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Parental Involvement of Ghanaian and Nigerian Immigrant Parents in Urban Public Schools

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

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Abstract

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by

Joseph Odai Quaye

MA, Walden University, 2008

BS, Montclair State University, 1982

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Immigrant parents face unique challenges in getting involved in their children's education. Research is limited about how immigrant parents cope with these challenges in supporting their children's education. The purpose of this qualitative study, as reflected in the central research question, was to describe the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in relation to their involvement in their children's education. The conceptual framework was based on Epstein's theory of parental involvement concerning how school, family, and community relate to each other. A phenomenological design was used, and participants included 11 Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents living in an urban city in the eastern region of the United States whose children were enrolled in public schools. Data were collected from participant responses to individual interviews that included 10 open-ended questions. Data were analyzed using the modified van Kaam method of analysis. Findings indicated that immigrant parents believed frequent communication with teachers was the most important component of Epstein's parental involvement model and that they should also support teachers in resolving disciplinary issues at school. This study contributes to positive social change by helping educators design and implement strategies that encourage immigrant parents to become actively involved in their children's education, which may lead to improved student achievement and socioeconomic mobility for students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my parents who did not live to see me begin this last leg of my formal educational journey. I am still carrying the spirit of perseverance they sowed in me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Study

Parental involvement has been shown to be a positive factor in how children learn. Researchers have indicated that when parents get involved in their children's education, their children tend to behave well in school, attend school regularly, and attain high scores on tests (Bracke & Corts, 2012; Hayes, 2011; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Tan & Goldberg, 2009; Tekin, 2012). Parents often hold high expectations for their children (Lim, 2012; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Wang, 2008). Additionally, parents want their children to attain high academic standards and succeed in school to enable them have better opportunities for success in life after school. Parental involvement also contributes to the success of students in core academic areas such as reading and mathematics (Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Lahaie, 2008).

Teachers prepare students to be successful learners and useful contributors to society. Teachers also want students to do well to demonstrate that the instructional strategies they use in the classroom improve student learning (Allen, Jackson, & Knight, 2012; Cherkowski, 2012). In addition, teachers also want students to achieve high academic and behavior standards to demonstrate to parents that the time their children spend in school is productive (Epstein, 2008; Risko &Walker-Dalhouse, 2009). School district educators and community members also play important roles in the education of children. In examining the discussions that parents have with teachers about the reading achievement of their children, Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2009) found that community members and educators initiated a community-based program called Immigrant Parent Partnership that improved school attendance, academic achievement, and parent/teacher

relations. In an investigation of Korean American parental involvement, Lim (2011) found that close-knit communities provide "community-driven benefits," such as information about the school system, which improves academic achievement for students (p. 91). Thus, educational stakeholders, such as teachers, parent, and community members, play an important part in the parental involvement process.

In this chapter, I introduce the study by discussing the background, explaining the relationship between the main problems, and stating the purpose of the research. I also present the research questions derived from the design of this study, which is a phenomenological approach. I also describe Epstein's (2008) concept of parental involvement, which formed the conceptual framework for this research. I discuss the scope, limitations, and delimitations of this research design. Furthermore, the assumptions I made about this study are presented. In addition, I discuss the significance that this study might have for advancing knowledge about strategies to improve parental involvement for immigrant parents and about contributing to positive social change.

Background

Prior studies have been conducted on immigrant parents regarding their involvement in their children's education. In a study about parent involvement as "ritualized practice," Doucet (2011) found that the current construct of parental involvement in the United States favors the middle class while it alienates poor and immigrant parents such as Haitian immigrant families. In an examination of Chinese parents in the United States in terms of family and school relations, Wang (2008)

found Chinese immigrant parents idealize American schools, yet they do not take the initiative to collaborate with educators. Doucet and Wang agreed that educators who consider only one form of parental involvement, either home-based or school-based, in their discussion of parental involvement issues are shortsighted. Several researchers also indicated that the challenges immigrant parents face in relation to their children's education have not been thoroughly studied (Galindo & Medina, 2009; Lim, 2012; Theodorou, 2008). Moreover, judging from current journal articles about parental involvement reviewed for this study, only a few ethnic immigrant groups in the United States have been investigated in relation to parental involvement in their children's education. Therefore, a study such as this one, which examined parental involvement for a group of immigrant parents that had not been investigated, is helpful in advancing knowledge about how different immigrant parents address educational issues.

I found other similar studies in this literature review. Studying one specific immigrant group, Haitian parents in the Boston metropolitan area, Doucet (2011) found existing myths about immigrant parents with respect to education. The problem, Doucet concluded, was that immigrant parents do not utilize all the resources at their disposal because they do not fully understand their relationship to the schools. This confusion makes them feel alienated from the school. Lim (2011) noted that the misunderstandings that immigrant parents have about school requirements for their children can be avoided if educators take the time to explain these requirements or show sensitivity to the parents' cultural needs.

In addition to these studies, Wang (2008) conducted research on how Chinese immigrant parents handle challenges pertaining to their involvement in their children's education and found that they are reluctant to communicate with teachers and school administrators because of cultural barriers, language, and work schedules. In their examination of how Korean and Haitian immigrant parents address the challenges of parental involvement in the United States, Lim (2012) and Doucet (2011) found that immigrant parents want to assume significant roles in their children's education. However, cultural issues and different school systems pose challenges to them. Studying the effects of attitudes, norms, and obstacles on parental involvement, Bracke and Corts (2012) found that cultural issues and unfamiliar school protocols present problems for parents. Hill and Tyson (2009), however, conducted a meta-analysis of the parental involvement strategies that improve achievement at the middle school level, and they found that gaps in academic achievement are minimized if family-school relations and parental involvement are improved.

The complex nature of parental involvement has led researchers to study it from varied perspectives, including teachers, parents, and students. Hayes (2011) examined factors that predict home and school involvement of parents of African American high school students and found that conditions at home as well as the activities parents engage in with their children, such as helping them with their homework and talking about the importance of education, are essential to effective parental involvement. In an examination of the relationship between parental control over their children's behavior and their academic outcomes, Kramer (2012) concluded that effective behavioral control

by parents contributes to high academic achievement when combined with parental warmth. In related research, Radzi, Abd Razak, and Sukor (2010) examined the perceptions of teachers about parent involvement in relation to student achievement and recommended that educators make schools more parent friendly in order to encourage parents to become involved in their children's education, not only at home but also in school activities.

Many parents believe that they have an important role to play in their children's education and want to become more involved in the academic life of their children (Bracke & Corts, 2012; Radzi, Abd Razak, & Sukor, 2010; Tekin, 2012; Wang, 2008). Bracke and Corts (2012) explored parental involvement in relation to a theory of planned behavior and found that, even though parents have good intentions about participating in their children's education, work schedules and child care hamper their intentions. In an examination of primary teachers' views about parental involvement to improve academic achievement, Radzi, Abd Razak, and Sukor (2010) found that parental involvement involves checking homework, communicating with school officials, volunteering, attending school meetings and functions, and supporting their children in extra-curricular activities. In a discussion of the background, theories, and models related to parental involvement, Tekin found that parental involvement is important to parents, educators, community, and policymakers as well as to children. In an examination of the involvement of Chinese immigrant parents in their children's education, Wang (2008) found that most Chinese immigrant parents have high expectations for their children's education, and therefore, they go to extra lengths to provide for their children's

education. However, this provision mainly involved home-based parental involvement. Thus, these studies indicated that immigrant parents are involved in the academic life of their children in varying degrees.

In summary, studies have shown that many factors hinder parents from getting as involved in their children's education as they would like (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Tekin, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009). However, although immigrant parents constitute a major part of the demography of urban school districts (Boske, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wang, 2008), only a few studies exist about the problems immigrant parents encounter concerning their involvement in their children's education. A review of the research literature about the educational challenges immigrant parents encounter found that no researchers had explored immigrant parental involvement issues in urban schools districts in relation to Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrants. Many Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who live in large cities on the eastern coast of the United States face unique challenges in becoming involved in their children's education, which often make them feel alienated from the school system. Therefore, this study examined the lived experiences of two immigrant parent groups, Ghanaian and Nigerian, in relation to their children's education in an urban school district in the northeastern region of the United States.

Problem Statement

The problem related to this study was that it was not known how Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who live in urban school districts cope with the challenges they face in becoming involved in their children's education. Although immigrant parents

constitute a major part of the demography of urban school districts (Boske, 2012; Galino & Medina, 2009; Wang, 2008), only a few studies exist about the problems immigrant parents encounter concerning parental involvement. Exploring this problem is important to both educators and immigrant parents. Educators needed to be aware of the challenges these parents face in relation to their children's education, and immigrant parents need to have opportunities to become more deeply involved in their children's education beyond the traditional notions of parental involvement (Galindo & Medina, 2009). Therefore, this study addressed this problem by describing the parental involvement experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents whose children were enrolled in a large urban public school district in the eastern region of the United States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who resided in an urban school district in the northeastern region of the United States in terms of their involvement in their children's education.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study was based on the conceptual framework and a review of the literature.

RQ: What are the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in an urban school district regarding their involvement in their children's education?

The subquestions below were developed to guide the interview process in order to make it possible for follow-up questions when necessary (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994):

SQ1: How do Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceive their role in interacting with educators about their children's education?

SQ2: What factors impact the participation of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in their children's education?

SQ3: How effective do Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceive the communication between home and school in terms of parental involvement?

Conceptual Framework

Epstein's (2010) conceptual model of parental involvement, which forms the framework for this study, was designed to improve educators' understanding of the challenges facing immigrant parents. The selection of this conceptual model was justified in that it provided the framework to describe how immigrant parents cope with the multiple challenges of becoming involved in their children's education.

Epstein's (2010) conceptual model of parental involvement is based on the idea that parental involvement falls into six different types of involvement that include (a) parenting, which involves assisting families with parenting skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and establishing home conditions that support children as students; (b) communicating, which involves providing parents with information about school programs and the progress of their children; (c) volunteering, which involves families giving their time willingly to support programs for their children; (d) learning at

home, which involves parents helping students with homework and engaging them in cognitive activities; (e) decision-making, which involves parents taking part in the decision making process of school rules through parent/teacher organizations; and (f) collaborating, which involves cooperation between parents, educators, and the community. Epstein believed that parental involvement is an all-inclusive proposition because parents, teachers, students, and community members need to participate in its implementation.

The Epstein (2010) model of parental involvement was relevant to this study because in Ghanaian and Nigerian cultures, the line between school and home authorities is clear. Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents, just like Haitian and Korean immigrant parents (Doucet, 2011; Lim, 2012), believe that teachers know best; therefore, they rarely question teachers' decisions about school issues. The use of Epstein's model of parental involvement as the conceptual framework for this study allowed me to explore how Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in this study addressed problems related to their involvement in their children's education.

Nature of the Study

For this qualitative study, I used a phenomenological research design to describe the challenges Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents face in relation to their involvement in their children's education. The phenomenological research design was appropriate because it enabled me to describe the perceptions of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents about their interactions with educators concerning their children's education. Additionally, this design allowed me to describe the factors that these parents

believe promote or hinder their involvement in their children's education. As Creswell (2013) and Moustakas (1994) indicated, researchers select a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of a group of individuals through descriptions of their beliefs and observable behaviors. Thus, this research design was aligned with the intent of this study, which sought to describe the lived experiences of a group of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in educating their children in the United States. In addition, phenomenological design is often used to study a group of people and their understanding of specific issues or challenges that they face in their lives (Patton, 2002). Using a phenomenological design allowed me to focus on how a group of Ghanaian and Nigerian parents as a cultural entity in a metropolitan area addressed the challenges that a large public school system often presented to them. In alignment with the purpose of this study, I designed research questions to address the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in getting involved in their children's education because many of these immigrant parents grew up in other countries in which parental involvement was different from expectations in the United States.

In relation to the methodology of this study, participants included 11Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents whose children were enrolled in an urban public school district in the eastern region of the United States. Data were collected from these parents through individual interviews that were about an hour in length. Data were analyzed using a modification of the van Kaam method of analysis for phenomenological data (Moustakas, 1994).

Definition of Terms

Discipline: For this study, discipline was defined as following a set of behaviors or complying with rules and regulations in order to promote a conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning (Ndofirepi, Makaye, & Ndofirepi, 2012).

Educators: For this study, the definition of this term was broad, including any persons who teach, coach, or help learners to learn. These people include teachers, parents, school administrators, coaches, community leaders, and youth group leaders (Epstein, 2008; Young, Austin, & Grove, 2013).

Ghana: Situated on the western coast of Africa, Ghana is about 92,000 square miles (238,535 square kilometers) with a population of 24 million people. English is the official language of instruction in schools, but Ghana has 11 languages and 67 dialects (Rosekrans, Sherris, & Chatry-Komarek, 2012).

Home-based parental involvement: Parent-child communication and activities about school and learning that take place outside school premises (Hayes, 2011).

Immigrant parent: For this study, any parent or guardian who grew up in another country and migrated to the United States and who is responsible for a child in the public school system (Doucet, 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009).

Individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP): Any secondary school student or an adult with limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2007).

Mother tongue: An individual's first language or language of origin (Akinnaso, 1991; Amuzu, 2000; Osman, 2013; Rosekrans et al., 2012).

Nigeria: Occupying an area of 356,376 square miles (923,768 square kilometers), Nigeria is located on the Western Coast of Africa with a population of about 167 million as of 2011 (National population commission, Nigeria, 2011). Although English is the official language of instruction in schools, Nigeria has about 400 languages (Akinnaso, 1991; Schaefer & Egbokhare, 1999).

Parental involvement: Activities by an adult that might involve checking of homework, communicating with the school officials, volunteering, attending school meetings and functions, and engaging in extra-curricular activities in supporting children to grow academically and emotionally (Epstein, 2008; Hayes, 2011; Radzi, Abd Razak, & Sukor , 2010).

School-based parental involvement: Parent's attendance and participation in school events on behalf of his or her child (Hayes, 2011).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was narrowed by the participants and a specific geographical area. Participants were immigrant parents of Ghanaian and Nigerian descent living in a major, urban, cosmopolitan city on the Northeastern Coast of the United States. Narrowing the focus of this phenomenological study to a specific geographical area and to parents who belonged to these specific ethnic groups allowed for more effective data collection and analysis and findings that were more specific. In addition, time and resources also narrowed this study. I started to collect data in the fall of 2015 and completed the study in the summer of 2016. As a single researcher, I also had limited time and resources.

Limitations

The limitations of a qualitative study are often related to the specific research design. The first limitation of this study was related to the sample size. The research design for this study involved a small sample size, making this sample less likely to represent the total population. A small number of participants, which included 11 Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who met specific inclusion criteria, agreed to take part in the data collection phase of this study. These participants may not have been representative of other immigrant parent populations in the United States, and therefore, transferability of the findings may be limited to similar populations.

Another limitation of this study was related to the participants. Although English is the official language in Ghana and Nigeria, citizens of both countries speak many local languages. Therefore, the language barrier may be one of the limitations of this study because many Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrants are often more comfortable expressing themselves in their native languages than in standard English. According to Ladky and Peterson (2008), immigrant parents may be uncomfortable in engaging with teachers and administrators because of their difficulty in communicating effectively in English.

Another limitation of this study was related to reactivity or the influence that the researcher has on the setting and participants (Maxwell, 2005). Although Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) believed that researchers needed to be familiar with the phenomenon and the setting of their studies, this familiarity should not cloud their judgments about the studies. I was familiar with parental involvement issues because I am teacher in an inner-city school, and as a result, I was aware of the frustrations teachers

and administrators feel when parents do not participate in school-based activities. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, this frustration inspired me to embark on this study. However, I was also aware of some of the cultural barriers that immigrant parents face such as a lack of proficiency in the English language, which often creates communication problems (Doucet, 2011; Lim, 2012; & Wang, 2008) and may thwart the efforts of immigrant parents to get involved in school-based parental involvement programs. I belonged to both groups, teachers and immigrant parents, and I wanted to find answers to the challenges that immigrant parents face in getting involved in their children's education. This membership in both groups, however, holds the potential for bias. Therefore, I kept this potential bias to a minimum by following strict protocols for data collection and analysis as well as using specific strategies to improve the trustworthiness of this study.

Assumptions

This study was based on several assumptions. I assumed that the participants would answer the interview questions honestly and truthfully. I also assumed that participants would provide information that accurately reflected their attitudes and beliefs about their involvement in their children's education. These assumptions were important because they impacted the credibility of the findings. These assumptions also guided me through the interviews in the data collection phase of the study. Given that English is the official language in Ghana and Nigeria and participants in the study have resided in the United States for at least two years, I assumed I would be able to find participants with sufficient English proficiency to participate in the study.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was related to advancing knowledge in the field, improving practice, and contributing to positive social change. This study adds to the body of knowledge about the challenges that a particular group of immigrant parents face in educating their children. Furthermore, this study also has the potential to kindle the interest of other researchers in examining other ethnic groups about the challenges they face in becoming involved in their children's education.

In relation to improving parental involvement practices, results of this research have the potential to help educators improve school-based parental involvement programs in the school district. In addition, the results of this research may help both educators and immigrant parents to appreciate each group's efforts to educate students. Educators may have the opportunity to harness the values, language, and different educational background of the parents to enrich their school programs (Guo, 2011). If educators understand the challenges these immigrant communities face, they might be able to design programs to alleviate some of these problems. In much the same way, if parents understand the limited resources educators have to work with, they might appreciate the efforts of educators. Moreover, the results of this study may help immigrant parents more effectively communicate their needs about their children's education to teachers and other educators (Young, Austin, & Grove, 2013).

In relation to positive social change, the potential for a greater good is that educators from other school systems might apply the findings from this study to their parental involvement programs. Furthermore, collaboration between teachers and parents

is in the best interests of the children both groups are nurturing (Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2009; Tan & Goldberg, 2009). In urban public school districts, closing the achievement gap between different racial and ethnic clusters of students is a major concern for all educational stakeholders including parents, teachers, and school administrators. Such students may include European Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, students with limited English proficiency, as well as special education students. Parental involvement, regardless of the ethnicity of the parents, has improved student achievement and student behavior (Marschall, Shah, & Donato, 2012; Tan & Goldberg, 2009). In addition, improved student achievement benefits society because if students graduate from their schools they may get jobs and benefit their communities and society at large. In a study about the use of time by youths of immigrant and native-born parents, Kofman and Bianchi (2012) discovered that immigrant parents aspire to educate their children because they believe education leads to the "attainment of knowledge and skills that can later be capitalized on in the labor market" (p. 5). Kofman and Bianchi suggested that the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education is the key to socioeconomic mobility.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I presented an introduction to the study that included background information about the problems faced by immigrant parents whose children were enrolled in public school systems. I also presented the research questions for this study, which were based on the conceptual model of parental involvement that Epstein (2005) developed. Additionally, I described the nature of the study in relation to the

phenomenological design that I used to examine how Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents addressed the challenges of involvement in their children's education. I also described the scope, delineations, and limitations as well as the assumptions I made. I ended this chapter with a discussion of the significance of the study and its implications for social change.

In Chapter 2, I present a review of current literature relevant to the challenges immigrant parents encounter in becoming involved in their children's education. I also examine definitions, methods, and prototypes researchers have used in examining parental involvement for specific groups of immigrant parents. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of the major themes and gaps found in the literature in relation to the study topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Studies about immigrant parents have shown that many factors prevent them from getting as involved as they would like in their children's education (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). Although immigrant parents constitute a major part of the demography of urban school districts (Boske, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wang, 2008), only a few studies exist about the challenges immigrant parents face in becoming involved in their children's education. Many immigrant parents believe that they have some roles to play in their children's education and want to get more involved in the academic life of their children than they are able to do (Bracke & Corts, 2012; Wang, 2008). However, cultural factors (Doucet, 2011; Wang, 2008) often thwart the efforts of immigrant parents in getting involved in their children's education. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to describe the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who resided in an urban public school district in terms of their involvement in their children's education.

In this chapter, I provide a review of the research literature related to immigrant parents and parental involvement. I describe the literature search strategy and Epstein's conceptual model of the six types of parental involvement that is the conceptual framework of this study. I also examine research related to the definitions of parental involvement, theoretical concepts of parental involvement, educator responsibilities for parental involvement, and immigrant parents' perspectives of parental involvement. Additionally, I describe research about communication issues, cultural issues, and immigrant parents' knowledge of parental involvement. I also discuss implications of

parental involvement for child development and the importance of parent/teacher conferences, differences within immigrant communities, dynamics within immigrant families, and the need for further studies. In the conclusion, I analyze the major themes and gaps that emerged from the research literature.

Literature Search Strategy

I began this review of the literature by searching for articles about parental involvement in relation to the education of inner-city students. I narrowed the search to the challenges immigrant parents encounter in getting involved in their children's education. I collected peer-reviewed articles from various journals found at the Walden University library, such as the *Journal of Educational Research*, *Ethnography and Education, International Journal of Learning*, *School Community Journal*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Multicultural Perspectives*, *Journal of Latinos & Education Journal of educational change, The Journal of Early Adolescence, Multicultural Perspectives,* and *International Review of Education Studies.* I often searched for articles through the Article by Topic link*;* however, occasionally I located articles through the Find Exact Article link at the Walden University library when I knew the DOI or the title of the article. Furthermore, I used the libraries at Seton Hall University and Kean University in New Jersey for additional research. I located many of these journals through databases such as EBSCO host, ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. To focus my analysis on contemporary findings about the parental involvement challenges that immigrant parents in the United States face, I restricted my search to peer-reviewed journal articles from the past 5 years. Keywords for this search included *immigrant parental involvement in K-12*

public schools, parental involvement, immigrant families, parent-child communication, cultural barriers, West African immigrant parents, acculturation, and *enculturation.* Researchers have not studied the experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents relative to their involvement in their children's education, and therefore, little research was found on this topic. This lack of research posed a challenge as I searched for articles on this topic.

Conceptual Framework

I selected Epstein's model of parental involvement as the framework for this study because it emphasizes the collaborative and complex nature of parent involvement. Epstein et al. (2009) described how to use the various components of the model and the responsibilities for each stakeholder in supporting parental involvement in their children's education. In an important study of family and community involvement in schools in relation to health policies and programs, Epstein, Michael, and Dittus (2006) described how educators could apply these six types of parental involvement to enhance school-based parental involvement programs.

In earlier research, Epstein (1981) contended that quality of school life was based on the contributions of many educational stakeholders. Epstein noted that "the quality of school life involves the judgment of teachers, administrators, students, and parents" (p. 281). Epstein (1995) expanded on this idea by describing overlapping spheres of influence, including the school, the home, and the community. Utilizing data from earlier research on school and family partnerships, Epstein (1995) reformulated the theoretical process of parental involvement and redefined the overlapping spheres of influence.

Epstein explained that in raising children, no clear line of responsibilities exist among the

school environment, the home environment, and the community. Rather, the respective

functions of these environments should overlap to influence one another by sharing

attitudes, beliefs, polices, practices, and resources (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2009).

As Lahaie (2009) aptly stated, "There is never a total overlap of any sphere since they are

partially independent" (p. 686). Figure 1 shows a graphical representation of Epstein's

model of the overlapping spheres of influence.
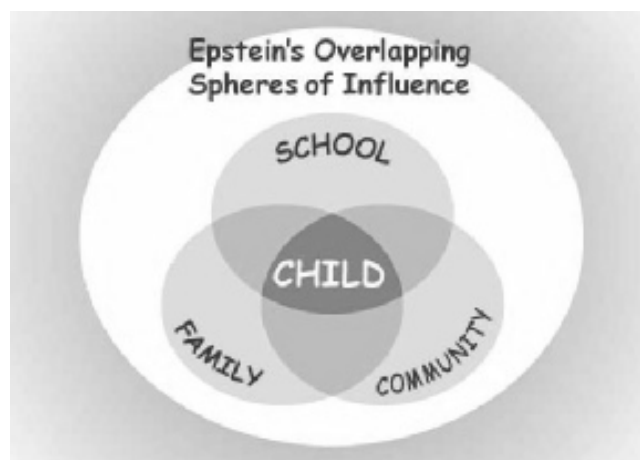
Figure 1: Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence. Epstein, J. et. al., (nd). Copyright
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permission.

Later, Epstein (1995) used the concept of overlapping spheres to develop a more

comprehensive theory of parental involvement, which consists of the following six types:

parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and

collaboration. Parenting, which was the first type, involves the basic responsibility of the

family to provide a place to live that offers conditions that are conducive to learning

(Epstein et al., 2009). Epstein suggested that educators provide seminars and workshops that are taught in school. In relation to the second characteristic, Epstein described communicating as a two-way street between parents and teachers. Practically, educators should send information about school curriculum to parents, and parents in turn should send information about home issues to their teachers. In relation to volunteering, Epstein suggested educators should endeavor to recruit and train families to volunteer their time and expertise for school activities. For example, teachers should invite family members to volunteer to lead lunchtime and after-school programs. Concerning learning at home, Epstein submitted that parents should help their children with homework where possible, while administrators should encourage teachers to create homework assignments that will elicit family discussions. In relation to decision-making, Epstein recommended that educators include parents' input in the decision-making process for school programs and activities. This process can help educators develop parent leaders for the school activities. In terms of collaborating with the community, Epstein proposed that parents identify and use community resources to supplement school resources provided for their children. Community leaders should identify and distribute available resources to school and family activities that aid children's programs.

Epstein et al. (2009) also described the types of responsibilities that parents, students, and teachers have in relation to each of these six types of parental involvement. For the first type of parental involvement, parenting, Epstein et al. contended that parents and guardians are responsible for providing a favorable atmosphere at home that encourages children to continue their schoolwork after school. Epstein et al. (2009) also

noted that parents need to understand "child and adolescent development" and make changes for learning at home as children proceed through school. Therefore, parental strategies should vary as their children move from middle school to high school. That means parents' attitudes about their children's social and academic needs must change as they grow. Students need to be aware of and respect the family's authority. Additionally, children need to learn to balance their time between chores, homework, and social activities. Teachers also need to make contributions for parenting to be effective. In order to help parents become involved in their children's education at home, Epstein suggested that teachers need to know parents' concerns and goals, understand their cultural backgrounds, and have respect for their strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, Epstein recommended that educators should provide workshops for parents on subjects they are learning in school.

In relation to the second type of parental involvement, Epstein et al. (2009) noted that communication is a bidimensional process and a shared responsibility. In order for parents to get involved in their children's education, they must know what is going on at school. Epstein (2005b) noted that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB; 2002) mandate calls for parents and teachers to share information about schools, students, and family involvement programs. Parents must make genuine efforts to understand school policies, know their children's progress in school, and interact with teachers. Thus, they must use all available means at their disposal to seek information about their children and school policies (Epstein, Sheldon, & Galindo, 2010). Students are responsible for understanding that they are the link between their parents and their teachers. Although contemporary

communication tools have enhanced children's positions as couriers of school messages, the importance of their role as messengers cannot be overstated (Kosaretskii & Chernyshova, 2013). Kofman and Bianchi (2012) found that, in addition to chores at home, immigrant youths have the added responsibility of serving as the family interpreters, particularly in families in which the parental generation has low English language ability. Besides being messengers, students must be comfortable talking about their own grades, behavior, and conduct in school. Epstein emphasized that teachers also play important part of this type of parental involvement process and must use all communicating tools at their disposal to communicate with parents. In an examination of how to attain the goals of the NCLB Act on parental involvement, Epstein (2005b) noted that it is important for "educators to communicate in clear, useful languages that all parents understand" (p. 180). Furthermore, Epstein et al. (2009) contended that teachers need to understand the family dynamics of their students. Thus, communication means that information should flow from school-to-home and from home-to-school.

Concerning the third type of parental involvement, Epstein (2009) noted that parents are responsible for volunteering their free time, experiences, and resources to support school activities. This type of parental involvement gives parents the opportunity to show teachers and administrators that they care about their children's education (Shannon, Dittus, & Epstein, 2007). Parents with flexible schedules should offer their talents to the school. Children are responsible for assuring their parents that their presence in school will be welcomed. Students can also be a good reference for their parents' interests and talents (Epstein et al., 2009). In addition, volunteering provides

opportunity for students to become aware of other talents in the community. Teachers and school administrators should take advantage of the expertise of families and community members; in fact, they should actively recruit them. Specifically, administrators can invite family volunteers to lead lunchtime walks, weekend games, and walk the halls (Epstein, 2007). Furthermore, administrators should not only reach out to family members who have specific expertise, but they should also actively recruit and train family members to help with extracurricular activities like social clubs in the schools.

In relation to the forth type of parental involvement, Epstein et al. (2009) noted that learning at home means that parents are responsible for helping their children with their schoolwork at home. According to Epstein, parents can provide this support by regulating television time, reading and discussing educational topics, and talking about cultural issues with their children. Setting rules for children about time management after school sets the tone for managing their time when they are on their own (Pong & Landale, 2012). Epstein noted that students should view learning at home as an extension of the school. Kofman and Bianchi (2012) echoed this sentiment in their study about time use by youths of immigrant and native-born parents and suggested that students need to take advantage of the time at home to do their homework. Additionally, students should view parents as teachers who want their success in school and in life. To help students learn at home, teachers need to design homework that parents may be able to contribute to in order to help their children learn. Teachers also need to be conversant with the various types of families in the school district. Additionally, teachers should respect

parents' time and effort in providing resources for their children in doing their homework.

For the fifth type of parental involvement, Epstein et al. (2009) contended that parents are responsible for recognizing that their views matter in the decisions that are made at school; therefore, they should be proactive in offering their views about school programs. In addition, parents should make clear decisions concerning discipline, instruction, or motivation to help their children succeed in school (Pong & Landale, 2012). Students should be aware that they are representing their families. However, educators need to provide students with information about parent/teacher partnerships. Such information may help students assist their parents to make decisions about how to get involved in their children's education (Epstein et al., 2009). It is important that educators should also consider parents' perspectives as a factor when developing school policies (Boske, 2012). Therefore, teachers should strive to have equal family representation on committees for various school programs.

Concerning the last type of parent involvement, Epstein et al. (2009) asserted that collaborating with the community involves the teamwork of parents, students, teachers, and community members. For parents, Epstein suggested that they take advantage of available resources for their children and interact with other family members in community activities. Parents need to be aware of the supportive role the community plays in education and the importance of the school to the community. Students, on the other hand, need to take advantage of career opportunities within the community. Thus, Epstein et al. believed that collaborating with the community includes "the connections

between parents, teachers, students, community members, business and social entities"

within the school district (p. 31). Furthermore, teachers need to use community resources

to enrich curriculum and instruction and invite business owners and community members

as mentors to assist in school programs. Additionally, teachers should be aware of

resources in the community in order to refer students and their families to them.

Many researchers and educators have used the Epstein et al. (2009) model to

analyze the dynamics of parental involvement. In an examination of parental school

involvement in relation to children's grades and adaption to school, Tan and Golberg

(2009) used Epstein's theory to explain the multidimensional nature of parental

involvement. Tan and Goldberg concluded that the traditional marker of student success,

which includes their adjustments to the school culture and improved academic

achievement, is the result of comprehensive parental involvement factors. Tan and

Goldberg believed that these factors include "schools assisting families with parenting

skills, school-to-home and home-to-school communication, parents volunteering at

schools, involving parents in children's learning at home, recruiting families as

participants in schools' decision making activities, and collaborating with the community

to coordinate resources for families" (p. 451).

In support of the Epstein et al. (2009) model, many other researchers have

contended that parental involvement is a shared responsibility among educational

stakeholders (Lahaie, 2008; Lim, 2012; Marschall, Shah, & Donato, 2012). Lahaie (2008)

examined the school readiness of the young children of immigrant parents in Ontario and

found that applying Epstein's concept of collaboration encourages teachers to "learn

more about the types of parental involvement occurring at home" (p. 703). In an

examination of parental involvement as the missing link in school achievement,

LaRocque, Kleima, and Darling. (2011) found that "there is no one best way for parental

involvement" (p. 121). Therefore, they recommended that school administrators should

remain open to a wide range of parental involvement options to accommodate the diverse

families and children in their school districts. LaRocque et al. also emphasized the

importance of the Epstein et al. concept of collaboration in helping parents and teachers

overcome the emotional barriers that prevent them from cooperating with each other.

This study benefits from the Epstein et al. (2009) model of parental involvement

in several ways. This model helps families and educators to identify the types of parental

involvement that need to be improved in their schools. Furthermore, this model clearly

identifies the responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, and community members in

the parental involvement process. Therefore, the Epstein et al. model of parental

involvement invites researchers and educators to consider parental involvement as a

shared responsibility for all educational stakeholders, even if parents bear a significant

part of this responsibility.

Literature Review

In this literature review, I analyzed research related to definitions of parental

involvement and theoretical concepts of parental involvement. In addition, I analyzed

studies related to educators' responsibilities concerning parental involvement and

immigrant parents' perspectives about involvement challenges. I also discussed research

related to communication and cultural issues that immigrant parents face and their

knowledge of and engagement in parental involvement activities. Furthermore, I explored the implications of parental involvement on child development and parent-teacher relations. I also discussed how the differences within the immigrant communities and the dynamics within immigrant families affect parental involvement. Finally, I argued for the need for further research on parental involvement of immigrant parents.

Multiple Definitions of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement defies a precise definition. However, researchers often use similar terms to define parental involvement, which transcends aspects of immigration status or the nationality of the parents. In their study about the perceptions of school administrators concerning parental involvement Young, Austin, and Grove (2013) found that educators and parents define parental involvement differently. Educators define parental involvement through the lens of parents' direct activities with the school while parents define parental involvement in terms of activities they conduct at home with their children. The underlining themes permeating these definitions were support and inclusiveness, which means that immigrant parents require the support of educators and the communities in which they live and they need to be included in school-based programs.

Parental involvement also needs to be flexibly defined because it is a dynamic process, which means parents must be engaged with their children's education and must change their involvement strategies as the situations change. Bokhorst-Heng (2008) echoed the dynamic aspect of parental involvement, noting that "parental involvement comes in various forms" and should differ as the child moves from elementary school to

high school (p. 39). In a study about nurturing adolescent literacy, Bokhorst-Heng found that even in hierarchical societies like Singapore, where decisions are made at the highest level of government, policymakers are flexible enough to allow families to be part of the process that guides the development of educational policies. Using Ulugad's (2006) definition of parental involvement as collaboration between parents and teachers about their children's education, Coleman and McNeese (2009) examined the relationship among parental involvement, student motivation, and academic achievement. They found that as parental involvement increased, student motivation in schoolwork decreased, which was an undesired outcome. Therefore, the results from these studies supported the argument that parental involvement needs to be flexibly defined to accommodate a wide spectrum of factors because no one particular parental involvement process results has been found to result in increased student achievement.

In defining parental involvement, some researchers have included the development of the whole child in the definition. In a study about parental involvement at home and school for high school African American students, Hayes (2011) defined parental involvement as "the means by which parent support their children in education and overall development" (p. 154). In this study, overall development means nurturing the child to become a fully responsible person in society. Davidson and Cardemil (2009) examined parent-child communication and parental involvement in Latino adolescents and found that parent-child communication creates a positive relation between children and their parents. This communication, Davidson and Cardemil concluded, improves parental involvement in Latino American schools and their communities. This improved

parent-child communication is another important factor in the development of the whole child. Abdul-Adil and Fanner (as cited in Young, et al., 2013) defined parental involvement as "any parental attitudes, behaviors, style, or activities that occur within or outside the school setting to support children's academic and/or behavioral success" (p. 192). This definition of parental involvement advocated that the development of the whole child should be the ultimate aim of parents. Educators also ascribe to the notion of parental involvement that nurtures the whole child. As Ferrara (2009) noted, teachers believe that that parent involvement is "the most important factor in creating their child's academic, social, and emotional success in school and life" (p.135). Furthermore, according to Epstein et al. (2009), this model of parental involvement indicates that parental involvement at home such as helping with homework, providing and establishing positive conditions at home, becoming actively involvement in school decisions, and helping as volunteers to support school initiatives support the positive development of the whole child.

In summary, workable definitions of parental involvement center on concepts such as support, inclusiveness, engagement, and the development of the whole child. Therefore, the child is at the center of the relationship between the parents, the school, and the community. Furthermore, the definition of parental involvement is multi-dimensional in nature. Due to its complexity, researchers have defined parental involvement from different perspectives that involve communication among educational stakeholders, parents' attitudes towards school, and the creation of community-based programs that bring parents, teachers, and students together.

Theoretical Concepts of Parental Involvement

In seeking answers to questions about the parental involvement of immigrant parents, researchers have applied various theoretical concepts to their analysis of the data. While some researchers have used well-established concepts, others have used obscure ones. Price-Mitchell (2009) used the theory of boundary dynamics to explain the need for teachers and parents to collaborate in order to develop effective parental involvement. The theory of boundary dynamics addresses the edges of interactions between two or more autonomous entities. The essence of this theory, according to Price-Mitchell, is that teachers and parents "must find a way to bridge their differences without threatening the core values that make them distinct" (as cited in O'Mahony & Bechky, 2008, p. 425). Furthermore, Price-Mitchell found that the partnership of parents, teachers, and school administrators does not undermine the importance of parents' contributions to their children's lives. Providing basic needs, such as housing, food, and clothes, are always included in responsibilities of parents for their children. Moreover, the parents' role as the first teachers of their children cannot be overstated. As Guo (2012) stated in a discussion on diversity in education, "parents informally taught children their first languages at home" (p. 126). In much the same sentiment, Radzi, Abd Razak, and Sukor (2010) noted that "parents play the role of the earliest teachers in educating their children" (p. 259). Consequently, parents are the first individuals to start teaching their children the languages with which they begin to communicate with others. Similar to Epstein's (1995) concept of overlapping spheres of influence, the theory of boundary dynamics stresses the need to share resources and ideas among entities or groups of

people. At the core of these concepts is a partnership between the stakeholders of any organization (Epstein, 1995; Price-Mitchell, 2009).

Another theoretical concept that emerged from the research literature in relation to parental involvement was agency. The concept of agency in parental involvement shows the independent responsibilities of the stakeholders in the process of improving parental involvement. Galindo and Medina explored Mexican parental involvement, using the theoretical concept of agency to describe the concerns that immigrant parents express about their children's education. They defined parental agency as "actions and responses that parents undertake in response to their concerns" (p 313). Galindo and Medina believed that agency gives immigrant parents the impetus to be proactive about their involvement in their children's academic lives and to demonstrate that they care. In a study about constructing home and school in relation to immigrant parents, agency, and the desirability of bridging multiple worlds, Doucet (2011) found that Haitian immigrant parents demonstrated their autonomy in parental involvement by constructing elaborate activities at home that are independent of school activities. Haitian immigrant parents give their children strict rules and tightly monitor and control their children's activities. Thus, an analysis of research related to the concept of agency indicates that immigrant parents can and do act independently when becoming involved in their children's education.

An additional theoretical concept related to parental involvement is the concept of social capital. Using Coleman's (1988) definition of social capital as the degree of cohesiveness within a given social setting, Price-Mitchell (2009) found that social capital

is a theoretical construct related to parental involvement because parents believe that becoming involved in their children's education is an investment that will yield positive results for their children. One result may be improvement in their children's academic achievement and/or obtaining a good job (Kofman & Biachi, 2012). Price-Mitchell did not examine the reasons why parents often do not use social capital to enhance their involvement in their children's education. However, other research may have provided the answers. In a study about diversity in public education in relation to acknowledging immigrant parent knowledge, Guo (2011) contended that class and race are important factors in using social capital to enhance parental involvement because parents of low socio-economic status often do not have easy or equal access to resources, such as information about college admissions or information about curriculum. In an examination of the academic achievement of legal immigrant children, Pong and Landale (2012) argued that poor children learn less than rich children do partly "because their homes are not stimulating" enough (p. 1545). Another reason why immigrant parents do not use social capital, Guo argued, is that parents and teachers often have different expectations for parental involvement in terms of trust and shared norms. Doucet (2011) and Lim (2012) supported this idea, noting that cultural differences, such as revering and trusting teachers by not questioning their actions and keeping home activities separate from school activities, encourages immigrant parents not to use the social capital available to them in America. Despite these challenges, however, immigrant parents do manage to get involved in their children's education (Doucet, 2011; Lim, 2011; Wang, 2009).

Self-concept is another theoretical concept that is important to understanding the research about parental involvement. Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, and Keating (2009) used the construct of self-concept to analyze research on parental involvement and children's school achievement. Self-concept, Rogers noted, involves preferences, philosophies, sentiments, and attitudes that people systematically use to make decisions about their lives. The notion of self-concept includes how people think of themselves and how they behave in various life roles. These behaviors are the results of peoples' life experiences, attitudes, cultures, and interactions. Consequently, Rogers et al. noted that students' school behavior, family/school relationships, and parent/teacher relationships are instrumental factors in parental involvement. Self-concept relates to immigrant parental involvement because, as Doucet (2011) argued, immigrant parents' beliefs, preferences, opinions, and cultures shape their attitudes towards their involvement in their children's academic lives. Considering the complex nature of student achievement and its association with parental involvement, Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, and Keating recommended that researchers conduct further studies of parental involvement with parents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Another theoretical construct that is important in parental involvement is the process of assimilation, because immigrant parents' actions and beliefs are often transformed by the new culture around them. The important aspect of this assimilation process is that parents interact with the environment, which in this case was the culture of the United States. Therefore, immigrant parents might not be able to achieve this assimilation easily without help from the educational system (Kofman & Biachi, 2012).

As Kofman and Bianchi (2012) argued, immigrant families believe that attending school is a crucial first step toward successful adaptation to American society. Furthermore, Davison and Cardemil (2009) and Kofman and Bianchi (2012) asserted that parents, especially those with low English language proficiency, receive information about outside the home partly from their schoolchildren. The most appropriate sector of the educational system that could offer this help to the immigrant parents is the school. For immigrant parents, getting involved in their children's school activities and the time they have lived in the United States play important roles in their survival. The survival of immigrant communities' depends partly on how quickly and thoroughly members of the communities assimilate into mainstream American society. Turney and Kao (2009) found that the number of years that immigrate parents have lived in the United States is a significant factor in parental involvement and networking within communities. In an examination of the role that education and language play among African immigrant parents, Talebbea (201) also found that these parents also go extraordinary lengths to assimilate into American society.

Chen and Gregory (2010) used ecological systems theory to examine the importance of parental involvement during the transitional phases of child development. They argued that parental involvement acts as a shield, which alleviates the effect of confusion that occurs when students move to different environment or different situation such as going from pre-teen to teenage. They analyzed parental involvement from two perspectives: direct contact involvement, which requires parents to contact teachers and school administrators, and high academic expectations, which requires parents to check

homework and make sure it is completed. Chen and Gregory found that both the home and school environment affects student achievement. Furthermore, Chen and Gregory found that when students perceive that their parents are involved in their education, they do well academically and exhibit fewer behavior problems in school. This finding supported research that Head (2010) conducted about promoting racial equality, parental involvement, and youth engagement. Head noted that children often pay attention to what adults do and not to what they say.

In conclusion, several theoretical constructs were important to consider in relation to parental involvement. These constructs include boundary dynamics, agency, social capital, self-concept, assimilation and ecological system theory. They were important to this study because they show that a complex topic like parental involvement could be examined from many different perspectives.

Educator Responsibilities Related to Parental Involvement

Educators are major stakeholders in the educational process; therefore, they have a responsibility to collaborate with parents in helping students to succeed. Ferrara (2009) discussed broadening the narrative of parental involvement by encouraging teachers to involve parents in school-based activities such as visiting their children's classrooms and volunteering in school programs. In much the same way, Panferov (2010) investigated how to increase English Language Learner (ELL) parental involvement in schools and asserted that educators "must engage parents and students in partnerships" to promote and motivate students (p. 111). In an examination of school readiness for children of immigrant parents, Lahaie (2008) noted that school is one of the three spheres of the

Epstein et al. (2009) model of parental involvement. Therefore, educators need to learn more about the kind of parental involvement that occurs at home (Gou, 2009; Lahaie, 2008). On the other hand, parents also need to create cordial relationship with teachers (Doucet, 2011; Lahaie, 2008).

The need for educators to improve parental involvement is another responsibility that school administrators assume. In a study about successful practices for immigrant parental involvement, Ladky and Peterson (2008) noted that educators in the Ontario province in Canada made a concerted effort to help immigrant parents get involved in their children's education. Educators offered professional development programs that enabled teachers to learn about the language and culture of non-native English speaking students of immigrant parents. Ladky and Peterson also found that educators developed practical ways to intervene in the home-based phase of the parental involvement process. For example, they found that English as second language (ESL) teachers often modify homework in order for parents to be able to help their children. In some instances, teachers wrote the meaning of unfamiliar words using the mothers' native language. Ladky and Peterson also found that some teachers sent assignments with "parent tip sheets" (p.84), while others held monthly meetings with ESL students' parents to show them how to help their children with homework. Ladky and Peterson concluded that this modification did not lower the standards of the schoolwork; rather, the help given to the parents helped them to get involved in their children's homework.

Another responsibility of educators is to develop and maintain positive relations with parents in order to learn about the cultures of immigrant parents. The lines of

responsibility in raising children are often blurred, particularly in relation to the responsibilities of teachers and parents. According to Barr, 2005 (as cited in Priutt, 2013), teachers are responsible for instruction, while families or parents and guardians are responsible for providing children with religious, moral, and academic values. Barr contended that there was a time in the United States when the line of responsibilities between the school and home were clearly drawn. Raising children in the United States during this period was not different from the methods that immigrant parents used to raise their children in other countries (Doucet, 2011), in which teachers were entrusted with absolute power in their children's education while parents were responsible for providing food, shelter, clothing, and teaching social protocols. On the other hand, teachers are also responsible for inspiring their students and reinforcing the importance of education. What seems to be missing in Doucet's analysis of immigrant parents' involvement is that these responsibilities need to be connected more clearly to each other as the Epstein et al. (2009) model of parental involvement suggests.

Educators also have a responsibility to show empathy when dealing with immigrant parents and their children. In a discussion about teacher commitment in sustainable learning communities, Cherkowskwi (2012) found that when leaders inspire hope and show love to people in their organizations, they achieve positive results in relation to productivity. This finding suggests that when teachers show love and interest in their students' activities both inside and outside the classroom, academic achievement improves. However, even though members of society expects teachers and principals to do their work with compassion, they still expect them to "check their emotions" about

students' behaviors "at the doors of the school" (Cherkowskwi, 2012, p. 62). The dichotomy between these two demands from society, displaying no personal emotions while showing compassion and sympathy to students and parents, makes teachers' work extremely challenging. Like emotions, motivation is a hard concept to quantify. Yet, Coleman and McNeese (2009) used motivation as a framework to study a complex subject like parental involvement. Coleman and McNeese found a positive relationship between motivation and academic achievement. Boske (2012) also noted that educators have a responsibility to show compassion and tolerance in addressing issues related to immigrant parental involvement. In an examination of how to prepare school leaders to stop oppressive school practices, Boske found that school administrators need to align their actions according to the needs of communities they serve. Compassion and tolerance are the oils that lubricate the engine of professional teaching. In addition, although teachers are mainly focused on providing effective instruction to students, Boske noted that they also need to give encouragement and provide incentives for students in order to increase their motivation to learn.

In summary, educators, especially teachers, have significant responsibilities in the parental involvement process, acknowledging the challenges immigrant parents and their children experience. What is not clear, however, as LaRocque, Kleima, and Darling. (2011) indicated, is what those responsibilities should be. This lack of concrete definitions for these teacher responsibilities requires further studies of parental involvement concerning the relationship between teachers and immigrant parents. Hill and Tyson (2009) maintained that parental involvement is a multi-dimensional concept,

and therefore, educators need to develop strategies to increase the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education. Hill and Tyson suggested that educators should take the initiative and include parents and community leaders in programs and discussions about parental involvement. Such programs and discussions should take into consideration the perspectives of all groups, including parents, teachers, and community members.

Immigrant Perspectives about Parent Involvement Challenges

Immigrant parents believe that they face many challenges in becoming involved in their children's education. One of the challenges that immigrant parents face is related to their socio-economic status in the United States. Examining the barriers immigrant parents encounter in getting involved in their children's education, Turney and Kao (2009) asked the question: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged? To the extent that they need time to learn and adjust to the demands of the American school system, Turney and Kao found that immigrant parents are at a slight disadvantage from native-born parents. This adjustment time is necessary because immigrant parents need time to adjust to cultural differences in order to assimilate into American society. Turney and Kao, and Wang (2008) also found that immigrant parents face more challenges related to finding jobs, language barriers, and cultural barriers than native-born parents do. Similarly, in an examination of school readiness for children of immigrant parents, Lahaie (2008) found that barriers to immigrant parents' participation in their children's school activities included a lack of childcare, inflexible work schedules, lack of transportation, and limited income. However, some of these challenges, such as inflexible work schedules and lack

of transportation, are not unique to immigrant parents. These socioeconomic factors affect both immigrant and native-born parents equally. Guo (2011) echoed Lahaie's sentiments in a discussion of diversity in public education and noted that "North American models of parental involvement tended to focus more on the middle-class than the working-class" (p.123).

Another challenge that immigrant parents face is a language barrier. In an examination of the role of education and language among African immigrants as they struggle to succeed in the United States, Tarlebbea (2010) asserted that immigrants who have little education do what it takes "to learn English, get education, and achieve the American dream" (p.859). Therefore, the assumption that immigrant parents are not "uninvolved and uninterested" (p. 416) is not quite correct (Doucet, 2011). The main challenge that immigrant parents face is developing fluency in the English language (Turney & Kao, 2009). As Lahaie (2008) stated, "When parents do not speak English at home, children of immigrants are at significant risk" (p. 685). Thus, learning standard American English is another challenge many immigrant parents face.

A third challenge that immigrant parents face is a lack of knowledge about how the education system in this country works. In a discussion about how to prepare school leaders to address oppressive school practices, Boske (2012) suggested that to work with educators in a given school district, parents have to make efforts to increase their understanding of the educational system. In a discussion about barriers to school involvement for immigrant parents, Turney and Kao (2009) asserted that immigrant parents face unique challenges not only because of a lack of free time and unfamiliarity

with the English language but also because of unfamiliarity with the American culture.
The educational system, however, is an integral part of the American culture (Turney &
Kao).

Communication Issues Related to Parental Involvement

Technology has changed the modes of communication within school systems, and
immigrant parents are especially impacted by that change. Researchers have suggested
that teachers and other educators should harness all communication means to improve
parental involvement, including emails and social media, in light of contemporary
communication technology and the ubiquity of computers (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2010).
Some immigrant parents are well informed about the use of computers and information
technology as the result of immigration policies that favor the admittance of technology
professionals (Ladky & Peterson, 2008).

Communication is no longer a linear process between the teacher and student or
the parent. It is more like a splash of water, which goes in many different directions
rather than a beam of light that follows one defined direction. For example, using
contemporary electronic communication system, a school administrator may initiate one
phone call that can reach hundreds of teachers and parents simultaneously (Kosaretsk &
Chernyshova, 2013). Therefore, educators should view contemporary communication
between teachers and immigrant parents in the context of the Epstein et al. (2009) model
of parental involvement, which means that the various types of parental involvement
often happen simultaneously and may require different types of communication.

The affinity that students have for contemporary communication devices and their accessibility to teachers means that students need to play a vital role in parent-teacher communication. Moreover, communication fuels the process of parental involvement. In a discussion of parent-child communication and parental involvement in relation to Latino American students, Davison and Cardemil (2009) found that parent-child communication helps to alleviate behavioral problems in school. In addition, Theodorou (2008) explored parental involvement through teachers' perceptions of immigrant families about school involvement in Cyprus and found that all parents "receive information about the school primarily from their children" (p. 255), perhaps due to the parents' lack of proficiency with English or a lack of distrust between parents and educators. Moreover, as children quickly become more proficient in the English language than their parents, Panferov (2010) noted, it often becomes convenient for children to be the messengers between the school and home. In addition, Panferov emphasized the importance of non-linear communication as part of the solution. Panferov asserted that frequent two-way communications, both written and spoken, and preferably in the parents' native language, is beneficial in addressing the needs of immigrant parents.

Other communication issues were also revealed in the literature review. In an examination of communication between parents and teachers, Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2009) defined parents from diverse backgrounds as "families who live in poverty, families of color, or new immigrants whose primary language is not" English (p. 442). As Boske (2012) observed in an examination of school leaders and oppressive school practices, disparities have often occurred between different classes in society, such

as between the upper class, which includes wealthy individuals, and the lower class, which includes immigrants who live in poverty. In a discussion about parental involvement in relation to school achievement, LaRocque , Kleiman, and Darling (2011) noted that parents who were not successful in school may still harbor mistrust for the school system, which impacts their ability to communicate with school staff. Teachers and other educators, therefore, need to address these sensitive issues with parents. LaRocque et al. also noted that the Standard American English that educators use may be too academic and intimidating to some parents. LaRocque et al. recommended that educators should consider using translators to make parents who do not speak Standard American English feel welcome when communicating with teachers and school administrators. Nevertheless, as Tarlebbea (2011) asserted, learning to speak Standard American English is often a challenge for immigrant parents who struggle with mastering this language.

Cultural Issues Related to Parental Involvement

Immigrant parents also face significant cultural barriers in relation to their involvement in their children's education. In a discussion about parent involvement as "ritualized practice," Doucet (2011) noted that good grades and perfect school attendance alone are not enough to guarantee students admission to a first class college or university in the United States. Doucet also noted that immigrants, however, have long believed that "education would give their children fair chance to succeed" in America (p. 412), but they are often not able to use all the educational tools at their disposal to help their children succeed in school (Wang, 2008). This situation happens because immigrant

parents often do not know about the resources available to them. For example, Doucet noted that taking the appropriate Advanced Placement courses, the *Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test* (PSAT), the *Scholastic Aptitude Test* (SAT), and completing college application forms are all part of the process in preparation for post-secondary education. Such a process does not come easily to the children of immigrant parents. Furthermore, Doucet contended, even those immigrant parents who are aware of the process often do not utilize it because they assume it is the educator's responsibility to do what is necessary to get their children into college.

Some immigrant parents miss opportunities to use their cultural capital due to various assimilation challenges. As Doucet (2011) noted in a discussion on parental involvement, research-based ideas about parental involvement have "stood in direct contradiction to Haitian immigrant parents' understanding of the role of schools" (p. 412), which is not to interfere with the work of professional educators. In a discussion about teacher and parent interactions, Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2009) indicated that the educational history of other countries influences the beliefs of immigrant parents that "they should not intrude on teachers' decision making" processes" (p. 442). Similar to Haitian immigrant parents' notions of school-based parental involvement, the main responsibility of parents in most West African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria is to pay their children's school fees. Educators are expected to take charge of all other student activities.

When parents and teachers do not agree about what parental involvement means, cultural differences often become an issue. Many immigrant parents are comfortable with

the educational system when the line between home and school is clearly defined

(Doucet, 2011; Lahaie, 2008). To some immigrant parents, teachers know best when it

comes to educating their children. In their discussion of teacher and parent

communication, Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2009) found that new immigrant parents

believe they should not interfere in the decision-making process of teachers. Parents often

hold teachers in high esteem, and they do not question teachers' judgments. In most

countries where immigrant parents grew up, teachers reprimand and praise students as

they see fit, and most often, without the parents' prior permission (Ladky & Peterson

2008; Doucet, 2011). Therefore, immigrant parents often believe it is a waste of time for

educators to contact them when their children have clearly violated school rules. This

sentiment of cooperation and responsibility is echoed in Doucet's research about parental

involvement as ritualized practice when a participant reported that "parents and teachers

have to come together to work for the kids" (p. 415). In effect, immigrant parents want

equal respect to build a relationship where each party's authority or expertise is not

questioned.

Thus, immigrant parents often view teachers as professionals or experts in

education, and they believe they should not interfere with teachers' work. Although some

parents whose children attend private schools are familiar with school-based parental

involvement, the majority of parents are used to the public school system where their

involvement is mainly restricted to home-based parental involvement (Ladky & Peterson

2008). These characteristics of parental involvement are consistent with other immigrant

communities (Wang, 2008). The expectation is that, even when immigrant parents have

been assimilated fully into American society, the respect they have for teachers in their native countries creates a layer of civility between them and teachers in the United States (Doucet, 2011). The new breed of immigrant parents might be educated, but they are not professional educators so they believe they still need teachers' professional acumen to educate their children.

Acculturation is a change in the cultural behavior and thinking of a person or group of people through contact with another culture. Enculturation is the gradual acceptance by a person or group of the standards and practices of another person or culture (Davison & Cardemil, 2009). These two concepts are important to consider in relation to parental involvement because they are major elements of assimilation process of immigrant families. When immigrant parents are assimilated into the American way of living, they may be more apt to participate in school-based parental involvement activities. Doucet (2011) also asserted that immigrant parents should bear in mind that they are in the process of acquiring an understanding of how American education operates, at least at the K-12 level. Therefore, to boost assimilation, immigrant parents must acculturate or change their cultural behavior with respect to parental involvement.

The dynamics of acculturation and enculturation of immigrant parents and their children who attend school in their home country, Kramer (2011) argued, is sometimes a cause of frustration for parents and sometimes a barrier to parental involvement in the United States. Educator responses to situations at school are sometimes different from what immigrant parents expect or are used to hearing when they were students (Allen, Jackson, & Knight, 2012). When researchers ignore time and place in their analysis of

immigrant parents' enculturation, they often miss important factors that need a more thorough examination. Place is important because immigrant parents embrace a different set of values and norms. Acculturation is the element that makes the proverbial melting pot possible.

The culture of immigrant parents and their understanding of the American school system are major factors that educators need to consider in providing effective leadership for improved parental involvement. In an examination of the impact of school culture on school leadership, Demmamonde (2011) observed that leadership occurs when leaders' work reflects the cultural and social needs of the school district they serve. In a related study, Wang (2008) discussed family-school relations as social capital in the context of Chinese parenting in the United States. Wang recommended that school leaders should create school programs that are designed to meet the needs of the local community, which includes immigrant parents and their children. School principals who direct curricula need to be sensitive to the cultural norms of the communities they serve. Furthermore, Wang recommended that educators should consider the cultural background of parents in developing school programs and policies. Wang suggested that educators should try to reach out to immigrant parents and include them in school activities when possible.

Researchers who conducted other studies indicated that culture of the immigrant parents play important role as to how immigrant parents get involved in their children's education. Bartee (2010) echoed the same sentiments as Demmamonde (2011) and Wang (2008) in applying the concepts of cultural and social capital to an analysis of educational

leadership in relation to parental involvement. Cultural capital, Bartee noted, means the application of a given knowledge that immigrant parents acquire through an affiliation of a particular group of people. Teachers benefit when they harness cultural resources from parents of varied backgrounds. However, because education is a dynamic construct, Bartee contended that teachers should temper their technical knowledge in relation to the cultural capital at hand in the local districts. This sentiment was in line with Carlson's (2011) assertion that scholars should treat culture as an essential part of the educational paradigm. Thus, Wang (2011) also maintained that school leaders should encourage the integration of the cultural values of immigrant parents into learning and teaching.

Immigrant parents also need to understand that parental involvement in the United States is a two-way proposition (Doucet, 2011; Lim, 2012). Immigrant parents must share what they know about education and child rearing with school district educators and be prepared to learn about how educators in the United States manage parental involvement issues. As Allen, Jackson, and Knight (2012) indicated, the cultural aspects of educational leadership are important for many reasons, one of which is that teachers should be encouraged to treat each student and their immigrant parents as unique individuals.

Educational policymakers need to understand that the integration of cultural norms from other countries into school activities is necessary because some of the current K-12 school policies marginalize immigrant parents who want to get involved in their children's education (Doucet, 2011). As Wang (2011) noted, in an era of globalization, it would be prudent for principals to introduce some aspects of other cultures into local

school programs. In a discussion of educational leadership, Carlson (2011) contended

that educators should treat school management "as a cultural production and as

something that occurs in a cultural space" (p.328). Furthermore, school leaders and

immigrant parents need not hold on so tightly to their respective stands because, as

Caldwell (2006) argued, societies now operate in a world that is " no longer bound by

differences in time, distance, or geography" (p.172). Therefore, by getting to know

immigrant parents, educational leaders should be able to diversify the school culture with

ideas from other countries in the form of symbols, metaphors, songs, or drawings.

Knowledge of and Engagement in Parental Involvement Activities

Research findings about immigrant parents' knowledge of and engagement in

parental involvement activities were often inconsistent. Several studies indicate that

immigrant parents tend to engage more in home-based parental involvement activities

than in school-based activities (Altschul, 2011; Lim, 2012). Exploring family/school

relations as social capital in relation to Chinese immigrant parents in the United States,

Wang (2008) found that, although Chinese immigrant parents are aware of the

importance of parental involvement, cultural differences often prevent them from taking

full advantage of the resources available to them. Wang defined social capital as an all-

inclusive concept that embodies how Chinese immigrants view participation in their

children's education. To Chinese immigrant parents, the concept of social capital entailed

tapping into resources from beyond the home and school to get involved in their

children's education. Wang found that Chinese parents network with people from work

and social groups such as book clubs and religious affiliations to maximize their

resources in getting involved in their children's education. Furthermore, the use of these resources is in addition to school and home resources and is dynamic because the resources change as the needs of the child changes. Education is important to Chinese immigrant parents, which helps them to value parental involvement activities. However, because educators often do not acknowledge the efforts immigrant parents make inn the home (Doucet, 2011), immigrant parents often shy away from offering their expertise about school-based parental involvement. However, despite these difficulties, Theodorou (2008) noted, many immigrant parents often extended themselves beyond their resources in order to provide for their children's education.

In a study of parental involvement and academic achievement of Mexican American students, Altschul (2011) also found that Mexican American immigrant parents understand the importance of parental involvement because they "care deeply about their children" (p.160). This understanding is supported by the fact that immigrant parents spend much of their financial resources on their children's education. Like their Chinese counterparts, Altschul found that Mexican American immigrant parents have "high expectation for academic success for their children" (p.160). Altschul suggested that immigrant parents view their involvement in their children as an investment that will yield positive results. Within Mexico immigrant families, Altschul also found that home-based parental involvement is more effective in improving student achievement than school-based parental involvement. Mexican immigrant parents also spend a large amount of their disposable income on their children's education, which also improves academic achievement among Mexican immigrant students. Therefore, Altschul

recommended that researchers study the effects of different forms of parental involvement on immigrant families.

Limited engagement in school-based parental involvement activities is not only related to Mexican-American or Chinese-American immigrants. In an examination of parental involvement as ritualized practice, Doucet (2011) uncovered similar findings in relation to Haitian immigrant parents. Doucet found that Haitian parents struggle to become involved in their children's education, even though they often attend parent/teacher conferences and uphold the teacher's authority at home. However, Doucet found that Haitian parents believe that teachers often do not acknowledge these efforts. Doucet also found that most Haitian immigrant parents lacked information about the American school system because they do not avail themselves of formal or informal educational networks. Moreover, Haitian parents assumed that it is the responsibility of educators to help their children with their educational needs. To alleviate these problems, Doucet recommended that school policymakers should modify the current educational system so that non-middle class parents are also viewed as partners of the school system. Additionally, Doucet recommended that the mistrust and misunderstanding expressed by both educators and immigrant parents could be lessened if educators acknowledge that varied family and cultural dynamics are at play within immigrant communities.

Immigrant parents also underutilize the educational resources available to them. One of the reasons why some immigrant parents do not utilize all the resources of parental involvement at their disposal is because they do not fully understand their relationship to the schools (Doucet, 2011). Wang (2008) defined social capital in terms of

a network of people and argued that the dynamic flow of educational resources within this network helps Chinese immigrant parents to accomplish given goals. Consequently, Wang contended, the goal of most immigrant parents is to improve the academic achievement of their children. Wang also used the concept of social capital in relation to other social units like the family, church organizations, and the workplace to argue that social capital is a versatile concept. Nonetheless, Wang failed to identify the link between the social entities of church, family, friends, and parents' aspirations. Such connections could benefit immigrant children's school experiences by helping them make friends in school.

The reasons that researchers give for this lack of engagement in parental involvement activities among immigrant parents sometimes differ. While Wang (2008) agreed that parents often view home-based and school-based parental involvement differently, Altschul (2011) concluded that researchers lump home-based and school-based parental involvement together in their analyses rather than emphasizing the importance of both types of parental involvement, as well as the overlapping effect of school, home, and community.

Educators lose important resources when they ignore immigrant parents. In a discussion of diversity in public education in relation to acknowledging immigrant parent knowledge, Guo (2012) found that educators often do not use three types of parental knowledge when immigrant parents do not participate in their children's education through school-based activities. These types of knowledge, Guo noted, are cultural knowledge, first language knowledge, and religious knowledge. Furthermore, the cultural

knowledge of immigrant parents may cause misunderstandings between teachers and parents. Hill and Tyson (2009) expanded on this idea in their meta-analysis of the research about parental involvement strategies that promote student achievement at the middle school level. They found that all the three phases of parental involvement (i.e. school-based, achievement-based, and home-based) must be present in order for parents to have an optimum effect on their children's education. Lahaie (2008) examined the school readiness of immigrant parents' children and found that their knowledge of community was an important factor in the parental involvement process. Therefore, Hill and Tyson could have considered community as a critical factor of parental involvement because immigrant parents often rely on communities as their support system. Thus, in their findings, Hill and Tyson indicated that high student achievement could be related to an understanding among parents, schools, and the community that the cultural knowledge that immigrant parents possess is a valuable resource.

Parents invest in parental involvement activities because they understand the benefits for their children and for themselves. As LaRocque, Kleima, and Darling (2011) observed, "Parental involvement has benefits for parents too; they become better informed about teachers' objectives and the needs of their children" (p. 117). This assertion is true for both immigrant and native parents. In a study of the relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement, Ferrara (2009) found that parental involvement promotes positive student attitudes and behavior and increases student academic achievement. These positive improvements are good reasons for parents to get involved in their children's education.

Turney and Kao (2009) also found that parents who are active in their children's academic lives send messages to their children that education is important. Additionally, by participating in school-based activities, immigrant parents get the chance to meet other parents and school officials in person, thereby increasing their circle of friends. Parents who become involved in their children's education often received privileged and unofficial information about the school such as the names of influential persons in the school district who can help them make good decisions regarding the education of their children.

Implications for Child Development

Teachers seek the partnership of parents in the parental involvement process with the aim of developing the whole child, which means nurturing each student to attain his or her full potential academically, emotionally, and socially (Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Epstein 2008; Kramer, 2012; Panferov, 2010). Furthermore, such nurturing involves the collaboration of parents, educators, and the community (Epstein, 2008). In support of this collaboration, Price-Mitchell (2009) discussed parental involvement as a partnership between the parents and the school community. Instead of focusing only on the parents, Price-Mitchell linked parental involvement to the academic, social, and emotional development of children. Bokhorst-Heng (2008) expanded this concept of wholeness in a study about school-home partnerships that nurture adolescent literature, noting that the essence of parental involvement is encouraging the child to "have positive attitude towards learning" (p. 40). Hayes (2011) also alluded to this concept of wholeness in a

study about African American high school students by concluding that the essence of parental involvement is to support the overall development of the child.

On the other hand, Price-Mitchell argued that parental involvement should not be treated like a project because projects have to end at a given point; parental involvement in the academic lives of children is a long-term proposition. Additionally, Price-Mitchell aligned MacGillivrary's (2006, 2008) research on the phenomenon of boundary dynamics, a concept of school reform where parents and schools interact to form a partnership on behalf of the children, with parental involvement. This partnership was based on the premise that schools should be learning communities that make knowledge available to all members. Furthermore, such communities should attempt to make both formal and informal learning more accessible to parents and students alike.

This system thinking ultimately helped to improve the process of parental involvement in that the development of the whole child is considered. In order for this idea to materialize, Price-Mitchell stressed the need to create a comprehensive network of parents, teachers, school authorities, and community members through tangible parent involvement programs. Some researchers have suggested some practical actions that educational stakeholders, such as teachers, may take. For example, Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2009) recommended that teachers open the door to informal connections with parents when they shop within their local communities and attend local community events. In a discussion of the complexity of parental involvement, Price-Mitchell used system thinking as a framework to explain that teachers and parents helping children to learn are two sides of the same coin. This partnership between parents and educators aims

at developing the whole child. Similarly, due to cultural and work scheduling difficulties, Price-Mitchell contended that the process of parental involvement does not lend itself to one particular theory of learning. Therefore, one-size-fit-all solutions for different school districts might not be appropriate; rather, parental involvement solutions should be treated as a comprehensive plan to fit each community's needs.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences form the basic means of communication between these two groups and give a personal touch to other types of communications between them. These face-to-face meetings, Radzi, Abd Razak, and Sukor (2010) asserted, help teachers gain trust from parents. In an examination about how to broaden the vision of parental involvement, Ferrara (2009) developed survey questions that aligned with the National Parent Teacher Association (2006) guidelines. Ferrara used the following concepts to construct the survey questions that included such topics as communication as a two-way responsibility, responsible parenting, parents as an integral part of school programs, and collaboration between parents, teachers, and community as an essential element for productive school districts. Ferrara found that teachers' attitudes often undermined parent-teacher conferences because they meet parents for expediency. Ferrara also found that 85% of student teachers reported that they would rather communicate with parents through memos or phone calls than through face-to-face meetings. Parent-teacher conferences, Altschul, 2009 asserted, are an important factor in school-based parental involvement. Echoing this importance, Wang (2008) found that Chinese immigrant parents' reluctance to initiate contact with their children's teachers

was problematic. However, Ferrara found that the obligatory parent-teacher conference as a yardstick for measuring parental involvement is woefully inadequate. Visiting school or attending a parent-teacher conference is only one of many parental involvement factors, whose importance should be viewed in relation to the total picture of parental involvement. Ferrara concluded that considering different viewpoints about these conferences from educational stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and administrators, are crucial to improving parental involvement.

In other research about parent-teacher conferences, Turney and Kao (2009) examined barriers to parental involvement and found that immigrant parents have high expectations for their children but do not value attending parent-teacher conferences. In an examination of parental involvement in relation to children's adaptation to school, Tan and Goldberg (2009) found that parent-teacher conferences are an essential aspect of the communication process between these two groups. When immigrant parents did not attend these parent-teacher conferences, Wang (2008) argued, they often miss opportunities for socialization with school staff and teachers and access to privileged information. Wang concluded that parents' input into their children's education is needed because parental aspirations are not always transferred automatically to their children. Direct personal communication at parent-teacher conferences often provides the best starting point to convey such ideas. However, as Kosaretskii and Chernyshova (2013) noted, the preferences of parents for contacting teachers depends on their socio-economic status and their desire to contact teachers. Kosaretskii and Chernyshova added that "low-income parents prefer to interact face to face" (p. 85). LaRocque, Kleima, and Darling

(2011) noted that Epstein (1994) found that 67% of parents have never met their children's teachers. Consequently, LaRocque et al. argued that the importance of parent-teacher meetings cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, face-to-face meeting between teachers and parents, which is accomplished at parent/teacher conferences, can form the building block of trust and respect between teachers and parents of diverse backgrounds.

Differences within Immigrant Communities

Many immigrant communities are composed of many subgroups, which have implications for their involvement in their children's education. LaRocque et al. (2011) examined parental involvement in relation to student achievement and found that immigrant parents are not a monolithic group. For example, clusters of social entities exist as common elements of West African culture in relation to their educational system (Allen, Jackson, & Knight, 2012). These characteristics were what Tarlebbea (2010) referred to as the socio-cultural identity within the African immigrant community. Thus, scholars should refrain from treating immigrant parents as one unified entity where the same programs or approaches will work for everybody. Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents have different cultural backgrounds from other African groups. While immigrant parents from Spanish speaking countries advocate for bilingual programs to help them with the assimilation process (Allen, Jackson, & Knight, 2012), immigrant parents from non-Spanish-speaking countries like Ghana and Nigeria have no such latitude. However, Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents are able to use their native English, however imperfect, to their advantage to build upon their language skills.

As Galindo and Medina (2011) noted in their research about Mexicana parental involvement, the "linguistic distance" (p.329) between English and Spanish can be bridged through programs like *Folklórico,* which is a cultural program created by Latino American mothers to convey a message of parental involvement in education that is culturally relevant to these parents. On the other hand, nonSpanish speaking immigrant parents are not able to use their native languages, such as Ga, Twi, or Yoruba, to communicate with people outside their community. Programs like *Folklórico,* Galino and Medina contended, serve as evidence that Spanish immigrant parents are concerned about their involvement in their children's education, even though the African immigrant parents have no such advantage. Many people might not understand or appreciate how a demonstration of Yoruba cultural dance could be used to bridge the gap between Nigerian immigrant parents and American teachers.

Dynamics within Immigrant Families

When it comes to parental involvement, various dynamics are at play in immigrant family households. One of these dynamics is the gender roles of the parents within the immigrant family. In families where both mother and father are present, each parent tends to perform different roles in nurturing the child. In some foreign cultures, the mother's and father's roles in raising children were clearly defined (Doucet, 2011; Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009). Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, and Keating's study was important in understanding the dynamics that hinder parental involvement of immigrant parents. Examining the connections between parental involvement, student achievement, and self-conceptfound that if parents are adequately

involved in their children's school activities, students not only achieve more academically but also acquire more self-confidence. Moreover, Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, and Keating's study is unique because they analyzed the mother's and father's support as different variables. This analysis afforded Rogers et al. an opportunity to critically examine relationships among the variables within a family of immigrant children. Rogers et al. found that "maternal involvement in the home was related to achievement" (p. 43), while paternal involvement in the home where academic pressure was exercised resulted in lower academic proficiency. In related research, Doucet (2011) found that in Haitian communities the father plays an active role in the child's education. In Haitian two-family households, the father is the main communicator, attends parent-teacher conferences, and primarily disciplines the children because of the cultural expectation that he is the head of the household.

In addition to the gender roles of parents, the concept of extended family still plays an important role in the lives of immigrant parents. Turney and Kao (2009) studied the barriers that hinder immigrant parental involvement and found that parents in multigenerational households often have greater opportunities for involvement because grandparents often provide child-care assistance for parents who live in such households. However, Rogers et al. (2009) failed to describe how fathers who do not live at home or coaches, uncles, and grandfathers impact the achievement of children. Furthermore, with so many different types of families besides the traditional father-mother family, Rogers et al. should also have acknowledged that these gender roles in families are fading, due to modern work schedules and improved recognition of cultural differences.

The dynamic of grade levels within the public school system also poses a special challenge to immigrant parents. Ferrara (2009) contended that many parents do not seem to be sure of their roles in the schools as their children move up through the grades because teacher expectations for student achievement are different for each grade level. This confusion occurs, Bokhorst-Heng (2009) argued, because parents' roles change as their children move from primary to secondary schools. In a study about primary teachers' views of parental involvement, Radzi, Abd Razak, and Sukor (2010) noted that "at the age of 7 to 10 years old, children require more guidance, attention, and motivation from parents" (p. 259). Although adolescent students need autonomy to develop social relationships outside the home, parents still play important to facilitate these relations (Simpkins et al., 2009). Ferrara (2009) noted that the feeling of connectedness that parents have to the school grows weaker as children move from junior high to senior high school. Young, Austin, and Grove (2013) explored the perceptions of school administrators about parental involvement and found that parents of preschool age children were involved in school activities based on their belief that they have the power to influence their children's education and their affiliations with the school. These assertions suggested that different dynamics play important roles in parental involvement when the power to influence their children's education dwindles in high school.

Need for Further Studies

Many researchers have expressed the need for further studies on immigrant parental involvement because it is an ongoing process. Lahaie (2008) maintained that further research is needed "to better measure the long term effect of parental involvement

on the educational achievement of immigrants" (p. 703). Tarlebbea also concluded that further studies on parental involvement are needed in order not to draw irrational conclusions from limited studies about the sociocultural identities of African immigrants. The need for additional studies is necessary because, as Altschul (2011) noted, "no known studies to date have explicitly examined" (p. 161) the effects of time and money invested by immigrant parents on their children's education. Although Altshul's argument is laudable, researchers should compare the resources immigrant parents devote to their children compared to their total resources. Such comparisons would give researchers an idea about the efforts immigrant parents put into their children's education.

Researchers also need to conduct more studies about home-based parental involvement from the perspective of immigrant parents. Lahaie (2008) contended that more research is needed to examine immigrant parental involvement beyond only a school-based perspective. Additionally, Theodorou (2008) asserted that further research is needed to reassess the perception that the main purpose of parental involvement is to help teachers rather than to help parents in relation to their children's education. Tekin (2012) also asserted that different theoretical outlooks provide incentives for scholars to conduct additional research on parental involvement.

Parental involvement is a complex undertaking (Chen & Gregory 2010; Doucet, 2011; Hayes, 2011; Lahaie, 2008; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling 2011; Taelebbea, 2011) that also involves "awesome joy" and challenges (LaRocque et al., p.115). The joy and satisfaction that come with parental involvement, however, creates responsibilities

for parents and educators. If there is joy in parental involvement, then those who are not involved in their children's education are missing one of the pleasures in raising children (La Rocque, Kleimann, & Keating 2011). However, those parents who are not engaged in this important responsibility are doing so because they face some significant challenges such as work schedule and cultural issues (Turney & Kao, 2009). Therefore, further studies are needed to find out why more immigrant parents are not aware of the benefits of parental involvement. Further examination of parental involvement in relation to immigrant parents is needed because researchers have ignored this topic for some time (Theodorou, 2008). Moreover, further research about parental involvement of immigrant parents are needed because researchers know little about how immigrant parents raise their children (Turney & Kao, 2009).

Summary and Conclusions

In this review of the research literature, my goal was to examine current research related to the phenomenon of parental involvement. I described the literature search strategy that I used to locate current research and the conceptual framework that informed the research questions for this study. I also analyzed research in relation to multiple definitions of parental involvement, the theoretical concepts related to parental involvement, educators' responsibilities in relation to parental involvement, and the challenges of parental involvement from immigrant parents' perspectives. Additionally, I analyzed research about communication issues and cultural issues concerning immigrant parental involvement. I also discussed research related to immigrant parents' knowledge of and engagement in parental involvement activities, as well as studies about the social

and emotional development of the child as factors related to parental involvement. Furthermore, I examined research related to parent-teacher conference, cultural differences within immigrant communities, and dynamics within immigrant families.

Several themes emerged from this review of the literature. One theme is that parental involvement should include both home-based and school-based activities. Home-based parental involvement involves communicating between parents and children about school, helping with or encouraging homework, and creating a learning environment at home. On the other hand, school-based parental involvement involves parents participating in school activities such as PTA, attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at school activities, and communicating with school personnel (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Both teachers and parents must work together in giving children the best education because such cooperation has shown to increase academic achievement (Rogers, Theule, Ryan, Adams, & Keating, 2009). The struggle for power among educators in some school districts often negatively impacts the parental involvement of immigrant parents because they feel forced to support either teachers or school administrators (Doucet, 2011). Many researchers advocate cooperation among parents, teachers, and the community in order to improve parental involvement from immigrant parents (Ferrara, 2009; Galindo & Medina, 2009; Hayes, 2009; Radzi, Abd Razak, & Sukor, 2010).

Collaboration is another theme that emerged from the literature review. In relation to parental involvement, collaboration involves teamwork between parents and teachers for the betterment of children. The importance of this collaboration prompted Ferrara

(2009) to recommend that educators need to broaden their view of parental involvement to include activities parents do at home with their children about school, such as talking to their children about school and helping their children with homework. Cultural differences notwithstanding, immigrant parents must endeavor to become involved in school-based activities on behalf their children because when children are aware that their parents are involved in these activities, they begin to realize that education is important. Educators should also recognize the efforts parents make at home, such as getting children prepared for school and providing places for them to their homework. Schools are often unwelcome places for parents (Doucet, 2011; Ferrara, 2009). If the crux of parental involvement is collaboration as Epstein et al. (2009) advocated, then examining home-based and school-based parental involvement as similar concepts is justified.

Another theme that emerged from the literature review is that the beliefs of teachers about their own professional practices largely determine how they teach students and how they react to parents of immigrant parents. For example, in a study of teachers' perceptions about the school involvement of immigrant families in Cyprus, Thoudorou (2008) found that parent responsibilities are measured by "the level of parents' compliance to teachers' demands" (p. 263). However, even when teachers see the need for changes in curriculum and pedagogy, Carson (2011) reported that they run into resistance by educational leaders and other interest groups who may not see the need for change.

The major theme about immigrant parental involvement that emerged from this review of the literature is that, in order to have an effective impact on the educational

needs of their children, the needs of immigrant parents, educators, and the community

should be coordinated. This theme is supported by the Epstein et al. (2009) parental

involvement model in which the overlapping spheres of responsibility include parents,

school, and the community. Doucet (2011) and Kramer (2011) also agreed that parental

involvement is a multiphasic and multifocal proposition that includes many educational

stakeholders**.** At the center of this overlapping sphere is the student because the aim of

parental involvement is to improve student achievement.

      Gaps in the literature also emerged in this review. The first gap relates to the

challenges that immigrant parents face in relation to their involvement in their children's

education, which demands that researchers examine the educational needs of immigrant

communities in the United States. Turney and Kao (2009) and Wang (2008) studied

Caribbean and Chinese immigrants, respectively, to ascertain the challenges that these

immigrant parents face when they become involved in their children's education.

Altschul (2011) and Galino and Medina (2009) concentrated on Mexican immigrant

parents, and Doucet (2011) focused on Haitian immigrants in the Boston, Massachusetts

metropolitan area. Lim (2012) examined parental involvement in relation to Korean

immigrant parents in a southeastern suburban city in the United States. However, no

studies focused on Ghanaian or Nigerian immigrant parents emerged from this review.

This study addresses this research gap.

      Although immigrant parents constitute a major part of the demography of urban

school districts (Boske, 2012; Lahaie, 2008; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wang, 2008), another

gap that emerged from this review is that only a few studies exist about the problems

immigrant parents encounter concerning their desire to become involved in their children's education. Furthermore, no researchers have explored immigrant parental involvement issues in urban schools districts in relation to Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrants. This study is important because it addresses the problem of not knowing the challenges Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents face in becoming involved in their children's education.

Another gap that emerged from this literature revise is that parental involvement often creates problems for school leaders, particularly superintendents and principals, who may not be able to design and implement appropriate parental involvement programs for these immigrant parents. With an ever increasing mix of students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds in urban schools (Boske, 2012; Lahaie, 2008; Marshall, Shah, & Donato, 2012), the unique challenges that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents face concerning their involvement in their children's education deserves exploration. This study will help to fill this gap and add to the body of knowledge about the educational challenges facing immigrant parents in the United States.

The challenges related to the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education continue unabated because these challenges are dynamic. Therefore, educators must revisit the demands of parental involvement of immigrant parents on a continual basis. In addition, this examination of the research literature on parental involvement revealed that researchers draw on a variety of parenting styles and different theoretical concepts of parental involvement to determine their findings. In the following chapter, I discuss why I used a phenomenological research method to describe the lived experiences

of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in relation to their involvement in their

children's education.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Researchers have conducted limited research about the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education in the United States in relation to the challenges they face. Not knowing how various groups of immigrant parents cope with the challenges they encounter in supporting their children's education poses problems for educators and the communities in which they live. Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who resided in an urban public school district in the northeastern region of the United States in relation to their involvement in their children's education.

This chapter is a presentation of the research method that I used to conduct this study. In this chapter, I describe the design and rationale for this study as well as the research questions used in this study. I also explicate how other qualitative designs, such as case study, ethnographic, grounded theory, and narrative are less appropriate designs for this study. In relation to the methodology of this study, I describe the researcher's role, participant selection, and instrumentation. Additionally, I describe the procedures for data collection and data analysis as well as issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations in qualitative research.

Research Questions

I developed the research questions for this study with the intent to explore issues pertaining to the three spheres of parental involvement: the school, the home, and the community that Epstein et al. (2009) described in a model of parental involvement. This

model was the foundation for the conceptual framework of this qualitative research.

Therefore, the central question of this study was as follows:

RQ: What are the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents

in an urban school district regarding their involvement in their children's

education?

The subquestions below were developed to guide the interview process in order to

make it possible for follow-up questions when necessary (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas,

1994):

SQ1: How do Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceive their role in

interacting with educators about their children's education?

SQ2: What factors impact the participation of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant

parents in their children's education?

SQ3: How effective do Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceive the

communication between home and school in terms of parental involvement?

Research Design and Rationale

The central phenomenon of this research was the lived experiences of Ghanaian

and Nigerian immigrant parents living in an urban school district in terms of their

involvement in their children's education. To examine this phenomenon, I selected a

research approach that allowed me to explore the experiences of participants in depth

(Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). The qualitative approach offered a richer opportunity

than the quantitative approach for understanding the lived experiences of immigrant

parents in relation to their involvement in their children's education. Therefore, the use of a qualitative method fit the intent of the study.

I used a phenomenological research design to conduct this study. Moustakas (1994) defined phenomenology as experiences that determine the underlying structure of the original situations in which the experiences occur. Creswell (2013) defined phenomenology as the study of the aggregate lived experiences of individuals in relation to a given phenomenon. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) noted that phenomenology involves the development of themes to "extract essences and essentials of participant meanings" (p. 8). The themes that permeate these definitions include (a) experiences that are contemporary and ongoing, (b) the experiences are described in their textural forms, and (c) the researcher aims at presenting the ideas that participants have in common. The challenge to the researcher is to describe and interpret the phenomenon through the eyes of the participants who experience it.

As the phenomenological research design is both descriptive and interpretive, it allowed me to investigate the lived experiences of a group of parents who "are less powerful" (Theodorou, 2008, p. 254) in society and whose voices were seldom heard by educators in K-12 school systems (Patton, 2002). Moreover, this design allowed me to achieve this goal through an inductive process of data collection that involved obtaining comprehensive answers to open-ended questions (Moustakas, 1994). I collected data by interviewing participants, recording the interviews, transcribing the data, and determining the meaning of participants' experiences through the analysis and interpretation of their

responses. Therefore, the research method for this study was dictated by the intent of the study and the research questions (Creswell, 2013).

The use of the phenomenological approach for this study evolved from the consideration of other qualitative research designs. A case study design was a close contender for this study. Researchers who want to conduct studies on a particular group, program, or a specific social problem often use case study design. Case studies are bounded by a specific time and place (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Furthermore, case study research is often time consuming because researchers need a large database to collect data from multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). However, for this study, my goal was to collect data only from in-depth interviews with participants in order to describe their lived experiences in relation to their involvement in their children's education in public schools; therefore, the case study design did not fit my research goal.

Researchers use an ethnographic design to develop a comprehensive description of the culture of a group of people. Researchers use purposeful observations to capture the day-to-day activities of a particular group of individuals (Creswell, 2014; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The emphasis on culture in the use of ethnographic design lured me into considering this research design. However, I realized that the use of an ethnographic design would have resulted in a focus on the culture of the participants rather than on the lived experiences of immigrant parents involved in their children's education.

Other qualitative research designs such as narrative inquiry were also considered. Narrative inquiry involves presenting participants' life histories, memoirs, and actual events in sequential order (Elliott, 2005; Patton, 2002). Although researchers who use narrative design allow participants to relate stories similar to phenomenological design, narrative inquiry encourages researchers to focus on only a few participants who tell their stories from their points of view, with researchers helping to construct the narrative. The purpose of this study, however, was to describe the lived experiences of immigrant parents in relation to their involvement in their children's education from their point of view; therefore, narrative design was not as appropriate as phenomenology for this study.

Researchers who desire to generate an original and comprehensive theory from their analysis of the data (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002) use grounded theory design. Researchers who use grounded theory require a large number of participants in order to build a comprehensive database (Creswell, 2014). The goal of this study was not to build a theory from this type of database, but rather to examine the lived experiences of these immigrant parents in relation to their support of their children's education; therefore, grounded theory was not an appropriate research design for the purpose of this study. Moreover, with limited participants at my disposal, a grounded theory research design was less desirable.

In summary, phenomenological design involves describing the lived experiences of individuals and groups of people (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002). The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in relation to their involvement in their children's education. Consequently, because I

used a phenomenological design, only individual interviews with participants were needed as the data source.

Role of the Researcher

As a single researcher for this qualitative research, I played several roles. One of my roles was to collect data. In this role, I conducted individual interviews in person with each participant, using the oral questionnaire that I created. Another role was to analyze and interpret the data. Furthermore, as a researcher, I followed ethical protocols in selecting participants and informing them of their rights while collecting and analyzing the data.

I also had the responsibility of ensuring the trustworthiness of this study by reducing my biases about the topic by using specific strategies such as triangulation, maximum variation in the sampling, and member checks (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In addition, I maintained a researcher's journal in which I stated my biases upfront before I collected and analyzed the data. For example, one of my biases was that immigrant parents do not care about school-based parental involvement activities. This bias may have been the result of observations I made about school-based parental activities at the school where I was employed. At this school, parent participation in activities such as parent/teacher meetings, parents' night, and report card night was often disappointing. In addition, I am an American citizen of Ghanaian descent, a parent, and a teacher in the public school system. I grew up in the same culture as some of the participants. However, I had no personal or professional relationship with any participant. Furthermore, I do not claim to know all the problems

that parents face in balancing cultural issues with involvement in their children's education. To increase the trustworthiness of this study, it was important to consider the experiences that immigrant parents described as fresh and new encounters (Creswell, 2013). It was also important "to set aside prejudices regarding the phenomenon being studied" (Moustakas 1994, p. 22). In order to minimize these biases, I used the strategy of reflexivity (Merriam, 2009) to maintain a researcher's journal in which I reflected on my potential biases.

<div align="center">**Participant Selection**</div>

The participants for this study were selected from the population of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents living in a cosmopolitan area of New Jersey. Potential participants were determined according to the following inclusion criteria: (a) participants must be immigrant parents of Ghanaian or Nigerian descent, (b) participants must have children enrolled in the Korklu Public School System (pseudonym), (c) participants must have lived in the United States for at least two years, and (d) participants must also have sufficient English proficiency to participate in this study.

I used the sampling strategy of snowballing to select the participants from this population. Snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013) "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information rich" (p. 158). In using snowball sampling, the researcher's responsibility is to locate a few participants who meet the criteria he or she has established and who will provide rich information about the topic (Merriam, 2009). Although I interviewed 11 participants, the number of participants was not as important as getting informed data from the participants I interviewed. In

collecting qualitative data through interviewing, "the crucial factor is not the number of respondents but the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 105). Moreover, how to get answers to the research questions should be one of the main factors in choosing a sampling size strategy (Maxwell, 2005; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Consequently, the adequate number of participants in any qualitative study process is the number that takes the researcher to the point of data saturation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as (cited in Merriam, 2009). In the data collection process, a saturation point is reached when new participants can no longer offer any new information about the topic being studied (Creswell, 2014; & Maxwell, 2005).

Instrumentation

The instrument that I used to conduct the interviews for this study was the oral questionnaire, which I designed (Appendix C). The interviews were semi-structured, and the questions were open-ended. Merriam's (2009) continuum for interview structures was used as a guide in selecting the interview structure that was used. This semi-structured interview fell on the continuum between structured and unstructured interviews (Merriam, 2009; Wengraf, 2002) and drew from a phenomenological orientation that researchers make no claim to be without any biases; rather, they try to ask questions that will generate dialogue between them and the participants. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) suggested that semi-structured interviews give researchers the latitude to ask the questions in less formal and more congenial ways. Therefore, semi-structured interviews allowed me the flexibility to modify the questions as the interviews proceeded. This style

enabled me to ask probing questions if participants did not answer the questions directly. Moreover, using this type of interview enabled me to describe the lived experiences of immigrant parents.

To increase the content validity of the interview instrument, I asked two colleagues who were in the advanced stages of their doctoral programs in the Richard Riley College of Education at Walden University to review the interview questions to make sure they were aligned with the research questions for this study. As Creswell (2014) indicated, this peer review process provides an external check to keep the researchers on task with consistent use of research protocols.

Conducting effective interview begins with creating constructive questions that speak to the needs of the participants and to the type of methodology used for the study (Merriam, 2009). Thus, in creating interview questions, researchers need to use words that are meaningful as well as sensitive to the participants. I used experience and behavioral questions because I was interested in how participants cope, on a daily basis, with the challenges of involvement in their children's education. Table 1 includes the alignment of the interview questions with the research questions.

Table 1

Alignment between research questions and interview questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
A.How do Ghanaian and Nigerian parents perceive their role in interacting with school personnel concerning their child's education?	1. How do your communication skills influence your relationship with the educators at your child's school?
	2. What do you think you can do to improve your relationship with your child's education?
	3. How does your relationship with educators at your child's education?
B. What factors impact the participation of Ghanaian and Nigerian parents in their children's education?	4. Does your job prevent you from participating in your child's school activities? Why or why not?
	5. How do your communication skills influence your relationship with your child's teachers?
	6. What do you think you can do to improve your relationship with your child's teachers?
C. How do Ghanaian and Nigerian parents communicate with their children about school and learning issues?	7. How do you respond to child when he or she does strong academic work? When his or her academic performance is not strong?
	8. Is there anything else you will like to say about the challenges that you face in getting involved in your child's education that I have not asked?

The ultimate purpose of designing good interview questions is to obtain relevant data (Merriam, 2009). Such questions enable researchers to probe for further details about ideas raised by the responses to the initial interview questions. Therefore, open-ended

interview questions support Merriam's assertion about obtaining relevant data. By using open-ended questions, I provided opportunities for participants to elaborate on any issues they perceived to be relevant. Initial interview questions were developed to make it possible to ask follow-up questions when necessary (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Consequently, designing interview questions requires careful thought (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). For this study, the interview questions were derived from the broad research questions in order to elicit responses from participants about (a) how they handle challenges related to the school system, (b) how immigrant parents ascertain what happens at school from their children, and (c) the opportunities participants have to self-reflect on their own educational experiences.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

In relation to recruitment, I first contacted the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction of the Korklu School District (pseudonym) to explain the purpose of my study and to determine if the school district would become my research partner. I asked the director of data and records to sign a letter of cooperation for this study to no avail. In addition, I asked the pastors of the Catholic Church, the Methodist church, and the Presbyterian churches in this school district to be the gatekeepers for potential participants. They agreed and signed letters of cooperation indicating support for my study (see Appendix A). Gatekeepers are members of the research population who act as liaisons between the participants and the researchers (Creswell, 2013). Gatekeepers facilitate the access of the researcher to potential participants who meet the inclusion criteria.

After obtaining approval from the participating school district and Walden's

Institutional Board (IRB Approval Number 07-27-0112837), I started the process of

selecting participants using the snowball sampling method. My plan for selecting

participants using a snowball sampling strategy included approaching stakeholders,

gaining access to two of three people from the population of Ghanaian and Nigerian

immigrant parents who had children in the Korklu School District. I attended meetings

and services at three churches in the Korklu Township where some of the Ghana and

Nigerian families were congregants. The plan to contact the PTA chairperson to inform

him or her about my intentions and ask him or her to be my gatekeeper did not

materialize. I introduced myself to the pastors who allowed me to introduce myself to the

congregation. I contacted a few people through these congregations. On the consent form,

I asked all the contacts if they knew any colleagues who fit the given criteria. If so, I

contacted the referrals from the initial participants by phone and asked them to

participate. I sent those individuals consent forms through email or personally dropped

them off in their mail boxes. I asked these potential participants to recommend Ghanaian

and Nigerian immigrant parents in the Korklu School District who might be interested in

participating in this study. This process continued until 15 to 20 people agreed to

participate in the study.

From these received consent forms, I selected 11 participants in relation to the

number of children they had in the public school system. I started with the parents with

the highest number of children and worked my way down the list until I obtained 11

participants. For example, when I had a parent with four children, and there was another

parent with three children in the school district, I selected the parent with the four

children first. I then selected the parent with three children, two children, and one child in

the school system. I started this selection process again with the highest number of

children until I obtained 11 parents who agreed to participate in the interviews. I choose

the number of children in school from one family as a criterion to select the 11

participants because the number children in a household may bring different dynamics to

parental involvement activities.

In relation to data collection, all the initial interviews were conducted face to face

in public places that offered a private setting such as public libraries. For privacy, I

reserved a conference room in the public libraries that I planned to use. Furthermore,

each initial interview was 60 to 90 minutes, and they were scheduled at the mutual

convenience of the participants and the researcher. I also audio recorded each interview.

In accordance with interview protocol, I began the interview by welcoming and thanking

the participant and introducing myself again. During the interview, I recorded field notes

and my reflections for each of the interview questions. Additionally, I transcribed all

audio recordings of each interview.

Data Analysis Plan

For this phenomenological study, I analyzed data using the modified van

Kaam method of analysis that Moustakas (1994) recommended for phenomenological

studies. This method involves seven steps. The first step is listing and preliminary

grouping, and in this step, for each participant's interview, I constructed a list that

included all expressions relevant to the participant's individual experiences as an

immigrant parent in relation to their involvement in their children's education. van Kaam

referred to this process as horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). The second step is

reduction and elimination in order to determine the "invariant constituents" (p. 121) or

the major categories. I tested each expression for two requirements: (a) does the

expression add to the understanding of the participant's experience, and (b) is it possible

to abstract and label this expression as a category that is relevant to the participant's

experiences. Moustakas called data that meet these criteria "invariant constituents"

because they are constant and unchanging elements of the experience (p.121). The third

step is clustering, and in this step, I clustered these invariant constituents or categories

into the core themes of the experience for each participant. The fourth step is final

identification of the invariant constituents or categories and the themes. In this step, I

validated the categories and themes by checking them against the participant's complete

transcript. If these categories and themes were not explicitly stated in the transcript or if

they were not compatible, I deleted them. The fifth step is construction of an individual

textural description of the experience for each individual participant. To construct this

textural description, I used verbatim examples from the participant's transcribed

interview. Step six is construction of individual structural descriptions of the participant's

experience. For this step, I constructed the structural description based on the individual

textural description using the technique of imaginative variation, which entails viewing

data from different perspectives. In the final step, a composite description, to capture the

meaning and essences of all the participants' experiences, was created using the textural

and structural of the individual participants.

I had planned to use Nvivo, a software analysis program for qualitative research data to help me analyze the data. Nvivo is an appropriate data analysis tool because it would allow me to query the database about relationships between and among categories (Creswell, 2013). However, this idea was abandoned after I spent hours listening to the audio interviews several times during the transcribing process. I decided to construct my own codes by using open coding, which is explained in more detail in the data analysis section of Chapter 4.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of qualitative research, according to Merriam (2009), should be discussed in relation to the constructs of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. In the paragraphs below, I describe each construct and the strategies that I used to improve the trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility

Merriam (2009) defined credibility in qualitative research as how congruent the findings are with reality. The strategies that Merriam recommended to enhance the credibility of a qualitative study included triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, and peer examination. For this study, I used the strategy of triangulation by comparing data collected from participants with different perspectives. I also used the strategy of member checks by asking participants to review the tentative findings of the study for their plausibility. I also used the strategy of adequate engagement in data collection by spending enough time with the interviewees in order to obtain rich responses to the interview questions.

Dependability

Merriam (2009) defined dependability in qualitative research as "the extent to which the research findings can be replicated" (p. 220). Another important aspect of dependability is "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (p.221). The strategies that Merriam recommended to improve the dependability of a qualitative study include triangulation, peer examination, the researcher's position on the topic, and an audit trail. For this study, as stated earlier, I used triangulation by interviewing participants with different educational backgrounds, varying lengths of stay in the United States, and with children who were in different grade levels. I also used peer examination by asking two doctoral candidates of advanced standing in the Richard Riley College of Education at Walden University to review the findings for their plausibility. In addition, I used an audit trail by maintaining a research journal, in which important details of the data collection and data analysis processes, the problems I encountered, and the decisions I made during this research were entered.

Transferability

Transferability or external validity refers to the degree to which the findings of the study can be applied to other similar situations (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). To enhance the transferability of qualitative research, Merriam recommended that researchers use the strategies of rich, thick description and either maximum variation or typicality in relation to the sample. I used the strategy of rich, thick description for this phenomenological study by describing the setting, the participants, and the findings in detail. I also paid close attention to the sample size for this study by selecting a sample of

participants who were typical of other Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who resided on the northeastern coast of the United States and who had children in public schools.

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined by Merriam (2009) as the objectivity of a qualitative study. Merriam recommended that researchers use the strategy of reflexivity, which is "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (p. 219). I used this strategy by maintaining a researcher's journal in which I reflected on my beliefs about parental involvement in the schools, which stemmed from my upbringing in Ghana and my experiences as a teacher in an inner city public school in the United States. Growing up in Ghana, I believed that parents often did not appreciate the need for involvement in their children's education. Today I also believe that parental involvement in American schools is often lacking. These perceptions could have impacted the findings of this study. Moreover, some of the literature I reviewed for this study indicated that some cultures support a lack of parental involvement in schools. Therefore, using the strategy of reflexivity enabled me to reflect upon the need to minimize my own thoughts and feelings about parental involvement as I interact with participants in the data collection phase.

<div align="center">

Ethical Procedures

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Merriam (2009) noted that the trustworthiness of a study depends on the ethics of the researcher. To ensure the trustworthiness of this research, I first sought and obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval Number 07-27-0112837) at

Walden University to conduct this study. As IRB requires, I treated the participants in this study ethically and with utmost respect. Before the interviews began, participants were asked to sign consent forms that informed them that their names would not appear in this study because pseudonyms would be used, participation was voluntary, and no compensation was provided for any activities connected to this research. To help participants feel at ease, I introduced myself as an American educator of Ghanaian descent. Culturally, Ghanaian and Nigerian civilians are leery of government officials seeking information because of prior abuses and tense relations (Human Rights Report, 2010; Nyarko, 2014; Nwokoji, 2011). To lessen their apprehension, I reviewed the purpose of the study and the data collection procedures included in the letter of consent. I also asked participants to review their transcripts for accuracy of transcription and the tentative findings of this study for plausibility. At the completion of this study, I sent each participant a copy of the dissertation abstract and a brief summary of the key findings.

Summary

This chapter included a description of the research method that I used to conduct this study. The research design and rationale and my role in this study were provided. Phenomenological research design was selected because it provided me with the means whereby individual participants' lived experiences, within a social and cultural context, could be investigated. This design also allowed me to describe how the participants in this study presented their experiences and what these experiences meant to them. My role as a researcher included creating the questionnaire for the interviews, selecting specific

parents as participants, and analyzing the data. I also described how I used the modified

van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data that Moustakas (1994)

recommended to analyze the data for this study. In addition, I discussed how to improve

the trustworthiness of this study by using specific strategies related to the constructs of

credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability and the ethical procedures

that were used in the data collection phase of the study. In Chapter 4, the results of this

study based on this research method are presented.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who resided in an urban public school district in the northeastern region of the United States in terms of their involvement in their children's education. Therefore, the central research question that guided this study was:

RQ: What are the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in an urban school district regarding their involvement in their children's education?

The subquestions were:

SQ1: How do Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceive their role in interacting with educators about their children's education?

SQ2: What factors impact the participation of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in their children's education?

SQ3: How effective do Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceive the communication between home and school in terms of parental involvement?

This chapter is about the results of the study. It includes a description of the setting, participant demographics, a review of the data collection process, an explanation of the data analysis procedures, evidence of trustworthiness, an analysis of the results in relation to the research questions, and a summary.

Setting

This study was conducted in the residential community of a metropolitan public school district located in the northeastern region of the United States, and participants were limited to Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents whose children were enrolled in that public school district. The Korklu School District (pseudonym) had been under state government control since 1995 because of poor student academic achievement and mismanagement of school resources (Strauss, 2015). Additionally, the district was not able to meet the standards of the state department of education for school district certification (Strauss, 2015). Available records from the school district's website showed that 35,054 students in Grades K-12 were enrolled in 2013-2014, of which 19,440 students were identified as Black, 15,315 students were identified as Hispanic, and the remaining 299 students were identified as White, Asian Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans. The Korklu School District included 48 elementary and middle schools, 24 high schools, 14 chartered school, four early childhood schools, and three ungraded schools. Because many of the district's K-8 students were housed in the same complex, there were no separate primary and middle schools. However, 10,785 students in Grade 5-8 were enrolled in the Korklu School District. Since August of 2014, 10,000 students in 19 schools in this school district were under the federal program known as the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act, and they received free breakfast and lunch regardless of their family income.

Participant Demographics

Twenty Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents expressed an interest in participating in this study. However, some of these parents had enrolled their children in private Catholic schools, and therefore, they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Thirteen parents signed the consent forms, but only 11 of these parents participated in the interviews. The names of the participants used in this study were common African proper names but were not the real names of the participants. The real names were changed to conceal the identity of the participants, thus adhering to the promise of anonymity pledged to the participants. The time that participants resided in the country ranged from 2 to 42 years. Three of the 11 participants were single. Only two of the participants were a married couple. Eight of the participants were male, and three of the participants were female.

The eleven potential participants who signed the consent form have spent the average of 22 years in the United States. The grade levels of the children of the participants range from third grade to high school senior. Of the 11 participants, six grew up in Ghana and four grew up in Nigeria. All the participants were secured through the churches' connections by the strategies of the gatekeeper and snowball data collection methods. One participant, Ketudor, did not returned phone calls for the follow up for a period of three weeks, so she was excluded and was replaced by another participant. Although, neither educational level or nor the line of profession was asked during the screening, all the participants invariably revealed their standard of education and their

level of education. All the names of the participants are common African proper names but are not the real names of the participants.

Afutu

Afutu lived with his American-born wife Naatsoo (pseudonym) and two children in an upscale part of the school district. Their son was a sophomore in public high school and the daughter was an eighth grader in a private school. Afutu liked the school their son attended because he was doing well, and they usually heard positive things about him from teachers. Over the years, Naatsoo, a registered nurse, worked various shifts and long hours at a local senior citizens' center. Afutu worked during the day so dropping the children off at school was his job. High school sweethearts who married about 20 years ago, they enjoyed chauffeuring their children to activities, helping them with their homework, and supporting their children's afterschool programs because their children were their pride and joy. When Naastoo worked the day shift and was at home in the evening, checking homework was a shared evening proposition.

Akua

Akua was a home health care worker who had one daughter in one of the primary schools in the Korklu School District. Her 9-year old daughter lived with her grandmother when she received a week-long living assignment. Akua was going back to school to get a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) certificate, so she viewed education "as a pathway to success" in this country. Akua called home two or three times every day to check on her daughter when she was away on assignment. Although Akua had been in

the United States for 10 years, she had lived in this school district for 2 years, and she took pride in knowing the names of her daughter's teachers and was friendly with them.

Ama

Aspiring to be a registered nurse, Ama worked as a nurse's aide at night and attended school in the evening. Ama believed that there was discrimination against African children, noting that an English teacher criticized her son's "accent." Ama volunteered to help in her son's Karate class. Within 2 years of her stay in America, Ama had secured Home Health Aide (HHA) and Certifield Nurses Aid (CNA) certificates in New Jersey.

Anani

Pursuing an advanced degree in public health, Anani believed that he and his wife were responsible for the education of his three daughters. Anani had lived in the United States for 35 years, and he was alone in this country without his wife for the first 8 years. Anani remembered how lonely those years were, so he cherished every moment he had with his family. For the past 2 years, Mansa had been on a rotating schedule at work, leaving Anani to help the children with their homework every other week. Constantly comparing the limited educational resources they had when they were children in their native country, Anani reported that they did not recognize any problems their teenagers had in school.

Chudimeka

Chudimeka lived with her 25-year-old son, who was the father figure for the other three children. The only daughter among the siblings was a junior at the high school, and

the twin boys were in the fifth grade. Chudimeka and her family stayed in Switzerland for 5 years before immigrating to the United States. Due to her long working hours, Chudimeka was not at home when the children came home from school. Her daughter rushed from the high school to pick up the twins from the primary school a few blocks away and stayed with them until her older brother came back from work. Therefore, Chudimeka constantly called home from work to check on her children. Although Chudimeka loved the work the teachers were doing, she was frustrated by their inability to discipline the children about their behavior.

Donkor

Donkor was self-employed and had tailored his schedule around the education of his two sons. One child had been labeled as a difficult learner, and therefore, Donkor was eager to let every teacher know that, although his child was a difficult student, he was a special education student who needed extra attention. Married to his American-born wife for 3 years after he immigrated to the United States as a student, Donkor saw life through the prism of teamwork. For 40 years, this belief in teamwork worked for him and his wife. Among the seven married participants, they were the only husband and wife team who both majored in engineering in college. Additionally, Donkor was the only Parent Teacher Association (PTA) president among the participants.

Ibe

Ibe won the immigration lottery 6 years ago, and with his brother's help, he and his wife Nena immigrated to the United States a year later. Their three children, ages 14–17, followed them within 6 months. Although doing so placed a strain on the family

finances, Ibe had to quit his night job to be able to be with the children after school. A school teacher in his native country, Ibe had yet to secure a full-time teaching job in the United States. Additionally, he believed his involvement in their children's education was necessary in building a foundation for a better future for the children.

Kofi

Taking care of his children's education was a "juggling act" in this household. An upbeat and energetic young man, Kofi lamented having to work two jobs to make ends meet. Kofi had been in the United States for 8 years, but his wife Ama arrived 2 years ago and the children had been living in the United States for only a year. At first, the children had to go to a neighbor's apartment until Kofi could pick them up after work. Unlike the children of some of the other immigrant parents, Kofi reported that his children had a rough transition to the American school system because Kofi did not know anything about the system. Within a year, Kofi had moved the children to another school because he and his wife disagreed with some of the teachers and administrators at the first school. Despite Kofi's hard time with school administrators, Kofi admired teachers.

Mahama

Mahama was a single parent with two children who was proud of his children's smooth assimilation into the American public school system. The children came from Ghana 3 years ago, and both of them were on the honor roll in their schools. Praying was very important in Mahama's household; they prayed together before Mahama left for work, and he called to remind them to pray when they came back from school. At 6:00 p.m. every evening, they prayed together before dinner, and after that, homework started.

At this point in their children's educational life, Mahama believed that everything hinged on homework, so he wanted the children to take homework seriously, because he believed they had many opportunities in the United States. Mahama considered himself lucky because the school was within walking distance from their apartment for his daughter, the eighth grader, and his son, the fifth grader. Although Mahama had some college education in Ghana, he started college as a freshman when he immigrated to the United States 11 years ago. As a manager of a trucking company in this city, Mahama was not working in the field of his expertise, which was medical technology. After the children joined him in the United States, Mahama had little time for any social life because his life revolved around his children and work.

Nuunu

An accountant by profession, Nuunu lived with his wife and their three teenage children four blocks away from the high school. Both he and his wife missed the homework ritual when their children were in grade school. Because the children were enrolled in different school activities, these parents did considerable chauffeuring. Although the children all went to the same school, they were able to participate in soccer practice on another school's field and gospel choir practice at the high school. Nuunu went to summer school throughout his college years, and therefore, he believed that going to school was a continuous process. Nuunu believed in education and in humility, and therefore, he preached the importance of discipline, respect, and time to his children. For the past four years, Nuunu had been on disability from an accident that occurred

during a snowstorm. Nuunu had lived in this country for 35 years, and took little vacation; however, he visited his native country every 5 or 6 years.

Okoronkwo

Okoronkwo was a widower and an accountant by profession, and his last child was in high school. Knowledgeable about the school system, Okoronkwo was appalled by the contentious relationship between school teachers and administrators and the superintendents' cabinet. Okoronkwo had lived in the United States for 40 years, and he had a relationship with this school district for 30 of those 40 years. His two daughters, now grown adults, had attended schools in the Korklu School District.

A summary of the demographic information of the study sample is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Table 2

Participants Demographics

Participant Names	Number of years in United States	Number of children in school system	Grade levels of children
Afutu (male)	40	1	High school
Akua (female)	10	1	Elementary school
Ama (female)	2	2	Elementary school
Anani (male)	35	3	High school
Chudimeka (female)	5	3	Elementary school/high school
Donkor (male)	40	2	High school
Ibe (male)	6	3	Middle school/high school
Kofi (male)	8	2	Elementary school
Mahama (male)	11	2	Elementary school
Nuunu (male)	42	3	High school
Okoronkwo (male)	40	1	High school

Data Collection

The data collection process began in October 2015 and ended in February 2016. I contacted the leaders of the major churches in the Korklu School District who agreed to assist me in identifying the potential participants by signing a letter of cooperation (Appendix A). Additionally, they disseminated the information to the congregation and invited me to talk to the congregation about this study. Thus, the leaders of these

churches acted as gatekeepers for the data collection process. As Creswell (2014) and Namageyo-Funa et al. (2014) indicated, the gatekeeper is the one who can lead the researcher to the group of potential participants and who can validate the value of the research to the group. From this process, 20 Ghanaian and Nigerian parents indicated an interest in participating in this study. However, many of these potential participants had enrolled their children in private Catholic schools and did not meet the inclusion criteria for this study. Therefore, 13 parents signed the consent forms, and 11 of these parents chose to participate in this study.

Seven of the 10 interviews were held at local public libraries within a 5 mile radius of the Korklu School District, two interviews were conducted in the participants' homes, and one interview was conducted by phone. One individual and one married couple were interviewed at home. Before I started the interview at the participants' homes, the television and cell phones were turned off. The interviews were conducted without any interruption. For the phone interview, I situated myself in my basement of my home where I was free of disturbances and where the interview could not be overheard. I followed the same protocol for both in-person and phone interviews. Interviews took place between October 1, 2015, and February 6, 2016.

To capture each interview accurately, I printed a copy of the interview questions and followed the same protocol throughout each of the interviews. In addition, I took notes in my journal, and I audiotaped the interview using a hand-held Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-821. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to 75 minutes. Each interview was saved as an mp3 file on a password-protected computer. In addition, an

average of 15 to 20 minutes of pre-interview conversation occurred before the interviews began.

None of the participants reported any major events in their lives that might have compromised their responses during the interview. However, the data collection took over 4 months because of scheduling difficulties with parents.

Data Analysis

For this study, I used the modified van Kaam method of analysis that Moustakas (1994) recommended for phenomenological studies. This method included seven steps. The first step involved listing and preliminary grouping of the data, using an open coding process. The second step was reduction and elimination of coded data to determine the "invariant constituents" or the primary categories (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). The third step was clustering the major categories into the core themes of the experience for each participant. The fourth step was the final identification of the invariant constituents or categories and themes. The fifth step was the construction of an individual textural description of the experience for each individual participant, and the sixth step was the construction of individual structural descriptions of the participant's experience. The seventh step was a composite description of the meaning and essence of the experiences for all participants. In the following sections, I describe how I analyzed the data in relation to these seven steps.

Step 1: Listing and Preliminary Grouping

I transcribed the audio-recorded interviews as soon as I completed them, and I sent the transcribed interviews to each participant for review. Only one of the participants

made minor corrections to the transcribed interview. I used open coding to code the interview data for each participant, which is a process used to "retrieve and categorize similar data chunks so the researchers can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question" (Mathews et al., 2014, p. 72). To begin this open coding process, I read the transcripts to highlight preliminary groupings of statements. As I read each transcript, I highlighted phrases or sentences that were relevant to the participant's experiences. I then created a list of statements that represented separate thoughts. At this point, each of these phrases and sentences had equal value. This step required me to examine the data and recognize and isolate essential statements that described the lived experiences of the participants in relation to their involvement in their children's education.

Step 2: Reduction and Elimination

The second step entailed reduction and elimination of the coded data in order to determine the major categories that emerged from the responses to the interview questions. In this step, each statement selected in the preliminary stage is tested if: (a) the expression added to the understanding of the participant's experience, and (b) it was possible to label this statement as a category that was relevant to the participant's experiences (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). Categories emerged from an analysis of this coded interview data, using the constant comparative method (Merriam, 2009). When similarities among the codes emerged, a category was determined. A category was determined when a minimum of six out of the 11 participants agreed.

Interview Question 1 asked, "How do educators at your child's school encourage or prevent you from participating in your child's education?"

A significant category that was constructed from the responses to this question was that parents believed administrators in all of the schools had an open door policy that encouraged parents to participate in their children's education. Most of the parents expressed their appreciation for this open door policy and took advantage of it to get more involved in their children's education by running for positions in the PTA, making their concerns known to educators, and helping other parents get involved in their children's education. Donkor noted that as an immigrant parent, it was refreshing "to see that you are encouraged by the principal and the staff to participate in the school affairs." Furthermore, Donkor believed that this policy and the positive attitude of the principal encouraged him to run for the PTA president.

Another category that was constructed in relation to this interview question was the direct communication that occurred between parents and teachers. Many parents expressed appreciation about how teachers communicated directly with them. Okoronkwo noted:

> They encourage me to participate in the sense that they get me involved in his classwork. If he's slacking, they call me. Sometimes we have one on one parent/teacher conferences in the school, especially if he's not doing some of his homework or any other problem like that. So at least they encourage me to be there, and they always send me his progress reports, and they all have my number,

and I have all their information, and they call me or email me concerning his

progress in school.

Chudimeka also acknowledged that teachers periodically sent letters home or gave them

to the children. Teachers also called her at work to remind her about a scheduled meeting,

adding, "Sometimes if they lack in certain areas, they put it in letter form and they bring

it for us to also evaluate and see how we can help them at home…. sometimes they call

me while I am at work." Anani also encouraged direct communication with teachers by

giving them his phone numbers.

Another category was that parents believed educators encouraged them to

participate in their children's education by providing a computer lab for them to use.

Both Afutu and Okoronkwo were impressed with the availability of the parents'

computer laboratory in their children's school because they could go there on their own

time. They found the parent computer laboratory particularly impressive because they

could meet other parents informally and find out what was going in their children's

school without having to call anybody. They also noted that parents who did not have

access to computers at home could take advantage of this amenity. Afutu also reported

that it was inspirational to have this computer lab" because the more they (educators)

open up, the more you want to do for, not only your child, but for the other children in the

school." Donkor agreed that parental participation was one of the factors related to

children's success in school, so he always attended the meetings and asked questions.

However, for Afutu and Okoronkwo, the computer lab provided a safe haven for asking

questions without expressing emotions to the administrators.

In summary, three main categories emerged from the data analysis in relation to the strategies that parents believed educators used either encourage or prevent their participation in their children's education. These categories included an open door policy, direct communication between teachers and parents, and provisions for a parent computer lab.

Interview Question 2 asked, "Tell me about the changes you will like educators to make to make in order for you to participate effectively in school activities."

Parents agreed that they wanted educators to make several changes so that they could participate more effectively in school activities. The first category that was constructed in relation to these changes concerned the enforcement discipline at school. Nuunu believed that discipline was a problem for many teachers and that they should try to take more control of these disciplinary issues. Nuunu commented,

I have a problem with the discipline aspect of the kids in the school system right now. They don't seem to pay attention to their teachers. . . . I know school kids have their problems but still they should be able to respect their teachers who are trying to nurture them for a society where they can stand on their own two feet.

Nuunu added:

I witnessed that once. The kids where standing in the hallway and the teachers asked them to get back into their classrooms. . . . The length of time they took to leave that spot shows that there's some disrespect right away. They took their time; they didn't walk as quickly as demanded by the teacher, but they continued to walk slowly and continued to talk. I could see the frustration in the teacher's

face. It's like you could see that there's no other way other than to continue to

speak. And these kids just waste her time until they were satisfied. That is a

drawback . . . so, this is a problem . . . that needs to be changed.

Nuunu also believed that these student attitudes made it hard for teachers to provide their

best instruction. Akua also believed that bullying and teasing flourished in the elementary

schools because of a lack of discipline, adding that "a lot depends on the teachers." In

addition, Mahama believed that discipline is definitely an issue and that teachers are

aware of it. Mahama remarked:

Sometimes, I don't feel like going there because of what is actually going on there

with the kids. They don't know how to talk, they don't know how to behave and

that sometimes ticks me off, and that makes me stay away from that place. One

time a teacher told me to transfer my son to a charter school because they are

more disciplined. [The teacher said,] Your son is good and very smart and will do

well at a charter school, because they themselves know how bad the behavior

situation is in the school.

Ibe also believed that teaching and learning cannot take place without discipline and

respect. Ibe added, "Without discipline, nothing could be achieved in school." Although

Anani acknowledged that discipline was a problem in schools, it did not deter him from

participating in school activities. Anani believed that parents need to empower teachers to

discipline their children. Therefore, Anani told teachers that they could discipline his

children as they deemed fit. Donkor expressed similar sentiments, adding, "I have noticed

that... showing the teachers that you have faith in them and trust their judgment to make the right decisions for your child in your absence … you will have positive results."

A second category that was constructed in relation to changes that participants suggested to improve their participation was the meeting times for parent/teacher conferences. Afutu noted,

> I think maybe one of the things they can do is to have different times when they can meet. Lot of their meetings are around 5 or 5:30 [p.m.] I work an hour away and get off at 5:30 [p.m.] so sometimes I don't get back until 6:30 or 7:00 [p.m.] when the event or meeting is over. If they could work out another time to have later meetings, that would be better for me and I would be right there; other than that my wife had to call off.

Chudimeka agreed, noting that she could not attend meetings because it coincided with her working hours. Kofi also indicated that he was lucky to have his wife available for these meetings; otherwise, he would not have been able to attend any of the late afternoon meetings.

A third category was about the student transfer process between schools. Parents believed that the student transfer policy in the Korklu School District was too stringent, and they wanted that process to be modified. Two parents in particular who had to transfer their children from one school to another within the school district expressed the need to have the transfer policy modified. Akua, who was aspiring to become a licensed practical nurse, commented, "If I had the power, I would like to change the process of student transfer to make it easier, adding that "it is too difficult to move your child from

one school to another." Ama also believed the transfer process was too cumbersome

when she transferred her son from the first school to a new school.

A fourth category concerned listening to parents' suggestions. Several parents

believed that parental involvement could be improved if educators listened to their

suggestions about improving the schools. Donkor noted,

> If there was a magic wand, I would bring it down on the district so that they will
>
> be more flexible and attentive to parents. . . . Somebody needs to tell them, the
>
> people at the district, that the state gives them all this money and we are the
>
> customers. Yes, the kids and their parents should be the customers. And you know
>
> the saying . . . the customer is always right; you listen to the customer.

Okoronkwo also was frustrated about the disconnect between educators and parents.

Okoronkwo expressed the need for parents to be heard, noting, "in this school district and

for a very long time, parents had no input in the governing of schools because we are

under state control." Nuunu also expressed the same sentiments this way, "You know …

if you have a problem you just communicate with them and correct it, but they always

come with a heavy hand. You do it this way or not at all and that creates conflict. They

dictate to them and that is a conflict." These parents believed that parental involvement

could be improved if district educators, in particular, listened more carefully to parental

concerns.

Thus, several categories emerged in relation to parents' suggestions about

changes that educators could make to improve their participation in school activities.

They suggested that educators needed to enforce disciplinary rules at school because of

the connection between discipline and academic achievement. Other parents expressed the need for changing the times for parent/teacher conferences, easing the student transfer process, and listening to parents' suggestions and recommendations.

Interview Question 3 asked, "How does your relationship with the educators at your child's school align with the goals that you have for your child's education?"

Many of the parents agreed that their relationships with educators at their children's schools were aligned with the educational goals they had for their children. They believed that when parents and teachers work together, it is easier to achieve their common goal, which is to educate their children. Therefore, establishing positive relationships with teachers was important to many of the parents. Donkor remarked:

Our goals as parents for our children are not different from any other parent. We want the best for our children and we want them to be successful. . . . We have average kids, and I say this proudly, but they are better than others in so many ways. Academically, they are strong in other areas and they are weak in other places. And so they usually need help and . . . when you work with the teachers sometimes they will call your attention when they sense some weaknesses. And so I believe that . . . teachers have called me to say, 'ok, sir . . . this kid of yours did not do this study or this project . . . I don't see progress on it; are you aware? Maybe they do it to all parents, but I think that the personalizing of the relationship with the teachers typically at the beginning of the year paves the way to, in my opinion, get better than the average returns. To me, I see our relationship with the teachers as an investment for our children.

Akua also accentuated personalizing parent/teacher relationships in order to achieve this alignment, adding:

> Last year, I communicated with my daughter's teacher more than the principal. When I was home for holidays, I text[ed] her, 'Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas. . . . how was your holidays?' Sometimes I text her just to say, 'How are you doing?'

Therefore, building relationships that went beyond casual teacher/parent relationships was important to many parents in order to achieve this alignment.

Another category that emerged in response to this question was the frustration that parents reported about the politics of education, which they believed often prevented them from aligning their educational goals for their children with the goals of the public schools. Okoronkwo reported establishing good relations with his son's teachers, but the state's control over the Korklu School District frustrated him. Okoronkwo believed that his goals for his son's growth were met because his son was doing well academically, and his passion for music was also fulfilled by playing in the school band. However, Okoronkwo feared that the music program in the school might be curtailed by the school board in the near future. Okoronkwo expressed his frustration this way:

> My problem is [that] we have so many politicians getting themselves [involved] in the education of these children. Politicians don't help the children; they just want to win. Politicians have too much influence on the education here, and I wish something would be done about that.

Okoronkwo's fear of losing some school programs was realistic because, as Afutu indicated, the state asked public schools to trim $50 million from their budgets. Okoronkwo also noted:

> We need to have direct control of the school system and not politicians. It can even be any governor, whether Democrat or Republican, because the law says that the public schools are controlled by the state. So, you elect your officials to represent you, but meanwhile they cannot do anything. I don't even know why we have board meetings because whatever we say doesn't go anywhere.

Okoronkwo added:

> I feel alienated beyond the school level because you can go to board meetings, and you hear them talk and make noise, and it doesn't go anywhere because the instructions come from the higher-ups. In Korklu Public Schools, for a very long time parents had no input in the governing of schools because they were all state-controlled schools.

Like Okoronkwo, Nuunu believed that his aspirations for his children and the goals of the school were aligned and that the school board should have control over the school district. Nuunu believed that his children were doing well academically. However, Nuunu also expressed his frustration:

> It is the city itself that should have control over the whole public system. . . . Let's see what the federal government does for our district. They give mandates and provide funding to the state so the state can provide it to the districts. There are too many bodies involved in all these things, and that's scary.

Afutu reported often feeling helpless as a parent trying to get other educators to understand the educational goals he has for his children. Afutu noted:

> We can protest and write letters, but the rules are being handed down from the state so it's almost impossible. For example, this year we were told that the public school has to trim $50 million dollars from their budget. So, some of the first things that will go are music and art, which are helpful for the children's overall education. Any special programs that help the children are cut, and so that kind of handicaps some of the things the district told the schools to do: to be innovative.

Another significant category was that parents reported they did not know much about the public school system, which often prevented them from taking advantage of resources the school system had to offer and prevented this alignment . Mahama acknowledged that he did not know much about the public school system in the United States, but he was happy that educators were nourishing his children's potential. Mahama added:

> There are things that my son and my daughter know that I didn't know when I was at their age. But maybe it's because I am here and they are in my native country. So, I am not able to see every day what they are doing, but over here it's like with the homework and the classes that they have been taking, I would never have imagined that they would learn it, and I am very happy that they are and you can see them really getting into it. They are doing better than the kids that were born here and there are a lot of opportunities here that with a little push they will get it right.

Kofi also confessed that he did not know much about the public school system in the United States before his children started school. However, Kofi believed that his goals and the school's goal were in alignment because his children were doing well in the school. Ibe added, "I don't know much about the school system. I don't know anybody to contact."

Thus, several categories emerged in response to this interview question. Parents believed their educational goals for their children were aligned to the goals of public school educators. Parents also believed that positive relationships with educators were critical to this alignment. In addition, parents who were knowledgeable about how the public school system worked did not like the politics of education and believed that state control was a problem. A lack of knowledge about how the school district worked was also evident in some of the parent responses. Thus, their need to help their children succeed and the importance they attached to teachers as their partners helped them to understand that interacting with school personnel was important to this alignment.

Interview Question 4 asked, "Does your job prevent you from participating in your child's school activities? Why or why not?"

Many parents indicated that their jobs did not hinder them from getting involved in their children's education. Even when the school meeting time did not neatly fit into their job schedule, they still found ways to attend the meeting. For example, Donkor did not have to make many adjustments to his work schedule in order to attend his children's school activities. Donkor remarked:

We are fortunate in that our lines of work aren't 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p. m. I work in the technical industry as a consultant, and I always have control over my calendar... Very rarely do I have to be in a meeting that coincided with after-school programs. I wonder if I was involved in a situation at work where I had to leave for work at 7:30 [in the morning] and come back at 5:30 [in the evening], whether I could do any of these things, so there's a balance here.

Anani also reported that he did not miss any school activities because he was not working during the evening when many of the school meetings took place. Anani added:

Because most of the school's parental involvement activities in my children's school are mostly in the evening, I make time for them. Also, when it comes to homework, I am home with them. So, I make sure I have time for them whenever they need me.

Like Anani, Mahama did not miss his children's school activities because conflicts between his work schedule and school activities did not emerge. Being a manager on his job, Mahama had the flexibility to leave work for school activities, so he went to the school whenever his son was playing soccer or when a teacher called for an emergency. Mahama noted:

My job has nothing to do with it. When there is a problem or something is at the school, then I have to tell my boss. I am the manager at my job so easily I ask permission that I have to take care of my kids, and they allow me because they know that I have children. So, my work doesn't prevent me from participating.

Another category was that parents needed to balance the importance of their children's education with their need to make a living for their families. Okoronkwo, whose son played the saxophone in the school band, noted that his work schedule did not hinder him from participating in school activities for his son. Okonronkwo noted, "I am able to go anytime; I just have to tell them that I have to go to the school and then I'll come back. Sometimes if I am busy, they'll do it through a telephone conference." Although the lack of discipline at school activities bothered Mahama, he still attended these activities. Mahama added:

> I don't feel like going there because it is terrible what goes on there among kids. They don't know how to talk, they don't know how to behave and that sometimes ticks me off, and then makes me stay away from that place. There was even a time a teacher told me to go put my son in a charter school because they are more disciplined. Your son is good and very smart and will do well at a charter school, because they themselves know how the school is.

Afutu also discussed the need to balance the importance of his work with the need to attend his son's school activities. He noted:

> My job is an hour away so I need to leave home early. They allow for me to take days off or get out early; however, I cannot abuse that privilege because then I begin to be seen as a problem at work and no one wants that. I need to support my family so I need to be selective in terms of when I can leave early and when I can take days off for any school event. I need to be very careful because that's my livelihood.

Ibe also expressed similar sentiments about the need to find equilibrium between spending time on one's children education and earning a living. Ibe added:

My substitute teaching position job did not, in any form, hinder me from participating. It actually boosted my involvement. [Because of] my overnight job with the security company, I cannot sleep there or they will fire me. But sometimes I do have [time] to sleep, just for few hours, and get up in preparation for my night job. But when I see the effect that it has on my reason for coming to America, I decided to resign from my overnight job, getting another one which I can focus on better over there so I can give them more of my time towards their education. What I realized is that my substitute job, which is my permanent job, is aligned with me helping them. [For] the other one, that wasn't so, I dropped it already.

Kofi did not participate much in his children's school activities because he had two jobs. Unless the activity occurred on the weekend, Kofi was not able to attend. Instead, his wife attended weekend school activities. "Time is a constraint on me," Kofi said. Even when he changed his full-time job to a part-time job, he still did not get enough time to attend regular PTA meetings, adding "but once in a while my wife goes the PTA, [and] that's fine."

Thus, two opposing categories were constructed in relation to this interview question. Many parents reported that they did not use their work schedule as an excuse for not participating in their children's school activities. Many parents who had flexible work schedules attended after-school activities without any problems. Other parents,

however, had to find equilibrium between their need to earn a living and their participation in their children's successes at school.

Interview Question 5 asked, "How do your communication skills influence your relationship with the educators at your school child's school?"

The majority of parents believed that frequent communication with their children's teachers was very important. Many parents believed that their native accents or their lack of command of the English language did not deter them from frequently speaking to teachers. Furthermore, parents believed that the more they communicated with teachers, the more they strengthened their relationships with them. They also believed that they needed to support teachers in disciplining their children.

In relation to frequent communication with teachers, Donkor reported that he did not hesitate to talk to their sons' teachers about their academic needs. He declared that "when it comes to my children about school, I have no shame." Donkor believed that he had established a good relationship with his sons' teachers, not only because of his communication skills, but also because he let teachers know that he was on their side in nurturing his children. Donkor added:

> I always tell the teachers that look, you and us are on the same team and this little troublesome child here is our enemy . . . and you and I are going to fight this battle together. And I think this empowers the teachers because in a way you transfer some of your parental authority to the teachers, and I find that to be very helpful.

Afutu shared the same sentiments about supporting teachers, noting that "I tell all my son's teachers I'm trying to work with you so if something happens, I don't care how small it is, let me know." Chudimeka also recounted an experience with her daughter to illustrate this point of giving teachers her full support.

> I have one teacher at the time my daughter was in middle school, and she was following these girls, and their behavior was so bad, and what are you going to do about that? I said, 'Please take of my daughter, in the name of Jesus, because all the time I am working so the thing that you know will be good for her [so] please do it! Do everything you can, discipline her, don't spare her, I give you that authority, and she said ok. So that teacher did everything she could, and she stopped her from those kids. I appreciate that teacher a lot.

Anani also noted, "If there are some important messages, the school will send information at times [so] I get the information before I pick them [up]." Concerning frequent communication with teachers, Anani added,

> I know them by name and I have personal relations with them. I have their phone numbers, and they encourage the parents to call them. I have their school emails addresses, and they my home number, my work numbers, and cell phones numbers. This is to make sure that they could reach me and keep me informed when they need to, like the progress of my children or when there is any problem.

Akua also believed that if she talked to her daughter's teachers about other issues besides grades, she created a stronger teacher/parent relationship. Akua remarked:

I like talking to the teachers because when my child goes to school ... I don't

know what is going on, so I like talking to the teachers to find out what is going

on in the school. The more you talk to them, the more the let you know what is

going on. I am happy to talk to them. May be once a week, I call the teacher to

ask about my child. At times when my daughter does something bad, they call

me.

Akua also believed in frequent communication with teachers. Akua indicated that she

communicated with teachers more often than with school administrators. She also pointed

out that she developed a deeper relationship with her daughter's teachers by

acknowledging holidays with greetings. In addition, Nuunu reported that his admiration

for the teaching profession made him feel comfortable talking with educators at his

children's schools. He noted:

There are various ways of communicating, through email, telephone messages,

[or] texting. I reply the best way I know how. If I am able to speak to any of them,

I enjoy talking to them, and I know they enjoy talking with me as well. Every

time I engage with any of them, I'm always asked to participate in something, and

I have a problem with time, and they do not know that. I speak my mind,

[because] I am the type to speak his mind, and if I have any idea other than yours,

I will share it with you, [because] I'm very unselfish. So when it comes to

communication, I'm not afraid of it, I have a way of communicating with virtually

anybody, and I am proud of it.

Ama also believed that frequent communication with teachers was critical to the education of her children. Ama added:

> Everything depends upon the teachers. Like the teachers in my child's former school, she made my child feel uncomfortable. So I do not feel comfortable talking to her. But [at] this new school, everybody is nice, even the security guards, so I like talking to them.

In addition, Okoronkwo reported feeling comfortable talking to teachers and administrators about his son. He noted, "They just listen to my concerns as a parent; it is the people at the district office who do not listen to us." Okoronkwo also felt comfortable communicating with teachers in various forms, such as emails, texting, and phones. Okronkwo added, "Sometimes they ask me to come and I go, sometimes they send me emails or just do it over the phone, whichever is convenient." Mahama also believed that frequent communication with teachers was important; therefore, it did not matter who initiated the talk. However, Mahama also believed that parents still needed to talk to their children in order to support this communication with teachers:

> As a parent, you need to talk to your children and their teachers all the time. They send me emails, and I like that a lot . . . but more importantly, if you talk to your kids all the time, you the parent will know about the good and the bad in the school. Also, you have to take it easy with them and try to understand them, and teach them. If you leave your kids to the teachers at school alone, then you are courting failure.

Thus, three categories also were developed in relation to this interview question. Parents believed that frequent communication with teachers about their children's progress in school was important. They also believed that frequent communication strengthened parent/teacher relationships. Parents also expressed the need to support teachers unconditionally in their efforts to discipline their children.

Interview Question 6 asked, "What do you think you can do to improve your relationship with your child's teachers?"

Parents made several suggestions about how to improve parent/teacher relations, including improving the frequency of communication and, sharing ideas about how to improve discipline and respect at school and at home. In relation to increasing the frequency of communication between teachers and parents, Afutu noted:

I would say more communication on both ends. I've always told my child's teachers that if my child does anything out of the ordinary or anything that is wrong or anything that is negative, they need to contact me right away. I know that many schools have a procedure where they write it down and send it home and do this and that, but I tell all my son's teachers that I'm trying to work with you so if something happens I don't care how small it is, if he disrespects you or any of the other adult in the school, let me know immediately so that before he gets home I can have a plan of action, so we can nip it in the bud.

Afutu confessed that he had not initiated calls to thank teachers when his son made commendable progress at school. Afutu added:

It's something I never thought of before, but now I'm going to send an email to the teachers to say how much I appreciate their work on my son. Also, I need to tell them in addition to the negative things I already told you, if there are positive things let me know as well because that's a part of his education as well.

Concerning how to improve discipline and respect at school and at home, Okoronkwo believed some changes should be made about discipline in the schools. Okoronkwo noted:

I suggested to the school at one time [that]they should have that kind of detention and discipline for the school on Saturdays. They should make them sit down for five hours, but they told me that it wasn't a part of their policy. If it's not a part of the school policy, that's why they go all haywire with you. If you make the kids wake up early morning, 8 o'clock on a Saturday [morning], and come and sit down for hours at a time, [but] because they don't want to come, they misbehave. Tell them to bring their homework so while all their friends are sleeping, they have school on Saturdays, too. But the policy doesn't allow them.

Mahama was also not comfortable about discipline at school. Mahama noted:

They don't seem to have any system in place to ensure that children behave well. They [the children] take so many bad things from the school and bring it home, but I have to stand firm and take them away from what they are learning and make sure not to bring the behavior from the school here and not to even do it there.

Mahama added:

I tell my children that the people they see in the school are not their friends; they are just their classmates. You are going to move on to the next school and you are going to meet other people. There are not you friends, they are just your classmates, so don't take anything from them and bring it to my home. . . . Even my son told me there was a time the teacher was teaching and one of the students just got up and threw the teacher's bag. It is very, very bad, and I wasn't happy with it, and I told my son not to adopt that way of life because that is not the perfect one. In my native country you cannot even talk disrespectfully in front of your teacher like how they do here. So, they have to be very careful and remain focused. That is what I always tell them: stay focused and never leave your culture. The culture in my native country is the best culture, and they don't have it here, so I want him to keep that respect and discipline.

Ibe also believed that he could improve relations with his children's teachers by instilling discipline in his children at home, because they would then respect teachers and teachers in turn would be happy with his children. Ibe added:

The children must respect the teachers . . . absolute respect. The children must be disciplined at home; if the children are disciplined at home, they will know that this teacher is a contemporary of my father, my mother, or my grandfather. I tell my children all the time [that] if you respect the teacher, the teacher will pay attention to you. So we inculcate in them how important it is to respect the teacher.

Thus, two categories were constructed in relation to this interview question. Parents believed that they could improve relationships with their children's teachers by increasing the frequency of communication with teachers. They also believed they could help teachers discipline their children by asking teachers to inform them of any misbehavior that happened at school, giving the children detention for misbehavior, and setting a high standard of behavior for their children at home.

Interview Question 7 asked, "How do you respond to your child when he or she does strong academic work? When his or her academic performance is not strong?"

All of the parents reported that they had established clear structures of reward and punishment for their children's academic work. Many of the parents believed that in order for their children to improve their academic achievement, they should be held accountable by receiving rewards for good work and punishment for poor work. Many parents also discussed the positive effects of acknowledging good academic performance from their children. They all had a system in place for rewarding their children for excellent academic school work. On the other hand, parents did not allow poor academic work from their children to pass without a stern talk or punishment. Some of the parents discussed their expectations with their children at the beginning of the academic year. Taking the children out to eat seemed to be the favorite means of rewarding their children for good academic work.

Parents reported that they often praised their children when they did well in school. When Akua's daughter did well in school, she praised her. Akua remarked:

I tell her that I proud of her and I want her to continue doing well, but when my child does something wrong, I talk to her and sometimes I talk her loud . . . I don't want to punish her by beating her. When I raise my voice, then she knows that I am serious.

Okoronkwo also believed that celebrating his son's academic achievements with his other two daughters brought the family together. He noted, "I take them out to dinner, [because] they like going to Applebee's or to Champs restaurants. They tell me where they would like to go and I take them when they're doing well." In such cases, Okoronkwo noted that his other children had a vested interest in their brother's achievement. However, if his son did not do well in tests because he did not study or was 'fooling around', Okoronkwo usually gave him long lectures, adding:

I tell him that in this country education is important. Your parents aren't going to be here forever. Your parents are taking care of you now, but at a certain time you ae going to be on your own, and you may not have anything to fall back on so it's very important for you to get an education so that you can get a good job and you can take care of yourself. I emphasize to all of them that education is important in getting a good job so that you can take care of yourself because in this country you can be homeless in a minute.

Okoronkwo believed in using both words and actions to emphasize the importance of education to his son.

In relation to poor school work, parents reported that taking away their children's cell phones was the most effective punishment to put them back on track for learning.

Okoronkwo added, "I think a little bit of both reward and punishment is good; you reward them when they do well and when they don't, you chastise them; both are good for them." However, when Okoronkwo realized his son was genuinely struggling with mathematics, he hired a tutor and made him complete extra work through an online program. Afutu also reported that his son was a sensitive person who thrived on adulation, so he and his wife did not miss any opportunity to praise him. Afutu remarked:

> The thing with my son is that he's a very touchy-feely person, so he thrives on hugs and thrives on compliments. So if he does well on a test or a performance or if he does well in basketball or track, I make sure to go out of my way to let him know that I'm proud of him and that I celebrate his successes. Depending on what it is, we might go to dinner somewhere or we might get something to eat somewhere, something small. Just something for him so that he knows we acknowledge his accomplishments.

However, Afutu added that he tried to help his son when he was struggling in school:

> If he is doing badly at math or if there is a problem that he just cannot solve, I say, "Okay, is there another example in the book that is similar to that?" If there isn't, I'll say, "Okay is there a classmate who is good who you know can help you with the problem; who you know you can call or speak to, to try and help you solve that problem?" I try to help him go through those steps. Also, we try to let him know the importance of education. I try to express to my son that whatever he's going to do in life is going to need education to do it. And in this country, there is a minimal level of education that you need to get and you have to be able to

master the basics of education. And if you do not master those basics of education, you can't go far in life.

Anani also acknowledged using both punishment and rewards to support his children's education, adding:

They know that I have high expectations for them. If they do not do well for no apparent reason or I get a call about something bad, I take their cellphones from them, I take privilege of watching TV from them, and sometimes if take the privilege of going on school trip from them. If they are doing well, I ask them whatever they want; as we are talking now, one of them said this semester she is aiming to get high honors and she wants a new iPhone. I have agreed to that, [because] this is one of the ways that I encourage them and reward them when they do well academically. Sometimes I reward them with treats like going to Dunkin' Donut, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), or ordering pizza. These are some of the things I reward them with when they do well.

Like Anani, Ibe was stern about grades and had high expectation for his children, which he explained to them at the beginning of the year. Ibe remarked:

There are rules and regulations at the beginning of the academic year. If you perform very well possible I will buy kits for you, I will buy new bags, new clothes, or an iPad for you. Inability to get A or A+; it means you forfeit that item. You have not fulfilled your promise. That is one. So, each one of [them] are involved in after-school programs like basketball and soccer. So, once you do not perform to [a] certain extent, it means you are not going to participate in your

activities any longer. So, this one of the things I do to let them put more effort in their academic work. I always remind them to see themselves as foreigners here.

Thus, several categories were constructed from the data analysis for this interview question. Parents reported that they had a clear structure in place to reward their children's excellent academic work. Parents also indicated that when their children did not do well in school due to genuine problems, they often provided extra help. However, when children did not do well academically because they did not apply themselves, these parents often disciplined them by giving them long lectures to emphasize the importance of education or removing some privileges.

Interview Question 8 asked, "Is there anything you will like to say about the challenges that you face in getting involved in your child's education that I have not asked?"

Many of the parents believed that they had addressed all of their concerns about their involvement in their children's education during the interviews. However, a few parents suggested some ideas for addressing the challenges that they face in getting involved in their children's education.

Nuunu reported that he was grateful for the opportunity to vent his frustrations about his experiences in getting involved in his children's education, such as a perceived lack of discipline in the school and the disconnect between parents and the people in the district office of the Korklu School District. However, Nuunu ended the interview by reiterating his deep-seated admiration for teachers. He noted:

What really pleases me is the kind of composure the teachers have to

continuously come back to school daily and still teach these kids who are so

overwhelmingly undisciplined is something that amazes me a lot, and I have to

give them deep respect. I respect the teachers, I do, because I was a teacher just

temporarily and … I lost my temper because you're teaching the same thing, over

and over, and I got angry.

On the other hand, Afutu expressed concern about the constant challenge to

balance work with involvement in his children's lives. Afutu remarked:

 The biggest challenge for me personally is trying to balance my work life with

my involvement in my children's life. In this country you have to work and

there's no way around that; you have to work. But then also you have to be

involved in your child's life. It's important for your child to see, for your child's

friends to see that he is not an orphan. So that's the biggest thing, balancing those

two worlds, but I'm giving it my best shot, and I hope to God that everything

turns out okay. It seems okay, but you can only see [that] in the end.

At the end of the interview, Ibe stated that he wanted immigrant parents to send

their children to their native countries for visits so that they could understand the realities

of education opportunities of their native countries. Ibe believed that such visit would

offer children some basis for comparison and an appreciation of the educational resources

they have in the United States. Ibe remarked:

I think we immigrants support and help our children very well here. But we

should take our children to our homeland, whether it is Nigeria or Ghana, for

them to see what is here and what is there. When they see the situation over there versus here, they see the opportunities that they have here. All the time you are telling them orally, they can't imagine what you are saying but when they go there and see the classrooms over there. Look at it, "You want to come down to this place?" You have opportunity there [so] don't lose it. They rarely see laptops, they rarely see screens in the classroom, and they see dust… no fans, nothing. It's not that I like to be here . . . but what you gain from there is much more valuable than what you lose. That is the only way of teaching them the things that are already there, when they see with their eyes, they will know better. They cannot imagine what is at home now [because] even when you tell them, they can never imagine it. But if you have the opportunity, take them home. Don't think they are too small, [or] they are too young; they know what is good and what is bad.

Thus, three categories were constructed in relation to this interview question. These three parents believed that additional challenges related to improving parental involvement included making expressions of gratitude to teachers, the challenge to balance work and participation in their children's education, and the need to take children of immigrants to their ancestral lands in order to have some educational perspective.

A summary of the categories that I constructed from an analysis of the interview data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Summary of Categories from Analysis of Interview Data

Interview Questions	*Categories*
IQ1: Encouraging/preventing participation	Noting open door policy for parents
	Noting direct communication between parents and teachers
	Appreciating parent computer lab
IQ2: Suggested changes to parental participation	Enforcing disciplinary rules at school more effectively
	Changing times for parent/teacher conferences
	Easing student transfer process
	Listening to parent suggestions and recommendations
IQ3 Alignment of relationship to educators to your children's educational goals	Believing their goals for their children were aligned to educators' goals
	Believing that positive relationships with teachers were important to achieving these goals
	Noting that educational politics sometimes prevented this alignment
	Having little knowledge about public schools sometimes prevented this alignment
IQ4: Relationship of job to parental participation	Believing work schedule was no excuse for not participating in children's school activities
	Struggling to balance work schedule with participation in school activities
IQ5: Influence of communication skills on teacher/parent relationship	Believing in frequent communication with teachers
	Believing communication strengthens parent/teacher relationships
	Reporting the need to support teachers in disciplining their children

Table Continues

Interview Questions	Categories
IQ6: Suggested changes to improve parent/teacher relationships	Suggesting more frequent communication between parents and teachers
	Suggesting how to improve discipline and respect at school and at home
IQ7: Parent responses to their children's academic work	Using both rewards and punishment to support improving academic work
	Believing they helped their children when academic problems were genuine
	Reporting positive effects of rewards and punishment for improved academic achievement
IQ8: Other challenges	Needing to express admiration for teachers, particularly in relation to discipline issues
	Balancing work with involvement in their children's lives
	Helping their children understand educational realities in other countries

Step 3: Clustering and Developing Themes

From these categories, the following themes emerged in relationship to the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in an urban public school district regarding their involvement in their children's education:

Theme 1: Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceived their role in interacting with educators about their children's education as a critical factor in aligning their educational goals for their children's future with the goals of the school district.

Theme 2: Factors that impacted the parental involvement of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents included (a) communication between teachers and parents, (b) attitudes of educators toward immigrant parents, (c) discipline issues at school, (d) balancing work with their children's educational needs, and (e) understanding the politics of the educational system.

Theme 3: Ghanaian and Nigerian parents perceived communication between home and school was effective because communication with teachers was frequent and positive and because school administrators expressed positive attitudes toward them through an open door policy.

Theme 4: Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents suggested that parental involvement could be improved by enforcing disciplinary rules at school and requiring respect at home, expressing their appreciation more frequently to teachers for their work, and listening to parent concerns more carefully.

Step 4: Validating the Themes

To validate these themes, I checked each theme against the complete responses of the respective participants presented in the transcripts. I reviewed individual transcripts, my analysis of the interview data, and the categories I constructed from each interview question. The themes that emerged were explicitly matched to these data. Themes that were not explicitly matched or incompatible in the analysis of the interview questions or in the categories that I constructed were considered irrelevant to the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents to their involvement in their children's education and were eliminated.

Step 5: Individual Textural Descriptions

In this step, I constructed individual textural descriptions of the experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian parents in relation to the four themes that emerged in the previous step. To present the individual textural descriptions, I used verbatim examples from at least five of the 11 individual interviews to support each of the four themes.

Theme 1: The first theme was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceived their role in interacting with educators about their children's education as a critical factor in aligning their educational goals for their children's future in America with the goals of the school district.

Anani. In relation to this theme about role perceptions, Anani believed that interacting with educators about his children was a critical factor in parental involvement. Anani viewed interactions with teachers as an essential aspect of aligning his educational goals for his children with educators' goals. Anani believed that by giving all his telephone numbers to his children's teachers, he expressed his desire to communicate with his children's teachers. Anani also believed that by attending all school and after-school programs involving his children, he was able to interact with teachers who were not his children's classroom teachers. Through these phone calls and interactions, Anani believed he was able to build a relationship with educators in his children's school. He remarked: "As I've said my children's teachers know everything that I do [including] my rewards to them and how I chastise them." Anani loved talking about his daughters and believed that his educational goals for them were in line with the goals of the school.

Chudimeka. In relation to role perceptions, Chudimeka also liked the way educators in her children's school communicated directly with her. When one of her children and some other students got into trouble, the principal called all the parents. Chudimeka noted, "It was a good thing they did; we all sat down with the witnesses of the incident, and we came to a conclusion, and the other child apologized … and that really helped." Consequently, Chudimeka believed that communication is a two-way street. Although Chudimeka did not appreciate being called at work, she realized that it was necessary when an emergency occurred. Chudimeka believed that her educational goals for her children were aligned with the goals of the schools because she received feedback from teachers about her children's academic strengths and weaknesses. Chudimeka was also impressed that teachers called her only when there was a significant problem at school concerning her children.

Donkor. Donkor believed that his role in interacting with educators about his children's education was a critical factor in aligning his educational goals for his children with the goals of the school district. Donkor believed that the interactions between him and teachers depended mainly on frequent communication. Like Chudimeka, Donkor relished in receiving telephone calls from teachers. He shared this statement:

> I believe that ... teachers have called me to say, 'ok sir . . . .this kid of yours did not do this study or this project . . . I don't see progress on it; are you aware?' Maybe they do it to all parents, but I think that the personalizing of the relationship with the teachers typically at the beginning of the year paves the way to, in my opinion, get better than the average returns.

Donkor noted that, like all parents, he wanted his children to do well academically. In order to achieve this goal, Donkor believed that he had to be on the same frequency with his children's teachers. Therefore, Donkor spared no effort in taking advantage of the open door policy that educators implemented at his children's schools.

Ibe. Concerning role perceptions, Ibe believed that interacting with the teachers was an important aspect of raising his children. To Ibe, interacting with educators meant reinforcing what teachers taught his children. In addition to going to school to meet with his children's teachers in person, Ibe made sure that their homework was done. Furthermore, Ibe believed that both the school's goals and his goals for his children were in alignment. He shared this experience:

> Three days ago, I went to the school, and I told the teachers the story that I am telling you now. I told them what I did, and said that if my children are performing anyhow, please call me. There must be a teacher-parent common relationship. I know how the children behave in the classroom here, and I don't want my children to behave the same way. . . . I am very close to the teachers.

In addition to interacting with teachers, Ibe helped his children with homework, especially mathematics assignments. Ibe believed that once his children understood these lessons, they were less likely to misbehave in class.

Mahama. In relation to perceptions of parents' roles in their children's education, Mahama also believed that cooperating with teachers in raising his children was important because " it is the school [that] will bring whatever they have in them out," meaning that teachers will nurture his children's potential. Mahama noted:

It's good; the relationship with the school is very good; there's no headache.

When there is something going on, and my son is doing something wrong, they

call me, or when he's late, they call me, and I call them back to see how he is

doing and so on and so forth.

Mahama believed that interacting with his children's teachers helped him participate

more effectively in his children's education.

Nuunu. Concerning role perceptions, Nuunu believed that he did not have to be

physically at the school in order to interact with his children's teachers; rather, he

frequently communicated with them through telephone conversations, so that he could

reinforce teachers' requests of his children. Nuunu added:

They have called about some of the issues my older child was having in the

school. . . . I just told them to do what is right for him. That's it. I'm good at that;

I tell them every time I talk to them because they are the parents or the eyes for

our kids when they leave the house.

Nuunu believed that acquiring an education helped him to live comfortably in the United

States so he reiterated that idea to his children. At every chance, he told his children that

teachers were helping them to get a good education for a better future.

Thus, individual textural descriptions supported this theme about role perceptions

because many parents believed that interacting with teachers about their children's

education was a critical factor in aligning their educational goals for their children's

future with the goals of the school district. They also believed that interacting with their

children's teachers meant frequent communication with them and developing an

awareness of disciplinary issues that occurred in their children's schools so that they could be supportive.

Theme 2: The second theme is that several factors impacted the parental involvement of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents, which included (a) communication between teachers and parents, (b) attitudes of educators toward immigrant parents, (c) discipline issues at school, (d) balancing work with their children's educational needs, and (e) understanding the politics of the educational system.

Afutu. In relation to this theme about parental involvement factors, Afutu did not like the way school board members treated teachers at his children's schools. He expressed his sentiments like this:

> I would like the administrators at the Board of Education to let them [school administrators and teachers at local schools] do what they do and not try to micromanage them. If they're doing well, let them stay, and if they're not, let's talk about it.

Understanding how governmental agencies operated in the Korklu School District was problematic for Afutu because he could not understand the benefits for the schoolchildren. In addition, Afutu believed that a lack of discipline in his child's school impeded teaching and learning, and he did not want his son to be part of this disruption. Therefore, Afutu asked his son's teachers to let him know immediately if his son disobeyed them. For Afutu, balancing work and attending school programs on behalf of his children was another important factor in parental involvement. Afutu shared this comment:

I need to support my family so I need to be selective regarding when I can take early days and when I can leave early and when I can take days off for any school event. I need to be very careful because that's my livelihood. Again, one of the biggest challenges for me personally is trying to balance my work life with my involvement in my children's life. In this country, you have to work, and there's no way around that. You have to work.

Afutu believed that he was able to balance his work schedule and his son's after-school activities.

Ama. Concerning parental involvement factors, Ama initially believed that educators showed an uninviting attitude towards immigrant parents in the Korklu School District. Ama reported that her son's teacher should not have told her that her son had an accent, especially when he had entered the United States only a few months ago. However, when Ama transferred her children to another school, she developed a more favorable rapport with teachers and other support staff at the school. Consequently, Ama believed that communication depended on the individual teacher and the parent. Ama also began to develop positive relations with other parents who attended events related to the after-school karate program for her son.

Donkor. In relation to parental involvement factors, Donkor believed that initiating communication with teachers about his children served him well in getting involved in his children's education. He added, "I said this earlier, but my most recent answer is an example of how communication worked to my advantage. Letting the teachers know ahead of time that this is what makes the child tick." Therefore, Donkor

believed in proactive communication. Donkor also believed that some of the problems, such as the fixing the broken playground in a timely manner, at his children's schools would not have happened if parents were not immigrants. Donkor also believed that these problems took a long time to repair because some educators did not respect the immigrant community.

Kofi. In relation to this theme, Kofi believed that many factors impacted his involvement in his children's education, including communicating with teachers, instilling respect for adults in his children, perceiving discipline problems in the schools, and balancing his work schedule with his children's school activities. Kofi reported that managing work and attending his children's school activities was difficult. Kofi added, "In America you are always with your children … that is hard, but good though." Without help from the extended family system that he was used to in Ghana, Kofi found that attending the afterschool activities of his children and holding more than one full time job was challenging. Kofi's main mode of communication with teachers was by phone. He called teachers for information that he needed. Kofi considered every call from the school important because he believed communicating with teachers was his responsibility. Although Kofi believed that he did not fully understand the impact of educational politics in the Korklu School District, he was satisfied with how the schools were managed.

Nuunu. In relation to parental involvement factors, Nuunu believed that educational politics in the school district impacted his involvement in his children's

education. Nuunu did not appreciate the part politicians played in the education of his

children. He expressed his sentiments this way:

> If it is the Korklu Public School system, it is the city itself that should have
> control over the entire public school system. What is the state participation in
> that? Let's see the federal [government] in all that; the federal [government] has
> their mandates. They provide funding to the state so the state can provide too. So
> if you are a source by which the local government handles their business, why not
> just send things to them so they can manage it effectively so they can bring it back
> because they are a body that knows the system well. If not, they should have been
> disbanded, but they are there. If you see any mistakes, correct them. There are too
> many entities involved in all these things, and that is scary.

Nuunu concluded that the state operated system that managed the Korklu School District

was ineffective. In addition, Nuunu believed that a lack of discipline in the schools

thwarted teaching and learning. Nuunu believed that parents should give teachers the

authority to chastise their children when necessary, and he believed that parents should

also set high standards of respect and discipline at home. Nuunu noted:

> I have a problem with the discipline aspect in the school system right now. They
> don't seem to pay attention to their teachers based on so many different personal
> issues. I know that school kids have their problem before they get there, but still
> they should be able to respect their elders who are their teachers who are trying to
> bring them back in a society where they can stand on their own two feet.

Nuunu believed students should show the utmost respect to their teachers.

Okoronkwo. Okoronkwo also believed discipline was an important parental involvement factor, and he trusted teachers to enforce the disciplinary rules they had at their disposal. Okoronkow added:

> We have trusted our kids to them, so we should make sure that they study, and if they can impose some discipline on them to study, then that's all well and good. I'm not saying that they should go get the cane and whip them these kids, no. There are real simple techniques that you can do for the children in terms of discipline that will change their life. Like I told you, if you don't do your work or the assignment, tell them to go clean your office, and, of course, they don't want to, but they'd have to because it's a rule.

Okoronkwo believed in supporting teachers' decisions about his son's education. Concerning educational politics, Okoronkwo believed that politics often interfered with teaching and learning. Okoronkwo contended that politicians had too much influence in the day-to-day affairs of the schools. Okoronkwo expressed these sentiments:

> The teachers are fine; they are just following instructions from the top. My problem is: how do you have so many politicians getting themselves [involved] the education of these children? Politicians don't help the children; they just want to win. Too much the politics have influenced education, and I wish something would be done about that, but I mean, who are we?

Okoronkwo often felt alienated from the school system because of the way these politicians treated parents in his children's schools. He remarked:

I feel alienated beyond the school level because you can go to board meeting[s], and you hear them talk and make noise, and it doesn't go anywhere because the instructions come from the higher-ups. In Korklu Public Schools, for a very long time parents had no input in the governing of schools because they are all state-controlled schools. The board doesn't really have any say; they can vote and everything, but they don't really have any say.

Okoronkwo believed that district office administrators were often indifferent to the needs of the parents in this school district.

Thus, individual textural descriptions supported this second theme, which was that immigrant parents in this study believed the critical factors that impacted the parental involvement included communication between teachers and parents, attitudes of educators toward immigrant parents, discipline issues at school, balancing work with their children's educational needs, and understanding the politics of the educational system. Furthermore, these parents believed that parental involvement concerned a wide range of responsibilities that involved both teachers and parents.

Theme 3: The third theme was that Ghanaian and Nigerian parents perceived communication between home and school to be effective because communication with teachers was frequent and positive and because school administrators expressed positive attitudes toward them through an open door policy.

Akua. In relation to this theme about communication between home and school, Akua believed that frequent communication with teachers improved her involvement in

her daughter's education. Akua was surprised that the principal, instead of a secretary or an assistant principal, called her about her daughter, adding:

> Yes, the principal called me herself. There was an incident about the teasing about my child. The children were teasing her so, she called me and the family of the other children for a meeting. At times, her behavior wasn't good. We sat down and talked, because of my child's mouth.

Akua reciprocated this communication by going to the school or calling her daughter's classroom teacher to ask how she was doing. Akua realized that communication was a double-headed arrow. Akua added:

> When I'm home, I go to the school to visit 2 times or 3 times a week ... and I ask the teachers how she is doing, whether good or bad. When they say she did well, I praise her and when she did badly I talk to her. I know what is going on in the school.

Akua believed that such action was effective because her child understood the consequences of her behavior immediately.

Anani. In relation to home and school communication, Anani reported that he knew his daughters' teachers by name and had established good relations with them. He declared:

> I know them by name, and I personally relate with them. I have their phone numbers, and they encourage the parents to call them. I have their school emails addresses, and they my home number, my work numbers, and cell phones. This is

to make sure that they could reach me and keep me informed when they need to, like the progress of my children or when there is any problem.

Anani also believed that taking advantage of the open door policy of the school resulted in direct and frequent communication that empowered teachers to do more for his children. Anani remarked:

Communication with the teachers has been good … we communicate through emails, phones, and memos. Also, when I pick the kids from school, they inform me about upcoming events. . . . My children are in a good school. The teachers are committed, and they help children a lot.

Anani believed that communication was the oil for the engine of parental involvement.

Donkor. Concerning home and school communication, Donkor noted that the school principal gave parents open access to the school building, and he believed that this open access also enhanced his communication with educators:

We were lucky to have a principal who said, 'This is your school, this is your community, if you can give me one hour a week.... Come in; it does [not] have to be your child's classroom, and [you do not need to] sit in a classroom'.

Donkor took advantage of this open invitation to participate in his sons' education in various ways, such as running for PTA president. Donkor believed that this open invitation to the school helped him to trust educators who expressed a sincere desire to communicate with him and other immigrant parents.

Ibe. In relation to this theme of home and school communication, Ibe also reported that he had established a good rapport with his children's teachers:

They will e-mail me, apart from calling me; they will text me and any assignment they give my kids, they will send it to me also. I know much about mathematics so I will sit down and help them with it, and I also give them the opportunity to do it. If they're having any problems, they can call on me. There are methods we use to calculate mathematics in Africa and they don't normally use it here. So I give them the African way of doing mathematics, and then I look at the textbooks to guide them on how they do it here. At the same time, my friend is a mathematics teacher here, and so sometimes, I drop them with him and ask him to teach them mathematics the way you teach your students in the classroom. I am close to the teachers, [and] I have their number and they have my number, too.

Ibe also expressed the need to get to know teachers beyond casual parent and teacher relationships. He added, "So now that they've gone to a new school, I've started making friends with the new teachers in the new school. I went there yesterday." Ibe believed that getting to know teachers in person improved his relationships with them.

Mahama. Concerning home and school communication, Mahama reported that he was happy about his communication with teachers, even though this communication did not go smoothly all the time. Mahama was particularly happy that teachers noticed a change in his son's behavior. He explained it this way:

It's good because we do communicate on the phone. There was a time my son wasn't concentrating in the class, and he was always playing. The teacher called and notified me that my son was changing and that he was picking up some bad habits. I punished him for that, and I called her back and told her that if she sees

any more changes in him, she should call me back. Sometimes we don't

communicate at all, like the day there was a fight and he had bruises on his face. I

took a picture and sent it to the head teacher, and they apologized and assured me

that it will not happen again, and they punished the guy.

Mahama was pleased about the professionalism with which administrators handled this

problem. Mahama concluded that frequent and open communication with teachers at his

children's school yielded positive results.

Thus, individual textural descriptions also supported this theme that Ghanaian and

Nigerian parents perceived communication between the home and school to be effective.

Immigrant parents in this study agreed that this communication with teachers was

frequent and positive and that school administrators expressed positive attitudes toward

them through an open door policy. Furthermore, they believed that this open door policy

helped them develop trust and build positive relationships with teachers, which was

critical in establishing respect for each other's position as a stakeholder in the educational

process.

Theme 4: The fourth theme was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents

suggested that involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education could be

improved by enforcing disciplinary rules at schools and requiring respect at home,

expressing their appreciation more frequently to the teachers for their work, and listening

to parent concerns more carefully.

Afutu. In relation to this theme, Afutu believed that parental involvement could be improved if educators addressed behavior issues with students immediately. He declared:

> I tell the teachers, I'm trying to work with you so if something happens, I don't care how small it is, if he disrespects you or any of the other students or the school, let me know immediately so that before he gets home, I can have a plan of action so we can nip it in the bud. As long as I have that communication, we'll be fine.

Afutu believed that educators needed to contact him immediately about discipline problems related to his children so that he could support their actions at home. Therefore, Afutu suggested that communication should continue between home and school so teachers could address his son's disciplinary issues. Afutu also believed that he needed to find a happy medium between his work schedule and his involvement in his children's education.

> Again, one of the biggest challenges for me personally is trying to balance my work life with my involvement in my children's life. . . . It's important for your child to see, for your child's friends to see that they're not an orphan.

Thus, Afutu believed constant communication between home and school and a more flexible work schedule were issues he should continue working on to improve his involvement in his son's education.

Chudimeka. Concerning this theme, Chudimeka also believed that parental involvement could be improved if educators addressed the lack of discipline at school

that she believed disrupted teaching and learning. Therefore, teachers should have the authority to discipline students as they deemed fit. Referencing what she knew about school discipline from her native country, Chudimeka remarked:

> In my country, if the children are misbehaving in school, the teachers will take care of it in the school before they come and tell you. They discipline them in the school, and the parents are aware; nobody will call the parents to come and discipline their child in the school; the teachers would do it and that's the right thing.

Chudimeka wanted teachers to use these same disciplinary practices in her children's schools. Chudimeka believed that curbing the lack of discipline in schools would improve the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education.

Donkor. Concerning suggestions, Donkor believed that parental involvement could be improved if parents showed more appreciation for their children's teachers. Donkor shared his experience about the appreciation that the PTA at his children's school expressed to teachers:

> Teachers love to be appreciated. So, for instance, the PTA we would do bake sales, flower sales, and raise a lot [of money] and then we would have [the] annual teachers' dinner. This is usually on the Friday afternoon of teacher appreciation week. This is [a] PTA funded program just for the teachers. And we would have the kids dressed up [in] white shirts, black pants or skirts with bow ties and serve their teachers. The first time we did this we had teachers crying. Another year on teacher's appreciation week, we came down to [a] flower

wholesaler and pitched a nice soft story to them and we told them we need roses.

They delivered to the school 80 to a 100 nice roses. The PTA presented these

roses to the teachers, thanking them for all the work they do. Little things, little

things, and the principal would often tell us that 'I don't know what you guys are

doing but I am seeing a new level of energy coming out from you the parents'.

Donkor also believed that parents should emphasize the importance of a single teacher in the life of a student. Donkor shared a personal story:

One of son's had problems with reading in the beginning. After I attending

expensive private school for two or three years, he [still] could not read. And we

took him to public school, and within a short period of time he could open a first

grade book and flip it to any page and read it. And you could take another book

that he wasn't familiar with and he could still pick up those easy words and that

was an eye opening for us. …I believe it was the teacher, a very exceptional

public school teacher.

Even though Donkor was grateful for educators in general, he was particularly thankful to his son's second grade teacher who improved his son's performance in reading.

Ibe. Concerning this theme, Ibe also believed that parental involvement could be improved if teachers and parents demanded respect from children at school and at home. Ibe believed that parents must help their children do well in school. He noted, "Learning must be continuous, both in school and at home. If it is like that, definitely they will perform better than average." Therefore, with his children, Ibe discussed lessons that they learned at school and helped them with their homework. Ibe also believed that learning is

hampered when students do not respect teachers and when they disrupt class with unruly behavior. Consequently, Ibe demanded respect and obedience from his children and wanted teachers to demand the same from his children.

Mahama. Like the other immigrant parents, Mahama believed that parental involvement could be improved if discipline in the schools was improved. Mahama noted that he did not take disrespect of teachers from his son lightly. When his son disrespected a teacher, he made sure his son never forgot his stand on respect for teachers. He recounted how he handled a situation like this:

> I seized the phone for a while until I am happy with the punishment that he has to serve, and then finally I give him back the phone and warn him not to go back to those days so that he won't make those mistakes again or disrespect his teacher. . . . Making sure he stays in line with his discipline, discouraging him every time he does something wrong. I tell him not to disrespect his sister, be nice, be gentle, behave well, and so on. Those ideas, if you bring them from home, will replay in their mind[s] and they will make use of it outside. So, by the time they grow [up], they drop all the negatives and they catch up with what you taught them to be. Also, the way you to talk to them, discuss with them issues, you make them feel like they are very important and the more you talk to them, the more they piece it together and understand what you mean.

Mahama believed that parental involvement could be improved by treating disrespect from his son as a serious matter and by talking with him respectfully about how to be respectful to teachers. Because Mahama communicated frequently with teachers, he

believed that he understood what went on at school. Consequently, Mahama taught his son that he needed to show respect to elders both at school and at home and that he should not copy any bad behavior he saw at school.

Nuunu. Concerning this theme, Nuunu believed that parental involvement could be improved if the responsibility for discipline or the lack of it in schools was not placed only on teachers. Nuunu believed in teaching discipline and respect at home as well. Nuunu noted:

Before kids go to school, there are some needs that I have to provide. Their clothing, everything that makes them go to school. We provide them allowances, transportation cost, whatever. We show them in the house how they should be disciplined enough, so that when they go to school they should respect their teachers. You have to respect who stands before you and who teaches you. Number two, you have to be prepared at all times. You should be there on time so you can leave on time. If you have to approach a teacher, you have to approach them nicely and respectfully. This is one of my primary objectives that I teach them respect in the house for them to know before they go to school. It's a daily thing. I get angry [about] it most of the time, but still, I can't give up just because sometimes it takes a while before they absorb things. It's something I repeat a lot because I hate it to the point where I say you better grow up [or] leave the house. I say it openly just to put fear in them so they can do things on time.

Nuunu assumed that once he had taught his children about the essence of respect and discipline for learning, his children would do well academically and behave respectfully in school.

In terms of improving discipline at home and school, Nuunu also believed that discipline should be coupled with some responsibility. In his household, if a child failed to perform his or her chores, there were repercussions. He explained:

One kid has to vacuum every day, and I'm not going to remind him. If I have to remind him more than twice, then he's not doing his job, then you don't get those complimentary gifts, that's the little one. The middle one is so hardheaded, he gets so involved in his books that he does not recognize his environment. He can walk past this thing ten times and not pick it up, but when I drop money, he picks it up, he thinks it's his. If ever, in a number of days, he gets up and does his work right without me behind him or yelling at him, I tell him well done and ask him what happened the previous time.

To Nuunu, a child is not disciplined if he or she has to be reminded to do what he or she is supposed to do daily. Nuunu acknowledged that it had not been easy teaching his children discipline because "it takes a while before they can absorb things." Nuunu reported that he would never give up on demanding discipline and respect from his children, which he believed was a key factor in improving the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education.

Okoronkwo. In terms of improving parents' involvement in their children's education, Okoronkwo suggested that giving students some responsibilities at school could curb discipline issues. He declared:

I told them that I went to school in Ghana, whether its boarding school or day school, they give you chores. In the boarding school, we have people who clean the bathrooms and the classrooms before we start class. Here, they don't have that. Here they come to the classroom, [and] you can't touch them; you can only instruct them to study. But if you give them extra responsibilities, the respect will be there, but they just come into school and then go home. That is the difference that I see, and I tell them every day, they can't even do it to them as a form of punishment. If they come on Saturdays and are told that they have to go clean the bathroom, they will learn, because they won't want to come back and do it every day. They will change; but the law or whatever won't allow [it]. But the kids over here have too many rights, but not enough responsibilities. I'm not saying to punish them to the point of bodily injury, but there should be a balance between responsibility and rights. That's why there's a lack of discipline in public schools, [because] the kids have too many rights.

Okoronkwo believed that doing chores at home was a building block for acquiring responsibility at school. Therefore, just as children have chores at home, Okoronkwo believed that they should have chores, however simple, at school, too. In relation to listening to immigrant parents, Okoronkwo believed that state and district level educators often ignored the wishes of the local school boards. He stated:

The [school] board doesn't really have any say; they can vote and everything, but

they don't really have any say. They don't take it because it's just an advisory

board, in other schools . . . they have their board elected, and the board is elected

here but it's just advisory. And this is one of the things I'm talking about, parents

in the district will not have a direct say in the school activities, but then somebody

from [the] state capital will come and say this what the school district is supposed

to do.

Okoronkwo believed that immigrant parents were often not heard because the school

board often did not have authority to act on their requests. Okoronkwo described a

disconnection between parents and state and district educators this way. "If there were a

magic wand, I would bring it down to the district so that they will be more flexible and

attentive to parents." Thus, Okoronkwo believed that state and district level educators

needed to pay closer attention to the concerns of immigrant parents about getting

involved in their children's education.

Thus, individual textural description supported this theme that immigrant parents

in this study offered several suggestions for improving involvement in their children's

education. Many parents understood the difficulties in disciplining children, yet they

believed teachers could do more to enforce discipline in the schools. Therefore, many

parents suggested that infractions should be dealt with immediately. They also suggested

that parents need to express their gratitude to teachers explicitly and more often.

Additionally, parents suggested that educators needed to listen more carefully to the

concerns and aspirations they have for their children and the schools.

Step 6: Structural Descriptions

In this step, I constructed individual structural descriptions to provide a vivid account of the lived experiences of these immigrant parents about their involvement in their children's education. These individual structural descriptions are based on reflections about the essence of these experiences in relation to the themes discussed in the previous section.

Theme 1. Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceived their role in interacting with educators about their children's education as a critical factor in aligning their educational goals for their children's future with the goals of the school district.

Afutu. In relation to his perceptions about his role in his son's education, Afutu believed that interacting with his son's teachers was crucial to realizing his dreams for his son. Afutu was happy to be involved in his son's education because he believed that his dream for his son was in line with the goals of the school. Afutu reported that his son was doing well in all his subjects and enjoyed extracurricular activities such as playing electric guitar and basketball. Afutu also believed that initiating communication with teachers was his responsibility, which caused him to endear himself to teachers and to interact comfortably with them. Afutu believed that these interactions with his son's teachers had paid off for him in relation to getting involved in his son's education.

Akua. Concerning his perceptions about his role in his children's education, Akua believed that interacting with teachers at her daughter's school was an essential aspect of participating in her daughter's education. Akua viewed this interaction with her children's teachers as her obligation. Through these interactions, Akua realized that her

educational goals for her daughter and the school's goals were in alignment. Furthermore, the personal relationship that Akua developed with these teachers reduced her worries about her daughter when she was working on long-term assignments. Teachers were able to tell her about how her daughter behaved and whether or not she turned in her homework. Akua believed that interacting with educators at her daughter's school was an integral aspect of aligning her academic aims for her daughter's future with the goals of the school district.

Donkor. In relation to his perceptions about his role in his sons' education, Donkor believed that his goals for his sons were aligned with the aims of the school partly because he interacted effectively with teachers at the school. In addition, Donkor believed that developing relationships with his sons' teachers was his responsibility. Donkor also believed that initiating communication with teachers at the beginning of the academic year helped teachers to interact with him more comfortably. Furthermore, the friendly relations Donkor developed with these teachers demonstrated to his sons that he had the same level of authority as their teachers. Donkor did not miss any opportunity to interact with educators at his children's schools because he believed that these interactions were an integral part of realizing that the educational goals he had for his sons were in alignment with the goals of the school.

Mahama. In relation to this theme about role perceptions, Mahama believed that interacting with his children's teachers about his children's education was a critical aspect in aligning his educational goals for his children. Mahama's children were doing well in school, so that fact encouraged him to get more involved in their school activities.

Mahama's son, who had not been an exemplary student, had improved his behavior and

not had any disciplinary infractions for quite some time. Mahama attributed this change

in his son's behavior partly to his interactions with the teachers of the school. Mahana

noted:

I don't think it is right for me to force him into any career, so I'm open minded,

and I leave it up to my son. . . . He plays soccer very well, so I encourage him in

that area. In school, he is very good in all of the subjects. I encourage him to do

whatever he wants because I do not want to worry about that right now.

With the help of the teachers, Mahama believed that his children could be anything they

wanted to be; all he needed to do was to be there for them. Mahama believed that he was

also obligated to support his children by interacting with their teachers. Mahama did not

worry if his son became a professional soccer player or a medical doctor. Mahama

believed that interacting with his children's teachers helped him to understand that his

educational goals for them and the school's goals were in alignment.

Okoronkwo. In relation this theme about role perceptions, Okoronkwo believed

that his role in interacting with teachers about his son's education was a critical factor in

aligning his educational goals for his son with the goals of the school district. Okoronkwo

believed that interacting with his son's teachers was one of the important factors of

parental involvement. Okoronkwo believed it was his obligation to attend his son's after-

school activities and to interact with the educators at his children's school. Okoronkwo

also reported that he occasionally adjusted his workload to attend his son's school events.

Attending these school events was an opportunity to meet teachers other than his son's

classroom teachers. Okoronkwo also never missed any of his son's performances in the

school band. Although it was sometimes challenging to participate, Okoronkwo enjoyed

attending these school events. To the extent that his son was doing well in school and had

good relation with teachers, Okoronkwo believed that his goals for his son's education

and the school's goals were in alignment.

In summary, individual structural descriptions supported this theme because a

majority of immigrant parents in this study believed that interacting with teachers was the

vehicle they used to understand that their goals for their children's education and the

schools' goals were in alignment. This theme was also relevant because it supported the

idea that educating children is a concerted effort between parents and educators.

Theme 2. Factors that impacted the parental involvement of Ghanaian and

Nigerian immigrant parents included (a) communication between teachers and parents,

(b) attitudes of educators toward immigrant parents, (c) discipline issues at school, (d)

balancing work with their children's educational needs, and (e) understanding the politics

of the educational system.

Afutu. In relation to this theme about parental involvement factors, Afutu

believed communication between parents and teachers helped him to know what was

going on in school and that district administrators had little to do with immigrant parents.

However, Afutu believed that balancing his work schedule and attending his children's

after-school activities was his responsibility. Afutu believed that the disconnection

between district educators and his children's teachers was detrimental to educating the

children of the whole community. Afutu reported that teachers at his children's schools

displayed positive attitudes toward him as an immigrant parent. Afutu also held the view that a lack of discipline in the schools hampered student learning, and therefore, both teachers and parents needed to instill respect in children.

Chudimeka. In relation to parental involvement factors, Chudimeka was pleased to notice that teachers initiated calls to her about her children when necessary. Chudimeka also believed that communication about her children was a shared responsibility between her and her children's teachers. Chudimeka believed that educators did not make unilateral decisions about students; rather, they preferred to discuss issues with parents before making any decisions. When her son was involved in trouble in the school, Chudimeka was invited to participate in the decision-making process. However, Chudimeka also wanted teachers to enforce disciplinary rules at her children's schools. Balancing her work schedule with attending school activities was sometimes problematic, but Chudimeka believed that it was her responsibility to solve that problem. She started going to school to become a registered nurse so she could have more control of her work schedule.

Mahama. In relation to parental involvement factors, Mahama believed that it was his responsibility to communicate his goals for his children's education to their teachers. In turn, Mahama believed that teachers needed to let him know what they needed from him to support his children's academic success. Mahama also placed great value on discipline as an important factor in improving teaching and learning. Mahama wanted teachers to demand the utmost respect from their students by enforcing strong discipline in the schools. Despite his misgivings about the lack of discipline in the

schools, Mahama did not miss afterschool programs for his children. Mahama also believed that the attitudes of teachers towards him as an immigrant parent had been positive, and he was appreciative of their efforts to help his children excel in school. Mahama believed that it takes a concerted effort of both teachers and parents to educate children in the United States.

Nuunu. Concerning parental involvement factors, Nuunu believed that communication with his children's teachers had been productive. He punished his children immediately when he was told of any misbehavior in school, and he expressed his appreciation for the professionalism of teachers when he talked to them. Nuunu also addressed disciplinary issues about his children with seriousness. Nuunu assumed that it was his responsibility to make sure that his children respected and obeyed their teachers. Nuunu also believed that teachers had a positive attitude towards immigrant parents in the community. Nuunu added, "I don't feel alienated as an immigrant parent. I'm not alienated because I am involved in the school, [and] I haven't been cut off. I involve myself with my kids here, and they go to the school." Nuunu also believed that he communicated with teachers in a respectful and appreciative manner. Nuunu expressed some regret about not participating in as many afterschool activities as he would have liked to due to ill health and time constraints from work, but he took responsibility for that problem. In relation to the educational politics of the school district, Nuunu believed that district educators did not often serve the needs of the students.

Okoronkwo. In relation to parental involvement factors, Okoronkwo reported that a lack of discipline at school bothered him because he believed that children cannot learn

without discipline in the classroom. Okoronkwo believed that teachers and parents must

deal with this issue collectively. Okoronkwo also believed that communication with

teachers was an essential factor in his involvement in his son's education, so he cherished

every opportunity to get in contact with teachers at his son's school. Okoronkwo was also

frustrated with the educational politics of the Korklu School District. He believed that

district educators were more interested in holding on to their positions than in educating

children.

In summary, individual structural descriptions supported this theme because a

majority of the immigrant parents in this study believed that these factors were

interrelated and affected their involvement in their children's education. These parents

believed that communicating with teachers, balancing work with their children's

educational needs, and understanding the politics of the educational system were their

responsibilities. On the other hand, they believed educators were responsible for

displaying positive attitudes towards immigrant parents and for enforcing disciplinary

rules at school.

Theme 3: Ghanaian and Nigerian parents perceived communication between

home and school to be effective because communication with teachers was frequent and

positive and because school administrators expressed positive attitudes toward them

through an open door policy.

Akua. In relation to this theme about effective communication between home and

school, Akua believed that he was able to communicate frequently with the teachers

because of the open door policy of the school administrators. Therefore, Akua took full

responsibility for initiating communication with her child's teachers. In addition to calling teachers to check on her daughter's academic progress and behavior, Akua visited her daughter's school occasionally. Akua reported that she was always welcomed when she stopped by to talk to her daughter's classroom teacher. When necessary, teachers called Akua. These actions demonstrated to Akua that the principal was sincere about having an open door policy for parents. Through the process of communication, Akua was able to create a relationship with a few teachers at her daughter's school.

Ama. Concerning effective home and school communication, Ama believed that her communication with teachers was frequent and positive. Despite an unfavorable encounter with one of her son's teacher, Ama held a favorable view of most of her son's teachers. Ama believed that communication with teachers was her obligation, and therefore, she developed positive relations with teachers at the new school, in large part because of the open door policy at this school. Ama knew the names of teachers, as well as the names of the school nurse, the guidance counselor, and the security guards.

Donkor. Concerning this theme about the effectiveness of home and school communication, Donkor believed that he was able to communicate with his children's teachers more frequently mainly because of the open door policy of the school. The need to see his children succeed in school also helped Donkor to bring all resources to bear on his relationship with the teachers. Donkor believed that he gave his best for his children; therefore, he demanded the best from their teachers, too. Donkor noted, "I do not know how much of it is African, and I don't know how much my personality is," but he believed it was the right thing to do. Donkor also reported that communication with

teachers was frequent because he did not hesitate to offer the teachers information about his children. Donkor let teachers know that he had "faith in them and trust their judgment," which he believed created respect for each other.

Mahama. In relation to this theme, Mahama also believed that effective communication between home and school was an important factor in his involvement in his children's education. Mahama believed that his communication with teachers was frequent and positive because school administrators provided an open door policy. Mahama realized that educators at his children's school were sincere about this open door policy when they initiated calls to him. Such gestures made Mahama appreciate the open door policy because it encouraged him to contact them without hesitation. Because Mahama did not know anything about the school district, he talked to teachers at his children's schools to learn more.

Okoronkwo. In relation to effective communication between the home and school, Okoronkwo believed that taking advantage of the school's open door policy improved his communication with teachers. Okoronkwo talked with his son's teachers by using various forms of communication, including calling on the phone, texting, and sending emails. The open door policy that educators extended to Okoronkwo reinforced his positive attitude about the school system. Okoronkwo noted, "They [teachers] encourage me to participate in the sense that they get me involved in his classwork." When teachers called him about his son, he gladly acquiesced to their requests. Okoronkwo also believed that continuous communication with his son's teachers helped his son to improve his academic performance.

Thus, individual structural descriptions supported this theme because immigrant parents in this study reciprocated the open door policy from educators by communicating directly and often with their children's teachers. As parents became more comfortable with teachers through this frequent and positive communication, they believed that they were also able to build relationships with other educators. Consequently, these relationships enhanced their participation in their children's education.

Theme 4. Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents suggested that parental involvement could be improved by enforcing disciplinary rules at school and requiring respect at home, expressing their appreciation more frequently to teachers for their work, and listening to parent concerns more carefully.

Afutu. Concerning this theme about suggestions for improving parental involvement, Afutu directed two recommendations to himself. First, Afutu believed that he needed to step up his communication with his children's teachers so they could curb his son's disciplinary issues. Afutu also believed that he needed to improve the management of his work time so that he could attend his son's school activities. Although communication with his son's teachers was good, Afutu believed there was still room for improvement. Afutu did not rest on the current state of affairs in his involvement in his child's education. He wanted to take responsibility for communicating more frequently with teachers and managing his work schedule more effectively.

Donkor. In relation to suggestions about how to improve parent involvement in their children's education, Donkor believed that the lack of discipline at school and at home hampered the ability of his children to reach their academic potential. Donkor

believed "there should be instant punishment" for children when they misbehave. He added, "I don't know, but I'm sure the law doesn't allow it. Perhaps there was a history of maltreatment, but the teachers are not allowed, or the school is not authorized to punish the kids." Even though Donkor acknowledged that there are circumstances when teachers can not correct student misbehavior, he still believed teachers could do more to discipline students in the school his son attended. In addition, Donkor also suggested that parents should show more appreciation for the work that teachers do with students. Donkor appreciated his son's teachers, and he also trusted their judgment to discipline his children if needed. He noted: "We have trusted our kids to them, so . . . if they can impose some discipline on them for them to study that's all well and good." Concerning listening to parents' concerns, Donkor was skeptical about any positive change. Donkor reported that "unless they turn state control to district control where the parents will directly be involved in the school," he believed that little would change in the school district.

Mahama. In relation to this theme, Mahama suggested that parental involvement could be improved if both teachers and parents enforced strict discipline at school and home. Mahama added, "If I depend only on the teachers, it's not going to be good at all." Mahama believed that curbing undisciplined behavior by his children was a joint responsibility between him and his children's teachers. Mahama believed he needed the knowledge and support of educators to participate more actively in his children's education. Mahama also suggested that teachers needed to receive more appreciation from parents because of the difficult work they do. Mahama believed that he appreciated

his children's classroom teachers, and he also noted his gratitude to school

administrators. He added, "When my son was number one, they invited me, and we

shook hands, and they are very good." Following that honor roll ceremony, Mahama's

respect and appreciation for school administrators grew when he realized the part that

administrators played in producing the event. Concerning educational politics, Mahama

did not make any recommendations because he did not understand the role that the state-

appointed school superintendent played in running the school district. Mahama's lack of

knowledge about the school district, however, did not prevent him from suggesting that

the parental involvement of immigrant parents could be improved, particularly about

enforcing disciplinary rules in the schools.

Nuunu. In relation to suggestions for improving parental involvement, Nuunu

believed that both teachers and parents shared in the responsibility of disciplining

students and that parents needed to express their gratitude more explicitly to their

children's teachers. In addition, Nuunu believed educational politics in the Korklu School

District needed to change. Nuunu did not miss any opportunity to chastise or correct his

children when they misbehaved at home, and he wanted teachers to do the same to

students when they misbehaved at school. Nuunu believed in discipline, respect for

authority, and the proper use of time. Nuunu also believed that it should be the

responsibility of parents to explicitly express their gratitude to their children's teachers.

What impressed Nuunu about teachers at his children's school was the continuous

dedication that they displayed in spite of frequent misbehavior from students. Concerning

the educational politics of the school district, Nuunu recommended that "they [the state

government] should give most of the power to the local government." Therefore, state control of the Korklu School District did not sit well with Nuunu.

Okoronkwo. In relation to this theme, Okoronkwo believed that parental involvement could be improved if teachers enforced disciplinary rules at school, if more parents required respect at home, and if educators listened to parents more carefully. For children to perform well in school, Okoronkwo believed that teachers and parents needed to work together. Therefore, Okoronkwo suggested that teachers needed to enforce disciplinary rules in school and parents ought to instill respect in their children at home. He noted,

> I'm not saying to punish them to the point of bodily injury, but there should be a balance between responsibility and rights. That's why there's a lack of discipline in public schools; the kids have too many rights.

Okoronkwo wanted teachers to have more authority for enforcing disciplinary rules at school. Okoronkwo also believed that district administrators did pay attention to the needs of immigrant parents, adding, "the state has more power than the board, but the board is supposed to represent the public, so why don't they have to listen to the parents? That is what is wrong with the system." Okoronkwo believed that these individuals needed to pay more attention to parents' concerns about their children's education.

Thus, individual structural descriptions supported this theme because immigrant parents in this study believed that improvement was still needed in relation to their participation in their children's education. Their suggestions fell into the following three categories: joint responsibilities between parents and teachers, parents' responsibilities,

and teachers' responsibilities. In relation to joint responsibilities, parents believed both teachers and parents should be obligated to curb disrespect and misbehavior of students at school and at home, respectively. Concerning parents' responsibilities, many parents suggested that they should express their gratitude explicitly to teachers. On the other hand, teachers should take the responsibility to listen to the concerns and aspirations that immigrant parents have for their children.

Step 7: Composite Description

The composition description is one that addresses all participants as a whole and is constructed from the individual textural and structural descriptions. It provides a description of the essence of these lived experiences as a group. This composite description will be presented later in this chapter as part of the results section in relation to the central research question for this study.

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Discrepant Data

</div>

Discrepant data is data that challenges the major themes that emerged from this study and could provide alternative themes that may need to be considered. For this study, I found discrepant data related to Theme 2, which was about factors of parental involvement, and to Theme 4, which was about suggestions that parents made concerning improving their involvement in their children's education.

In relation to Theme 2, one of the factors that impacted the involvement of immigrant parents in their children's education was educational politics. A majority of the parents in this study believed that educational politics, especially in relation to state control of the Korklu School District, negatively impacted their involvement in their

children's education. However, two participants, both Kofi and Mahama, did not consider

educational politics as a factor in their involvement in their children's education. Rather,

they believed that parents should focus on communicating directly with their children's

teachers. Following the dynamics of educational politics was time consuming, and these

two immigrant parents were often too busy to do that. Mahama presumed that it was not

his responsibility to deal with the politics of the school district. Kofi also reported that he

did not know anybody in the central office and did not understand the political system in

the school district. Kofi and Mahama did not consider educational politics an important

factor in parental involvement because they assumed they could not affect any change in

the educational politics of the district.

Concerning Theme 4, Ibe added another dimension to the parental involvement

factor related to discipline in the schools because he contended that immigrant children

could play a part in improving the involvement of their parents in their education. Ibe

suggested that immigrant parents should send their children to their native countries to

experience the availability of school resources firsthand and to give them some basis for a

comparison of educational resources between their country of origin and the United

States. Ibe noted:

> We should and take our children to our homeland, whether it is Nigeria or Ghana,
>
> for them to see what is here and what is there. When they see the situation over
>
> there versus here, they [will also] see the opportunities and stuff that they have
>
> here. All the time you are telling them orally, they can't imagine what you are
>
> saying but when [you] take them to the classrooms over there and say, 'Look at it.

You want to come down to this place?' You have an opportunity here [so] don't

lose it. They rarely see a laptop, they rarely see a screen in the classroom, and

they see dust… no fan, nothing. It's not that I like to be here … they cannot

imagine what [it] is at home now. Even when you tell them, they can never

imagine it. . . . Don't think they are too small, they are too young; they know what

is good and what is bad.

Ibe believed that by seeing the disparity in educational resources between countries,

children would be less likely to squander the opportunities they have in the United States.

Consequently, they would be more likely to obey their parents and teachers who were

helping them to take advantage of the opportunities that the school systems in the United

States offered. Because children might become more appreciative of these opportunities,

Ibe believed that this appreciation could influence their parents to become more involved

in their children's education.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Evidence of trustworthiness to qualitative research is important because it

indicates that the researcher has applied strict protocols for data collection and data

analysis in order to ensure the quality of the research. The trustworthiness of qualitative

research, according to Merriam (2009), should be discussed in relation to the constructs

of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. In the paragraphs below,

I describe each construct and the strategies that I used for that construct to improve the

trustworthiness of this study.

Credibility

Merriam (2009) defined credibility in qualitative research as how congruent the findings are with reality. The strategies that Merriam recommended to enhance the credibility of a qualitative study included triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, reflexivity, and peer examination. For this study, I used the strategy of triangulation by comparing data collected from Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents with different perspectives about parental involvement. Another strategy by which the credibility of a study is enhanced is member checking (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012), which I used by asking participants to review the tentative results of this study for their plausibility. I also used the strategy of adequate engagement in data collection by spending an average of 55 minutes with each individual participant to obtain rich responses to the interview questions.

Dependability

Merriam (2009) defined dependability in qualitative research as "the extent to which the research findings can be replicated" (p. 220). Another important aspect of dependability that Merriam noted is "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (p.221). The strategies that Merriam recommended to improve the dependability of a qualitative study include triangulation, peer examination, the researcher's position on the topic, and an audit trail. For this study, as stated earlier, I used the strategy of triangulation by interviewing participants with different educational backgrounds, varying lengths of stay in the United States, and with children who were enrolled in the Korklu School District at various grade levels. I also used the strategy of

peer examination by asking one doctoral candidate in the Richard Riley College of

Education at Walden University to review the results of this study for their plausibility. In

addition, I used the strategy of an audit trail by maintaining a research journal, in which I

recorded important details of the data collection and data analysis processes, the

problems I encountered, and the decisions I made during this research study.

Transferability

Transferability or external validity refers to the degree to which the findings of

the study can be applied to other similar situations (Creswell, 2013; Lietz & Zayas, 2010;

Merriam, 2009). To enhance the transferability of qualitative research, Merriam

recommended that researchers use the strategies of rich, thick description and either

maximum variation or typicality in relation to the sample. I used the strategy of rich,

thick description for this phenomenological study by describing the setting, the

participants, and the findings in detail. I also paid close attention to the sample size for

this study by selecting a sample of participants who were typical of other Ghanaian and

Nigerian immigrant parents who had children enrolled in the Korklu Public School

District.

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined by Merriam (2009) as the objectivity of a qualitative

study. Merriam recommended that researchers use the strategy of reflexivity, which is

"the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (p. 219). I used this strategy

by maintaining a researcher's journal in which I reflected on my beliefs about parental

involvement in the schools, which may have stemmed from my upbringing in Ghana and

my experiences as a teacher in an inner city public school in the United States. Growing

up in Ghana, I believed that parents often did not appreciate the need for involvement in

their children's education. Today, I also believe that parental involvement in public

schools in the United States is often lacking. These perceptions could have impacted the

results of this study. Moreover, some of the literature I reviewed for this study indicated

that some cultures support a lack of parental involvement in schools. Therefore, using the

strategy of reflexivity enabled me to reflect upon the need to minimize my potential bias

about parental involvement as I interacted with participants in the data collection and data

analysis phases.

Results

The results are analyzed in relation to the following central research question:

What are the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in an urban

school district regarding their involvement in their children's education? Specific sub-

questions were related to the perceptions of immigrant parents about their role in their

children's education, factors that they believed impacted their involvement in their

children's education, and how effective they believed communication was between the

home and the school.

Perceptions of Parental Role

The first key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents

perceived that frequent and positive communication with teachers was critical to their

role in interacting with educators about their children's education. Interview data

supported this finding. All 11 participants believed that their role was to have frequent

and positive interactions with teachers and other educators at the schools their children attended. They believed these positive and frequent interactions were necessary to understand the educational goals that educators had for their children so that they could compare them to their educational goals for alignment or misalignment. Such interactions enabled parents to discuss these educational goals with their children's teachers. Okorokwo indicated that he communicated frequently with teachers to the benefit of his children. Okoronkwo remarked, "Whichever one is more convenient for both parties. Sometimes they ask me to come, and I go, sometimes they send me emails or just do it over the phone, whichever is convenient." Furthermore, Okoronkwo sympathized with the anxieties of the teachers and "at times the teachers just listen to my concerns as a parent." Likewise, Mahama often communicated with his children's teachers. Mahama noted, "It's all perfect because we do communicate on the phone…. So I can say that the communication is very well." Mahama also reported that he did not hesitate to initiate a call to his children's teachers when necessary. However, Chudimeka did not use the phone much in communicating with teachers, because as she noted, "We see the teachers every day, when picking [up] the kids, so most of our communication is done face-to-face, so there isn't much need to initiate phone calls." Thus, many of the parents believed that their parental role was to communicate frequently with their children's teachers.

A second key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that frequent and positive communication was a shared responsibility between parents and teachers, particularly in resolving disciplinary problems with their children. Interview data supported this finding. Ibe remarked, "They [children] must be disciplined at home

and then . . . view the teacher as a respectful figure." On discipline at home, Mahama

noted, "I make sure he stays in line with his discipline, discouraging him every time he

does something wrong like disrespecting his sister." Mahama hoped that such disciple at

home would also help his son respect his teachers at school. Okoronkwo believed that

student disrespect toward teachers hampered teaching and learning; he added, "If you

instill some discipline in them, they will learn better." Thus, Ghanaian and Nigerian

parents believed that their role was to support teachers in disciplining their children.

A third key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed

that their role was to align the educational goals for their children with the goals of the

school. Nuunu noted that he always told his children, "Due to my education and the

skills, I've been able to own a car and to own a house … with an education you can be

somebody, but without [it], you have a weak foundation." Anani noted, "My wife and I

very much understand the importance of education, so we back the school. Many of the

students in the school where my children go to some of the top colleges in the nation."

On the other hand, Afutu did not mince words with his son in letting him know the

importance of school. Afutu reported, "I try to express to my son that whatever he's

going to do in life is going to need the education to do it." These remarks underscored the

idea that helping their children to be respectful to teachers and helping them to take

advantage of the time they have in school were of mutual interest to both teachers and

parents in aligning these goals.

Factors Impacting Parental Involvement

The key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that the following factors impacted their parental involvement: (a) communication between teachers and parents, (b) attitudes of educators toward immigrant parents, (c) discipline issues at school, (d) balanced work with their children's educational needs, and (e) understanding the politics of the educational system.

The interview data clearly supported this finding. The first factor that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed impacted their involvement in their children's education was communication between teachers and parents. Immigrant parents in this study believed that communication was a shared responsibility between teachers and parents. As Mahama noted, "If I depend only on the teachers, it's not going to be good at all," meaning that the onus was on both educators and parents to talk about concerns they had in educating the children. Afua noted, "The more you talk to them the more the let you know what is going on." Many immigrant parents also believed that frequent communication helped them keep abreast with what was going on at school. Anani reported that "communication has been good, [and] as I said earlier, we communicate through emails and by phones." Donkor also reported that teachers contacted him when necessary, adding that "teachers have called me to say 'I don't see progress . . .; are you aware'?" Many immigrant parents believed that communication from teachers helped them to keep their children on target concerning their lessons.

A second factor that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed impacted their parental involvement was the attitudes of educators. These parents believed that

educators were responsible for approaching them in a positive way by establishing an open door policy to engage them in their children's education. Immigrant parents also believed that the attitude of educators towards them fueled relationship building, which helped create more positive parental involvement. Donkor noted, "The principal has [an] open door policy ... In this particular school, he encourages parental participation." Okoronkwo expressed similar sentiments when he remarked, "They [teachers] encourage me to participate in the sense that they get me involved in his classwork. If he's slacking, they call me." Afua also took advantage of this open door policy adding, "I walk in without an appointment, and sometimes I call them on the phone. I have their phone numbers." Thus, immigrant parents believed that an open door policy was an important element in getting involved in their children's education.

Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents also believed that discipline issues at school were another factor that impacted their involvement in their children's education. Mahama noted, "Sometimes, I don't feel like going there because … they don't know … how to behave and that sometimes ticks me off, and then makes me stay away from that place." Nuunu remarked, "I have a problem with the discipline aspect of the kids in the school system right now. This display of disrespectful attitudes pulls the teachers away from actually going at 100% to teach them." Nuunu believed that disrespect from students negatively affected both parents and teachers. Ibe added, "A disciplined student would learn effectively and easily, but these kids are not disciplined." Ibe attached discipline to academic performance.

Another factor that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed impacted their involvement in their children's education was their work schedule. Immigrant parents believed that managing their work schedule so that they could attend their children's afterschool activities was their responsibility. To become involved in his children's education, Ibe had to make some adjustments in his work schedule. Ibe noted, "I decided to put in my resignation letter to my overnight job, getting another one [so that] I can focus on [my children's education]." Afutu was frustrated by not being able to attend school activities for his son. He added, "I think maybe one of the things they [educators] can do is have different times when they can meet." Kofi also had to give up one of his jobs. "It's hard, but my kids' future is more important than the little money I am getting now." Thus, these immigrant parents believed that making adjustments at work to participate in school activities was a necessary sacrifice they made for their children's futures.

Another factor that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed impacted their involvement in their children's education was their understanding of educational politics in the Korklu School District. The majority of immigrant parents believed it was their responsibility to understand how various national and state government decisions affected their local educational community. However, many of the parents also believed that it was the responsibility of educators to inform them of these governmental policies. Okoronkwo noted, "Education has been too much influenced by the politicians, and I wish something would be done about that, but I mean who are we?" Afutu noted, "The state has control of the school board and when decisions come down … we as parents are

almost helpless." Thus, immigrant parents expressed frustration about national and state educational politics over which they believed they had little control.

Communication Between Home and School

The first key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian parents perceived communication between home and school to be effective because communication with teachers was frequent and positive. The interview data also supported this finding. Concerning frequent and positive communication with teachers, immigrant parents believed that communication was a shared responsibility between parents and teachers, so they did not hesitate to inform teachers about their children's strengths and witnesses. Anani noted, "My children's teachers know everything that I do.… I have their [teachers] phone numbers and ... school emails addresses; and they have mine. This is to make sure that they could reach me when they need to." Therefore, immigrant parents made sure they were accessible to teachers for communication purposes by providing them with their cell phone numbers and email addresses and by responding immediately to their requests. Okoronkwo remarked, "I have access to look at [my son's] work online, but if [he is] not doing his homework, they call me." Nuunu noted, "I keep [teachers'] names and numbers in case of any issues." He added, "Anytime I received a phone call from administration, they were telling me not to be afraid to call them." Thus, these immigrant parents believed that an open line of communication with teachers was necessary to getting involved in their children's education.

A second key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents agreed that the majority of teachers and school administrators welcomed them into their

children's schools through an open door policy that facilitated this frequent communication between teachers and parents. Afutu remarked, "They have an open door policy to allow parents in… and a community room, so whenever parents want to come in and talk about different issues it is more than open; it is expected." Afua noted, "Maybe once a week, I call the teacher to ask about my child." Donkor noted, "It [open door policy] was indirectly used to encourage parents' participation." Thus, an open door policy instituted by the school authorities encouraged these immigrant parents to get involved in their children's education.

A third key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents also believed in using contemporary means of communication to efficiently interact with teachers and other educators. Parents reported that they provided their email addresses and cell phone numbers to the school, so teachers were able to initiate communication with them when necessary. Afutu noted, "Since I have all of their [teachers] email addresses, I can communicate with them either on my computer or on my phone". Okoronkwo noted, "They all have my number, and I have all their information, and they [can] call me or email me concerning his progress in school." Mahama noted, "When my son misbehaves in school, the teacher calls me to notify me. … It's all perfect because we do communicate on the phone." Donkor noted, "We make it a point to know the names and get the phone numbers and the emails of the teachers." Thus, these immigrant parents effectively used contemporary means of communication to get in contact with their children's teachers.

Table 4 is a summary of the key findings or results for this study.

Table 4

Summary of Key Findings

Research Questions	*Key Findings*
RRQ 1: Perceptions of parental role	Believing frequent and positive communication with teachers was critical to their parental role.
	Believing this communication was a shared effort between teachers and parents, particularly in resolving disciplinary problems
	Believing that their educational goals for their children were in alignment with school's goals
RRQ 2: Factors Impacting Parental Involvement	Believing that communication between teachers and parents needs to be frequent and positive
	Believing that attitudes of educators toward immigrant parents needs to be welcoming
	Believing that discipline issues at school to be resolved
	Believing the need to balance work schedules with their children's educational needs
	Believing the need to understand politics of the educational system
RRQ 3: Communication between home and school.	Believing communication between home and school was effective because it was frequent and positive
	Believing open door policy supported effective shared communication between home and school
	Believing in using all forms of communication, including sending emails and texting

Summary

This chapter is about the results of this study. In this chapter, I described the setting for this study, participant demographics, and data collection procedures. The data analysis section included the following steps: listing and preliminary grouping, reduction and elimination, clustering and developing themes, individual textural descriptions, individual structural descriptions, and composite descriptions or results. I also discussed discrepant data that presented a possible challenge to the four emergent themes. I addressed evidence of trustworthiness for qualitative research, using the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In the results section, I presented key findings in relation to perceptions of the parental role, factors impacting parental involvement, and communication between home and school.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for this study. In this chapter, I present a summary of the findings, and I interpret the findings in relation to the literature review and the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2. In addition, I discuss the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and how this study contributes to positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who resided in an urban public school district in the northeastern region of the United States regarding their involvement in their children's education. To accomplish that purpose, a phenomenological research design was chosen in order to present a rich picture of the phenomenon of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents' perceptions about their involvement in their children's education in public schools. This study was conducted because a lack of current research exists about how immigrant parents perceive their involvement in their children's education.

Three key findings emerged from the data analysis for this study. The first key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that frequent and positive communication with teachers was critical to their parental role. They also believed that this communication was a shared effort between teachers and parents, particularly in resolving disciplinary problems. These immigrant parents also believed that their educational goals for their children were in alignment with the goals of the school. A second key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that the following factors impacted their involvement in their children's education: (a) communication between teachers and parents, (b) attitudes of educators toward immigrant parents, (c) discipline issues at school, (d) balancing work with their children's educational needs, and (e) understanding the politics of the educational system. A third key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that

communication between home and school was effective because it was frequent and positive and that an open door policy welcoming parents supported effective shared communication between the home and the school. These immigrant parents also believed that communication between home and school was effective because all forms of modern communication were frequently used, including phone calling, e-mailing, and texting.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study are interpreted in relation to the literature review presented in Chapter 2 and to the conceptual framework of this study. The conceptual framework for this study was based on Epstein's (2010) model of parental involvement, which included six different types of involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration.

Perceptions of Parental Roles

One of the key findings was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents perceived that their role in children's education was to engage in positive and frequent communication with teachers about their children's academic progress. The literature review for this study supported this finding. Carlson, Armitstead, Rodger, and Liddle (2010) explored parents' experiences with using community-based family support and therapy services involving a strengths approach and natural learning environments. They found that parents become more hopeful for their children's future when applying a strength approach, which includes respect, teamwork, sharing, and transparency. Carlson et al. concluded that parents attribute their positive experiences to frequent communication with educators, and they recommended that educators should build

positive relationships with parents and their children to strengthen their hopes for the future. In related research, Fisch (2010) examined verbal communication in the management of an organization and found that leaders rely on the language of storytelling to ascribe meaning to organizations. Fisch concluded that a narrative strategy could be used to improve communication as well as to create a culture of understanding among educational stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and community members. Fisch recommended that storytelling be used to elicit interactions among members of an organization in order to contribute to improving the quality of a school or organization. In a similar study, Ying and Han (2008) investigated the dynamics of parental acculturation, parental involvement, and intergenerational relationships in Filipino immigrant families and discovered that through family interactions at home, children learned communication skills, such as active listening, which enhances intergenerational understanding and intimacy. Ying and Han concluded that Filipino immigrant parents demonstrated active involvement in their children's lives and education because of these intergenerational relationships, which were consistent with Filipino culture. Ying and Han recommended that educators' interventions aimed at promoting parental involvement in the home and school should include grandparents, children, uncles, and aunts in order to adhere to the context of intergenerational dynamics.

Another key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that their role in their children's education was to support teachers in resolving discipline problems that involved their children. The literature review for this study also supported this finding. Holloway, Park, Jonas, Bempechat, and Li (2014) explored the strategies

that Mexican immigrant parents use to help curb discipline issues at school and found

that the most effective strategy to support teachers in resolving discipline issues was to

address disciplinary problems in the context of respect for the family, which also means

respect for teachers and for school rules. Holloway et al. concluded that Mexican

immigrant parents' advice to their children hinge on strong cultural values that entail

respect for their elders. Halloway et al. recommended that educators make genuine efforts

to know about the challenges that Mexican immigrant families face in supporting their

children in school. In another related research study, Jensen and Dost-Gözkan (2014)

examined the cultural development of autonomy, authority, conflict, and cohesion among

Asian Indian and Salvadorian immigrant families in the United States and found that

children are expected to respect their parents and authority figures. Jensen and Dost-

Gözkan concluded that immigrant parents attach respect for authority and autonomy to

cultural identity, and they recommended that educators and immigrant parents should

help children maintain the aspects of cultural characteristics, such as respect for authority

that helps behavior. In similar research, McElderry and Cheng (2014) investigated the

lack of discipline in school within a broader social context to include the environment of

students and parents. They discovered that African American ethnicity has a moderating

effect on the relationship between school discipline and parental involvement. McElderry

and Cheng concluded that those students who often disrespect teachers and school

authorities are most likely to end up getting in conflict with the law after graduating from

school. They recommended that teachers and administrators should believe that

immigrant students and ethnic minority students can excel in school, and therefore, they must create a conducive school environment to achieve this goal.

Another key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that their role was to align their educational goals for their children's future with the goals of the school district. The literature review for this study also supported this finding. Lim (2012) explored how Korean immigrant parents perceived and responded to school and home partnerships and found that parents interact more effectively with educators through face-to-face group meetings than by telephone or letters. Lim concluded that by negotiating as a group of concerned parents, Korean immigrant parents were able to articulate their concerns more effectively. Therefore, Lim recommended that school administrators and other staff members should use discussion groups to interact with parents in addition to informal contacts, parent/teachers/student conferences, and student projects that might need a family member's knowledge. In other related research, Price-Mitchell (2009) investigated the creation of parent-teacher partnerships based on a theory of boundary dynamics and found that these partnerships help children succeed because parents interact more frequently with teachers. Price-Mitchell concluded that both educators and parents needed to share their frustrations in interacting with children because they have a common goal. Furthermore, Price-Mitchell recommended that educators and teachers build relationships that include not only teachers and parents but also members of the community. In similar research, Lahaie (2008) investigated whether or not parents played a role in school readiness for children of immigrant parents. Lahaie found that parental involvement is associated with increased academic achievement for

children of immigrant parents. Lahaie concluded that parental involvement policies and practices that specifically target immigrants helped immigrant children improve their academic achievement. Lahaie recommended that immigrant parents develop cordial relationships with teachers in order to harness the resources that schools offer.

Factors Impacting Parental Involvement

The key finding for this study was that the following factors impacted parental involvement: (a) communication between teachers and parents, (b) attitudes of educators toward immigrant parents, (c) disciplinary issues at school and at home, (d) balancing work with their children's educational needs, (e) understanding the politics of the educational system.

The literature review for this study supported the finding that communication between teachers and parents is an important factor in parental involvement. Niia, Almqvist, Brunnberg, and Granlund (2015) explored student participation and parental involvement in relation to academic achievement and found that communication is an essential element that makes all phases of parental involvement possible. Niia et al. concluded that both educators and parents had an obligation to uphold two-way communication between the school and the home, and they recommended that teachers and parents establish a common definition of parental involvement in their children's school activities, so that educational stakeholders know what to expect from parents and teachers. In other related research, Padiglia and Arcidiacono (2015) conducted a narrative research design intended to improve language acquisition through social interaction. They found that social interactions between school and families help teachers, students,

and parents to develop an awareness of their roles and to strengthen their collaboration through narrative forms of communication. Padiglia and Arcidiacono concluded that the narrative design provided favorable conditions for communication, particularly informal discursive discussion. Therefore, they recommended that teachers should use a narrative mode of communication as the main means of working with parents. In similar non-empirical study, LaRocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011) investigated the missing link in student achievement and discovered that the missing link was parental involvement. LaRocque, Kleiman, and Darling concluded that parents' participation in their children's education is challenging to promote and maintain because of the diverse population of contemporary school districts. Consequently, LaRocque, et al. recommended that two-way communication between parents and teachers with respect to each other's authority and background would improve parental involvement.

Another key finding of this study was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that the attitude of educators toward immigrant parents was a factor in parental involvement. The literature review for this study supported this finding. Hosseinpour, Yazdani, and Yarahmadi (2015) explored the relationship between parents' involvement, attitude, educational background, and level of income and their children's English achievement test scores. They found that when Iranian parents get involved in their children's school activities and demonstrate a positive attitude towards their children's learning, the children achieve well academically. Hosseinpour et al. concluded that the attitudes of parents and teachers towards each other and the children contribute to creating a favorable learning environment both at home and at school. Therefore,

Hosseinpour et al. recommended that parents should show positive attitudes towards teacher and administrators and encourage their children to learn the English language to improve their communication with teachers. In related research, Dor (2014) examined how attitudes of teachers and school counselors affected parental involvement in school and found that negative attitudes of teachers and counselors towards collaborating with parents thwarts communication between teachers and parents. Dor concluded that working conditions and lack the professional training of teachers that includes interaction with parents impacts teachers' attitude towards parental involvement. Dor recommended that teacher education should include the topic of parental involvement and the challenges that it entails. In related research, Boske (2012) investigated how small changes in professional development programs for teachers result in significant differences in parental involvement. Boske found that when educators align their actions with the needs of the community they serve, students and teachers both benefit. Boske concluded that educators have a responsibility to show compassion and tolerance to parents and students of different backgrounds in addressing issues related to education. Boske recommended that teachers be trained to make meaningful connections with parents, teachers, and members of the communities in which they serve.

The literature review for this study also supported the finding that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that disciplinary issues at school and home were an important factor in parental involvement. As stated earlier, McElderry and Cheng (2014) explored the lack of discipline in school within a broader social context to include the environment of the students and parents. They found that only African American

ethnicity has a moderating effect on the relationship between school discipline and parental involvement. McElderry and Cheng concluded that those students who displayed disrespect to teachers and school authority were most likely to end up getting in conflict with the law after school. Therefore, they recommended that teachers and administrators need to believe that immigrant students and ethnic minority students can excel in school in order to create a conducive school environment to achieve this goal. In related research, Guo (2012) examined diversity in education and the knowledge that immigrant parents bring to the public school system. Guo found that child rearing that emphasizes respect and discipline is deeply ingrained in the culture of many immigrant communities. Guo concluded that immigrant parents bring a wealth of knowledge about education and raising children to their children's schools and recommended that educators consider cultural differences when communicating with immigrant parents. In a similar study, Doucet (2011) investigated how Haitian immigrants in the Boston metropolitan area coped with parental involvement issues. Doucet found that Haitian immigrant parents enforce strict discipline with their children at home and that these parents believe teachers should instruct their children and demand proper behavior through clear expectations and strict discipline at school that prepare them for the future. Doucet concluded that Haitian parents like many of their children's teachers, but their greatest disappointment is a perceived lack of discipline in the schools. Doucet recommended that school policymakers take into account the culture and the background of diverse parents from the school districts they serve.

The literature review for this study also supported the finding that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that balancing work with their children's educational needs was a significant factor in parental involvement. Sottie, Dubus, and Sossou (2013) explored ways to enhance student outcomes through mentoring, peer counseling and parental involvement in Ghana and found that full-fledged parental participation in public schools might be problematic because many parents are " too busy earning an income to spend time in the school." (p. 385). Sottie et al. concluded that parental involvement in their children's education encourages parents to understand how the school system operates. Sottie et al. recommended that parents, classroom teachers, and administrators must be prepared to rationally and emotionally address the ultimate goal of student achievement. In similar research, Turney and Kao (2009) examined the barriers that prevent immigrant parents to get involved in their children's education and found that the work schedule of parents is a crucial predictor of their involvement in school activities. Turney and Kao concluded that time spent in the United States and English language abilities are barriers to parental involvement for immigrant parents and recommended that educators "should take steps to make immigrant parents feel welcome" (p. 269) at school activities. In similar research, Wang (2008) investigated how Chinese immigrant parents interact with their children's teachers and found that job schedules and cultural barriers are some of the factors that negatively impact their relationship with teachers. Wang concluded that the weak relationship between teachers and Chinese immigrant parents is due in part to the cultural adjustments that these immigrant parents struggle to make. Therefore, Wang recommended that Chinese

immigrant parents let go of some of the cultural norms they hold on to in order to take advantage of the resources that American schools have to offer.

The literature review for this study also supported the finding that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that understanding the politics of the educational system is also an important factor in parental involvement. Poza, Brooks, and Valdes (2014) explored the strategies that Latino immigrants in San Francisco Bay Area suburb used in becoming involved in their children's education. Poza, Brooks, and Valdes found that these parents demonstrated extensive knowledge about school policies and settings, and therefore, they were more likely to seek educational alternatives for their children. Poza et al. concluded that immigrant parent are not given credit for the approaches they use in participating in their children's education, and they recommended that educators expand their definition of parental involvement and create open door policies that would make Filipino immigrant parents feel welcomed in their children's schools and activities. In other related research, Altschul (2011) examined the types of parental involvement that mattered most to the academic achievement of Mexican American youth and found that parental involvement is an important factor in many educational policies of governmental agencies. Altschul concluded that school policies and programs requiring parents' time for school activities are not effective for Mexican immigrant parents. Altschul recommended that educational policies in diverse communities include activities that immigrant parents can apply at home. In related research, Doucet (2011) investigated the challenges that Haitian immigrant families in Boston encountered in becoming involved in their children's education and found that these immigrant parents view

parental involvement from the prism of home involvement. That is, Haitian immigrant parents believe that they do not need to tread on teachers' authority, and their involvement in their children's education is limited to completing homework with their children and providing a home environment that was conducive to learning. However, Haitian immigrant parents also support teacher authority in the classroom, which they assume is often lacking, by enforcing strict disciplinary rules at home. Doucet concluded that Haitian immigrant parents do not take full advantage of the resources available at the schools. Doucet recommended that educators acknowledge the varied experiences among immigrant parents and parents make a genuine effort to understand the American public school system.

Communication Between Home and School

One of the key findings of this study was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that communication between home and school was effective because communication with teachers was frequent and positive. The literature review supported this finding. In an examination of the perceptions of school administrators about parental involvement in K-12 schools, Young, Austin, and Grove (2013) found that school administrators and parents have different definitions and descriptions for parental involvement. They recommended that educators and parents should communicate more efficiently and effectively with each other because communication is a two-way proposition. Young et al. also recommended that school administrators and teachers develop a standard definition of parental involvement, which includes contributions from all stakeholders in the educational community. In related research, Panferov (2010)

investigated how to increase parental involvement for English language learners and discovered that frequent two-way communications, both written and spoken, and preferably in the parents' native language, is beneficial in addressing the needs of immigrant parents. Panferov concluded that this type of communication is one of the solutions to improving parental involvement and recommended that educators engage parents and students in interactive partnerships concerning their children's education. In similar research, Galindo and Medina (2009) used the theoretical concept of agency to examine the concerns that Mexican immigrant parents expressed about their children's education. Galindo and Medina found that the concept of agency entails owning up to the responsibilities that educational stakeholders share concerning children's education and parental involvement in particular. Therefore, Galindo and Medina recommended that educators use the theory of agency to give immigrant parents the motivation to be proactive in their children's education.

Another key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that an open door policy at their children's schools created effective communication between the home and the school. The literature review supported this finding. Cherkowski (2012) explored how teacher commitment sustains learning communities and found that when administrators explicitly show compassion towards their teachers, their commitment to learning communities improves. Cherkowski concluded that technical know-how alone is not enough for educators to demonstrate optimal performance and recommended that educators strive to show compassion to all educational stakeholders in order to obtain this optimal performance. In related research, Risko and Walker (2009)

examined the dynamics of communication between parents and teachers and found that when teachers and community members initiate parental partnership programs that include immigrant parents, parent/teacher relationships improve. Risko and Walker concluded that creating opportunities for communication and building relationships improves parental involvement, and therefore, they recommended that educators establish a network for parents to facilitate this involvement. In similar research, Ladky and Peterson (2008) investigated successful practices of immigrant parents in Ontario, Canada, and discovered that educators make a concerted effort to encourage immigrant parents to participate in their children's education. Ladky and Peterson concluded that educational programs that include a multicultural and multilingual approach boost immigrant parent parental participation, and they recommended that immigrant parents be encouraged to use formal and informal ways to communicate with educators.

Another key finding was that Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that using all forms of communication, including making phone calls, sending emails and texting, improved communication between the home and the school. Thompson, Mazer, and Grady (2015) explored the changing mode of parent-teacher communication in the smartphone era and found that contemporary communication tools and gadgets have changed the way parents communicate with teachers. Thompson et al. concluded that the use of smartphone is the preferred choice, and its use is increasing due the convenience and common use of this technology. They recommended that educators encourage parents to use various means of communication to improve parent/teacher communication. In related research, Pakter and Chen (2013) examined the use of text

messaging in an urban high school in Northern California as a common means of communication between teachers and parents. Pakter and Chen found that many parents in economically depressed districts or homes of low socio-economic status (SES) do not have Internet access, so they cannot take advantage of modern communication technology has to offer via emails and internet access. Pakter and Chen concluded that text messages might not improve student outcomes, but they reduce the teaching load of instructors. Therefore, they recommended that texting should be part of the overall strategy in communicating with parents to increase parental involvement. In similar research, Villano (2008) examined how the use of a new digital notification system that sent daily reports on students' behavior, attendance, and performance affected parental involvement in various school districts in the United States. Villano found that using this technology improves parental knowledge about what is happening in the schools. Villano concluded that the use of this information system improves the relationship between teachers and parents and recommended that educators should help parents use this technology, particularly older parents and others wary of technology.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Epstein's model of parental involvement. This framework emphasizes the collaborative and multifaceted nature of a complex nature of parent involvement. At the core of this model is a partnership among the stakeholders of education (Epstein, 1995). The main findings of this study, which are related to parental perceptions of their roles, factors that they believe impact their involvement in their children's education, and effective

communication between home and school, align with the six types of parental involvement that Epstein described, which included parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making and collaboration.

Epstein (2010) defined the first type of involvement as *parenting*, which involves assisting families with parenting skills, understanding the child and adolescent development, and establishing home conditions that support children as students. In this study, Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents reported that teachers and other educators assisted them in educating their children. When one of her daughters and some other students got into trouble at school, Afua noted, "The principal called me. There was an incident about the teasing my child. The children were teasing her, so she called me and the family of the other children for a meeting ... We sat down and talked." In a similar situation, Chudimeka remarked, "We all sat down with the witnesses of the incident, and we came to a conclusion, and the other child apologized … and that really helped." Chudimeka noted that educators helped them to solve the problem amicably. In a similar incident, Mahama noted, "There was a time my son wasn't concentrating in the class, and he was always playing, and the teacher called and notified me that my son was changing and that he was picking up some bad habits." As a result of this conversation, Mahama developed a strict protocol about homework. Mahama noted, "When they come back from school, I let them keep their phones until about 6:00 [p.m.], and then I take their phones from them. At 6:00 [p.m.], they do their prayers, eat, and then go to the books. I turn their phone off and keep it in my room for them to concentrate on what they're doing." Thus, educators assisted parents by helping them to solve individual

academic and behavior problems that their children experienced at school. As a result, these immigrant parents required their children to follow a clear structure for doing homework.

Epstein (2010) defined the second type of parental involvement as *communicating*, which involves providing parents with information about school programs and the progress of their children. In this study, immigrant parents believed that communication was the most critical factor of parental involvement. Afutu noted, "They [educators] have an open door policy to allow parents in; they even have a computer lab just for parents, so whenever parents want to come in and talk about different issues … it is more than open". Chudimeka also noted, "If they lack in certain areas, they put it in letter form, and they bring it for us also to evaluate and see how we can help them at home…. sometimes they call me." Donkor observed, "Teachers have called me to say, 'Ok sir ... this kid of yours did not do this study or this project ... I don't see progress on it; are you aware?" Okoronkwo also remarked, "I have access to look at his work online, but if there is something in the classroom, like him not doing his homework, they call me." Okoronkwo added, "If he's slacking, they call me. Sometimes we have parent teacher conferences in the school, especially if he's not doing some of his homework or any other problem like that." These timely calls from teachers assisted Okoronkwo in providing appropriate intervention plans for his son's academic work. Thus, educators communicated information about school programs and their children's academic progress through a variety of modern communication, including the Internet, emails, and phone calls.

Epstein (2010) defined the third type of parental involvement as *volunteering*, which includes parents giving their time to support programs for their children. In this study, Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents reported that volunteering was important aspect of parental involvement. However, none of the immigrant parents in this study reported that they volunteered their time for school activities. Concerning volunteering, Okoronkwo remarked, "No, I wouldn't have time to do volunteering work." Ibe commented, "The truth is, if I have a relaxing hour, I still have to run up and down. Anyway, my time is always absolutely consumed. But things that are necessary like PTA meetings they schedule it and I go." Thus, time constraints were as one of the main reasons that these immigrant parents did not volunteer their time for school activities.

Epstein (2010) defined the fourth type of parental involvement as *learning at home*, which means that parents help their children with homework and engage them in cognitive activities. In this study, Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents reported that they helped their children with homework as well as creating a conducive home environment for studying. Mahama remarked, "I turn their phone[s] off and keep [them] in my room for them to concentrate on what they're doing." Okoronkwo noted, "I take his cell phone from him until he finishes his work because I think the cell phone is a distraction." Anani noted, "I am always around them, picking them [up] from school, helping them with their homework, going to church, going to choir practice. We are always talking." Thus, these immigrant parents often created an environment at home that was conductive to study, and they helped their children with homework when necessary.

Epstein (2010) defined the fifth type of parental involvement as *decision-making*, which involves parents taking part in the decision-making process of determining school rules through such venues as parent-teacher organizations. In this study, Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents reported that they did not participate in decision-making processed related to establishing school policies or school rules. Mahama noted, "I did not bother to get into that," perhaps because getting his children to school on time, requiring them to behave well in school and at home, and helping them with their homework was enough. Okoronkwo expressed cynicism about the decision-making process, adding, "I don't even know why we have board meetings because whatever we say doesn't go anywhere." Okoronkwo was disillusioned about the decision-making process because he believed that state control of the district allowed little room for parental involvement in decision-making. Thus, these immigrant parents reported that they often had little time to become involved in decision-making processes at school and that their participation would make little difference in their involvement in their children's educational lives.

Epstein (2010) defined the sixth type of parental involvement as *collaborating*, which involves cooperation among parents, educators, and the community. In this study, Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that keeping up with what teachers and students were doing in school was important. These immigrant parents believed in working in partnership with teachers and sharing disciplinary authority with them. Donkor noted that he always told teachers, "You and [my wife and I] are on the same team." Ibe also believed in this partnership and noted, "What we can do to improve is for

the students to respect the teachers. They must be disciplined at home and then come and view the teacher as a respectful figure." Immigrant parents reported that they believed in teaching their children to show respect to teachers at school. Immigrant parents also believed that working in partnership with teachers helped their children to learn because they [the parents] have to know what happened at school, and that enabled them helped their children promptly.

In summary, Epstein's (2009) parental involvement model supports the results of this study, which are related to Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents' perceptions of their roles, factors that they believed impact their involvement in their children's education, and effective communication between home and school. The results of this study align with four of the six types of parental involvement that Epstein described, which included parenting, communication, learning at home, and collaboration. Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents believed that educators supported their involvement in their children's education by assisting them in parenting, communicating program activities and academic progress, creating a home environment for learning, helping them make decisions about their children's education, and collaborating with them about their children's academic progress. However, concerning volunteering and decision-making, Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents reported they did not participate mainly because of time constraints and their distrust about the decision-making process at state and district levels.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study is related to the phenomenological research design. The purpose of a phenomenological research design is to understand the lived experiences of a phenomenon, which for this study were the lived experiences of Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents in relation to their involvement in their children's public school education. Therefore, transferability may be limited to similar populations of immigrant parents. However, this limitation was addressed by providing rich, thick description of the lived experiences of these immigrant parents and the findings so that the transferability might apply to other immigrant populations.

The second limitation is related to the sample size of this study. Eleven Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents who met specific inclusion criteria participated in this study. These 11 participants included eight men and three women, which was not gender balanced. In addition, socioeconomic and educational status could have been applied as other delimiters to define the participants, but they were not. Therefore, these participants may not have been representative of other Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parent populations in the United States.

The third limitation is related to the data collection process. The only data source that was used for this phenomenological study were individual interviews with 11 Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents. Multiple data sources may have strengthened the results of this qualitative study. A case study research design could have been used to collect data from multiple sources such as observations of immigrant parents interactions

with teachers and with administrators and documents such as district policies and guidelines for parental involvement.

Recommendations

The recommendations for additional research are based on the key findings or results of this study. The first recommendation is related to the first key finding about parental perceptions of their role in their children's education. The recommendation is that additional qualitative research on this topic should be conducted using an ethnographic research design, which would allow qualitative researchers to collect data over a long period of time for a particular group of immigrant parents. Using an ethnographic design would also allow researchers to use purposeful observations to capture day-to-day activities of participants (Miles, 2014). Thus, qualitative researchers would have an opportunity to analyze parental involvement from other perspectives over a longer period of time.

The second recommendation is related to the key findings about the factors of parental involvement that immigrant parents believed impact their involvement in their children's education. This recommendation is to conduct additional quantitative research that employs a survey design in order to incorporate statistical data in the findings. No known studies to date have explicitly examined parental involvement factors in order of their importance or preference by parents. A survey design would allow researchers to quantify these factors and rank them in order of importance according to parental beliefs. Furthermore, researchers using this survey method could explore the correlation among these factors.

The third recommendation is related to the key findings about effective communication between the home and the school. This recommendation is that other qualitative research designs such as the grounded theory and narrative could be used to conduct additional research about Ghanaian and Nigerian immigrant parents and other ethnic groups. A grounded theory research design would enable researchers to develop a theory grounded in qualitative data about immigrant parents' experiences about their involvement in their children's education (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This theory might be useful because it would allow researchers to compare the links between and among the categories deduced from the data analysis (Merriam, 2009). Using a narrative design would enable researchers to collect stories about parents' experiences in relation to their involvement in their children's education (Creswell, 2014, p. 71). The strength of narrative research is that the analyses of these stories that participants tell allows researchers to describe the importance they attach to their experiences.

Implications for Social Change

Several implications for positive social change have emerged from the findings of this study. The first implication for social change impacts individuals because individual parents and teachers understand and appreciate each other's frustrations in educating children. Therefore, such knowledge might help teachers and parents to cooperate more effectively in resolving issues that lead to student success. After reading the results of this study, immigrant parents might understand that teachers do not have unlimited powers over students, and they may develop a more realistic approach in working with teachers to improve behavioral issues for their children at school. The implication for teachers is

that they may realize that immigrant parents appreciate and admire their work with their children and want to support them. This realization might help administrators and teachers to formulate parental involvement policies that maximize parents' support for their children's education.

The second implication for social change impacts families. The second implication for social change is that this study may help immigrant parents to understand that they no longer have the help of extended families they were used to in their native countries. Therefore, they should learn how the public school system in the United States works and collaborate with teachers and other parents as partners in their children's education. This study may help immigrant parents and educators understand that teachers also have the opportunity to harness the knowledge and values of immigrant parents to enrich their school programs.

The third implication for social change impacts educational institutions such as K-12 public schools in the United States. This study may benefit public schools because the results may help educators to understand the challenges that immigrant parents face in becoming involved in their children's education. This research may also contribute to positive social change by helping educators in public school districts design and implement strategies that encourage immigrant parents to become actively involved in their children's education. K-12 educators may adopt some of the parent involvement strategies described in this study, such as an open door policy that encourages immigrant parents to interact more frequently with teachers.

The fourth implication for social change impacts society in relation to educational policy. Knowledge about how immigrant parents from Ghana and Nigeria support their children's education is weak or nonexistent; therefore, more studies are needed to help understand how these immigrant parents and others cope with the issues they encounter in supporting their children's education. This study may serve as the catalyst to ignite the interest of other researchers to examine other groups of immigrant parents about the challenges they face in becoming involved in their children's education. Armed with knowledge from such studies, school administrators might create school parental involvement programs that appeal to immigrant parents, and immigrant parents might be less intimidated in voicing their opinions about school issues. Ultimately, student achievement might improve as parent/teacher relations and parental involvement improves. School districts are becoming more diverse, and therefore, the need to know and solve problems in consideration of diversity is important (Guo, 2012). This study would benefit society in that readers have the opportunity to learn how a specific group of immigrant parents copes with a problem common to many groups of immigrant parents. Thus, their awareness of the cultural nuances of parental involvement will be enhanced.

Conclusion

The findings of this study support the need to help immigrant parents adjust to American society, and in particular, to the K-12 educational system. This conclusion is consistent with current research about the pluralistic realities found in many public K-12 school districts (Altschul 2011; & Guo, 2012). The findings of this study suggest that

educators need to learn how to address the needs of immigrant parents and their children who have different cultural backgrounds and often need help in assimilating into American society. In relation to this assimilation, this study provides clear evidence that providing a welcoming climate such as an open door policy and promoting effective communication between teachers and immigrant parents improves their involvement in their children's education. In addition, immigrant parents reported that they require respect and discipline from their children, and they believed in taking responsibility for supporting them with their educational needs. The result of this study also demonstrated that despite many challenges, Ghana and Nigerian immigrant parents attached great importance to frequent and positive communication with teachers, which helped them to become involved in their children's education. This study also augments the findings of other studies about the strategies that immigrant parents use to participate in their children's education (Doucet, 2011; Holloway, Park, Jonas, Bempechat, & Li, 2014). Both researchers and scholar practitioners would benefit from further research that casts a wider net on parental involvement research rather than treating all immigrant parents as one monolithic entity.

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Appendix A: Letters of Cooperation from Research Partners

█████████

Dear Mr. Quaye,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study titled "Parental Involvement of Ghanaian and Nigerian Immigrant Parents in Urban Schools" in ████████████████████ As part of this study, I authorize you to invite immigrant parents of Ghanaian and Nigerian descent to participate in face-to-face individual interviews with you. I understand that the participation of these individuals will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty without permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Sincerely,

████████████

██████████
███████████
████████████

Dear █████████,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study titled "Parental Involvement of Ghanaian and Nigerian Immigrant Parents in Urban Schools" in ████████████████████████. As part of this study, I authorize you to invite immigrant parents of Ghanaian and Nigerian descent to participate in face-to-face individual interviews with you. I understand that the participation of these individuals will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty without permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Sincerely,

████████████████
██████████████
████████████

███████████

Dear ███████,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study titled "Parental Involvement of Ghanaian and Nigerian Immigrant Parents in Urban Schools" ████████████████████. As part of this study, I authorize you to invite immigrant parents of Ghanaian and Nigerian descent to participate in face-to-face individual interviews with you. I understand that the participation of these individuals will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty without permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Sincerely,

████████████

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

11/04/14

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is ████████, and I am a PhD in education candidate at Walden University. I am conducting a study titled "Parental Involvement of Ghanaian and Nigerian Immigrant Parents in Urban Schools." I am also currently a ████████ ██.

You are invited to participate in this study because you are an immigrant parent of Ghanaian or Nigerian descent who has a child in the ████████████████████. If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an individual face-to-face interview that will last about 60 to 90 minutes. All of your responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential. The results of this research may help educators develop a deeper understanding about how to help immigrant parents get involved in their children's education. Participation in this study is voluntary, and there is no compensation.

Should you have any questions later, you can contact me at ████████████ ████████████████. I am appreciative of your time and efforts for this study.

Yours Truly,

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Interviewer_____

Interviewee (pseudonym) _____

Date: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

Interview Location: _____

Hello_____

Thank you for coming. Please have a seat. Did you have an opportunity to review the informed consent form? If not, please may take a few minutes to review the form now.

Before I begin the interview, let me remind you that you may take a break at any time, and I will stop the recording. I will start again when you are ready.

After the interview, I will transcribe the audio tape and email you a copy of the transcription for your review, if I may have your email address. I will also ask you to review the tentative findings of this study once I have prepared them.

Thank you again for being a part of this study.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interview Questions

1. How do educators at your child's school encourage or prevent you from participating in your child's education?

2. Tell me about changes you will like educators to make in order for you to participate effectively in school activities.

3. How does your relationship with the educators at your child's school align with the goals that you have for your child's education?

4. Does your job prevent you from participating in your child's school activities? Why or why not?

5. How do your communication skills influence your relationship with the educators at your child's schools?

6. What do you think you can do to improve your relationship with your child's teachers?

7. How do you respond to your child when he or she does strong academic work? When his or her academic performance is not strong?

8. Is there anything else you will like to say about the challenges that you face in getting involved in your child's education that I have not asked?

Thank you for your time.

Appendix D: Permission for Use of Previously Copyrighted Material

9-22-15

To: ████████████

█
████████████████

Re: Permission

See approval below.
Best of luck with your study.

████████████████████████████

From: ████████████████████████████
████████████████████
████████████

Subject: Permission Letter for Use of Previously Copyrighted Material

8/25/15
████████████████████████████████████

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I am completing a doctoral dissertation at Walden University entitled " Parental Involvement of Ghanaian and Nigerian Immigrant Parents in United States Urban High Schools." I would like your permission to reprint in my dissertation excerpts from the Partnership Center for the Social Organization of Schools (Epstein et al., (nd)). The excerpt to be reproduced is the diagram of Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of influence retrieved from pebsaf.org/page47.html. The requested permission extends to any future revisions and editions of my dissertation, including nonexclusive world rights in all languages, and to the prospective publication of my dissertation by ProQuest through its ProQuest® Dissertation Publishing business. ProQuest may produce and sell copies of my dissertation on demand and may make my dissertation available for free internet download at my request. These rights will in no way restrict republication of the material in any other form by you or by others authorized by you. Your signing of this letter will also confirm that your organization owns the copyright to the above-described material. If these arrangements meet with your approval, please sign this letter where indicated below and return it to me. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

PERMISSION GRANTED FOR THE

USE REQUESTED ABOVE:

[REDACTED]

Date: __9-22-15_____

Signature (signed and sent by E-mail): ██████████, Director, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships _