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Perceptions of Educational Accountability Among Single African American Mothers

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Tierra Winston

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Walden University
2017

Abstract

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MS, Chicago State University, 2009

BA, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services Administration

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Abstract

The construct of educational accountability formally originated in 2001 as a means to improve education standards by holding teachers accountable for student academic progress; however, the definition of educational accountability for parents continues to be illusive. The purpose of this generic, qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of educational accountability among single, African American mothers of high school-aged children. The research question asked about how the beliefs of educational accountability among single African American mothers related to any involvement in their children's education. Azjen's theory of planned behavior, which outlines the relation of intention to action, was the framework used to analyze the attitudes and perceived behavior control of the participants regarding parental involvement. Data collected from one-on-one interviews with 5 single African American mothers were transcribed and analyzed using manual open coding and thematic analysis. The results of the study indicated that the mothers' intentions to be more involved in their children's education played a significant role in the outcome of their children's academic success, whether or not they were actively present in the school. Parental involvement may be explained by the overall socialization of children toward these intentions. It is recommended that educational institutions explore alternate options of parental involvement tailored to meet the needs of parents to be involved. This study contributes to social change by informing educators and African American families to collaborate to instill positive involvement in children's' educational planning.

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Dedication

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Romans 8:18. Throughout this process, I have definitely suffered. I suffered the loss of relationships, the loss of friendships, the loss of my sense of self, and sometimes I felt like I was losing my mental stability. I cried more than I can count, lost focus more times than I should, and let others get the best of me at my most vulnerable state. I suffered mentally, emotionally, and physically. Yet, despite my suffering, I gained a stronger relationship with God. He has carried me through this entire process and without Him I would be nothing. The sacrifices made, and the journey I traveled to get thus far, is nothing compared to the glorious feeling of having completed this process. I dedicate this dissertation to my God. Without God, I wouldn't have made it through this process, nor would I have completed this dissertation. "I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips." Psalm 34:1. To Him I give all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise. I also dedicate this dissertation to my son, Tyriek. He has been patient, steadfast, and understanding, while bearing witness to his mother embarking on yet another educational journey. For the nights he came in my room, closing my laptop and kissing me on my forehead, I will be forever grateful. Tyriek, with God all things are possible. Reach for the unreachable, dream the impossible, and let God handle the rest. You are my reason my breathing. You are my reason for persevering. You are my reason for reaching the unreachable, dreaming the impossible, and leaving the rest up to God. I love you unconditionally and immensely. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to every little Black girl with a dream and desire of wanting more. "Seek ye

first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33. Let no one or nothing stop you from accomplishing your goals. Hold your head high and your standards higher. Keep smiling, keep dreaming, and keep your melanin popping. Black girls rock. Always have, always will. I love you.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The history of educational accountability as a means to improve children's education has been, and continues to be, quite controversial. According to Rasmussen and Zou (2014), there are three different types of accountability in education: institutional regulation of educational activities, acknowledgement of professional norms, and expected results and evaluation of performance. However, the lack of consensus on how to address educational accountability properly has continued to be a concern (de la Vega Rodriguez, 2015). As early as 1779, President Thomas Jefferson drafted the Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge at a time when people viewed education as a way to protect the citizens and the public from tyranny and as a way to exercise their natural rights (Janak, 2006). However, recently members of Congress proposed a recommendation to set 21st century goals for a new federal education accountability framework equipping the nation's students with advanced knowledge and skills to make them successful (Dance, 2015).

The 2011 Kettering Foundation/Public Agenda report, as cited in J. Johnson (2013), revealed a gap in how the public and leaders in federal, state, and local government defined accountability. Attempts set forth to redefine accountability were built for shared responsibility and trust among teachers and school districts (Dance, 2015). In the educational realm, accountability is the act of putting pressure on teachers and schools to promote improvement in education for students (de la Vega Rodriguez, 2015). Most parents agreed and would like teachers and schools to be held accountable

(J. Johnson, 2013). However, those same parents also believed that families, communities, and society should be held accountable as well (J. Johnson, 2013).

Accountability is the dynamic of a relationship between parties in which one is in a position to hold the other party accountable for certain actions (Rasmussen & Zou, 2014). Teachers and administrators encourage parents and families to provide academic support at home and in the classroom to foster a partnership for success where families, schools, and students are held accountable (Graves-Smith, 2006). The list of expected examples of parental involvement has not drastically changed over the years. Parents could provide support in the school by attending parent conferences, school programs, working on committees, or participating in activities that supported classrooms (Fields-Smith, 2005). More recent literature has suggested the same interactions such as volunteering at the school, communicating with teachers, attending parent conferences, and assisting with homework (Bower & Griffin, 2011). However, educators have found it difficult to increase parental and family involvement for the purpose of their children's academic improvement (Cavanagh, 2012).

To redefine educational accountability, researchers have suggested a model more focused on shared responsibility and trust between educators and districts while promoting proper behaviors and actions for meaningful parent and community engagement (Dance, 2015). The accountability model focuses on providing meaningful learning for students by skilled professionals through adequate and appropriate resources (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2015). De la Vega Rodriguez (2015) expressed educational accountability as the act of putting pressure on teachers and schools to

promote improvement in education for students. However, according to Bower and Griffin (2011), the era of accountability has placed an increased level of parental involvement in a powerful position of importance. Yet, questions still arise pertaining to the level of accountability, whom is expected to provide the account, and to whom and for what the account is owed (Rasmussen & Zou, 2014). Even with the most recent definitions of accountability in education, few scholars have mentioned parental accountability, resulting in a gap between the desired levels of parental involvement and the actual levels of parental involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Background

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was the expansion of the Elementary and Secondary School Act in which school districts and teachers were held accountable for student performances (Krieg, 2011). By focusing on accountability, more parental choices, and educational standards, the goal was to close the achievement gap by providing quality education for all students (Diorio, 2015). Some parents have applauded NCLB and its efforts regarding accountability (J. Johnson, 2013). However, there are those that believe it is flawed because of failure to mention responsibility of parents, lack of support from the community, and students who are unmotivated (J. Johnson, 2013).

Parental involvement, an evidence-based practice, has been the focal point of an extensive amount of research (Griffin, 2012). As opposed to addressing parental accountability or perceptions of it, previous researchers discussed either how schools have failed at parental involvement, or how important it is for parents to be involved. J. Johnson (2013) spoke of the parental discussions of accountability that highlight parents

and the role they play in their children's education. Nearly all parents want teachers and schools to be held accountable, but they believe families and communities have responsibilities and should be held accountable as well (J. Johnson, 2013).

Parental perceptions of the educational system brought on by their own personal experiences have shaped parental involvement in education (Bracke & Corts, 2012). Some of those experiences include not feeling welcomed in the school environment or encountering racial bias and racism in the school environment (Bracke & Corts, 2012). To escalate involvement, there has been an increase in governmental support for families to form partnerships with their children's schools (Bracke & Corts, 2012). However, despite governmental endeavors, Cavanagh (2012) identified how difficult it has been to increase parental and family involvement for the purpose of academic improvement. Schools, administrators, and government officials have consistently failed when attempting to bring parents to the forefront of their children's education (Cavanagh, 2012), resulting in African American students lagging behind their White peers (Hayes, 2011).

Problem Statement

Over the years, parental participation in children's educational progress has been associated with school success, such as fewer absences, better behavior and achievement, and more positive attitudes toward school (Hayes, 2011). Involvement in education is crucial to the wellbeing and development of a child (See & Gorard, 2015). Increased levels of parental involvement have correlated with a rise in academic achievement. However, African American students (as well as other students from diverse

backgrounds) have been lagging behind in performance (Larocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). Aforementioned researchers have viewed African American parents of school-aged children as uninvolved in their children's education in comparison with their White counterparts, and there has continued to be a problem of parental "uninvolvement" with African American families across the educational system (Griffin, 2012, p. 54).

According to Parent, Jones, Forehand, Cuellar, and Shoulberg (2013), 73% of African American children are born to parents who are not married, with 67% of them living in a single-parent household at some point in their lives. Single mothers tend to have fewer resources (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, as cited in Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, Widaman, & Cutrona, 2010) and social capital (Harknett, as cited in Taylor et al., 2010) than two-parent households. Researchers found that they also had less education, lower income, and were younger in age than married women (Taylor et al., 2010).

In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 63% of African American families were headed by single mothers, compared to only 33% in the general population (Taylor et al., 2010). Findings in several studies showed that parents belonging to ethnic or racial minority groups or with low income were less likely to participate than were other parents in some form of involvement (Bowen & Lee, 2006; Park & Holloway, 2013; Hughes & Wong, 2006). Still, I found no studies to show how African American mothers viewed their role of educational accountability in their children's education.

Not many people use the word *accountability* in everyday life (J. Johnson, 2013). According to Rasmussen and Zou (2014), accountability is the request for responsibility

and a party giving account for that responsibility. In addition, J. Johnson (2013) discussed accountability shifting towards responsibility or trustworthiness. Within American schools, however, stakeholders have viewed accountability as a justification for educational reforms and teacher evaluations (Brevetti, 2014). It is the act of holding teachers and schools accountable for the academic success of their students.

Previous researchers explored the predictors of parental involvement among African American families from various socioeconomic backgrounds (Hayes, 2011). Unfortunately, I have yet to find any literature that examined the beliefs or perceptions of the construct of educational accountability among African American mothers. The problem is the continuing lack of parental involvement in the African American community and the need to explore and understand African American mothers' perceptions of the construct of educational accountability.

Purpose

The goal of this generic qualitative study was to explore African American mothers' perceptions of educational accountability in order to understand the role they believe they play in their children's education. The purpose of a generic qualitative study is to understand a phenomenon or process and the perspectives of those individuals involved (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). Peterson et al. (2011) sought to understand the perceptions of accountability for student success and failure on the behalves of parents, students, and teachers using a qualitative study. The only other qualitative study addressing parental views of the influences on student achievement was conducted by Bishop et al. (as cited in Peterson et al., 2011), which was considered to be a very limited

study. I have not discovered in the literature any findings on how African American parents perceive their educational accountability and whether their socioeconomic backgrounds affect those perceptions. Because there is such a high percentage of families' led by African American single mothers, it is imperative that current research addresses their perceptions of educational accountability.

Research Questions

RQ1. What are the attitudes and beliefs of educational accountability among African American mothers?

RQ2. How do African American mothers make decisions related to their involvement in their children's education based on their beliefs of educational accountability?

Framework

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is an extension of the theory of reasoned action developed to explained individual behaviors (Chun-Wen, 2012). Ajzen's TPB model of decision-making focuses on an individual's intentional actions based on his or her attitudes and beliefs, subjective norms, and his or her perceived controls (Ajzen, 1991; Bracke & Corts, 2012). Because all acts are intentional, one has to peer into an individual's attitudes, subjective norms, and perception of the volition of the control of those said behavior (Chun-Wen, 2012). Ajzen argued that behavioral decisions were based on results of reasoned processes and not spontaneity (Chun-Wen, 2012).

By utilizing TPB, I identified the perceptions and behaviors of African American mothers through subjective norms, attitudes, and their perceived behavior control of

parental involvement. Parental engagement made its transition into mainstream educational discourse through the work of Epstein as early as 2009 (McKenna & Millen, 2013). The Epstein model identifies six different behaviors of family involvement: partnerships with the community, learning activities in the home, shared decision making with the school, school involvement, communication, and current conditions in the home (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Among other models used to examine parental involvement, the model put forward by Epstein has been the model that addresses all aspects of parent involvement (Lindberg, 2014).

Nature of the Study

After extensive review and consideration, I found generic qualitative research to be well suited for this study. By using thematic analysis, it is plausible for the fragmentation of the participants studied (Smith, Bekker, & Cheater, 2011). Generic qualitative research is not led by the more conventional qualitative methodologies and does not focus solely on culture or building a theory (Caelli, Mill, & Ray, 2003). The qualitative approach using inductive research develops a theory to seek and discover the perspectives and views of people involved in a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2011).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "thematizing meanings" is a generic skill shared across qualitative analysis. It is the intent of qualitative research to understand an experience or an event (Caelli et al., 2003). According to Saldana (2016), data are collected with thematic analysis by transcribing personal meanings verbatim and identifying speech and jargon associated with the African American culture (Saldana, 2016).

Significance

This study was necessary for the practice of future scholars interested in building on literature surrounding educational accountability in African American families. It was also important for researchers seeking to understand the varying perceptions of solely African American mothers, based on their socioeconomic background. In my review of the literature, I found a lack of scholarship addressing educational accountability on behalf of mothers in African American families. I also concluded that there was not enough evidence or literature to find whether socioeconomic status plays a role in educational accountability for African American mothers. Conducting this study provided much-needed insight into the ideas behind parental perceptions of educational accountability on schools and parents in African American families, especially those families with mothers as the head of the household. Filling this gap has allowed scholars the ability to expound upon what stakeholders need to address educational accountability on behalf of African American families.

Consequently, this study further informed the problem based on the prior knowledge of parental views of African Americans as to their opinions of educational accountability and the role they play in their children's education. According to Young, Austin, and Growe (2013), researchers and writers have expressed the importance of school parental involvement. With such positive results, parental involvement has continued to remain at a minimum level within ethnic-minority, language-minority, and low-resource families. Parents and families have power and a voice in their children's educational process (Griffin, 2012). However, African American mothers have a

tendency not to use their voice or power due to the lack of incentives and enforcement of parents having the ability to make their voices heard (Rogers, 2006). When parents are not aware of their power or what parental involvement entails, there is an unusual placement of blame, resulting in parents feeling unappreciated (Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011). If policymakers advocate on behalf of the needs of African American mothers, those mothers may begin to support themselves and their children, which in turn may lead to increased parental involvement and parental accountability.

Definitions

Adequate yearly progress: The minimum progress that states, school districts, and schools must show on the way to achieving full compliance with state academic standards (Krieg, 2011).

Charter school: A publicly funded school that operates independently of the mainstream public school system and is overseen by educators, parents, community leaders, and others (Diorio, 2015).

Educational accountability: The detailed institutional regulation of educational activities and acknowledgment, and adherence of professional norms and through specification of expected results and evaluation of performance (Rasmussen & Zou, 2014).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): An Act intended to close the learning gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, between wealthy and nonwealthy students, and between minority and nonminority students (Diorio, 2015).

Socioeconomic status: An individual's income state or condition based on their revenue and education (Anton, Jones, & Youngstrom, 2015).

Assumptions

For this study, I assumed participants would be honest and truthful. It was also assumed that my participants would be explicit with their answers and that they would meet the criteria needed to participate. It was also assumed that the participants had experience in parenting children.

Limitations

There were three limitations to my study. One limitation was the reliance on self-reported data or historical content being gathered from the participants. Another limitation was the lack of research on my topic prior to my study. One final limitation were biases that may have influenced data. If participants recalled negative experiences with schools, self-reported data may have included biased thoughts of educational accountability on behalf of the schools.

Scope and Delimitations

Boundaries of my study included data collection solely from African American single mothers. I interviewed only African American single mothers in the Midwest as opposed to any other demographic. There was no screening or questionnaires about previous mental health, preexisting conditions, or history of parental involvement in the African American community.

Summary

This study was set to reframe an understanding of behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs surrounding parental involvement among single African American mothers. It was my intent to explore the perceptions of educational accountability to highlight the roles African American mothers play in their children's schooling. Chapter 2 consists of an extensive review of the literature, outlining and detailing previous research concerning African Americans, parental involvement, education, and accountability.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Previous research has shown African American parents appeared uninvolved in their children's education in comparison with their White counterparts (Griffin, 2012). Findings in several studies have shown that parents with low incomes or belonging to racial or ethnic minorities were less likely to participate in some form of involvement than were other parents (Park & Holloway, 2013). Shareholders increased governmental support for families and schools to counter this problem (Bracke & Corts, 2012).

There has continued to be a lack of parental involvement with African American families across the educational system (Griffin, 2012). Accountability is requesting responsibility from one party and that party giving account for said responsibility (Rasmussen & Zou, 2014). In the eyes of some parents, the most current discussions on accountability lack one of the most crucial components—the role of parents (J. Johnson, 2013). The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore African American mothers' perceptions of educational accountability.

This chapter includes discussion of current research in this area. Some of the articles addressed parental involvement in the African American community, school involvement, parental participation in other countries, accountability, and socioeconomic status. It was necessary to research several topics to understand the perceptions of accountability among African American mothers. Because of the gap in current literature on how socioeconomic status may affect perceptions of accountability, especially in

African American families, I reviewed other topics such as lack of resources, employment, childcare, and funding.

Literature Search Strategy

In searching the literature, I accessed some materials through the Walden University Library, searching through several databases and peer-reviewed articles. Many of the sources came from the education, human services, and social work databases. The search engines used included ERIC, Education Research Complete, and Sage Premier. I also reviewed multidisciplinary databases using ProQuest Central and Academic Search Complete. Using related subject databases, I located articles using PsycINFO and SocIndex w/Full Text. Finally, I used doctoral resources searching Dissertations and Theses, Sage Research Methods Online, and Test & Measures Databases. I also used Google Scholar for Internet searches. I used the following subject terms and keywords individually and in conjunction: p*arental involvement, African-American families, African-American mothers, teachers perceptions, parental perceptions, children's perceptions, high schools, parental involvement in elementary schools vs. high schools, NCLB, accountability, educational accountability, responsibility, Epstein's Theory, ecological systems theory, contingency theory, parental involvement in other countries, socio-economic status, poverty, low-income, household income, African-American achievement, African-American, head of household, social change, individual,* and *family.*

Concerns with Lack of Research

I often struggled when searching for current or updated research on this topic. However, I found a few themes and dissertations that supported my reasoning for researching this subject. The research on the perceptions of educational accountability especially among African American mothers has been very limited. While researchers such as Bracke and Corts (2012) have studied the concept of parental involvement in greater depth, J. Johnson (2013) found the idea of educational accountability among African American parents has not had the same amount of attention. Researchers such as Rasmussen and Zou (2014) only discussed accountability concerning schools and teachers being held accountable, not parents. To address this issue, I used *parental involvement* and *accountability* as my basic keyword searches and found articles that discussed participation in schools especially among African American mothers.

Theoretical Foundation

Researchers have attempted to define parental involvement using various theories. Some of those theories include the TPB and ecological systems theory. In the next few paragraphs, I examine Ajzen's (1991) TPB as well as other theories and the theorists behind them.

Ajzen's TPB

The TPB (Ajzen, 1991), used as a social-psychology theory, provides a solid foundation for beliefs that individuals' intentions influence particular behaviors and helps scholars to understand how different beliefs motivate an individual's intention (Servaty-Seib et al., 2013). The precursor to an individual's actual behavior, just as in the original

theory of reasoned action, is how intentional the person is to carry out the behavior (Schnusenberg, de Jong, & Goel, 2012). TPB first appeared in 1980, following Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of reasoned action (Campbell, 2010). Before 1980, theorists and social scientists studied the relationship between attitudes and behaviors (Campbell, 2010). Proponents of the theory of reasoned action indicated that an individual's attitude toward an act or his or her subjective norm could be factors used to explain one's behavior and intentions (Riemenschneider, Leonard, & Manly 2011).

As an extension of the theory of reasoned action, Ajzen (1991) developed TPB and added perceived behavioral control to help better predict one's intention and their behavior (Riemenschneider et al., 2011). Perceived behavioral control with behavioral intentions directly predicts behavioral achievement (Ajzen, 1991). The perception of behavioral control could more accurately predict an individual's behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Intentions of behaviors are indications of people's determination, effort, and plan to perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, the stronger the intention to engage in the behavior, the more likely the individual is to perform that behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

While Heuer and Kolvereid (2014) identified that the TPB was determined by three antecedents, attitudes towards starting up, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, Riemenschneider et al. (2011) identified two additional factors that contributed to TPB: moral judgment and perceived importance. To be transparent, these were the only authors I found who included those other factors that had an effect on an individual's behavior. For example, Acarli and Kasap (2014) did not reference moral

judgment or perceived importance. On the other hand, they did include belief dimensions either influenced by perceived outcome, recognized expectation, or perceived factor (Acarli & Kasap, 2014). This particular adaptation of Ajzen's theory was the most explicit I came across during this review. However, for the purpose of the study, I focused solely on the first three antecedents (attitudes towards starting up, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control).

The three common factors to explain most behaviors are the individual's attitude toward the behavior, his or her perceptions of social pressure, and his or her perceived ability to control the behavior (Salleh &Laxman , 2015). An individual's background factors, whether personal, social, or informational, have only indirect effects on intentions and behaviors with the influence of those attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Heuer & Kolvereid, 2014). Therefore, behavioral and normative beliefs viewed as favorable and having a firm sense of control lead to an intention and likelihood to carry out the behavior (Hart, 2011).

Ajzen (as cited in Campbell, 2010) argued that control beliefs can indirectly and directly affect behavior via intentions. It is the measurement of the individual's intentions to behave either ethically or unethically (Riemenschneider et al., 2011). TPB has had several revisions, yet many authors still use its original model. While researchers such as Fichten et al. (2014) used and referenced Ajzen's more recent version of TPB, his original theory (Ajzen, 1991) has remained a viable theoretical framework for an abundant number of studies in the social sciences (Campbell, 2010).

Theories of Parental Involvement in Education

TPB is an extension of the theory of reasoned action developed to explain

individual behaviors (Chun-Wen, 2012). Ajzen's (1991) TPB model of decision-making

focuses on an individual's intentional behaviors based on their attitudes and beliefs,

subjective norms, and their perceived controls (Bracke & Corts, 2012). According to

Chun-Wen (2012), Ajzen's theory indicated behavioral decisions are results of reasoned

processes and not spontaneity.

Through the use of TPB, I classified the perceptions and behaviors of African

American mothers through subjective norms, attitudes, and their perceived behavior

control of parental involvement. As early as 2009, Epstein's work made it possible for

parental engagement's transition into mainstream educational discourse (McKenna &

Millen, 2013). The Epstein model identifies six different types of family involvement:

partnerships with the community, learning activities in the home, shared decision making

with the school, school involvement, communication, and positive conditions in the home

(Bower & Griffin, 2011). Epstein's model, among other models used to examine parental

involvement, continues to be the model addressing all aspects of parent involvement

(Lindberg, 2014).

Previous Applications

According to TPB, beliefs are shaped by the parents' experiences with the school

and their personal perceptions about school (Bracke & Corts, 2012). There are some

scholars who have preferred to use Ajzen's TPB; however, Epstein's model of parental

involvement has continued to be one of the most referenced frameworks for parental

involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Researchers have commonly used Epstein's framework of school, family, and community partnerships to analyze the levels of parental involvement in school settings (Smith Bekker, & Cheater, 2011). Epstein (as cited in Mncube, 2010) classified parental participation as communication, volunteering, home learning, and decision-making. Epstein also suggested parental involvement includes a two-way home–school communication reflecting an equal partnership between families and schools (Mncube, 2010). According to Bower & Griffin (2011), Epstein offered a model of family–school–community partnerships based on the theory of overlapping spheres of home, school, and community influences that shape children's learning and development.

According to the Epstein model, educators who work with parents understand their students better (Mncube, 2010). Along with educators, school counselors can use Epstein's parent involvement model as a framework to implement intervention programs for students such as bullying prevention (Kolbert, Schultz, & Crothers, 2014). They also have a greater opportunity to solve classroom problems and reach an understanding of the students and their parents (Mncube, 2010). Parental efforts at home, school, and in the community are considered solutions to remedying problems in education (Crosnoe, 2012).

Rationale

The purpose behind choosing the TPB was to grasp a better explanation of why there is a lack of parental involvement in the African American community. Due to Ajzen's (1991) beliefs that reasoned processed influence behaviors, one must assume that

attitudes, beliefs, and perceived controls affect the lack of participation and perceptions of educational accountability. Epstein's model of parental involvement has been the guiding framework for how effective parental involvement can be when ensuring student success (Bower & Griffin, 2011). It has served as a model for detailing the various types of parental involvement and its traditional definitions.

I chose the aforementioned theories to gain a better understanding of thoughts, behaviors, and perceptions of parental involvement. The selected theories build upon the existing theory of how African American mothers perceive their role in their children's academic success. By utilizing TPB and Epstein's model of parental involvement, it was my attempt to challenge current understanding of why there is a lack of parental involvement in education among African American communities.

Conceptual Framework

I had a theoretical framework that informed my study on the phenomenon of parental involvement and parental perceptions of accountability among African American mothers. It was my belief that parental perceptions of accountability influence parental involvement among single African American mothers. To define the phenomenon, I analyzed how scholars and educators defined educational accountability and parental involvement. I also looked at how the various definitions can affect and be determined by parental accountability. By pulling concepts from TPB, I received a better understanding the intentional behaviors of African American mothers regarding parental involvement and how their perceptions of parental involvement may have a direct or indirect effect on their intended actions of being involved.

Key Theorist

Key theorists have said TPB is one of the best theories to explain and identify intentional behaviors. The development of TPB was due to the limitations of the theory of reasoned action that did not address an individual's inability to have volitional control over their behaviors (Kraft, Rise, Røysamb, & Sutton, 2005). Ajzen (1991) himself stated that his TPB accomplishes the goal of explaining human behavior that determines an individual's intentions and actions. Servaty-Seib et al. (2013) suggested Ajzen's theory for the use of assessment interventions beyond the explanation of human behavior. Campbell (2010) also believed TPB could be used to provide a framework to examine intentions of general education students to include students with disabilities. The 2002 revision of TPB has continued to be a viable theoretical framework used for many studies (Campbell, 2010). Finally, while TPB has been successfully used to identify intentional behaviors in sociopsychological fields such as education, other researchers have utilized this theory to address intentional behaviors such as smoking, weight loss, and healthy diets (Acarli & Kasap, 2014).

<div align="center">Literature Review Related to Key Variables</div>

Accountability

Accountability is a term often used synonymously with responsibility, yet rarely defined when used in connection with education (Gawlik, 2012). O'Reilly (2014) reported that parental accountability is good as it relates to good parenting skills, conducting analysis on how to maintain a positive family identity. Holding parents accountable for the growth and development of their children would include education as

well. However, there have been questions as to what the appropriate role is for children, parents, educators, and the community (Levinson, 2011). Because there continue to be questions regarding the role of all parties involved in the development of children, the definition of accountability continues to be up for discussion, as is the definition of parental involvement.

The thoughts and ideas surrounding accountability solely focus on how to hold states and schools accountable as opposed to parents. In a democracy, parents and other citizens can hold states responsible for the lack of education provided to students (Levinson, 2011). While teachers can and must be accountable for classroom responsibilities, parents have to back school and administrative decisions such as discipline practices and student responsibilities (Brevetti, 2014).

Educational Accountability

Educational accountability is considered to be a control strategy designed to hold the government responsible for their actions (de la Vega-Rodriguez, 2015). One of the most common result–oriented mechanisms is educational accountability. In the educational field, accountability aims to put pressure on schools to promote educational improvement (de la Vega Rodriguez, 2015). However, there is little to be said regarding accountability on behalf of parents. What must be taken into consideration are the gaps between the way school leaders and parents view educational accountability that has been said to require additional attention and research (J. Johnson, 2013).

The creation of accountability approach by states is recommended for to allow all students to be prepared for college and career following high school graduation (Darling-

Hammond & Snyder, 2015). While researchers such as J. Johnson (2013) and Brevetti (2014) believe parents should be held just as accountable as teachers and schools, Farrell and Law (1999) reported governing bodies of education felt parents should hold schools and educators accountable. According to Rogers (2006), parents with data are the most active driving forces of educational accountability. If parents have certain powers and data, they have the ability to hold schools to their word and providing a free and appropriate education to their children. However, Brevetti (2014) has stated that because children spend 53% of their time at home and in the community, accountability should not solely rest on the shoulders of teachers, and families should share the responsibility of educating children and being held accountable.

NCLB signed into law by President Bush in 2002, was designed to hold schools accountable for a proficient increase in students' reading and mathematics scores (Brown, 2013). One of the measures designed to keep schools and administrators accountable according to the NCLB was the system of sanctions and incentives. If schools failed to make their adequate yearly progress, they were required to provide supplemental services to students such as tutoring and after school programs (Diorio, 2015). To ensure schools were being held accountable, NCLB required states and school districts to provide annual report cards to show their progress or lack thereof to parents (Diorio, 2015).

If a school is still failing after 5 years, then they may be forced to undergo a major overhaul such as restructuring, conversion into a charter school, or state takeover (Diorio, 2015). However, the threat of school closings, loss of jobs, or lose of charters has the possibility of exposing schools, administrators, and teachers to illegal acts. According to

Campbell's Law, "the more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the apter it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor," (Krieg, 2011, p.1). Teachers, schools, and administrators were more likely to be subjected to corrupt actions to make their adequate yearly progress, which in turn would damage the educational process of their students. Forty-four of 56 schools in one Atlanta school district were a part of an alleged cheating scandal where a harsh spotlight was shined on accountability systems and validity, exposing students needing retention and ill-equipped with the help they needed (Samuels, 2011).

Parental Perceptions

Over the past decades, few studies have reported the voices of African American parents and their perceptions of the educative process of the African American students. Researchers concluded that African American parents care about their children's education and would like to be more actively engaged (J. Johnson, 2013). However, surveys showed that despite good intentions, many parents are doing as much as they would like to assist with their children's education and developmental growth J. (Johnson, 2013).

Parents' perceptions and perspectives play a critical role in their children's academic success because they are the heads of the family unit, providing social and cultural capital, funds of knowledge, and support (Collins Ayanlaja, 2011). As cited in J. Johnson (2013), Baker's study on African American parental attitudes and perceptions of education found that parents believe it to be a way to get ahead. The perspectives of black

parents are important because the cultural values and experiences provided in the home affect their children's ability to adjust to school expectations and academic achievement expectations at home (Collins Ayanlaja, 2011).

As opposed to addressing perceptions of parental accountability or perceptions of, previous researchers discussed either how schools have failed at parental involvement, or how important it is for parents to be involved. J. Johnson (2013) spoke to the parental discussions of accountability highlighting parents and the role they play in their children's education. Cavanagh (2012) identified how difficult a task it has been to increase parental and family involvement for the purpose of academic improvement.

Definition of Parental Involvement

Aforementioned research has supported the claim of greater academic achievement among students when parents are involved in their education (Banerjee, Harrell, & Johnson, 2011). When parents are involved in their children's education, it has been believed that it promotes positive behavior, higher academic achievement, engagement, and fewer dropouts (Park & Holloway, 2013). Parental involvement, as the focal point of an extensive amount of research, is considered to be an evidence-based practice (Griffin, 2012). The definition of parental involvement has constantly changed over the years and continues to shift based on the needs of the family and the ideals of the school system. Traditionally, parental involvement has been defined as activities in the school and at home (Bower & Griffin, 2011).

Parental involvement has also been described as parental engagement and includes two central components: parent voice and parent presence (McKenna & Millen,

2013). Also, traditional definitions of parental involvement included an investment of time and money from parents and those who were unable to provide time and money were considered to be uninvolved (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Parental involvement has also been defined as the behaviors at home as well as at school (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011). Not only are there differences among aforesaid scholars, but there are also discrepancies among school administrators, teachers, and parents (Young et al., 2013).

When considering what parental involvement is, Bracke and Corts (2012) stated there is no simple answer because there has been little consensus about how being involved looks. One of the issues related to a decline in parental involvement is the lack of a precise definition of what parental involvement is (Young et al., 2013). Some of the concerns of lack of parental involvement include the treatment of parents by teachers, lack of encouragement from teachers, parents unaware of how to help their child academically, and parents contacted when something is wrong (Young et al., 2013).

Hill et al. (as cited in Wang &Sheikh-Khalil, 2014) defined parental involvement as "parents" interacting with their children and their school to benefit their children's educational success. LaRocque et al. (2011) identified family involvement as an investment in children's education on behalf of the parents or the caregivers. In agreement, Hill et al. (as cited in Wang &Sheikh-Khalil, 2014) and Suizzo and Stapleton (as cited in Wang &Sheikh-Khalil, 2014) identified parental involvement as a conceptualization by which parents support their children's education and development to be positively influential in their academic achievement. According to Griffin (2012),

parental involvement is a proven technique helping children mitigate barriers to academic success.

Aforementioned research has shown that children have a greater chance to learn when their parents have direct involvement in their education (Bartel, 2010). Radzi, Razak, and Sukor (2010) found some positive effects, both direct and indirect, observable via parent and school partnership. Efforts to increase parental involvement have been on a continuous rise and not just for the purpose of academic excellence. Parental involvement is also crucial for the mental health development of adolescents (Wang &Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Also, if parents perceive the role they play in their children's education matters, they are more likely to demonstrate parental involvement, (Walker, Ice, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2011).

Funding

One of the key components of the NCLB Act is parental involvement and how schools need to strategize to get more parents involved (Hoang, 2010). Aforementioned research discussed accountability only according to the NCLB Act and expressed states that schools are required to dedicate 1% of Title 1 funds to family engagement activities and parental involvement (Cavanagh, 2012). There has been a high value placed on family involvement at the federal, district, and local school levels due to the abundance of research showing the correlation between parental involvement and positive student outcomes (Hoang, 2010). Schools, administrators, and government officials consistently fail when attempting to bring parents to the forefront of their children's education (Bracke & Corts, 2012). However, it is believed that schools serious about promoting

parental involvement will work around any barriers that may prevent it from occurring (Cavanagh, 2012). Over the years, there has been an increase in governmental support for families to form partnerships with schools (Bracke & Corts, 2012). There is a constant problem of parental involvement regarding African American families across the educational system (Griffin, 2012).

Benefits

There has been an abundance of research identifying the influence parents have on their students learning and education (Bracke & Corts, 2012). Standing in agreement with Bracke and Corts (2012), Bower and Griffin (2011) expressed the significant amount of literature and strategies developed for schools due to the gap between the desired levels of parental involvement and the actual levels of parental involvement. Parental involvement continues association with academic achievement, an increase in positive attitudes, better behavior, and overall success (Hayes, 2011).

Educators recognize the beneficial role of parental involvement as a strong motivational force for influencing educational policies and practices (Williams & Portman, 2014). When parents share in their children's education, they have a tendency to do better in school which is one of the many identifiable benefits that include long-term academic achievement, an improvement in attitudes and behaviors, and increased grades and test scores (J. Johnson, 2013).

Bracke and Corts (2012) called to attention the definition of parental involvement according to The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and explained the well-documented body of research expressing how parents are vital to the success of students.

Parental involvement associated with academic achievement has been identified by researchers as one of the primary contributors to a student's success (Young et al., 2013). Parents showing up to positively influence their children's physical, intellectual, and emotional development within their school community is not to be considered an overstatement (Bracke & Corts, 2012). Parental involvement in education has generated some positive outcomes such as higher grade point averages, better writing skills, enhanced reading skills, greater mathematical achievements, fewer retentions, and lower dropout rates (Mncube, 2010). As early as 2005, it was found that parents directly involved in their children's education support learning while indirectly encouraging achievement (Young et al., 2013). If students are to maximize their potential in education, they need the full support of their parents (J. Johnson, 2013).

Parental Involvement Based on Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic disadvantage severely undermines academic achievement, underlies racial inequalities in education, and solidifies how active parental institutional behaviors are (Crosnoe, 2012). Educational policies attempted to leverage parental involvement Research can inform policies trying to leverage parental involvement by situating children's academic progress at the meeting ground of home and school, with particular attention to young socioeconomically disadvantaged children (Crosnoe, 2012). Hayes (2011) conducted a study predicting parental involvement relating to education, marital status, and income. The study consisted of two groups of participants of urban African American parents derived from diverse socioeconomic levels (Hayes, 2011). Despite the extensive amount of research navigating the definition of parental

involvement and the various factors associated with the different levels of parental involvement, Hayes (2011) failed to add NCLB as one of those factors.

It is unclear as to whether or not socioeconomic status is a significant predictor of parental involvement (Bartel, 2010). There has been debate as to whether the home-school communication is beneficial for students who come from families with lower SES (Mncube, 2010). Arguments on whether or not socioeconomic status or other societal issues affect African American families continues to be a trigger for roundtable discussions amongst education scholars for more than three decades (Delgado, 2014). While Brown and Beckett (2007) believed the level of parental involvement depends on the families' socioeconomic status, Vega, Moore, and Miranda (2015) stated poverty itself is not the issue, but can deny access to positive role models and other social resources.

Bower and Griffin (2011) noted poverty presents barriers to traditional forms of parental involvement. Work schedules, lack of childcare, lack of participation, and inadequate income may prevent parents from participating in school events or volunteer efforts which some see as a lack of care or concern (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Students who come from families with low socioeconomic statuses have limited resources that prevent the promotion of academic achievement (Chun & Dickson, 2011). Families in poverty or from lower socioeconomic statuses are more inclined to have informal conversations, and unscheduled visits often frowned upon by teachers and administrators (Bower & Griffin, 2011). What schools may need to consider is the cause of impromptu visits and conversations may be due to poverty and lack of resources for these parents.

Cross-Cultural Studies of Parental Involvement

The United States is not the only country in which parental involvement has been one of the primary focuses in education. Considerable attention has ben given to parental participation in children's education in countries such as Japan, Britain, and the United States (Radzi et al., 2010). However, the studies on what predicts parental involvement in different cultural contexts are not current (Eng, Szmodis, & Mulsow, 2014). The term parental involvement is a relatively new concept in the Bangladeshi education perspective (Kabir & Akter, 2014). However, the South African Schools Act of 1996 defined 'parent' as either the parent or guardian of a learner, the person legally entitled to custody, or the person who fulfills the obligations of the aforementioned persons (Mncube, 2010).

Peterson et al. (2011) sought to understand the perceptions of accountability for student success and failure on the behalves of parents, students, and teachers. Peterson et al. conducted a qualitative study with focus groups consisting of students, parents, and teachers in New Zealand. One particular question included whom they felt were responsible for a child's learning and education. Prior research conducted seeking teachers' views about accountability and student learning. The only other qualitative study I found directly addressing parental views of the influences on student achievement focused on one ethnic group and deemed limited (Peterson et al., 2011). As cited in Mncube (2010), parental involvement in South Africa is about the various forms of participation in their children's education and schools. Similar to the United States,

involvement included an understanding of the interactions between parenting skills, frequent communication, and student success.

Peterson et al. (2011) described a study conducted by Jones involving Pasifika and New Zealand female students from two different socioeconomic statuses with opposing views on who was responsible for their education. According to the study, low socioeconomic students believed the teachers were responsible for helping them learn while high socioeconomic students felt it was their responsibility. Students who take responsibility for the success or failure of their education are said to perform better in their academics. On the other hand, Peterson et al. failed to identify parental views of who is responsible for the success or failure of their children's education.

Barriers Affecting Parental Involvement

Over the years there have been some barriers identified contributing to the decrease in parental involvement. African American and Latino parents especially from low socioeconomic backgrounds encounter obstacles when it comes to participating in their children's education (Vega et al., 2015). Those obstacles include time, lack of awareness of school activities lack of finances, and lack of transportation (Vega et al., 2015). Various research studies conducted identified the importance of developing parents' self-efficacy and the confidence in their ability to have a positive impact on their children's development (Feiyan & Agbenyega, 2012). Then again, a study providing training and/or support for parents to support their children found overwhelming limitations, resulting in weak evidence (See & Gorard, 2015).

Parents not knowing how to be involved and parents not feeling welcomed in the school based on past experiences are additional barriers affecting parental involvement (Young et al., 2013). Although there are some who believe this should not be considered a barrier, the conflict between parental perceptions and teacher perceptions have proven to be such in student academic achievement. Both satisfied and dissatisfied participants described situations in which teachers gave parents the impression that their involvement was undesirable (Wanat, 2010).

Communication is the foundation of an effective parent-school partnership (J. Johnson, 2013). However, parent and school collaboration have continued to be a conflict when it comes to agreeing on what is academically sound for students. Most parents believed that parents and teachers should maintain complementary, but separate, roles, and thought negative attitudes of teachers could discourage or even steer parents away from being involved (Wanat, 2010). In a similar study conducted, one parent suggested that teachers should take the time to listen and avoid labeling them as aggressive blacks (Delgado, 2014). However, it is difficult for parents not to be viewed as aggressive or take on an aggressive manner when their voices are not heard. The result of this is children's suffering in the classroom, due to a lack of respect for parents and their students and teachers not heeding to their concerns (Wanat, 2010).

Another barrier preventing parents from being more involved in their children's education is the language barrier. A deficit forms when parents, whether monolingual or bilingual, are unable to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and concerns in the same manner as professionals involved in their child's education (Larios & Zetlin, 2012). The

language barrier hinders immigrant parents and teachers from communicating effectively both in oral and written form (Lasky & Karge, 2011).

According to the Individual's with Disability Education Act (IDEA), parent participation is mandated for Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings (Larios & Zetlin, 2012). However, I have yet to identify a law mandating parental involvement in their children's education in circumstances when their child does not have a disability. The federal policy through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 has been mandating parental involvement in disadvantaged communities through ventures such as parent advisory councils (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011). However, barriers continue to exist especially for urban, low-income, immigrant, minority, and working-class parents (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011).

Parental Involvement in Charter Schools

The establishment of charter schools developed as an opportunity for urban parents to play an integral role in their children's education (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011). Charter schools in the United States have become an attractive option for the improvement of public education across the nation (Wilkens, 2013). According to Wilkens (2013), in 2013 approximately 5,000 charter schools educated over 1.6 million students and operated in 42 states, including the District of Columbia. However, Knaak and Knaak (2013) identified 5,600 charter schools in 39 states, estimating between 1.3 million and 2 million students. While there is a discrepancy of charter schools and the number of states serving these schools across the United States, the consensus is the

number of charter schools grew over a 20-year span. There is a limited amount of qualitative and quantitative research data about charter schools (Knaak & Knaak, 2013).

An early study of charter schools, one of the few comparing charter school parent involvement to that of noncharter public schools in the same neighborhood, reported greater parent involvement in charter schools (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011). As cited in Smith, Wohlstetter, et al. (2011), Cooper found parents who elect to send their child to schools of choice may feel the decision alone is sufficient to ensure their child's success, and they have no need to get further involved. However, the same article stated parent involvement is the foundation for the vision of many charter schools. Despite lofty goals and good intentions, charter schools varied considerably in how they involve parents (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011).

There has been an identification of the different levels of parental involvement including a family's moral supporters, ambivalent companions, and struggling advocates (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011). Honest supporters are those parents who encourage their children without being physically present in the school setting (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011). Ambivalent companions are parents who want their children to do well but make no efforts to advocate on their behalf (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011). Struggling advocates are parents who work extremely hard to fulfill their role as set by traditional parental involvement standards, but are faced with barriers when they try to be present at the school (Smith, Wholstetter, et al., 2011).

Parental Involvement Based on Race and Ethnicity

Within the United States, there has been considerable diversity in the ideals of parental involvement among African Americans, Latinos, and Europeans. Research suggests that parental involvement or specific patterns of involvement depends on the racial or ethnic groups (Park & Holloway, 2013). A common misconception is that not being physically present at school functions means lack of the value of education (Vega et al., 2015). However, research demonstrates parents expressed interest to be involved in their children's education (Vega et al., 2015).

Even 50 years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, parental involvement tended to favor the perspectives of European, middle-class families while regarding African American parental involvement as being negative (Fields-Smith, 2005). When brainstorming strategies to increase the levels of parental involvement, consideration should be given to the race and ethnicity because of the differences among the aforementioned races (Bower & Griffin, 2011). What works for African American families, may not work for Latino families and vice-versa. Personalized parental involvement programs based on the needs of the community and the school is one means of encouraging parental involvement in these various ethnic groups (Young et al., 2013).

Parent groups have been proven to work for African American families. However, Latino families are said to respect the role of the teacher and the school and are less likely to contact the school for problems and concerns (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The question remains as to why parental involvement is so small for ethnic-minority, language-minority, and lower resource families despite visible results of parental involvement

being positive (Young et al., 2013). Despite the known advantages of parental involvement, aforementioned researchers have identified a lack of communication that continues to exist between African American parents and the educational system (J. Johnson, 2013).

Some of the major themes identified in the literature address parental involvement, or lack thereof, in the African American community. Studies have shown that ethnic/racial or low-income parents are less likely than other parents to participate in their children's education (Park & Holloway, 2013). Heavy emphasis has been on strategies to get parents involved in their children's education and the barriers these parents face when they attempt to get involved. When researching educational accountability, I found authors who focused solely on schools, administrators, and teachers. However, J. Johnson (2013) was the only author I located who examined what accountability looked like on behalf of parents.

What researchers do know is that parental involvement in the African American community has been low in comparison to their White counterparts, with an even more striking gap in urban school districts (Hayes, 2011). However, what is not known is the perceptions of parental involvement among African American mothers. In conducting research using *parental involvement* and *parental perceptions* as keywords, I located only two articles that addressed the two together. Despite the abundance of research regarding the benefits and funding of parental involvement, there is still a lack of involvement, especially in the African American community.

The present study filled the gap in the literature that required an exploration of the perceptions of educational accountability among single African American mothers with children enrolled in charter high schools. Most research addressed what schools, teachers, and administrations think about parental involvement. However, few articles touched on parental perceptions of their level of involvement and their understanding of educational accountability.

Summary

In summary, parental involvement in the African American community is considered to be drastically low despite efforts and funding for an increase. There has been little discussion about how parents perceive parental involvement or how they understand their role in their children's education, especially among African American mothers. It is important that we examine how mothers perceive parental involvement to understand why there continues to be a lack of involvement. Until there is an explanation of how African American mothers view parental involvement, the efforts to increase parental involvement in the African American community will continue to fall short. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of this study and how the data was collected and transcribed using the generic qualitative approach.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Purpose

The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of educational accountability among single African American mothers of high school children living in the Midwest. A generic qualitative study provides an opportunity to seek an understanding of the perspectives and worldviews of a phenomenon or process and the people involved (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). According to Parent et al. (2013), 73% of African American children are born to an unwed mother, with 67% of them living in a single parent household at some point in their lives. As cited in Taylor et al. (2010), single mothers tend to have fewer resources and social capital than two-parent households. They are also said to have less education, lower income, and be younger in age than married women (Taylor et al. 2010).

In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 63% of African American families were headed by single mothers, compared to only 33% of the general population (Taylor et al., 2010). Because over 50% of African American families are head by single mothers, the role they play in their children's education is a topic of interest as it is significant to their academic success. I have not found in the literature how African American mothers perceive educational accountability. Because there is such a high percentage of families' being led by African American single mothers, I explored their perceptions of educational accountability in order better understand the lack of parental involvement in the African American community.

Research Questions

Ajzen's TPB addressed how an individual's intentional behaviors are based on their attitudes and beliefs, subjective norms, and their perceived controls (Ajzen, 1991; Bracke & Corts, 2012). The perceptions of African American mothers have been researched to reframe an understanding of behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs surrounding parental involvement (McKenna & Millen, 2013). Because all behaviors are intentional, I sought to find the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of educational accountability among African American mothers to inquire about their role of parental involvement in their children's education. Because of this, the research questions are as follows:

RQ1. What are the attitudes and beliefs of educational accountability among African American mothers?

RQ2. How do African American mothers make decisions related to their involvement in their children's education based on their beliefs of educational accountability?

Conceptual Framework

Using TPB in this study, I explored the concept of educational accountability among African American mothers and their perceptions of parental involvement in education. According to previous literature, parents can act or fail to act based on what they believe about their children's schools (Collins Ayanlaja, 2011). To define the phenomenon of the lack of parental involvement among African American families, I

analyzed the reports of parental perceptions of educational accountability and parental

involvement in education among African American mothers.

Research Tradition

There is no definitive way to classify qualitative research (Smith, Bekker, &

Cheater, 2011). Qualitative research refers to various methods of collecting and analyzing

data completely different from quantitative research methods that include statistical

analysis (Smith, Bekker, & Cheater, 2011). Traditional qualitative research includes

approaches such as narrative, case studies, phenomenological, grounded theory, and

ethnography. Generic qualitative research is used when research is not guided in the form

of one of the well-known or established qualitative approaches (Kahlke, 2014).

Qualitative approaches are ideal for exploring topics about which little is known, making

sense of complex situations, gaining new insights into phenomena, constructing themes

to explain phenomena, and ultimately fostering a deep understanding of the phenomena

(Morse & Richards 2002).

Rationale

Thematic analysis is seen as a foundational method of analysis for qualitative

analysis, which provides core skills useful for conducting analysis (Braun & Clarke,

2006). The focus of thematic analysis is to understand an experience or phenomenon that

is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in any one of

the qualitative methodological forms (Caelli et al., 2003). One of the benefits of this

approach is flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Another benefit of generic qualitative

analysis is an approach with the potential to provide a rich, detailed, and complex account

of collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Exploring the perceptions of single African American mothers regarding educational accountability and parental involvement was the objective of this study.

Role as Researcher

The role I played in my study was the researcher. As the researcher, I conducted interviews with the participants who agreed to participate in my study. Participants were selected anonymously without any personal or professional relation to me; therefore, I did not foresee any relationship ethical concerns. However, because I am a single African American mother of a child who attended a charter middle school in the Midwest, there could be a potential chance of biases or power relationships on my behalf. The method of triangulation was used to reduce the effect of these biases or power relationships (Shenton, 2004). Interviews were conducted with a wide range of participants to create a rich picture of the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs based on the information being provided (Shenton, 2004). In addition to conducting interviews, I was willing to examine any documents provided by the participants to as source material. However, no documents were presented prior to, during, or after the interviews were conducted.

Participant Selection Logic

To select my sample size, I created a list of criteria my participants should have and gathered and collect data using purposeful sampling for my study. The ultimate goal of purposeful sampling is to obtain information rich data for the study (Sandelowski, 2000). Purposeful sampling is said to be more common in qualitative research (Cooper & Endacott, 2007) and occurs when a certain sample is selected because researchers believe

that interviewing or observing a particular group can gather the most information. Researchers using generic qualitative data collection will gather information from people about their experiences in real-world events and processes (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). It was the intent to have a total number of five participants, through which I planned to obtain saturation for my study with the five selected participants.

Population

The population selected was single African American mothers from the ages of 28 to 58 with children enrolled in charter high schools in the Midwest. These mothers were unwed heads of the household from various socioeconomic statuses. The justification to choose participants from this population was because of the number of African American mothers who head single-family households. The criteria on which participants were selected were based on African American mothers who have children that attend charter high schools across the Midwest. The goal was to get a minimum of five participants to commit fully to participating in the study.

Recruitment Steps

To recruit participants for my study, I sent out notifications via social media (i.e., Facebook and Linkedin) and the Walden Participant Pool. I informed potential candidates that I was looking for single African American mothers who had children that attended charter high schools in the Midwest. Once I had enough participants who showed interest, I sent a letter of consent explaining my study and what role they would play. Once the candidates signed and submitted the letter of consent, interview times and dates were scheduled.

The recruitment process included messages requesting participants via social media and the Walden Participant Pool. All interested participants had to send direct messages or e-mails expressing interest. Ethical concerns related to data collection were addressed as they arose. Should any participants have refused to participate or withdraw early, another attempt to recruit more participants for the study was made.

Instrumentation

Generic qualitative research requires participation observation, content or activity-specific, questionnaires, and semi- or fully-structured interviews (Percy et al., 2015). Generally, data are collected using semistructured interviews, focus groups, or other sources of data (Kahlke, 2014). However, data collection using the generic qualitative approach uses methods that evoke the participants' reports on their ideas about things that are outside themselves (Percy et al., 2015). In all phases of qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument (Tufford & Newman, 2012). To evoke the ideas and beliefs of the participants of my study, I selected to use semistructured interviews where I played the role of the researcher using myself as the instrumentation.

The data being collected from the interviews were coded using generic coding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Generic coding identifies keywords and relevant themes within group or individual interviews (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The first steps of general coding allowed me to identify any slang or jargon considered cultural knowledge (Saldana, 2016). Through a series of questions and responses, I collected and transcribed oral data.

Data Analysis

When working with verbal data such as interviews, that data will need to be transcribed into written form. Once the data were transcribed into written form, I used thematic analysis to analyze that data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis is a process used to conduct an analysis of qualitative data that includes the searching of data across a data set and seeking out repeated patterns of meanings (Braun & Clark, 2006; Percy et al., 2015). By using thematic analysis, any patterns or themes repeated in my data were identified and analyzed. The goal was to search for certain patterns or themes across my entire data set as opposed to data from one participant or interviewee. One of the key criteria addressed conducting qualitative research is internal validity in an effort to ensure the study measures or tests are what is actually intended (Percy et al., 2015). Because qualitative researchers are their own measures of validity, credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness when conducting a study (Shenton, 2004). In an effort to establish trustworthiness and credibility, I used triangulation. Triangulation involves the use of different methods such as observation, interviews, and groups to collect data (Shenton, 2004).

By having a thick and sufficient description of the phenomenon, it is possible for transferability to take place for readers seeking to compare the findings of my study with their own situations. With the opportunity to self-identify with my study, they will have the ability to determine if they have either experienced or observed a similar situation such as the participants in my study. Because some readers may also be future researchers looking to model my study, it was imperative that I report the findings in

great detail. The process of addressing the dependability and credibility of a study may be achieved with overlapping methods (Shenton, 2004). Conducting my study using semistructured interviews and additional documentation from participants addressed dependability and credibility concerns that may otherwise have caused ridicule or suspect of bias.

Addressing the issue of confirmability can be somewhat difficult when conducting a qualitative study due to the potential threat of biases. However, certain steps were taken to ensure the findings were a direct result of the perceptions and ideas of my participants and not of my own. As the goal was to conduct interviews with complete objectivity, all biases and predispositions were recognized in advance to prevent threats to the internal validity of my study. To achieve this goal, I used the process of bracketing. Bracketing occurs when the researcher holds in abeyance his or her biases, assumptions, or previous experiences to describe the phenomenon (Tufford & Newman, 2012). By using one method of bracketing, reflexive journaling, presuppositions and preconceptions were identified at the beginning of the research and then identified throughout (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

In generic qualitative research, as in all other methodologies, researchers must consider ethical implications outside of an already defined methodology (Kahlke, 2014). To address ethical implications, I completed several documents to ensure participants would be treated fairly and appropriately. Participants for my study were obtained using the Walden University participant pool and social media. Agreements to gain access to

participants and consent to participant were provided to participants as well. An IRB application was completed and granted approval (approval # 09-29-16-0378552).

Collected data were treated confidentially and anonymously. The participants were assigned an alias or number to keep their personal information private. Data will be stored on a hard drive and in separate fields labeled according to their assigned aliases. Data will be destroyed after 5 years.

Summary

In summary, the sample consisted of five single African American mothers with children who attend charter high schools in the Midwest. I recruited participants via social media and the Walden Participant Pool seeking interest, and consent for participation was sent once interest was expressed. I conducted semistructured interviews to inquire about participants' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors surrounding educational accountability and parental involvement. Using generic qualitative research, I collected and analyzed transcribed data using thematic analysis and basic coding. All participant information was treated confidentially and anonymously. Both participants and schools were assigned aliases. Information will be stored for 5 years. Chapter 4 will include the data collection and analysis of the study. Chapter 5 will include the findings of the study as well as the summary.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The goal of my study was to explore single African American mothers'
perceptions of educational accountability to understand the role they believed they played
in their children's education. It became worthwhile to investigate the perceptions of
single African American mothers because single mothers lead 63% of African American
families and there has been a reported lack of parental involvement in education within
the African American community (Taylor et al., 2010). I did not discover any studies
addressing how African American parents perceive their educational accountability and
how they define their role in their children's education.

The purpose of selecting single African American mothers with children enrolled
in charter schools was to examine their involvement in their children's education. Several
charter schools require some form of parental involvement, and these parents have a
certain level of educational accountability. According to Smith, Wohlstetter, et al. (2011),
charter school administrators envision parental involvement as foundational and expect
parents to play an intrinsic role in their children's education. Wilkens (2013) described
charter schools as alternatives to public school education. Many public schools fail to
serve the academic needs of their students adequately, resulting in parents choosing to
transition their children to charter schools. Findings in my study included reasons why
the participants selected charter schools and their degree of involvement in their
children's education (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011).

In this chapter, I include an analysis of data collected from the participants and results of the findings based on the analyzed information. Following the review of the research questions, I describe the setting in which I conducted the interviews and any personal or organizational conditions that may have influenced the participants' responses during the time of the study. I also describe the data collection process, including the number of participants; location, frequency, and duration of each interview; and variations to the anticipated data collection process. Next, I explain the data analysis process in moving from raw text to the identification of themes. Included in the discussion I present evidence of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, and how I attempted to address potential threats to validity. In concluding the chapter, I provide the results of my study along with a summary.

Research Questions

I developed the research questions based on my concerns regarding educational accountability and parental involvement within the African American community. Previous research addressed educational accountability on behalf of schools, yet the only study I found addressing educational accountability of parents was J. Johnson (2013). Prior research addressed the perceptions of single African American fathers' lack of parental involvement, but I found no research on the perceptions of educational accountability of single African American mothers. Increasing parental involvement and enhancing relationships between schools and families have long been a proposed strategy to close student achievement gaps (J. Johnson, 2013). However, there have continued to

be concerns regarding the lack of parental involvement within the African American community and whether that lack of involvement affects a student's academic performance (Larocque et al., 2011).

Setting

I conducted the interviews in two different locations in the same county, the city of Chicago and a suburb on the outskirts of Chicago. The participants were in a quiet location with no distractions or interruptions. During the interviews, none of the participants described any personal conditions such as job loss, trauma, or family concerns during the time of the study.

Inclusion Criteria

All participants reported being single African American mothers with children enrolled in charter high schools. All participants also reported they resided in the Midwest and the schools their children attended were in the city of Chicago. The participants reported being within the age requirements and they all reported having daughters in charter schools.

Data Collection

The initial data collection plan was to identify all the potential participants first, and then send letters of consent once enough participants showed interest. However, I found it more feasible to interview participants at the initial time they showed interest. Once a potential participant expressed interest, I sent the introductory interview e-mail (Appendix A) and consent form. When the participant completed the opt-in form and responded to the e-mail stating "I consent," I scheduled a date and time for the interview.

I decided not to wait for 10 participants to prevent any potential participants from losing interest should the recruitment process take longer than expected.

I also planned to recruit single African American mothers ages 28 to 48. I assumed that I would not find a single mother over the age of 48 with children in high school. However, I came across someone over the expected age who expressed interest in volunteering after seeing my flyer (Appendix B) posted on social media. Because an age requirement was not indicated on the flyer, I did not turn away the potential participant.

Five participants were included for the purpose of collecting data. All five participants were single African American mothers with children enrolled in charter high schools located in or near the city of Chicago. Each participant took part in a semistructured interview scheduled at her convenience. I conducted the interviews in a quiet, private location where four of five participants were in their homes. I assigned aliases to all participants to keep their identity confidential. Throughout the discussion, I do not identify the specific source of the quote to better protect the confidentiality of the participants. Therefore, quotes of the participants are not identified by name.

As outlined in Table 1, E53709's interview was the longest, lasting 29 minutes and 58 seconds. A25611's interview was the shortest, lasting 18 minutes and 52 seconds. B43209's interview lasted 21 minutes and 13 seconds. C14512's interview lasted 23 minutes and 18 seconds, and D34209's interview lasted 28 minutes and 13 seconds. I collected the data during semistructured interviews, which lasted no longer than 30 minutes. I interviewed each participant one time, with the exception of one of the interviews, which required two audio recordings due to technical difficulties.

Table 1

Summary of Participants' Demographics and Interview Time

Participant	Age	Location	Time
A25611	56	Residence	18 mins and 52 secs
B43209	32	Residence	21 mins and 13 secs
C14512	45	Business	23 mins and 18 secs
D34209	42	Residence	28 mins and 13 secs
E53709	37	Residence	29 mins and 58 secs

Using the free video conferencing application, join.me, I collected the participants' responses to the interview questions and took notes while recording the discussions after the participants had been notified. A total of 13 questions were prepared for the interviews. Some responses prompted me to ask additional questions that I did not pose to other participants for the purpose of acquiring more information. Not every participant understood the meaning of the questions being asked. Therefore, I often had to ask the participants to clarify responses to make sure they did not misinterpret the question. If the participants did not understand, I provided examples of responses or thoroughly explained what the question meant.

I encountered some unusual circumstances during data collection. Often the audio or webcam did not work properly, resulting in me asking the participants to repeat themselves or having to rewind the audio recordings several times in an attempt to

decipher their responses. Despite having difficulty with the join.me application, I was able to record and transcribe all responses in addition to the notes taken during the recording. During the interviews, four of the participants required assistance from their daughters to properly work the join.me application. I do not know whether the daughters remained in the room or if they were within earshot during the interview.

Participant C14512 was the only participant who did not require assistance with the use of the join.me application. The audio and webcam worked properly throughout the interview with no technical difficulties. During participant A25611's interview, the volume on the join.me application was not working properly. Although the webcam allowed for clear visibility, I had difficulty hearing their responses. I recorded the interview using the web-based application; however, the participant had to call me to conduct the interview due to the volume not working on her computer.

Participant D34209 had difficulty with the application but was able to access both audio and video on her daughter's computer. Participant B43209 required two videoconferences due to major technical difficulties. During the first videoconference, the webcam was frozen, and only audio functioned properly. The videoconference ended abruptly, and I had to call the participant to inquire if an abnormality occurred. I walked her through the steps again, and I was able to videoconference the second interview as both the audio and webcam functioned properly.

I had to walk Participant E53709 through the process as well, and she was successful in joining the videoconference and accessing the webcam. However, the audio

was not functioning properly. This resulted in me calling the participant to conduct the interview using audio via the cellphone and webcam using the videoconference.

Data Analysis

Before analyzing data, I wrote down my research questions on a notecard and placed it within eyesight. I also wrote down the coding steps I would be following to analyze my data: raw text, relevant ideas, themes, and research concerns. After I wrote down the coding steps, I began analyzing the five transcribed interviews.

Raw Text

I collected the data using semistructured interviews and transcribed the information by typing what I gathered from the audio recordings and reviewed in the notes taken during the interview as reference points. In taking notes during the interviews, I tried to grasp as much information as possible during the data collection process. The notes were another way to gather information provided by the participants. Although I knew I would not be able to type everything, I jotted down as much as possible in the event I was unable to decipher what the participants conveyed through the audio recording.

The average time to transcribe an interview was 3 to 4 hours. After each transcription, I highlighted certain phrases or keywords I believed were relevant to my study. I based my decisions on the repetitive or relevant words or phrases used by the participants. The decisions to choose these words or phrases were determined by the relation to the research questions. Because I was seeking the perceptions of educational accountability, content from the interviews such as *responsibility*, *support*, *guidance*, or

involvement became relevant. Once I highlighted keywords and phrases, I wrote them down on notecards and labeled them according to the participant's interview. After labeling each notecard, I created quick notes from them to break down the information provided by the participants.

The note cards allowed me to have something tangible to see as I reviewed the highlighted transcriptions. From there, I simplified the information on the note cards again, identifying repeated or key terms that stood out. These became additional quick notes. These quick notes were a shorter list of relevant or key terms taken from the note cards. The coding used to create this list was based on the how often each participant used the word or phrase and how many participants used the word or phrase. Although repetition did not occur with all the noted ideas, if I felt it was critical to my study, it became an addition to my list key terms.

Preliminary Coding

I highlighted relevant key terms identified through reviewing raw data and notes and pinpointing information I deemed important or necessary. Those relevant key terms were similar words and phrases I identified often used by the participants expressing the same idea (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). For example, reasons why participants selected their daughter's high school became one of the relevant ideas. Repeating relevant ideas occurring within different interviews provides evidence certain responses address research concerns (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). While the responses do not directly answer the interview question, the responses they offered were important in explaining the thought processes or beliefs behind selecting certain high schools.

Another relevant idea was the perception of participants whether the level of parental involvement would change if the participants were not single. Three of five participants believed their level of parental involvement would remain the same. Outlined in Chapter 3, preexisting research found 63% of African American families were head by single mothers, (Taylor et al., 2010). Their beliefs explicated how interested they were in their children's education and if their marital or relationship status would affect their level of involvement. This was of interest because despite additional support, the participants reported they would be involved whether single or not.

The list of key terms identified in Table 2 was quite extensive. I based the list on two criteria: responses directly linked to the research questions, and responses that created themes. I added any response directly linked to the research questions to the list of relevant ideas in the quick notes. To differentiate noteworthy data per interview, I colligated repeating and relevant ideas within each transcribed interview between all participants. After an additional simplification process, I created a list of themes outlined from each interview.

Arising Themes

Once I transcribed the data collected from all the interviews and created a list of relevant ideas through quick notes, I searched for emerging themes through each of the interviews using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves searching repeated patterns or ideas across a data set such as a number of interviews or focus groups (Braun & Clark, 2006). The themes emerged from the collected data included phrases or words such as *support, assistance, communication, collaboration, involvement, responsibility,*

hold everyone accountable, positive involvement experiences, being active, and being

responsible.

Table 2 is a table I created identifying the participants' interview number, their child's grade level, the school they attended, and key terms from each interview. The names of the schools are aliases to keep the schools and the students confidential. The purpose of identifying a list of themes within each interview was to provide insight to examine any themes across all participant interviews.

Table 2

Participants, Student Grade Level, School, and Key Terms

Participant	Grade Level	School	Key Terms
C14512	12th	Collegiate	Guidance
			Support
			Assistance
A25611	11th & 12th	Northwest	Communication
			Collaboration
			Positive
D34209	9th	Leadership	Involvement
			Preparation
			Advocate
B43209	9th	Northwest	Responsible
			Involvement
			Transportation
			Work

(table continues)

Participant	Grade Level	School	Key Terms
E53709	9th	Northwest	Mandatory
			Involvement
			Positive
			Active
			Responsible

While searching for themes, I found both similarities and differences in the participants' responses. The commonalities among the participants' thoughts and ideas included involvement, positivity, and responsibility. The definitions of educational accountability and parental involvement differed as well as the level of accountability for each entity. These similarities and differences produced themes to assist in addressing the research questions and concerns. The following paragraphs identify how I analyzed those similarities and differences.

Themes

Throughout the interviews, there were continuous patterned responses from all participants, which helped with developing themes. I based the list of themes on repeating and relevant ideas within the data collected about the research questions. Themes are based on the importance in the overall relation to the research question (Braun & Clark, 2006). I wrote down a list of repeating ideas from each interview. After I wrote down the list, I created a chart identifying which participants had those repeating ideas and what transcribed page to find it on. From this list I developed a total of eight themes. The themes were as follows: *be visible and involved or the education may not be*

adequate, schools encourage parental involvement, collaboration and communication, teachers and staff know me, preparation is key, work schedule is a barrier, involvement level would be the same whether single or not, educational accountability involves parents, teachers, and students.

Table 3 represents the key terms, themes, which were color coded teal, purple, green, red, yellow, and gray. The quotes of the participants provided the context allowing me to create the list of themes. Not every participant had the same beliefs, ideals, or opinions. However, the themes were not created based on the number of participants with the same beliefs. Only two participants expressed a belief that being visible in the school would enhance a child's opportunity for a better education. While all five participants believed educational accountability involved parents, teachers, and students.

Despite the differences outlined in the data such as how to be involved and what educational accountability means, this did not negate the relevance of those themes. I did not define key themes by how often the participants used relevant ideas, but how important it is to the overall research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I established themes and grouped them together to provide narratives based on my participants' personal stories (Auerbauch & Silverstein, 2003).

Table 3

Summary of Key Terms, Themes, and Participants

Key Terms	Themes	Participants
Guidance	Be visible & involved	C14512
Support	Education may not be adequate	E53709
Involvement		
Active	Schools encourage parental involvement	C14512
Positive		A25611
		D34209
		B43209
		E53709
Communication	Collaboration & Communication	C14512
		A25611
		D34209
		B43209
		E53709

Key Terms	Themes	Participants
Involvement	Teachers & Staff Know Me	C14512
Active		A25611
		E53709
Preparation	Preparation is Key	A25611
		D34209
		B43209
Work	Work is a Barrier	B43209
		E53709
Assistance	Involvement Would be the Same	C14512
		A25611
		D34209
		E53709
Accountable	Educational Accountability	C14512
Responsibility		A25611
Advocate		D34209
		B43209
		E53709

All participants stated that schools encourage parental involvement, yet only three participants expressed the fact that the teachers and staff know them. One participant reported that everyone at the school knows who she is, while another participant expressed an importance of knowing everyone who works with her daughter. Having relationships with the staff in the building was important as well as attending school functions such as PTO meetings, parent conferences, and school fundraisers.

For some participants, preparing their daughters for school and bedtime was a way of demonstrating parental involvement: "Making sure she gets up, gets a good night's sleep, getting up every day and going to school on time." Some believed it required more on their part. According to four participants, collaboration and communication were necessary for the academic growth of the child. In the eyes of some participants, their role is to make sure their children complete homework, they sign the necessary paperwork and assure their daughters have everything they need to be successful in school.

Before the beginning of data analysis, I identified the social problem and research problem: the lack of parental involvement in the African American community and the lack of focus on how African American mothers viewed educational accountability (Hayes, 2011). I was unable to find studies addressing how African American mothers viewed educational accountability and the role they believe they played in their children's education. As recent as 2013, over 70% of African American children were born to single mothers (Parent et al., 2013). The large percentage of children born out of wedlock and

the low percentage of parental involvement among African American families presented

a concern, which in turn resulted in the development of the research questions.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I intended to establish credibility using triangulation methods such as

observations, interviews, and documentation. I found I did not need observations because

I would not be observing any of the participants engaging in parental involvement. I also

did not receive any documentation from the participants during the interviews. I did not

use this method of triangulation. However, I achieved credibility through another form. I

compared the participants' viewpoints, experiences, and beliefs against one another,

which allowed for a rich picture of the attitudes and behaviors of each participant to

emerge (Shenton, 2004).

Site triangulation is another method used to achieve credibility. Having

participants from several organizations as opposed to the same institution allocate for site

triangulation to be achieved (Shenton, 2004). Three of the participants had daughters that

attended the same charter high school. Two of the participants had daughters in ninth

grade and one participant had daughters in the 11th and 12th grade. Among the five

participants, similar results emerged when questioned about educational accountability

and who should be accountable or responsible for their children's education.

There were no adjustments made to achieve transferability. I attempted to achieve

transferability by collecting data from participants with full and sufficient descriptions of

their parental involvement experiences. Not all readers of my study may have children

enrolled in charter high schools. However, that does not mean they will not be able to

self-identify with my study as having similar experiences as the participants. The participants in my study have students in grades ranging from ninth grade to 12th grade. The situations detailed in my study identify encounters single mothers have had with parental involvement. While not all encounters were the same, it is possible for readers to relate or self-identify with one or more participants whether they are an educator, scholar, or parent.

I did not use any overlapping methods in addition to the interviews to reach dependability since my study did not warrant those methods (Shenton, 2004). I intended to use semistructured interviews and additional documentation from participants to address dependability and credibility concerns. However, I addressed dependability providing a detailed account of the study for future researchers attempting to repeat the same processes, with or without a purpose to obtain the same results.

Before the beginning of my interviews, I took the necessary steps to implement confirmability. To avoid any potential threat of biases, I employed the use of bracketing, so as to ensure the findings were a result of the participants' beliefs and not my own. Preceding the data collection process, I practiced reflexive journaling, identifying any preconceived notions or presuppositions that could jeopardize my interpretation of the data. Any additional ideas or beliefs developed throughout the data analysis process were also identified and added them to the journal. I did this to ensure I did not base themes on any biases I may have had before or during data collection. I also copied the participants' information verbatim and transcribed it into written text.

Theoretical Framework

Using Azjen's (1991) TPB, I intended to identify participant's decision-making of parental involvement, based on their attitudes and beliefs about educational accountability. As stated in Chapter 3, an individual's attitudes, beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived controls determine their intentional actions (Ajzen, 1991; Bracke & Corts, 2012). I found that the participants had every intention to be involved in their children's education. However, their decision making of their parental involvement was based on their definition of educational accountability.

Responses Related to Research Questions

RQ1. What are the attitudes and beliefs of educational accountability among African American mothers?

Collectively, all participants believed they should hold some form of accountability for their children's education. Not only did they believe they are accountable for their children's education, but they also felt teachers, schools, and their children were accountable as well. The attitudes and beliefs of educational accountability among the participants was everyone should share the responsibility. For example, one participant stated, "If I don't push my child to be able to push herself and then the extra help from the teacher to push that child, then I don't think the child would be really eager to learn." The idea of holding everyone accountable was evident among all the participants.

Participants believed that while teachers and schools were responsible for educating students, parents also had a responsibility to educate them as well. One

participant stated, "I believe my role is primary teacher. I am her first teacher and school is next." Another participant stated, "I feel as if I want to hold my child accountable, I should be held accountable." One participant stated she believes parents should instruct their children because they do not know the importance of education as much as the parents. One participant stated, "Making sure she gets an education, attending school, making sure she completes her homework and paying attention in class." Another participant expressed similar views stating, "My role is to provide them with the best education possible as far as selecting the best high school for them."

According to the participants, students have an obligation to learn the information presented to them by "paying attention in class" and "being alert like what's going on in class." They believed since the students are the ones in the classrooms, they are accountable for what they learn. One of the participants defined educational accountability as her daughter acting independently to some extent. She stated, "Any kind of independent learning, being active, taking responsibility for your own growth and education."

Despite the differences in the attitudes and beliefs, I found a consensus that educational accountability rested on the shoulders of everyone. What I also found was that there had been no shift in the attitudes or beliefs of educational accountability once their daughters entered high school. I inquired if the parents had the same expectations regarding education accountability once their children transitioned to high school and there was no report of change. One participant stated she had always been active in her daughter's education. She said, "I encourage education to the fullest. I can't say that it's

actually changed." Another participant stated that because this is her second daughter in high school, her definition of educational accountability has not shifted at all.

RQ2. How do African American mothers make decisions related to their involvement in their children's education based on their beliefs of educational accountability?

Because all the participants had different beliefs of educational accountability, the decisions made related to their involvement in their children's education differed as well. Participants based the role they play in their children's education on their definitions of educational accountability and how involved they could be in their children's education. For example, one participant said her role is to get their children prepared for school. She stated, "get them there on time every morning, make sure they have all their school supplies, anything that's needed, dressed properly, fed, and all forms completely filled out properly." Despite her attitude that parents are less accountable than teachers and students, she believed that she was the driving force to make sure her children had everything they needed. She stated, "Whatever they need to be a successful student is what I provide." Her belief was that it was the teacher's job to present the information and the student's job to follow up. The parent's role was to step in as an advocate if there was a problem.

One of the participants had conflicting views, believing the parent is more accountable than the schools and the students. She stated, "And the reason why I say that is because as a parent it's my job so I don't have a choice." She believed that if she

wanted her daughter to succeed and go further in her education, she held a degree of accountability as well.

The decisions to send their children to charter schools varied among the participants. One participant stated she selected her daughter's school because of the academics and how close it was to their home. Another participant said she applied to her daughter's school after googling it and finding that it was one of the top five schools in the area. According to one participant, "the academic support is very great to me at the charter school compared to CPS." The decisions to enroll their children in charter schools were just one example of how the participants make decisions related to their involvement. Better learning environment, academic support, college preparation, and an alternate solution to the neighborhood schools that were not doing so well.

The participants' perceptions of educational accountability proved to be about their attitudes and beliefs of parental involvement. Table 4 highlights perceptions of educational accountability among the single African American mothers that participated in my study. Through the findings of the study, I identified how each participant viewed educational accountability if they were to base it on a 100% pie chart. Participants were asked what percentages of accountability each entity should hold: parents, students, and school. I found the participants identified varying levels of the percentages of accountability for their children's education. Each participant had opposing thoughts on the level of educational accountability each entity should hold, but each entity's responsibility level differed.

Table 4

Varying Levels of Participants' Perceptions of Educational Accountability

Participants	Parents	Students	Schools
C14512	50%	25%	25%
A25611	15%	35%	50%
D34209	20%	60%	20%
B43209	20%	40%	40%
E53709	30%	30%	40%

Summary

Using semistructured interviews, I received an abundance of knowledge and findings on how single African American mothers viewed educational accountability and parental involvement. In conducting interviews with five participants, I documented their attitudes, beliefs, and decisions related to their views on educational accountability. I achieved saturation by identifying repeating ideas and themes among the participants.

Consistency between the participants existed as it related to their perceptions of educational accountability. According to the collected data, the single African American mothers who contributed to this study believe educational accountability was the responsibility of schools, students, and parents. Although the participants expressed varying accountability levels, it was comprehensible that collaboration and communication, parental involvement, and taking responsibility for one's education are all strategies for educational accountability.

The decisions made related to the participants' involvement in their children's education was based on their attitudes and beliefs of educational accountability. These attitudes and beliefs provided insight allowing me to identify the types of parental involvement the participants engaged in at their children's respective schools. Participants believed charter schools offered a better learning experience than their neighborhood schools. While they considered work as a barrier and prevented some participants from attending meetings and events, this did not preclude the participants from being involved in other ways.

In Chapter 5, I will include a summarization of the purpose and nature of the study. I will also provide my interpretation of the findings along with the limitations and trustworthiness of the study. In conclusion, I will offer recommendations for further research as well as identify implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of single African American mothers with children enrolled in charter high schools. I undertook the study so researchers and scholars could understand how parents view educational accountability and to provide additional strategies to increase parental involvement in the African American community. I also wanted to add to the literature on this topic. I have found no previous literature where researchers studied perceptions of educational accountability among mothers in African American families. It was my belief that this study would provide much needed insight regarding parental perceptions of educational accountability.

The findings of my study aligned with previous research addressing the low rates of parental involvement among African American families (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The participants provided explanations of their ideas of educational accountability and how those ideas related to their level of parental involvement in their children's education. I found parents believed in accountability amongst themselves and their children. However, future scholars need to address how teachers, schools, and stakeholders can collaborate with African American families to share a common understanding of educational accountability.

Chapter 5 includes my interpretation of the findings, discussion of study limitations, and recommendations for future practice. I also describe implications for

positive social change at the individual, family, organizational, and societal level. In concluding the chapter, I summarize the overall study.

Interpretation of the Findings

As I discussed in Chapter 4, I organized repeating and relevant ideas from my data into themes. This section provides my interpretation of the findings, which includes an explanation of the themes and how they relate to the literature outlined in Chapter 2. I restated the research questions to provide guidance on the interpretation of the findings. Using educational literature outlined in Chapter 2 and collected data outlined in Chapter 4, I explain an understanding of the research study through the findings and conclusions. I also combined and grouped themes based on shared meaning, relevance, and frequency.

RQ1: What are the attitudes and beliefs of educational accountability among African American mothers?

Schools encourage parental involvement. A more traditional definition of parental involvement identified parents as being active at home as well as in the school environment (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Schools want parents to collaborate with teachers and administrators for the holistic benefit of the students. Well-documented research explained the importance of parents and other family members playing an active role in children's education (Larocque et al., 2011). While conducting my research, I found the participants supported such claims. One said, "If you want to go and sit in the classroom with your student…you're able to go, you're able to go up there and actually sit there." Another said, "They want to hear our voices, basically." Because parental involvement is an effective strategy to enhance student success, schools promote involvement to increase

academic performance and decrease in negative behaviors (Bower & Griffin, 2011). One participant stated, "I'm pretty sure they are happy with the way I try to do things. Because I'm more active, it should cut down on behaviors."

Work schedule is a barrier. Possible barriers to involvement include irregular work schedules, language barriers, and transportation (J. Johnson, 2013). Not every participant identified employment as a barrier. However, two participants indicated their jobs interfered with their ability to attend certain events and meetings. One explained, "I haven't did any type of volunteer work or anything like that because of my work schedule. I work mornings so while she's at school, I'm at work." Another parent expressed the same concern, stating, "I may not be able to attend all the school meetings because of my schedule." Work schedules were a concern; however, it did not stop either participant from checking in with their children regarding homework, missing assignments, attending office hours, and receiving additional support. Work may prevent parents from participating in school events, which gives the perception of them not being involved (Bower & Griffin, 2011). However, according to the participants, their jobs did not prevent them from being involved with their children's academics at home.

Involvement level would be the same. Students from single parent families may experience conflicts and a lack of parental monitoring that may interfere with school engagement and lead to school problems (Hernandez Tozefowicz-Simbeni, as cited in Cheng & McElderry, 2014). Countering this argument, Hayes (2012) found no significant relationship between discipline referrals and the degree of parental school-based involvement within African American families. Consequently, none of the participants

indicated their children displayed negative behaviors despite their inability to be as involved as they would like to be. In fact, many of the participants did not anticipate any change in their children's behavior, nor did they foresee any change in their involvement if they were not single.

Despite differing in their ideas about their role as parents in their children's education, parents were consistent in saying that they would maintain the same level of involvement. Many of the participants said they would still be very active at their daughter's school even if they were not single. In fact, one participant said, "it wouldn't be different because I'm aggressive." Another participant said, "I don't think that the man would probably participate…I mean maybe a report card or two, but I'm pretty sure he wouldn't go and ask the questions I would ask." Another participant stated, "majority of the parents that drop off are females. I think it would be the same because the majority of the meetings I've gone to have very few fathers." Finally, another participant stated, "If I wasn't a single mom, I would probably still be the active person at the school." I concluded that the participants' marital status did not affect how much or how little they would be involved in their children's education due to men traditionally leaving women to handle most issues related to their children's school.

Educational accountability involves parents, teachers, and students. According to J. Johnson (2013), the majority of parents want schools and teachers to be held accountable, but they also believe families should be held accountable as well. On the other hand, Dance (2015) found promoting transparency, engagement, and shared accountability did not include parents and students. One participant found that students

and parents should be held accountable equally. She said, "I would give the students 30%, the schools and teachers maybe 40%, and I guess parents would be kind of equal to the students as far as 30%." However, another participant stated students and teachers should share equal accountability. She said, "I would say that the parent should hold 50%, the child should hold 25%, and the school should hold 25%." Yet another participant expressed, "the teacher would have 40%; the student would have 40%, and the parents would have 20%." Finally, a different participant stated, "the students 60%, and the parents and teachers each 20%." After collecting data, I found that all participants stated everyone should be held accountable. However, there were no similarities on how everyone should be held accountable or at what level of accountability each person should be held.

RQ2: How do African American mothers make decisions related to their involvement in their children's education based on their beliefs of educational accountability?

  Be visible and involved or the education may not be adequate Smith, Wohlstetter, et al. (2011) identified parents sending their children to charter schools was sufficient in ensuring their child's academic success with no further involvement needed. However, not all parent participants in my study had the same sentiment. Two participants had a strong belief that parents needed to be visible and involved to ensure that their children received the necessary academic assistance. One participant said, "I feel like parents have to be involved more than just sending them to school and expecting them to just come home and do their homework." Another participant stated, "You

should be front and center because if the school doesn't see you, than some teachers to me, they're just there to collect a check."

Parent participants expressed that students do not understand the importance of an education, so parents have to be visible for teachers to take an active role. One participant stated, "I think schools in general, if you're not visible…teachers may not take an active role in your child's education like they should." Drawing from past experiences, the participant stated that being visible gives parents' perks: "I can say I get feedback from her teachers. They call me, they let me know what's going on with her. So I think that if you are invisible, you don't get those kind of perks."

Collaboration and communication. The foundation of an effective partnership between parents and schools is communication (J. Johnson, 2013). The participants had strong beliefs that collaboration and communication with schools were important whether it was on the phone, face to face, or electronically. One participant stated, "I'm able to interact with staff and teachers and everyone." Another participant explained, "It's always been a parent/teacher collaboration. I have occasional visits to the school, communication through telephone and e-mail with the teacher, and meet with teachers for parent conferences." However, parent and school collaboration have continued to be a conflict when it comes to agreeing on what is academically sound for students.

Teachers and staff know me. Previous researchers reported charter schools have greater parental involvement than noncharter public schools (Smith, Wohlstetter, et al., 2011). It was also indicated by the participants that parents should get to know the teachers and staff. A participant found "you have to be active, you have to know teachers,

even staff, security, I need to know everybody that's interacting with my child." The participant believed the parent should be there to make sure the teacher is providing everything for the child. She stated, "and all of the teachers, they definitely know me at her school." One participant expressed how many times she had been involved at her daughters' school. She said, "attending the school assemblies and benefits, I think that's very rewarding. I think the relationship is pretty positive with parental involvement."

Preparation is key. Because some participants are unable to be heavily involved in their child's education in the manner they would like to be, their level of parental involvement looks different. Families go unrecognized for their efforts at home because of the inability to measure home-based involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Some participants were only able to demonstrate involvement at home by preparing their children for school or homework. One participant expressed, "They have Internet access, they have iPhones, they have a ride to and from school every day, they have a lot of resources." Parents considered being able to prepare their children for school as involvement, and for some, it was the most they could do. Another participant mentioned "making sure she completes her homework before playtime." Yet another stated "making sure she gets up, gets a good night's sleep, getting up every day and going to school on time." Many of the participants believed holding their children accountable and making sure they were prepared for school with homework completed was also being involved, especially if they were unable to attend school meetings and functions like they wanted due to scheduling conflicts.

Summary of Findings

I found the attitudes and beliefs of educational accountability varied among the participants. All of them stated their child's respective schools encouraged parental involvement. The participants expressed involvement in a number of ways, and although work seemed to be a barrier for some, they still perceived themselves as being involved in their children's education. All participants had strong beliefs that parents, teachers/schools, and students are to be held accountable for education. Regardless of the differences in the levels of accountability, there was consistency in beliefs that everyone is accountable.

All participants selected charter high schools because of a desire for their children to have a better academic experience. The decisions of the participants regarding their involvement varied depending on their attitudes and beliefs. While some parents believed providing the necessities were sufficient, others believed being visible and present in the school was necessary. In addition to being involved in the school, some considered involvement as preparing their children for school every day and making sure they had things such as Internet access, books, clean uniforms, food, and so forth. Many of the participants had relationships with their children's teachers. I found that all participants participated in some form of collaboration and communication with their child's teachers to ensure there was a relationship and to let the teachers know they were involved. Some went further to develop relationships with school staff just to be sure they were aware of who would be working with their children daily.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study identified in Chapter 1 are not reflective of the limitations found following the execution of the study. It was my belief that self-reported information could include biased thoughts influencing collected data. Some historical content reported by the participants did include negative encounters at their children's schools, but they did not express it in their responses. Despite any negative experiences the participants indicated, they were still reportedly satisfied with their children's school.

The lack of research on my topic continued to be a limitation. However, the aforementioned research collected in the literature review provided some assistance with developing the interview questions for my study. The participants selected for this study were single African American mothers with children enrolled in charter schools. The findings of the study reflect only a small population of African American mothers, and not those thoughts of African American mothers with children enrolled in private or public schools.

Another limitation that arose was the lack of follow up questions asked of the participants. While all the participants believed in educational accountability for everyone, there were no questions asked to inquire how they felt they should be held accountable. For example, I should have asked how the participants hold themselves and their children accountable. I also should have provided better support for the participants prior to the interviews. The join.me app hindered the effectiveness of the interviews due to technical difficulties. As the researcher, it was my responsibility to make sure the app

was working properly prior to the interview. Lack of preparation resulted in the interviews starting late.

Recommendations

To increase the levels of parental involvement among African American families, I recommend that educational institutions explore alternate options based on the parents' involvement ability. However, the different definitions of parental involvement still hold the same expectations. Outlined in the Epstein model, parental involvement is a combination of communication, collaboration, home, and school involvement, identifying six different types of family involvement (Bower & Griffin, 2011). Because parents are not the same with the same needs, they do not participate in the same way (Larocque et al., 2011). Therefore, there should not be expectations for every parent to demonstrate the same level of parental involvement, and there is a need to move from the traditional ideas of parental involvement.

An increase in governmental financial support for families and schools does not provide a solution for families who are unable to be involved due to time restraints (Bracke & Corts, 2012). If a parent is unable to attend school events due to work scheduling, it can be suggested that parents provide support in other forms such as donating money or items for school functions. If parents are unable to provide donations or items and have no work restrictions, perhaps volunteering their time during school events is another way to be involved on their child's behalf.

By diversifying expectations, educational leaders can reduce the continued concerns regarding the lack of parental involvement within the African American

community. For example, school administrators can develop a parental involvement committee or mandate teachers to attend professional developments to enhance communication skills with parents (Larocque et al., 2011). Providing options for parents to be more involved in their children's education demonstrates the school' interests in increasing parental involvement.

Considering the findings and results of the study, future scholars and researchers should continue conducting studies encouraging educators and educational institutions to find alternate strategies to involve parents. I also recommend that future researchers investigate how to motivate parents to be involved and what current measures are successful in increasing parental involvement among the African American population.

Furthermore, there is a need for additional studies regarding the best strategies to work with the African American community (Bower & Griffin, 2011). The conclusion that not all parents have the same involvement should be taken into consideration to address the strong desire to increase parental involvement in the African American community. It is also recommended that future scholars conduct research on the history of African Americans and education. At one time slaves were forbidden to read with threats of beatings or death if caught. Once granted freedom, former slaves built schools for their children valuing an education they once could not access (Larocque et al., 2011). By understanding the history of education in the African American community, future scholars can provide the necessary research to examine better strategies for parental involvement. Future scholars should also conduct research including studies to address methods of holding everyone accountable.

Implications

Because there continues to be a lack of parental involvement within the African American community, positive social change needs to address individual, family, organizational, and possibly, societal levels. The potential for positive social change begins by defining social responsibility and individual values. According to Flanagan, Syvertsen, and Wray-Lake (2016), social responsibility is an individual's personal values and commitments to improve both their community and society. The higher order beliefs guide attitudes and behaviors (Flanagan et al., 2016). An individual's attitudes and believes reflect their beliefs regarding social change.

The single African American mothers participating in the study explained accountability on the children's part as them taking responsibility for and holding themselves and their parents accountable. Checking and assisting with homework, attending office hours, and making sure they are well rested and well fed allows for two-fold accountability. Being aware of adult choices following high school, teens have important decisions of either obtaining higher education or entering the workforce (Schoon, 2012). A desire for better education and preparation for college were among the reasons for parents selecting the respective charter schools.

Though the participants in the study were single, there was no expression of poor family dynamics. A family with expectations of trust and respect are vital for social and civic development (Flanagan et al., 2016). Human development is shaped by multiple influential interactions including the family environment (Schoon, 2012). To create social change values within the family creates a need to instill trust, respect, and positive

involvement. It is not assumed that the participants of this study do not have these values. However, to strengthen parental involvement among African American families, individual and family positive social change efforts must occur.

Teachers, schools, and other educational organizations can use data collected from this study to address how they can hold students and parents accountable to achieve academic success. Educational institutions recognize the benefits of parental involvement (S.L. Johnson, 2013). Implications for change in educational policies and practice may favor the parents, by providing alternate parental involvement opportunities for mothers and fathers.

There were no reports of changes in parental involvement if the participants were not single. However, this does not mean fathers could not be involved. If there is a desire for the African American family to partake in educational accountability, collectively, it is recommended to consider historical and cultural conditions in fatherhood to understand fathering behavior (Roy, 2014). Schools should include positive social change reflecting both parents.

Societal and policy implications can be supported by the ideas that educational accountability is the responsibility of parents, teachers, and schools. If societal and educational policies hold accountability expectations for parents and children as well as schools, there may be additions in the type of involvement parents have in their children's education. However, an awareness of inequalities in global society is needed, in addition to how it affects individuals and family lives.

Conclusion

According to TPB, a parent's intentions to be involved in their children's education are reflective of their attitudes and beliefs concerning education accountability. However, I did not find their intentions and behaviors to reflect one another. A parent may intend to be more involved based on their attitudes and beliefs, but external barriers may affect those intentions. Parents may not be able to control external barriers. However, they are in control of their own behaviors and intentions to be involved in their children's education (S.L. Johnson, 2013).

Prior to my study being conducted, I expressed a belief that parental perceptions of educational accountability influenced parental involvement among single African American mothers. The findings of the study confirmed my belief, but it did not confirm what educational accountability looked like. The participants were asked to define educational accountability, but they were not asked how to hold everyone accountable. When I addressed the construct of educational accountability, I collected data from the participants' perceptions, but I did not collect strategies to complete the construct.

The study of perceptions of educational accountability and parental involvement did not consider a model for accountability. Moving forward, experiences in accountability have to be highlighted to develop a concept describing plans to hold everyone accountable. Parents are fully aware of the role they play in their children's education and have every intention to be involved. Teachers and schools should not base a parent's level of involvement on traditional ideas. However, it should be based on parental ability and intentions.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Interest E-mail

Dear [Ms. LAST NAME],

I am writing to because you have expressed interest in participating in a study about educational accountability and parental involvement. I received your name either through the Walden Participant Pool, LinkedIn, or Facebook and would like to formally invite you to be a participant in the study.

The purpose of this research study is to understand parental perceptions of accountability among single African-American mothers. The study, being conducted by Tierra Winston, a PhD candidate at Walden University, will involve interviews asking questions such as:

- Do you have concerns regarding accountability in education?

- Do you question how parents should be involved in their children's education?

 You may be eligible for this study if you are African American and have a child currently enrolled in a charter high school.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please review the enclosed information, complete the enclosed form, and e-mail it back to XXXXX. You can also call me at (XXX-XXX-XXXX).

It is important to know that this letter is not to tell you to join this study. It is your decision. Your participation is voluntary. Whether or not you participate in this study will have no effect on your relationship with Walden University or Tierra Winston, the researcher.

You do not have to respond if you are not interested in this study. If you do not respond, no one will contact you, but you may receive another letter via e-mail which you can simply disregard.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Tierra Winston
PhD Candidate

**PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY AMONG
SINGLE AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS**

Please complete this form and return to the e-mail provided:

I am interested in learning more about this study. Please contact me using the

following information:

Name:

_____
Telephone(s):

_____
Best time and day to
call:_____
E-mail:
_____@_____

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

1.   DO YOU HAVE CONCERNS REGARDING ACCOUNTABILITY IN

        EDUCATION?

2.   DO YOU QUESTION HOW PARENTS SHOULD BE INVOVLED IN THEIR

        CHILDREN'S EDUCATION?

You may be eligible to participant in a research study about educational accountability

and parental involvement!!!

How do I know if I'm eligible to participate?

Additional eligibility requirements:

- African American female

- Mother

- Child currently enrolled in charter high school

- Currently residing in the Midwest

What does this study involve?

A one-time 30-60 minute videoconference where participants will be interviewed

THERE IS NO COMPENSATION FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

All interviews are confidential

For more information, please send e-mail to: XXXXX