not tailor curriculums to their children's education needs. African American parents are frustrated with traditional schools' lack of individualized attention.

Eight of the 12 African American parents responded to this theme.

Participant 1 (JK) stated, "My perspective on my decision to homeschool was that I wanted to train and teach my child comfortably. With so many things happening in the public school system, my child feels safer at home and would learn better. My experience with homeschooling has been good experiences. My child is improving in grades, character development, and engagement."

Participant 2 (KP) stated, "My perspective on the decision to homeschool my children was very personal. It includes the ability to tailor it to my child's needs and my child's ability to move at their own pace and create a supportive learning environment for my children. I have made the right decision to homeschool. My child was struggling with their academics and anxiety, and all this stuff was causing my child to fall behind academically. The benefit of homeschooling is that my child can move at their own pace of learning and customize the curriculum to suit their needs."

Participant 3 (JD) stated, "One of the most significant benefits has been the ability to move at my child's own pace of learning and customize the curriculum to suit my child's needs."

"My child has been to public school, just visibly because the teachers were not meeting my child's needs. Even in a mainstream classroom, lessons were taught in general, but there was no one-to-one interaction. I know the classroom size, but teachers need patience, or the schools need to limit the number of children in these autistic classrooms" Participant 12 (OT).

"The one decision that led me to homeschool was wanting my child to have a good education. Public schools were not teaching my child the information my child

needed to know. The public school was not meeting my child's educational needs"

Participant 4 (SM).

"The one decision that led me to homeschool was that my child's educational needs were not met, and there was a lack of support (individualized attention) in the classroom" Participant 8 (HM).

"The one decision that led me to homeschool was to take my time in my child's learning. My child receives individualized attention, and I also give my child what I want my child to learn and how I want it to be carried out" Participant 6 (DD).

"I choose to homeschool because I believe it was the right thing to do, and it still feels right even today. I do not think the public school system is equipped and ready to enhance my child's future. Not only that, but I have also heard too many stories of African American children suffering in the school system because the environment was not made for them and the lack of individual attention" Participant 10 (TC).

Theme 2: Social and Emotional Well-being

The results showed that African American parents talked about their perspectives, which led to their decision to homeschool because the traditional schooling areas did not create a structured, safe, and nurturing environment for their children. African American parents were concerned about wanting their children to be in a safe and nurturing environment. For many participants, the public-school classrooms needed to be more conducive to learning.

Four of the 12 African American parents responded to this theme.

“Homeschooling helps children who cannot cope with the class size because they are shy and have no choice. They need help learning and understanding but want a secure, safe space. It is to know and understand more, and I see homeschooling as something that can help children with autism. A secure environment is a perfect place for them to learn and understand. Many people say that the child will not be exposed. Nevertheless, I tell you, it is a lie because many people have been doing well in homeschooling. I have been doing well in homeschooling,” Participant 7 (GG).

“My perspective on my decision to homeschool was that I wanted to train and teach my child comfortably. With so many things happening in the public school system, my child feels safer at home and would learn better” Participant 1 (JK).

I want my child to be with me like this (homeschooling). The reason is that I am more confident about not sending my child to a public school, and I want my child to be homeschooled where I can monitor their academic progress” Participant 5 (SK).

“I had a problem in the classroom. I noticed a kind of separation from my child. I always felt like my child was isolated, and I noticed him being isolated. This classroom environment did not seem safe or conducive to learning” Participant 6 (DD).

Theme 3: Educational Outcomes and Progress

The results showed that African American parents expressed their perspective that led to their decision to homeschool, which was the lack of specific goals, achievements, and advancements targeted and measured in their children's educational journey, which were not achieved. African American parents decided to homeschool because they could track and measure their children's academic progress and achievements.

Seven of the 12 African American parents responded to this theme.

“For me, it is a nice thing; you can see your child progress as if it is happening right before you. You get to monitor what your child learns. One of the best ways your child can get an education. So, for me, it is a good thing to see your child's progress. I see what my child does daily, just like you are part of the education itself” Participant 5 (SK).

“I homeschool my child because I want to give my child the time to learn gradually and the progress my child makes. My child learns a lot directly, unlike when my child is in the crowd; my child might not learn as much. So, homeschooling was my best option,” Participant 9 (FX).

“My perspective on your decision is that homeschooling provides more one-on-one attention and support. I ensure I devote more time to my child and provide additional guidance and assistance as needed. I take her to take it upon myself to homeschool my child. And now I see the improvements and everything” Participant 12 (OT).

“The benefit I see is my child's everyday improvements and progress. My child has been able to catch up with his studies, and I notice that the education we have at home is what we need to put him through, and my child is in line with the studies”

Participant 6 (DD).

“My child is doing much better, such as better grades, character development, and engagement,” Participant 1 (JK).

“My child is doing much better since we started homeschooling,” Participant 10 (TC).

“I think homeschooling was one of the best decisions I ever involved in. I am so proud of homeschooling my child because my child is doing perfectly well,” Participant 7 (GG).

Theme 4: Parental Involvement and Empowerment

The results showed that African American parents expressed their perspective that led to their decision to homeschool was their level of parental involvement and empowerment. African American parents' perspectives on their decisions to homeschool were that they can take ownership of their children's educational journey, building a supportive and collaborative relationship with their children.

All African American parents responded to this theme.

“As an African American, I chose to home-school because I believed it was the right thing to do, and it still feels like the right thing even today. My child has autism, and I do not think the public school system is equipped and ready to enhance my child's future. Not only that, but I have also heard too many stories of African American children suffering in the school system. My child was treated poorly,” Participant 10 (TC).

“The classroom environment was not for my child, and his educational needs were unmet. He should have been ahead of my child's age, but my child was not at the level he should have been. So, I homeschooled,” Participant 11 (ES).

“Another aspect for me is monitoring. I can monitor your child's progress yourself. Nobody reports your child's progress. Once my child has difficulty, I am there to listen, and I have been very involved in my child's academics, first-hand involvement” Participant 5 (SK).

“I'm taking responsibility for my decision to homeschool my child and to teach them what they need to learn. I have devoted my time to homeschooling my child, which is my full responsibility” Participant 4 (SM).

“I just had to home-school my child. I wanted to be involved in my child's education so that I could properly care for my child educationally” Participant 8 (HM).

“I know I made the right decision to take that step to homeschool my child. I feel I have achieved something. I know it is improving (homeschooling)” Participant 12 (OT).

“I want to continue to homeschool because of the improvement I see. My child has improved, and more and more have seen the achievement and the goals he has accomplished” Participant 12 (OT).

“I notice that the education we have at home is what we need to put him through, and he's in line with the studies” Participant 6 (DD).

“I am giving my child the standard of a good education, so I will continue to be involved in my child's education and continue to homeschool my child,” Participant 1 (JK).

“I will continue homeschooling my child because I want the best for them. They do have a future. They have a bright future ahead of them, and helping them channel, you know, their little energy into the right path also gives them a very great life” Participant 2 (KP).

“I am continuing on homeschooling because I want to take special care of my child. I like to care for my child effectively and look towards my child's learning and

achievement. With homeschooling, I want my child to grow up to be bold” Participant 9 (FX).

I am so proud of homeschooling my child because my child is doing perfectly well,” Participant 7 (GG).

Theme 5: Personalized Learning Environment

The results showed that African American parents expressed their perspective that led to their decision to homeschool: Traditional school areas did not create a personalized learning environment for their children with autism. African American parents decided to homeschool because they could create an environment conducive to their children’s learning needs.

Five of the 12 African American parents responded to this theme.

“My child is improving daily. My child has been able to catch up with his studies, and I notice that the education we have at home is what we need to put him through, and he is in line with his studies. I also bring in what I want my child to learn and how I want it to be carried out” Participant 6 (DD).

“As I mentioned earlier, my perspective on my decision to homeschool is that I will continue to homeschool my child, who is growing academically and culturally. I believe homeschooling is the best decision I have made. I have an environment for my child to learn and have the best education possible. An education that the public schools cannot and will not provide Participant 4 (JK).

The home is a whole lot more comfortable. I feel like my child experienced learning more at home. I have created a learning environment at home where I challenge

my child to learn. I will teach and review things with my child, ensuring my child learns

Participant 9 (FX).

“My decision to homeschool was based on my desire to train and teach my child comfortably at home. With so many things happening in the public school system, my child would feel safer homeschooled and learn better” Participant 1 (JK).

“Homeschooling is teaching your child at home. Homeschooling my child provides a better space because my child is in the comfort of their space where they can learn and develop” Participant 10 (TC)

In my research on African American parents homeschooling their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey, I encountered a consistently cohesive set of data, revealing no discrepancies in the cases studied. Each participant's experiences and perspectives aligned closely, highlighting these families' shared challenges and successes in navigating the homeschooling landscape. This uniformity not only underscores the importance of community and support among African American parents in this context but also reinforces the validity of the findings, suggesting a collective understanding of the unique circumstances surrounding their educational choices.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the overall study and data analysis results with 12 participants. The results of the narrative inquiries from this qualitative study provided answers to the research question: What are the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey? The findings section was organized into five themes. First, the findings for the RQ were

presented by analyzing the personal narratives of the study participants regarding their perspectives on their decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. The themes that emerged from the data were Theme A: Educational Considerations, Theme B: Social and Emotional Well-being, Theme C: Educational Outcomes and Progress, Theme D: Parental Involvement and Empowerment, and Theme E: Personalized Learning Environment. All the themes that address the RQ were identified. The results showed that all participants were deeply frustrated with traditional schools' lack of individualized attention. The results showed that African American parents were actively customizing their children's educational content, teaching methods, pace, and resources to suit their child's learning style, interests, strengths, and weaknesses. All the participants interviewed expressed a strong desire for a curriculum tailored to their child's academic needs. All participants prioritized the social and emotional well-being of a child with autism in public school classrooms. All participants were concerned about wanting their children to be in a safe and nurturing environment. For many participants, the public-school classrooms needed to be more conducive to learning. Setting individualized goals, implementing evidence-based practices, providing appropriate support and accommodations, and fostering a positive and inclusive learning environment were crucial in promoting meaningful educational outcomes and progress for autistic children. By monitoring and celebrating their achievements, results showed that African American parents wanted their children with autism to reach their full potential and experience success in their educational pursuits, and reaching their full potential could only be done through homeschooling. All participants were involved in

their child's educational journey, and they all highlighted that a strong support system can enhance their development, learning, and overall quality of life. All participants enjoyed taking ownership of their children's education journey. African American parents embarking on the homeschooling journey for their children with autism often engage in a thoughtful decision-making process. This involves reflecting on their child's unique needs and learning style, evaluating the adequacy of the school environment and support services, and considering the potential benefits of homeschooling as a personalized educational approach. All participants created a learning environment at home that was conducive to their child's learning needs. To ensure the trustworthiness of this research study and create reliable findings that meet the predefined requirements for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, I evaluated and interpreted the data collected from interview sessions with the participants, reflective journals, and document reviews. Through a narrative inquiry lens, this study's data collection and analysis process conveyed rich information from participants' narratives of significant moments in their daily lives.

In Chapter 5, I further interpret the study findings in terms of how they compare and contrast to the literature presented in Chapter 2 and align the data with the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model of Parental Involvement framework. I also make recommendations for practice and future research and discuss the study's implications and limitations for positive social change.

Chapter 5

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to examine the perspectives of African American parents who decided to homeschool their children with autism in New Jersey. The problem was that many African-American parents lacked trust in the public education school system, which increased homeschooling within the African-American community (Kunjufu, 2014; Mazama & Lundy, 2014; Neuman & Guterman, 2016). The study was conducted with African-American parents located in the state of New Jersey who shared their perspectives on their decisions to homeschool their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism. The key findings highlight the perspectives on African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with homeschooling. African Americans' perspectives were the inability of the public school systems to meet their children's basic educational needs. The key findings showed that African Americans were not satisfied with the school's curriculums, the teacher's inabilities, and the classrooms that were not conducive to learning.

Interpretation of Findings

In this section, each theme is discussed within the broader context of the literature review in Chapter 2 and the conceptual framework of this study. I interpreted the results to gain an understanding of the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey, as well as how the themes aligned with the conceptual framework and the literature review. The findings were analyzed and interpreted in the context of the decision-making theoretical

framework. Five themes from the semi-structured interviews represent the findings.

Theme 1 was educational considerations. The sub-codes for Theme 1 were tailoring the curriculum to a child's needs and frustration with the lack of individualized attention in traditional schools. Theme 2 was social and emotional well-being. The sub-code was providing a safe and nurturing environment. Theme 3 was educational outcomes and progress. The sub-code was tracking academic progress and achievements. Theme 4 was parental involvement and empowerment. The sub-codes were taking ownership of the child's education journey and building a supportive and collaborative relationship with the child. Theme 5 was a personalized learning environment. The sub-code was creating a structured routine to support learning.

Theme 1: Educational Considerations

The first finding was that African American parents wanted curriculums tailored to their children's needs and were frustrated with the lack of individualized attention in traditional schools. This included individualizing educational goals, curriculum modifications, specialized instructional strategies, sensory supports, and behavioral interventions to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that fosters academic success, social skill development, and overall well-being of children diagnosed with autism. All African American parents decided to homeschool their children so they could individualize their children's education needs.

The findings of this research study confirmed Kidd and Kaczmarek's (2010) qualitative study, which was designed to explore mothers' perspectives on home-educating a child with ASD. Mothers commented that educating their children at home

improves their behavioral and psychological well-being. The experience of home education was influenced by the children's school experiences, parents' perceived choice of home education, and the level of educative and social support available. This study has implications for parents, educators, and healthcare professionals regarding the psychological and educational needs of children with ASD.

Theme 2: Social And Emotional Well-Being

The sub-code for this theme was providing a safe and nurturing environment. Findings from the second theme indicated that African American parents were concerned about wanting their children to be in a safe and nurturing environment. For many participants, the public-school classrooms needed to be more conducive to learning. The theme of supporting the social and emotional well-being of a child with autism is of paramount importance. It involves understanding and addressing their needs related to social interactions, communication, sensory sensitivities, and emotional regulation. This research study confirmed the findings of Alfadhel and Aloraini (2020). Alfadhel and Aloraini (2020) focused on home education, also known as homeschooling, which means parents or guardians instruct their children at home. Alfadhel and Aloraini (2020) found multiple reasons parents would lean toward homeschooling. Homeschooling is currently one of the adopted modalities with application guidelines and is received by parents of children with disabilities (Alfadhel & Aloraini, 2020). The findings of my study aligned with and contributed to the existing literature on the benefits of homeschooling for children with autism.

Theme 3: Educational Outcomes and Progress

Findings from the third theme indicated that African American parents decided to homeschool their children based on their perspective that the public school system was not measuring their children's academic achievements, skill development, or overall educational growth. African American parents indicated that their children's progress was not tracked through assessments, observations, and data collection to evaluate the child's development in various areas. All participants stated they were now tracking their children's academic progress and achievements through homeschooling. This research study confirmed the findings of (Martin-Chang et al. 2018), which suggested that structured homeschooling may offer opportunities for academic performance beyond those typically experienced in public school, filling the literature gap.

Theme 4: Parental Involvement and Empowerment

All participants enjoyed taking ownership of their children's education journey. African American parents embarking on the homeschooling journey for their children with autism often engage in a thoughtful decision-making process. This involved reflecting on their child's unique needs and learning style, evaluating the adequacy of the school environment and support services, and considering the potential benefits of homeschooling as a personalized educational approach. All participants continued to build a supportive and collaborative relationship with their children. Embracing challenges as opportunities for growth and reflection is a cornerstone of the homeschooling journey for African American parents. This research study confirmed the findings of (Dennison et al. 2020); many families elect to educate their children at home

rather than enroll them in school. Whereas each family has its reasons for deciding to homeschool, a factor for some families, including families of color, may be found in their response to institutions and systems that have historical roots in inequality and that have intentionally or unintentionally perpetuated inequitable outcomes for their children (Dennison et al. 2020).

Theme 5: Personalized Learning Environment

Findings from the fifth theme indicated that African American parents decided to homeschool their children based on their perspective that the public school system did not create personalized learning environments for their children diagnosed with autism. A personalized learning environment for children diagnosed with autism is a learning environment tailored to individual needs, strengths, and preferences. All African Americans created a homeschool environment conducive to their child's learning needs. The homeschooling environment was structured, and parents supported students in their learning process. This research study confirmed the findings of Kidd and Kaczmarek (2010) and Jacob (1991), who stated that in in-home education, the parent(s) facilitate their child's learning, usually from a home base, and assume primary responsibility for their child's educational program.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this study was the model of parental involvement developed by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model of parental involvement included five levels. These levels encompass a continuum of involvement, from basic participation in school-related activities to deeper engagement

in learning processes at home. I focused on how these levels manifest in the context of African American parents homeschooling their children with autism, highlighting the unique motivations and challenges they face.

Level 1: Parental Role Construction

At the foundational level, parental role construction refers to how parents perceive their roles in their children's education. For African American parents homeschooling children with autism, this often involves a strong advocacy role. Many African American parents felt compelled to take on this responsibility due to systemic issues within traditional educational settings. This role construction is influenced by parents seeing themselves as essential educators who can provide a customized learning environment that addresses their children's unique needs and a curriculum that caters to their children's learning abilities.

Level 2: Self-Efficacy for Involvement

Self-efficacy, or parents' belief in their ability to influence their children's educational outcomes, is particularly significant for African American parents homeschooling children with autism. Many of these parents exhibit high self-efficacy, motivated by their determination to advocate for their children's needs and to create effective learning experiences. African Americans know their children's progress and will help their children to have better learning outcomes. Support from community organizations and other homeschooling families can enhance their self-efficacy, reinforcing their belief that they can successfully educate their children.

Level 3: Perceived Invitations for Involvement

The third level involves perceived invitations for involvement. For African American parents, these invitations can come from local homeschooling groups, online communities, and support networks tailored to autism education. African American parents are more likely to seek resources and strategies that positively impact their homeschooling efforts and are involved in their children's educational journey.

Level 4: Involvement in Educational Activities

At this level, parental involvement encompasses parents' direct actions to support their children's learning. African American parents homeschooling children with autism often engage in various educational activities, including tailored lesson planning, utilizing diverse instructional materials, and employing individualized teaching strategies that cater to their children's learning styles. This level of involvement reflects their commitment to creating an enriching educational environment that addresses academic and social-emotional development.

Level 5: Outcomes of Involvement

The final level examines the outcomes of parental involvement on children's educational experiences and achievements. For African American children with autism, homeschooling has led to improved academic performance and greater confidence in their abilities. African American parents are actively involved in their children's learning environment. This outcome is particularly critical given the disproportionate challenges faced by African American children within traditional educational systems.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) five levels of parental involvement provide a valuable framework for understanding the experiences of African American parents who choose to homeschool their children with autism. By examining role construction, self-efficacy, perceived invitations for involvement, direct engagement in educational activities, and the resultant outcomes, we gain insights into the unique dynamics at play within these families. Supporting these parents in their homeschooling journey is crucial, as it enhances their children's educational experiences and fosters a sense of empowerment and community resilience. Understanding these factors can inform the development of resources and interventions that cater specifically to the needs of African American families, ensuring that children with autism receive the education and support they deserve.

Limitations of the Study

The potential limitation of this qualitative research was its potential need for more transferability. Due to the small participant pool of six mothers and six fathers, the findings may not be easily applied to broader populations or contexts. This limitation restricts the extent to which conclusions drawn from this qualitative research could be applied beyond the immediate studied participants. Lastly, the inherent subjectivity limited the establishment of inter-rater reliability.

The study's major limitations were the sampling method and sample size, which resulted in the data not conclusively representing all African American families in New Jersey. While a powerful method for exploring individuals' stories and experiences, narrative inquiry research has limitations. One limitation was the potential for each

participant's selective memory or storytelling bias. Participants may unintentionally omit or embellish details in their narratives due to memory limitations or a desire to present themselves in a particular light.

Another limitation of narrative inquiry research was the challenge of generalizability. Since narrative inquiry focuses on individual stories and experiences, the findings are often specific to the participants and may need to be more easily generalized to broader populations or contexts.

Another limitation was the issue of researcher bias, where the researcher's personal beliefs or assumptions inadvertently influenced the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. As the researcher, I found it important to recognize personal views of the world and discern the presence of a personal lens to accurately listen to and analyze the participants' reflections within the data collected during the study (Fusch & Ness, 2015). As the researcher, I maintained a journal to bracket my preconceived ideas about the topic before conducting the interviews.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Practice

Home-schooling is by far the best alternative for most African-American children (Daughterity, 2017; Dill, 2015; Jonsson, 2016), and African-American parents have realized the benefits of home-schooling compared to the tremendous harm of public schooling due to the lack of educational challenges, and lack of proper historical curriculum (Levine & Levine, 2014). African-American students would benefit from

home-schooling because it has allowed African American children to develop in a manner that emphasizes (Daugherty, 2017; Dill, 2015; Jonsson, 2016; Kunjufu, 2014) Another implication for practice could involve fostering collaborative partnerships between African American parents, educators, and healthcare providers to enhance the homeschooling experience for children with autism. By promoting open communication and collaboration among all stakeholders, such as sharing strategies, resources, and insights, a holistic support network can be established to benefit the child's academic, social, and emotional development. These partnerships can help create a unified approach to addressing the unique needs of children with autism within the homeschooling setting, promoting a sense of community and shared responsibility for the child's well-being and success.

Recommendations for Future Research

A recommendation for future research was to conduct a qualitative focus group study to analyze further theme 1: curriculum and lack of individualized attention, theme 2: a safe environment, theme 3: progress and outcomes, theme 4: parental involvement, and theme 5: homeschool environment. Another recommendation for future research was to conduct a longitudinal study on academic outcomes to analyze further theme 1: curriculum and lack of individualized attention, theme 2: safe environment, theme 3: progress and outcomes, theme 4: parental involvement, and theme 5: homeschool environment., focusing on the academic outcomes of African American children with autism whom their parents homeschool. By tracking these students over an extended period, researchers can gain insights into their academic progress, achievement levels,

and skill development compared to children with autism in traditional educational settings. This longitudinal approach can provide valuable data on the effectiveness of homeschooling as an educational option for African American children with autism and offer insights into factors that contribute to their academic success.

Implications

This qualitative study has implications for social change because it attempted to fill the gap in research that focused on the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism in New Jersey. Studies showed an increasing homeschooling trend among New Jersey African American parents. According to the New Jersey Department of Education, African American students homeschooled in the state increased by 51% between 2019 and 2022 (NJDOE, 2022). A recent report by the National Homeschool Association found that African American families in New Jersey homeschool at a rate 30% higher than the national average (NHA, 2022). An implication for positive social change stemming from African American parents homeschooling their children with autism is the potential for increased advocacy and awareness within the broader African American community. By highlighting African American parents' experiences and successes in homeschooling children with autism, these parents can serve as advocates for greater support, resources, and understanding for families facing similar challenges. This visibility and advocacy can contribute to breaking down stigmas surrounding autism within the African American community and promoting acceptance, inclusion, and empowerment for individuals with autism, homeschooling, and their families.

African American parents homeschooling children with autism can inspire positive social change by demonstrating alternative educational pathways that prioritize personalized support, cultural relevance, and family-centered approaches. By showcasing the benefits and successes of homeschooling in this context, these parents can spark conversations and innovations within the education system, healthcare sector, and community organizations to support the diverse needs of children with autism. This ripple effect of awareness, advocacy, and innovation can lead to a more inclusive and responsive society that values the unique strengths and experiences of African American families homeschooling children with autism, ultimately fostering positive social change for individuals with autism and their families. The implication for social change can equip New Jersey education officials, public school administrators, and private school administrators with information on making an informed decision regarding enrolling special needs children into the homeschooling arena.

Conclusion

This study examined the perspectives of African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children with ASD in New Jersey. It examined the perspectives behind the African American parents' decision to homeschool their children diagnosed with autism. During data collection, study participants were explicitly asked what their perspectives were on African American parents' decisions to homeschool their elementary-age children diagnosed with autism. Previous literature was carefully studied, and comparisons were drawn between earlier and this study's findings. This allowed for a more accurate interpretation of the results of this study. New Jersey is an autism

epicenter and may indicate future ASD trends (Shenouda et al., 2023). Autism prevalence in New Jersey is 3.6% overall but higher in one region (5.4%) and in multiple areas approaching 7.0%. The proportion of American families opting to homeschool is proliferating, especially among African-American families in New Jersey. For that reason alone, it is a movement worth understanding and watching.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocols

Research Study: The Perspectives of African American Parents' Decisions to Homeschool Children with Autism.

My name is Shannalee Stephenson, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I will facilitate a Zoom interview. In this study, I will explore the perspectives of African-American parents' decisions to homeschool their children with autism. I am interested in learning perspectives on decision-making regarding homeschooling.

Your participation in the study is entirely confidential. Therefore, paper-based data will be secured in a filing cabinet, and electronic data will be stored on a computer with cloud storage protected by passwords. Also, as a university requirement, data from this study will be stored and protected for five years and then destroyed by shredding any paper documents and deleting electronic documents.

Participation in this study is voluntary; you can withdraw your consent without consequences.

Interview Protocol Form

Research Study: The Perspectives of African American Parents' Decisions to Homeschool Children with Autism.

Location _____

Interviewer _____

Interviewee _____

Notes to interviewee:

- 📌 Thank you for your participation. Your input will be valuable to this research and in helping the African-American homeschooling community.
- 📌 Confidentiality of responses is guaranteed.
- 📌 This interview will take approximately 45 minutes.
- 📌 Do you have any questions? If there are no further questions, let us begin the interview (audiotaped).

Interview Questions

1. In which group do you belong?

21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 over 60

2. Please choose one:

Male Female Transgender Nonbinary Gender-fluid

3. How long have you been home-schooling your child with autism?

0-3 years 4-7 years over 8 years

4. What do you think about homeschooling?

5. Has being an African-American informed any of your decision to homeschool your child(ren)?

6. In retrospect (looking back on or thinking about the past), how do you feel about your decision to homeschool your child (ren)?

7. What are your perspectives on the decision to homeschool?

8. What has been the experience with homeschooling your child (ren)?

9. Have you made the right decision/s to homeschool your child(ren)?

10. What was the one (1) decision that led you to homeschool your child(ren)?

11. Have you been experiencing any benefits from homeschooling your child(ren)?

12. Have any of your children attended public schools? If so, were you ever concerned about the school or classroom settings? Did you ever have any issues with what was being taught? Or how it was being taught?

13. Please describe the kind of support you have for homeschooling your child(ren).

14. Do you see yourself continuing to homeschool your child(ren)? Please explain your perspectives on the decision-making process.

Appendix B: Screening Questions

Are you an African American?

Yes

No

Are you a parent at least 18 or over?

Yes

No

Are you living in New Jersey?

Yes

No

Does your child have a diagnosis of autism?

Yes

No

Have you been homeschooling for at least one year?

Yes

No

Is your child at the Elementary School level?

Yes

No

Appendix C: Flyer

**Calling for Volunteers**

HOME SCHOOLING

African American Parents Homeschooling Their Children with Autism.**If you meet the following criteria:**

- ✚ African American Parents 18 years and older
- ✚ Have a child with autism of elementary school age.
- ✚ Have homeschooled for at least one year
- ✚ Live in New Jersey.

Then you are invited to participate in a study about African American parents' reasons for deciding to homeschool their children.

The purpose of this study is to understand African American parents' decisions to homeschool their children with autism.

The findings of the study may help African-American parents and educators understand the decision to homeschool.

About the study:

- The interview will take place virtually via Zoom.
- Your privacy will be protected by keeping your information confidential.
- This study is part of my doctoral program as a Ph.D. student at Walden University.

A\$ 20 Amazon, or a \$20 Walmart, or a \$20 Target Gift Card will be given as a

Thank you for your time.



Thank you for your time!