The power of African American parent perceptions on student achievement

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THE POWER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT PERCEPTIONS
ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
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Doctor of Education

by
Melody Luretha Camm

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The Power of African American Parent Perceptions
On Student Achievement

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Giving honor to God and my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I just want to pause and say thank you to a few people who were instrumental in making this day possible. The Bible says “To whom much is given, much is required.” For me, I would not have made it this far as an African American single parent, if it had not been for some very special people in my life.

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There are so many people who are not here to see this day in the flesh, but I know through Jesus Christ are with me in spirit—my father, Odell Blevins, my Grandmother, Bigmama, and my mother, Sweet Lorraine.

I can never forget Bigmama who I am named after. She was a quiet, rock of a woman who held our family together with soul food and love. Being a product of a simpler time, Bigmama essentially raised me while my mother worked to support the three of us. I couldn’t help but love the woman who taught me my ABC’s and covered me with her love. This was a woman who never made more than minimum wage and only had a grade school education.

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time I stop to think about her. She was so kind, but tough. She was a wonderful mother and this is truly for her. She took a chance in 1964 to have a baby out of wedlock with two other rambunctious boys, but God knew best. We adored each other. She was by best friend and this is ultimately for her---to show the world there are no mistakes, just blessings in disguise. My mother was an extraordinary single parent who supported three kids with no more than a GED. This Ed.D. is for you, Mama. I love you and I miss you girlfriend. We did it!!!

In the absence of these three pillars, God has given me a very supportive extended family filled with the great aunts, cousins, neighbors, and a host of friends. They all have helped me be the person I am today. For this, I am truly grateful. Whatever the contribution no matter how big or small, I would like to take this opportunity to thank them one and all.

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Once upon a time, there was a little girl who wanted to do something wonderful in the world of education. Although this is just the beginning, I know there will be a happy ending. Again, I want to give a special thank you to all of you who have given so generously of your time to help me make my dream of becoming Dr. Camm a reality. May God bless each and every one of you.
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THE POWER OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PARENT PERCEPTIONS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

ABSTRACT

With the implementation of No Child Left Behind, schools have been challenged to maintain Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for low achieving subpopulations. Current research supported by historical data suggests that African American parent involvement could possibly be the missing link to African American student achievement. This study explores the possible connection between African American parent perceptions of their school involvement and student achievement. It surveyed 738 fourth grade parents from five Title I and five Non-Title I schools to see if there was a significant difference between the parent involvement perceptions of African American Parents and Non-African American Parents, as well as investigated the possible relationship of these perceptions to student achievement. Although a correlation was not found between African American parent perceptions and student achievement, other comparative analyses done indicates that there are interesting similarities and differences between Title I and Non-Title I parent populations. These findings may contribute to existing research concerning school factors that can be enhanced in order to encourage parent involvement. Implications for practice and future research are also discussed.

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The College of William and Mary in Virginia
The Power of African American Parent Perceptions

On Student Achievement
CHAPTER 1 – THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Fifty years after Brown versus Board of Education integrated the American public school system, our country is still exploring strategies/interventions to close the African American achievement gap. After decades of desegregation, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported the gap narrowing. Then suddenly in 1988, this divide started to widen again (NCES, 2000). To replace the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, Congress enacted the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB, 2001). NCLB was designed to address achievement gaps for the low achieving subpopulations of minorities, English as a Second Language students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with special needs, as well as hold our nation’s schools more accountable for student achievement. Although NCLB with its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement did initially narrow the achievement gap, the disparity between minority subpopulations and their majority counterparts still exists (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). What could be explanations for this divide?

The purpose of NCLB was to ensure that all schools (Title I and Non-Title I alike) along with all students meet the same academic standards regardless of race, economic status, or disability. By implementing the AYP component, NCLB holds schools accountable for achieving “annual measurable objectives” in order to maintain school accreditation and federal funding. Unfortunately, after eight years of NCLB, recent data shows that millions of children are still being left behind and the achievement gap still persists. The gap for minorities to include African American and Hispanic
students reportedly starts as early as kindergarten. Then it widens to the point, that by 12th grade those who do stay can only read on the 8th grade level and are performing two or more years behind white students in reading and math (Chubb & Loveless, 2002; Johnston & Viadero, 2000). Currently, African American and Hispanic students comprise 75% or more of the schools needing academic improvement (Kim & Sunderman, 2005). Many of these students are in high-poverty schools and have consistently had average test scores falling below the minimum proficiency level set by AYP accountability standards (Orfield & Lee, 2005). Disaggregated data, from the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress, shows African American and Hispanic students lagging behind their white counterparts more than 26 points in reading and more than 20 points in math (Education Commission of the States, 2005). To further put the facts into perspective, a disproportionate amount of minority students attend Title I schools that are subject to federal sanctions. Along with this, the average African American and Hispanic students currently achieve at the same level as White students in the lowest quartile of student achievement (Chubb & Loveless, 2002). Therefore, African Americans and Hispanic students are much less likely to graduate from high school, attend college, or acquire advanced degrees that would place them in the middle class (Ogbu, 1993). Although the research shows a definite correlation between race, poverty and achievement (Orfield, 1996; Orfield & Lee, 2005), other notable research shows that when income is comparable, many minorities still lag behind native-born white students (Berlak, 2001; National Center of Education Statistics, 2001).

In urban areas, African American and Hispanic populations make up over 50% of the student population. Kozol (2005) reports some metropolitan African American and Hispanic student enrollments in the 2002-2003 academic year as follows: Chicago
Schools-87%, St. Louis-82%, Philadelphia-79%, Los Angeles-84%, Detroit-96%, Baltimore-89%, New York over 75% with some schools more than 95% and our nation's capital, Washington, D.C. at 94%. With the minority population predicted to exceed the Caucasian student population in public schools by 2016 (Otuya, 1988; Johnston & Viadero, 2000), it is not surprising that schools are looking for ways to maintain AYP.

More specifically, African Americans trail behind their white classmates in some cases as much as 15 points on standardized tests like mandated state proficiency tests and the Stanford Achievement Tests (College Board, 1999; Griffith, 2002). This equates to 61% of African American students performing below average in reading and math at grades four and eight in comparison to 26% of white students (Hendrie, 2004; The Education Trust, 2005). This Black-White achievement gap, as it is more historically known (Jencks & Phillips, 1988), is not only found in grade point averages, but also extends to course level enrollment, participation in gifted programs, and disproportionate numbers of African American students in special education classes. Additionally, 25% more African American students drop out of high school as well as fail to meet graduation requirements than their White counterparts (Great City Schools, 1999). Jencks and Phillips (1988) after their landmark research concluded that more research was needed concerning in-school, and environmental influences to include parent behaviors.

Parent Involvement

For years schools have been trying to find just what is suppressing African American student achievement. Unlike Hispanics, the majority of African American students have had fifty years of integrated schools and yet, the black-white achievement gap persists. It poses the question, why hasn’t the gap closed for African American students? One place many researchers have found a correlation is between African
American parent involvement and student achievement. The research showed that when African American parents were involved in any way to any extent, their children performed better (Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1977; Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 2001). This was found to be especially true in Title I schools by Epstein (Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1977; Epstein, 1991; Epstein & Dauber, 1993; Epstein, 2001), Griffith (1996, 2002), and others. Additionally, in the 2004 Title I Parent Involvement Regulatory Guide, Henderson and Mapp (2002) were quoted as saying that “the evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.” Therefore, the research suggests that parents are an integral part of the education equation and since a majority of students in Title I schools are African American then this would hold true for these parents as well. Although African American parents are traditionally not active participants in the schools their children attend, the irony is that African American parents want to be involved and want their children to achieve (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Trotman, 2001; Thompson, 2003). By exploring what keeps African American parents from playing an active role in schools, the problem may be understood more fully.

Historical and current data supported by empirical research suggests that parent involvement could be related to African American student achievement. If parent involvement is linked to student achievement, then why are schools unable to cultivate it? Is there a correlation between African American parent perceptions of the school that could ultimately impact student achievement? These variables bring to the forefront
socio-political, ecological, and psychological theories that serve to describe the interpersonal dynamics that may hamper African American student achievement as well as hinder African American parent involvement.

The purpose of this research was to study this possible connection. By correlating disaggregated data collected from parent involvement perception questionnaires with current Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) mean scores in reading and math, the possible relationship between the two variables were investigated.

Research Questions

The purpose for my research was to answer the following research questions:

1. What are African American parent perceptions of their schools in the areas of parent/teacher relationship, parent involvement/volunteering, parent endorsement of school, and parent-teacher contact?

2. How do African American Parent Perceptions of their parent involvement compare to Non-African American Parents?

3. Is there a significant difference between African American and Non-African American parents by school type (Title I vs. Non-Title I)?

4. Is there a relationship between African American parents’ perceptions of their school involvement and African American student achievement by school type?

5. To what extent are Non-African American parent perceptions of their own involvement related to SOL school means by school type?

6. What do all parents report as being barriers and facilitators of their involvement?
Conceptual Framework

The traditional definition of parent involvement involves overseeing homework, attending school functions, and responding to school obligations (Cotton & Wilkelund, 2004). Epstein's (1984, 1993) landmark parent involvement research expanded this definition in an effort to help parents be more involved in schools. Her research introduced six types of parent involvement consisting of parenting, communication, volunteering, learning-at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. By expanding the traditional definition to include activities done with the child at home as well as at school, all parents were able to be actively involved regardless of race or socioeconomic status. Her research along with Chavkin and Williams (1993), Comer (1988), Henderson and Mapp (2002) and others demonstrates historical and empirical research linking parent involvement to student achievement.

After years of research looking for solutions, two questions still remain: why do African American parents continue to choose not to be involved in schools and why do African American students still fail to achieve? The conceptual framework for this descriptive study focuses on these two fundamental questions highlighting the perceived school factors that act as barriers to African American parent involvement.
Figure 1 represents theoretical perspectives the researcher has chosen to help explain what could be impacting African American parent involvement and ultimately hampering African American student achievement. In the center is the African American family consisting of the parent(s) and child(ren). Surrounding the family is Ogbu's (1993) Cultural Ecological Theory. In his research, he refers to Brofenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model to describe the environmental pressures impacting the African American family. Because African Americans were brought to this country and have endured years of racial oppression, they have developed a distrust for the system represented institutionally by schools. The dominant culture values of the school represent institutional and cultural/psychological barriers that are in opposition with the culture of the African American home (Tatum 1987, George, 2002; Boykins et al., 2005). These barriers are represented by the next split concentric circle enveloping the Cultural Ecological Theory.

To combat this external pressure, the African American family along with their community has historically turned inward in order to create a “buffer zone” to protect their children, their cultural identity, and to resist assimilation to the dominant culture.
Therefore, the conceptual relationship depicted in this visual representation shows the possible linear connection between the independent variable of African American parents' perceptions and the dependent variable of African American student achievement.

Just as Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) describes different layers of the environment that impact the social emotional development of the child, this framework shows the schoolhouse as being part the child's and ultimately the families' environment that is also a part of the child's development. To further explain the relationships between African American parents, the school, and student achievement, arrows are used to show a linear connection.

As described by the cognitive development theory, perceptions are a process by which one group perceives attributes fueled by belief to conjure up certain images/personal characteristics that are stereotypical in nature (Sleeter & Grant, 2003). This definition alludes to power of perceptions on human actions as well as reactions.

In her research, Thompson (2003) found a connection between school factors and African American parents' perceptions as well as their children's ability to achieve. Among them, perceived institutional and individualized racism was qualitatively reported by African American parents as one of their main concerns and correlated quantitatively to student achievement. Additionally, her research showed the impact of parent attitudes/perceptions concerning school on their child's attitudes/perceptions – thereby suggesting a link to student performance. Therefore, symbolically, this conceptual framework attempts to illustrate how parent perceptions from the environment outside of the school as well as within the school could potentially impact their involvement with their child's school and possibly their child's achievement.
Limitations

Several limitations associated with this study effect the generalization of its findings. First of all, meaningful sample size in order to determine a statistical significance is a necessity. The school district only agreed to allow 10 schools to participate (approximately 1000 participants) wherein 30 schools (approximately 4000 participants) are needed for generalization. Therefore, this is essentially a descriptive study.

The final convenience sample based on Socio-economic Status (SES) and magnet school populations were also a concern. Because parent involvement practices and initiatives vary from school to school, a variance in parent perceptions/attitudes impacted parent responses and survey results. Three of the schools in the data set were magnet schools with one of them being a magnet school and a Title I school. Magnet schools seek to attract students by curriculum interest, so that could potentially impact the composition of parent perceptions contained in their particular pools. In both instances, the research showed similarities and differences between African American parent perceptions at both ends of the socio-economic spectrum.

Although maintaining confidentiality is a normal limitation when surveying schools, the surveys yielded such useful information with respect to barriers and facilitators of parent involvement that each school’s results will be generalized and reported to the school board office for dissemination with district recommendations. Only Title I vs. Non-Title I comparative analysis will be shared.

Historically, African American parents are reluctant participants, especially low income parents. That did not seem to be a limitation in this study. A survey return rate of 78% was achieved, with Title I schools returning 63% of the surveys distributed. The
unexpectedly high survey return rates could be due in part to organized distribution of surveys, brevity of the instrument, along with the hierarchy of incentives. Because this was a convenience sample, the opinions of parents that did not return their surveys unfortunately were not captured.

**Delimitations**

Equally as important, the researcher deliberately imposed several delimitations on this study. In order to garner teacher and administrative support, the researcher sent out the surveys in early October before any major testing. This may have impacted some parent responses. Some parents that were new to the school commented that it was too early to survey frequency of teacher contact, quality of teacher relationship, etc.

Although the school district controlled the number of schools, the researcher essentially had control over the school types (Title I and Non-Title I) that the researcher solicited responses. The researcher notified all of the elementary schools in the district asking for permission to survey them and 11 schools replied. Past experience with these schools, as a former teacher in the school system and a parent of a former student, produced ten participating schools within the two preferred school types and one alternate.

Finally, there was the possibility that the results could be influenced by the researcher being African American and too personally invested in the outcome of the research. This could be perceived as both a limitation as well as delimitation. As a parent and former employee of the district, it was very hard for the researcher to remain objective when the research was done. It should prove helpful for the researcher as well as the school district when the final report for the school district is developed because the
researcher is privy to the parent involvement practices that are already being implemented.

Defining Key Concepts

**Parent involvement** is the participation of parents in the education of their child/children. Traditionally, it included overseeing homework, attending school functions and responding to school obligations (Cotton & Wilkelund, 2004).

In order to include more parents in schools, the definition was expanded to incorporate other types of parent involvement that African American parents display. Epstein (1993) outlined six types of parent involvement that expanded the traditional definition. They include parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at-home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. By expanding the definition, African American parents have additional ways to play an active role in their child’s education. For the purpose of this study, Epstein’s expanded definition will be used to provide a comprehensive definition of parent involvement.

Additionally, NCLB (2001) defines parent involvement in Title I, Part A as “the participation of parents in regular two-way, meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring:

1. that parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning;
2. that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school;
3. that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).
This demonstrates a shift in the traditional definition incorporating research based findings with respect to disadvantaged parents and student achievement.

**Perceptions** are the process by which one group identifies attributes fueled by beliefs that conjure up certain images/personal characteristics that are stereotypical in nature stimulating prejudices (Sleeter & Grant, 2003).

**Standards of Learning (SOL)** is the Virginia criterion-referenced test that measures minimum student competency of basic academic skills in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Education Act of 2001. For the purpose of this research, the reading and math mean scores will be used to demonstrate achievement.

**Title I** is part of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act that provides financial assistance to schools with high concentrations of economically and educationally disadvantaged students in an effort to reform schools. It is a government program that provides federal dollars annually to help close the academic achievement gap. Schools that are considered Title I have at least 10% of their students receiving free or reduced lunch to qualify for a targeted assistance program and 40% in order to qualify for a school-wide federally funded program. Title I schools must implement programs, activities, and procedures that actively attempt to involve parents in these schools. Furthermore, these schools must present comprehensive parent involvement programs that ensure meaningful, two-way communication between parent and school all in an effort to improve student achievement. In this study only Title I schools with school-wide programs were surveyed.

**Fast Track Parent Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ)** was the instrument used to capture African American parent perceptions of their involvement in schools. It is a 26
question survey created by the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (1991) at Duke University that measures the following four domains:

- Quality of relationship between parents and teachers
- Parent involvement / volunteering
- Parent endorsement of school
- Frequency of parent-teacher contact.

These domains not only reflect the expanded definition from the Epstein research, but also identify school factors that could potentially impact African American parent involvement. Twelve similarly coded 5-point survey questions along with 2 open-ended questions were added to meet conditions for use as well as to ascertain supplementary information with respect to currently used parent involvement practices (See Appendix A).
CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

African American Parent Involvement

With the implementation of No Child Left Behind, the standards and accountability movement for our nation’s schools has begun. Compliance to the rigors of this mandate are not only limited to passing rates on the Virginia Standards of Learning, but also include sustaining Annual Yearly Progress for low achieving subpopulations. These groups include minorities, low socio-economic status (SES), Limited English Proficient (LEP), and special education students who traditionally perform poorly on high stakes tests. Schools have been searching for the missing link to African American student achievement in order to maintain AYP. Current research supported by empirical data suggests that African American parent involvement could provide the missing piece to this proverbial puzzle, but what could be hindering them from being actively involved? One theory serves to help explain ecologically why the environment sustains institutional and psychological barriers that could serve to hamper African American involvement as well as suppress African American student achievement. Because the African American family is theoretically at the center of problem, it is important to discuss the Ogbo’s Cultural Ecological Model (1993); why parents choose not to be involved; why students fail to achieve; and what families want schools to know.

Theoretical Perspectives

Ogbo’s (1993) Cultural Ecological Theory seeks to explain environmental reasons why some parents are not involved in their child’s school. This theory is based in part on Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model where the environment was shown to have a direct impact on child development. Ogbo expands the theory to lend perspective to how the
environment not only impacts the development of the African American child, but also the parent's actions/reactions within the environment. His research goes on to show how these culturally based interactions impact African American student achievement.

Ecological Model

Brofenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model of human development describes the impact of environment on human development. His theory suggests that relationships within the immediate environment are part of a larger nested social network that exerts indirect pressure on the family, as well as indirectly impacts the well-being of the child. Brofenbrenner’s theory, also known as the bio-ecological systems theory, seeks to explain the complex layers of a child’s environment that have a direct and indirect effect on the child’s development. Brofenbrenner’s model consists of four levels of human interaction. They include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem.

The microsystem contains the child along with those structures that have direct control over the child i.e., parents, school, neighborhood, and childcare. These structures Bronfenbrenner calls bi-directional influences and they have the strongest influence on the child. The mesosystem is the next layer and contains connectors from the microsystem into the mesosystem through parents, teachers, church, and neighborhood. The exosystem is mainly comprised of the community at-large especially the parents workplace and other community-based resources. This layer only has indirect access to the child. The outermost layer is called the macrosystem. In this layer are cultural values, customs, and laws. Things that take place in the macrosystem tend to have a ripple effect throughout all the other systems. The Black Socio-Ecological Model is based on the findings of Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model.
In the African American community, the subordinate or home culture represents a conflicting racial socialization process for African American children with respect to the dominant culture/traditional ecological model (Wardle, 1996). Figure 2 represents the Billingsley’s Black Family Socio-Ecological Context Model and seeks to describe the interdependent nature of African American family life (Allen, 2002). The figure consists of four concentric circles with the African American child in the middle surrounded by family, then community, and finally society. The model was inspired by Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model. It basically shows how the environment surrounding the African American child impacts on their development. The key difference is that the African American Community acts as a insulator or buffer from the community-at-large. In this case, the community at large is considered society that encompasses a different connotation.

**Figure 2 - Black Family Socio-Ecological Context Model**
Tatum (1987) stated that the Black family is “culturally distinctive” because of its historical socio-cultural context. African American families typically form extended family kinship structures within the larger African American community. For the African American child, this series of subsystems provides a protective force field when they enter school. Barnes (1980) states the community serves as a protective “buffer zone” to aid in the development of positive self/group identity needed to combat racism (as cited in Tatum, 1987). The family, in turn, acts as a daily filter of input from the dominate culture. Parent explanations help African American children understand internal and external experiences from the family’s perspective (Tatum, 1987). Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that balance between this socialization process and the schools should be realized in order to give power to the developing child. If families, schools and communities share an interest in children, then they will be able to work collaboratively to ensure student success. Therefore it is important to work to help reconcile the culture of home with the dominant culture (Epstein 1987; Tatum, 1987).

Cultural Ecological Theory

Nieto (2000) defines culture as a “set of values, traditions, social and political relationships, and world views created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion.” In every society, there is a group that has power and is considered the dominant culture. In the dominant vs. subordinate theory (Ogbu, 1993), the dominant culture, in this case White European Americans, is the group that has the most political and economic power (Helms,1990; Yeh & Crost, 2002). They set the standard for normalcy as well as the parameters in what all others operate (Cooper 2003; Tatum, 1997; Nieto, 2000). Any other group other than the dominant culture is considered a
subordinate culture. The dominant culture assigns roles to the non-dominant or subordinate culture saving the valued roles for themselves.

The subordinate culture, on the other hand, is seen as "defective or substandard". They are devalued and thought to be unable to assume the dominant roles. Their values are considered abnormal, deviant, or wrong (Nieto, 2000). According to Tatum (1997) the subordinate group, in turn, internalizes these stereotypes. Although the subordinate culture knows everything about the dominant culture, the dominant culture knows little about the subordinate and does not acknowledge the existence of inequity between the groups (Tatum, 1997). African American children in this situation only have four choices:

1. To assimilate and risk alienation from their home culture (Tatum, 1987, 1997)

2. To become biculturally competent and balance the norms of the dominant culture at school with the home culture norms at home (Yeh & Crost, 2002)

3. To develop an oppositional identity (Ogbu, 2003; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986)

   resistant to the dominant culture

4. To marginalize means rejecting the home culture and fully accepting the dominant culture risking isolation (Phinney cited in Tatum, 1997).

Furthermore, the existence of the dominant verses subordinate culture beliefs in schools creates an environment that supports institutional barriers, influences teacher perceptions and depresses student achievement (Denbo, 2002).

Ogbu (2003) expands on this clash of the cultures and looks at socio-political as well as psychological reasons African American students fail to succeed academically. In his cultural ecological theory, there are voluntary and involuntary immigrants. He explains the subtle difference between voluntary immigrant African (IM) and involuntary
non-immigrant minorities (NIM) or in this case, African Americans and Native Americans. Although both groups distrust European Americans, the IMs trust schools and their personnel. NIMs, because of their historical racial conflict context, view the school as oppositional. IMs come to this country believing in the "American Dream" and the importance of education. Conversely, from their frame of reference, NIM’s see little evidence that education ensures success. Furthermore, they are preoccupied with the ideas associated with genuine concern and social relationships with teachers. IM’s know that they do not have to give up their culture in order to assimilate to the dominate culture. On the other hand, NIM’s are less willing to assimilate for fear of losing their culture to the dominant culture. Their distrust of the school as an institution is manifested through their beliefs and behaviors. It acts as a barrier for them and serves to isolate them from academic success, as well as impacts their social adjustment and academic performance (Ogbu, 2003). For these reasons, African American children demonstrate problems assimilating to the norms and values of the dominant culture. This is evidenced by their poor social behavior, low motivation, language and cognitive patterns present in their teachers and majority counterparts (Yeh & Crost, 2002).

Theories Why African American Students Fail to Achieve

Several theories support the Cultural Ecological Theory (CET) and present empirical underpinnings that serve to explain plausible socio-political, ecological, and psychological reasons why many African American students consistently perform below their Caucasian peers along with why African American parents choose not to get involved in public schools (Ogbu, 1993). Two theories that seek to explain the political, societal, and community impact on African American student achievement are the Cultural Discontinuity Theory and the Racial Identity Theory. Both of these theories
relate directly to the home-school connection and more specifically give explanation to the individual context that could influence African American student achievement. These same theories also serve to corroborate the existence of the psychological and institutional barriers to African American parent involvement in schools.

*Cultural Discontinuity Theory*

This phenomenon alludes to yet another theory that prevents students from succeeding academically. The Cultural Discontinuity Theory describes the cultural mismatch between the home culture of African American students and the European American culture emphasized in schools. (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This phenomenon forces children of color “to learn through cultural practices and perceptions other than their own.” (Hollins, 1996 as cited in Tatum, 1997). In this case, the institution of school promotes dominant culture values (Boykins et al, 2005) and is considered “inherently biased” (NWREL, 2005). This enculturation process causes a cultural conflict with respect to African American students’ learning styles (Boykin et al, 2005) that create a cultural mismatch, conflict, or dissonance that effects student attitudes, motivation, along with academic achievement (Gordon & Yowell, 1994; Boykin et al 2005).

*Racial Identity Theory*

On a more individual or psychological level, Tatum (1997) defines racial identity development as the process of establishing one’s personal significance. William Cross developed the Nigrescence Model as a way to assess “Blackness” in African Americans. Cross’ model identifies the five stages of Black identity development. It consists of five distinctly different stages which include Pre-encounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Internalization and Internalization-Commitment (Cross, 1971). These stages represent a
process in which the person changes his/her attitudinal and behavioral world views from non-Afrocentric to Afrocentric while developing a sense of self or Black Orientation (Cross, 1991). In the Pre-encounter stage, the individual embraces the European-American or dominant culture’s world view while denying their own Black racial identity. They absorb the values, beliefs, and stereotypes of the white culture as the norm (Tatum, 1997; Jenkins, 1995). This perception of the world changes in the Encounter stage. During the encounter stage, the individual experiences an event or series of events that challenge his present world view. This contradiction causes the individual to rethink their attitudes concerning race (Marks et al, 2001). From this encounter, the individual develops an oppositional identity where they are preoccupied with being “authentically Black” and begin to separate themselves from “whiteness” (Tatum, 1997). Tatum explains that these two stages normally occur for Black children during elementary and middle school years. The third stage is the Immersion/Emersion stage where the individual now embraces their Blackness by immersing themselves in Black history, black culture, and the Black community thereby negating previously internalized stereotypes (Jenkins, 1995; Tatum, 1997). Internalization occurs when the individual is able to balance their new found Blackness with the demands of society with self-confidence in their racial identity. In the fifth and final stage of Internalization-Commitment, the individual exhibits a “positive sense of racial identity” (Tatum, 1997). Cross’ Nigrescence stages of racial identity explains the internal psychological development of an individual dehumanized by slavery as they evolve into a confident, racially conscious, individual of color who is able to withstand overt/covert racism.

Documented student reactions to the aforementioned theories include the phenomena of “stereotype threat,” “acting white,” “hypermasculinity persona” and
oppositional identity. In “stereotype threat,” African American students’ fear of failure and confirming negative stereotypes causes some to inadvertently fail. For others, it is a conscious choice to not try to do well in school (Steele & Aronson, 1995). African American students who continue to take school seriously are labeled “acting white” by their peers (Fordham & Ogbu, 1997; Ogbu, 2003; Shaffer, Ortman, & Denbo, 2005). They are considered to be “selling out.” Spencer (2000) cited “Hypermasculinity” is when the quest for respect is more important than academic success. It is a coping persona which African American males evoke in school (cited in Schaffer, Ortman, & Denbo, 2002). Finally, the oppositional identity is another coping mechanism against racism. It embraces “authentically black” speech, dress, and music while viewing everything represented by the dominant culture negatively (Tatum 1997; Ogbu, 2003). The inability of African American students to identify with the school perpetuates the behaviors of persistent underachievement, high student drop out rates, and performance anxiety (Denbo, 2002). Because these behaviors often contradict the norms of the school and sometimes require disciplinary action, African American parents often experience negative relationship with schools that ultimately impact their parent involvement. Therefore, the aforementioned theories provide the socio-political, ecological as well as psychological explanations as to why many African American students choose to fail along with contributing to why African American parents choose not to participate.

Why African American Parents Choose Not To Participate

Traditionally, since the integration of the public school system, African American parents have not participated in schools to the degree of their White counterparts. By exploring the history of African American parent involvement, the institutional, and
personal/psychological barriers, some of the reasons why African American parents choose not to be involved will be explored.

History of African American Parent Involvement

Fields-Smith (2004) chronicle African American parent involvement prior to and beyond the Brown vs. Board of Education decision. In this article, she traces the history and importance of education to African Americans then highlights the findings from her qualitative study concerning contemporary African American parent involvement challenges.

Dating back to slavery, African American parents have known the value of education. Even at the risk of harsh treatment and severe punishment, parents along with their children pursued an education. During the era of segregation, African American parents continued their support of education by sacrificing to provide materials, transportation, financial support, and physical PTA membership. Unlike today, African American parents were strong vocal advocates for public education during the civil rights era.

During this period of segregated schools, home-school relationships were defined as collaborative and trusting. Parents embraced the job of conducting learning activities at home. The teachers and administrators were part of the community. Consequently, parents relinquished the responsibility of educating their children to the schools due to experiencing mutual respect and trust. Everyone in the community lived by the old West African proverb – “It takes a village to raise a child.” In this way, Fields-Smith (2004) cites the home, school, church, and the community-at-large had a vested interest in the success of every neighborhood child.
Post Brown vs. Board of Education decision, the integration of schools brought about a drastic change in African American parent involvement. Institutional barriers such as language, communication, learning styles and segregation within schools began to impact the education of African American children. This caused an obvious discontinuity between home, school, and community. It manifested itself through lower teacher expectations that began to hamper African American student achievement as well as African American parent involvement. In her qualitative study, Fields-Smith (2004), noted that contemporary African American parents still held the previously mentioned respect/support of education, but now the atmosphere of trust in schools had been replaced by distrust in teacher-pupil relationships. These African American parents also felt compelled to advocate on behalf of their children as well as supplement learning at home in order to ensure their children learned what was taught at school. This study showed that the definition of parent involvement for African American parents had changed over time due in part to changes in society. Although the “village” concept had worked in the past, with the shift from collectivism to individualism, African American parents today find it hard to fulfill the traditional parent involvement expectations. In order for schools to develop trusting relationships with African American parents, Fields-Smith suggest that schools let go of the traditional definition and embrace a more expanded one that reflects ways that working parents can participate from home in order to alleviate some of the institutional barriers that keep parents from being involved (Fields-Smith, 2004).

Institutional Barriers

Schools as an institution perpetuate the cycle of the non-participation of African American parents through their traditional daily practices. Schools largely populated
with African Americans are more likely to have under-qualified teachers (Haycock, 2001). Education Trust National studies show that poor urban students receive poorer quality instruction than their white suburban counterparts. Current patterns show that high poverty schools often employ teachers who have little or no experience, lack state certification/licensure, or the academic preparation to teach African American students. This means that the least qualified teachers are teaching the children who need the most academic support. (Haycock, 2001) These schools also receive fewer resources, lower funding, and reportedly delve out harsher discipline. (Johnston & Viadero, 2000)

The age-old institutional system of ability grouping/tracking often discourages African Americans from taking academically challenging courses. Some schools so “rigidly” track these African American students that they do not even qualify for advanced placement courses. Many African American students are discouraged by counselors or even by the absence of other African Americans in the classes. Even though they are capable, they just choose not to enroll (Viadero, 2000). Denbo (2002) outlines other school related practices that suppress African American student achievement. They include unequal funding, watered down curriculum, lowered teacher expectations, retention, suspension, and segregation. Coupled with tracking and weak home school connections, the persistence of these racially influenced institutional barriers serve to perpetuate the African American achievement gap (Denbo, 2002).

Although research supports parent involvement as an intervention for student achievement, the school, as an institution, discourages it. Trotman (2001) stated that schools are territorial. They seek to reserve the right to make all curriculum decisions and are resistant to creating a comprehensive parent involvement programs. Schools are
often viewed by parents as being “unapproachable, hostile bureaucracies” (Harris & Heid, 1989).

Moreover, schools promote middle class norms or dominate culture values that low-income African American parents often do not measure up to. This environment produces stereotypes and biases that serve to further alienate African American parents. The disparity between the low Socio-Economic Status (SES) parents and school staff keeps parents away from schools. Additionally, schools fail to take into consideration perceived African American parent inadequacies, their past negative educational experiences, and cultural differences (Trotman, 2001; Pena, 2000). One indicator that was found to be enhance parent involvement in schools was how school administrators and teachers encouraged it (Hollifeld, 1995).

The institution of school promotes dominant culture values and excludes cultural values of those who are not White (Boykins et al, 2005). Through this process of cultural socialization, African American children from diverse backgrounds are taught to conform to mainstream cultural themes (Boykin et al, 2005). This is often referred to as the “hidden curriculum” (Boykin, 1983; Delprit, 1995) that communicates teachers’ expectations through classroom practices (Thompson, 2004; Bakari, 2003). Gandara (1999) stated that the hidden curriculum is the cause of African Americans receiving different learning opportunities. This causes a cultural disconnect between the institutional practices, teaching preferences, and the home socialization practices of African American children (previously described in the Black Family Socio-Ecological Context Model) that serves to reduce African American students’ educational opportunities (George, 2002; Boykins et al., 2005). When the African American home
culture is incorporated into schools, then positive outcomes will result (Howard. 2001; George 2002).

*Personal/Psychological Parent Barriers*

Historical research outlines reasons why African American parents choose not to be involved. From an ecological point of view, Huang and Gibbs (1992) suggest that poverty, discrimination, and social isolation tend to weigh heavily on African American parents and ultimately their children. These psychological barriers subconsciously keep African American parents from taking the initiative to become involved in their child’s school.

Low SES or poverty has been a long time predictor of parent involvement and is one of the socio-cultural causes of the persistent African American achievement gap (D’Amico, 2001). Children born in poverty usually have low birth weight, perinatal problems and health/nutritional concerns (Viadero, 2000). The parents often cannot afford educational toys or outings. Due to financial difficulties, the parents tend to be transient (Viadero, 2000). Because of the lack of a comprehensive preschool program, many African American children do not have access to quality daycare and preschool. Although Head Start was developed to make a difference, it fails to reach the vast majority of eligible children and studies show that of the low-income children who receive preschool instruction, it is often of poor quality (Viadero, 2000). While the middle- and upper class parents are sending their children to progressive preschools, low-income parents are sending their children to inferior Head Start Programs that emphasize social skills (Merrow, 2002). Collectively, all these causes associated with poverty adversely affect a child’s readiness and preparedness for school. Additionally, poverty explains African American parents’ lack of communication, childcare, transportation, and
other resources (Trotman, 2001) that hinder a parent from being actively involved. These personal socio-economic factors tend to compound and suppress student achievement, as well as African American parent involvement prior to the child entering school. Furthermore, these factors contribute to the psychological barriers experienced by African American parents when dealing with the institution of school.

The realities of living in poverty potentially create psychological barriers that subconsciously hinder African American parents from participating in schools. African American parents’ lack of education leads them to misunderstand, be suspicious and ultimately distrust the school system. Emotions experienced by these parents include fear, anxiety, and defensiveness. Moreover, low income parents often feel threatened by the authority exhibited by teachers and administrators (Mole, 1993). This creates for some African American parents a pervasive feeling of intimidation with respect to the school. They sometimes feel isolated, alienated and helpless (Harry, 1992; Mole, 1993). To camouflage this state of being overwhelmed by the system, these parents sometimes act disinterested (Trotman, 2001). The school for parents becomes an institutional barrier that often erodes African American parents’ ability to provide the traditional parental support desired by teachers (Trotman, 2001). This disconnect tends to perpetuate inequality in the school environment.

From a psychological perspective, values, traditions, culture, are used as cultural or social capital by the dominant groups with power. African American parents often lack the social capital necessary to negotiate the institutional barriers presented in schools by the dominant culture (Nieto, 2000; Laureau & Horvath, 1999). Laureau and Horvath (1999) found that Caucasian families possessed social skills and cultural assets that were evidenced by supportive social networks, access to resources such as transportation and
childcare, and the ability to communicate/relate to teachers as equals. Conversely, African American parents were treated differently under the same conditions. The predominately White teaching staff recognized very few of their behaviors as acceptable. Those African American parents who agreed with teacher opinions were seen as more favorable than those parents who challenged or criticized teachers. This research demonstrates that due to deficits in cultural capital, African American parents are seen as inferior and therefore lack the social skills set to successfully advocate for their children, navigate the system or challenge the status quo (Laureau & Horvath, 1999). The social capital theory also serves to explain the socio-political connection with respect to African American parents, the school, and their children’s academic progress.

Perceived perceptions also contribute to the psychological barriers experienced by African American parents. McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown and Lynn (2003), found that the perceived presence of racism by parents dissuaded them from contacting school staff or attending school functions. They also found that negative perceptions by other parents altered parenting practices with respect to the school at home. Consequently, African American parents demonstrated negative suspicions with respect to school and their school staffs (Epstein, 1985; Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Preconceived stereotypes coupled with perceived institutionalized racism may create a cultural divide between African American parents and the schools that contributes to parent isolation. Rather than deal with the school system, many parents retreat into their communities where they are more comfortable (Harry, 1992; Tatum 1997). This phenomenon signals the beginning of a vicious cycle where the home culture is in conflict with the needs of the school culture.

Throughout all of these theories, several reoccurring themes are evident and serve to impact both students and parents alike. First of all, the reality of the dominant and
subordinate socio-political context creates a “no win” situation for African American parents and students. These situations potentially place them in a position of inferiority that many of them find hard to escape. It also impacts their ability to maneuver the institution of school due to their lack of social capital. For this reason, some African American parents are in effect powerless to make a change or challenge the system due to lack of resources, education, and social mobility (Julian, McKenry, McKelvey, 1994; Tatum, 1997). Another factor working against both groups is this country’s participation in slavery and the existence of overt/covert racism in our society (Ogbu, 2003). It manifests itself in African American parents and students psychologically, adversely impacting self-esteem, ethnic identity, and racial socialization practices in the home. In schools, it hampers the teachers’ ability to assess student potential (Ferguson, 1988). Additionally, teacher perceptions, expectations, and behaviors have been found partly to blame for the underachievement of African American students (Ferguson, 2003; Lawrence, 2005). These teacher behaviors tend to erode student performance through self-fulfilling prophecies and perceptual biases (Oates, 2003). For these reasons, as a group, African American males experience higher retention rates, higher drop-out rates, lower participation in non-athletic activities, less representation in advance leveled classes, over representation in special education, and are disproportionately disciplined (Shaffer, Ortman & Denbo, 2002). Finally, these theories suggest an ongoing conflict between the home culture and the school culture. The combined premise of these theories illustrates how the African American psyche is impacted from all sides – politically, socially, ecologically, psychologically, individually, as well as collectively.

Together these factors illustrate just why some African American students fail to achieve and also the reasons why some African American parents choose not to get
involved. This suggests the need for families, schools, and communities to share an interest in children as well as work together to ensure student success (Epstein 1987). Therefore, it is important to work to help reconcile the culture of home with the dominant culture exhibited by the institution of school (Tatum, 1987).

What African American Parents Want Educators to Know

Thompson (2003) in her complementary study, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, surveyed 129 African American parents/guardians on a variety of educational topics to ascertain their actions/reactions to common school practices. Although the size of the study was a limitation, her findings were supported by other existing empirical data. Overall, she found that African American parents valued education and were extremely concerned with respect to the education of their children. Her research revealed that a majority of the parents/guardians reported that their children liked school, especially if the children believed that the teacher and school genuinely cared about them. Conversely, when racism was noted, children and parents noted that they did not like school. These parents actually cited examples of institutional as well as individual racism that included low teacher expectations, unwilling teachers, and negative labeling. Thompson also found that most African American parents believed that their children’s teachers cared, but when it was perceived by parents that the teachers did not care, parents reported that their children hated school. This supports other research previously cited that teachers attitudes toward African American students do impact students emotionally and academically.

Teacher quality was also another determining factor found to impact African American students’ and parents’ attitudes towards school. In her qualitative interviews, parents reported the following reoccurring themes: (1) most teachers did not care; (2)
teachers were unwilling to give extra help; (3) teacher attitudes, assumptions, and practices lead to discipline referrals; and (4) parents were frustrated by their inability to help their children. Thompson’s findings are in line with the research previously discussed and support the reasons why some African American students fail to achieve as well as substantiate the reasons why some African American parents choose not to be involved.

Redefining Parent Involvement

Given the history of African American parent involvement as outlined by Fields-Smith (2004) as well as the institutional and personal/psychological barriers previously discussed, the literature and research supports that African American parents and their children may benefit from an expanded definition of parent involvement. The traditional definition of parent involvement is the participation of parents in the education of their child/children. It includes overseeing homework, attending school functions and responding to school obligations. Epstein (1987) in her landmark research of African American parent involvement expanded this traditional definition to include 6 types of parent involvement – parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.

Parenting involves providing a positive, safe, and healthy home environment that supports the school learning behaviors. Communication refers to the two-way communication first initiated by the school then encouraged to continue by both the school and the parent. Its goal is to keep parents informed through a variety of media in an attempt to foster parent trust. To meet the needs of all parents, volunteering can be done at home, attendance at events, or assisting with fieldtrips, presentations, etc. Volunteering is individual and flexible in order to correspond with parent work
schedules. Additionally, Epstein's research showed an increase in homework completion when parents were actively involved. Therefore, learning at home refers to parents assisting children with homework. In this case, schools should empower parents with ways to help the student at home. Decision making is more than just being part of the Parent Teacher Association. It means encouraging parents to take an active part on school committees, advisory councils, etc. For schools, it means providing leadership training for parents as well as identifying potential parents to personally ask to get involved. Finally, the sixth type of parent involvement is collaborating with the community. This includes developing connections with local businesses, agencies, and other groups who have a vested interest in the success of these children. By expanding the definition of parent involvement, schools make it easier for all parents to be actively involved, thereby improving the home-school connection and potentially impacting student achievement.

Parent Involvement and Student Achievement

The previously mentioned body of research helps to answer the question why African American parents choose not to participate in their children's schools. It outlines some of the personal and institutional issues that act as barriers to African American parent involvement. More importantly, it suggests that there is a connection between African American parent involvement and the narrowing of the Black-White achievement gap. The following content analysis of empirical research seeks to further explore the relationship between African American parent involvement, student achievement, and the specific school factors that has had an impact the two aforementioned variables.

For the purpose of this literature review, historical and current studies were analyzed to see if there was a connection between African American parent involvement
and student achievement outcomes. Overall, the analysis showed a positive relationship between these two variables. Key findings illustrated the benefits of initiating a parent involvement program along with suggesting some areas of school climate that patterns in the research showed to be effective parent involvement strategies. This analysis was also instrumental in identifying similarities in historical and recent research along with helping to forge a deeper understanding of the importance of African American parent involvement initiatives.

Meta-Analyses Connecting Parent Involvement to Student Achievement

Fan and Chen (1999) performed a meta-analysis reviewing the parent involvement practices of all general education student populations. They analyzed 25 studies and found a connection between parent expectations and student performance. Families with above average income had 30 percent higher involvement than parents working below median income. Although Fan and Chen found a link, their study did not disaggregate data with respect to ethnicity.

Jeynes (2003, 2005) performed two meta-analyses exploring the link between African American parent involvement and student achievement. His findings provide the impetus for the content analysis frame used in this paper to analyze the impact of parent involvement and the effectiveness of school sponsored programs. In his 2003 meta-analysis, Jeynes analyzed 21 studies that demonstrated a strong connection between parent involvement and African American student achievement. Although he looked at all African American groups, his research demonstrated the strongest effect sizes among African Americans in all aspects of parent involvement with respect to overall student achievement. Furthermore, with respect to specific academic measures, his meta-analysis found equal statistically significant data when overall parent involvement is combined
with GPA, standardized tests, and other measures at a p.<.00001 confidence interval. This meta-analysis thus shows the positive impact of overall parent involvement on African American students in all aspects of achievement.

More recently, Jeynes (2005) performed another larger meta-analysis of studies of African American parent involvement. In this analysis of 41 studies with 20,000 participants, he found similar results that supported the influence of parent involvement on African American student outcomes. This study supports Fan and Chen’s findings with respect to African American children; parent expectations yielded the highest effect size—showing a link between parent expectations for their children and student performance. Jeynes also found that school initiated parent involvement programs were effective in getting African American parents involved and improving African American student achievement. This study also illustrated a link between high parent involvement, teacher expectations for the child, and grades. Thus, this more recent study by Jeynes (2005) suggests a clearer connection between African American parent involvement and African American student achievement, the effectiveness of parent involvement programs in urban schools, and the importance of parent involvement not only on standardized test scores but also teacher grading. These three meta-analyses support a positive link between African American parent involvement and student achievement. Additionally, findings demonstrate that parent involvement transcends SES, race and other factors especially for urban students (Jeynes, 2005). Combined with landmark historical research, this meta-analysis makes the case for targeting African American parents to be more involved in schools.
The Effects of African American Parent Involvement

For the purpose of this content analysis, historical studies were analyzed to see if there were relationships between African American parent involvement and student achievement/outcomes. Studies used in this analysis ranged from 1987 to as recent as 2002. All of the studies used in the matrix were quantitative in nature with only a few qualitative studies used for clarification of the ideas presented. Overall, the analysis showed a positive relationship between these two variables. Key findings illustrated the benefits of initiating a comprehensive parent involvement program along with identifying some effective strategies related to aspects of school climate. This analysis was instrumental in isolating patterns in historical and recent research that help to forge a deeper understanding of the importance of African American parent involvement initiatives.

In general, comprehensive African American parent involvement initiatives were effective across grade levels (Kellaghan, Sloan, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Trusty, 1999; Simon, 1999). The earlier parent involvement initiatives were introduced in the educational process, the more powerful the effects (Cotton & Wiklund, 2004). The collective student benefits associated with increased parent involvement include higher grades, higher standardized test scores, better attendance, improved behavior, better social skills, and enrollment in more challenging classes (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002). Increased parent involvement was most effective in early childhood and elementary grade levels and was found to be instrumental in helping children transition from kindergarten to primary grades (Epstein, 1987; Miedel & Reynolds 1999; Marcon, 1999; Kreider, 2002; Starkey & Klein, 2000). Additionally, preschool and elementary teachers were more receptive to using parent involvement
techniques/strategies (Epstein, 1987). Successful parent involvement strategies during a child's primary years were noted to positively impact student achievement in reading and math (Shaver & Walls, 1998; Simon, 2001; Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1993; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Westat, 2001).

Epstein's body of empirical research (Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1977; Epstein, 1991; Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Epstein, 2001)) using Title I schools in Baltimore, Maryland further supports the positive impact of African American parent involvement on student achievement. Her research showed a direct correlation between these two variables, especially with low income populations, when the definition encompassed her six levels of acceptable parent participation. Shaver and Walls (1998) additionally found in their study of Title I students in grades 2 – 8 that regardless of gender or SES, parent involvement had a positive impact on student achievement in the subject areas of math and reading. Moreover, they found that parents were more likely to be involved at the elementary level and that greater academic gains were denoted between 2nd and 4th grades. Conversely with respect to teacher actions, longitudinal data found that frequency of parent-teacher contact, quality of parent-teacher interactions, and parent participation declined between kindergarten and third grade, even though these variables showed a positive correlation to student achievement (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999). Therefore early parent involvement is crucial to student achievement and it is essential for teachers to be able to maintain/sustain it. This research suggests that garnering African American parent involvement is essential and doable at the elementary level.

Recent research shows that researchers are beginning to look more at its effects on middle and high school student achievement. Because at adolescence, the student's
need for autonomy affects their level of parent involvement, parenting styles change at this stage (Hollifield, 1994). Although this change occurs, it was found that students still responded positively and academically to parental support (Epstein, Simon & Salinas, 1997; Van Voorhis, 2001), especially when schools initiated practices to involve families (Esptein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1997). After implementing the Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) interactive homework program, Epstein et al (1997) documented steady consistent academic gains among middle school students with respect to homework completion, grades, attendance, and behavior (Epstein, Simon & Salinas, 1997; Esptein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1997). Other researchers using the same TIPS program recorded similar gains (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Van Voorhis, 2001). Although high school achievement did not show the same gains as middle school, it was thought that several factors impacted parent involvement at this level. Coupled with the factor of autonomy, the organization of secondary schools was the main culprit. In this configuration, high school teachers had limited opportunities and less time to build relationships or make parent contacts (Hollifeld, 1994; Sanders & Epstein, 2000). Consequently, three out of ten high school teachers felt that it was not their responsibility to involve parents (Rumberger, 1990). For high schoolers, the intervention with the strongest effect on achievement was learning at home (Catsambis, 1998). If schools could encourage and maintain at home parental support throughout African American children's academic careers, the research suggests the potential for consistent academic growth and gains.

With respect to individual student achievement, at school practices in combination with active at home practices impacted student achievement as well as inadvertently improved the student outcomes of behavior, attendance, and self-concept in
some cases. Parent involvement at home had the greatest impact on student achievement and was most related to higher grades as well as higher test scores (Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Catsambis, 1998). Other individual studies indicate statistical significance in achievement when parents work with students at home (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Trusty, 1999) on homework, supporting new skills, or discussing school in general. A preponderance of these studies cited improvement in literacy (Faires, Nichols, & Rickelman, 2000; Hara & Burke, 1998; Quigley, 2000; West, 2000) while others cited gains in math (Shaver & Walls, 1998; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Epstein, 2001) science (Van Voorhis, 2001; Epstein, 2001), social studies, and art (Epstein, 2001).

Additional analysis of these studies revealed that schools with comprehensive parent involvement programs had certain social and school factors in common that seek to address the previously mentioned personal and institutional barriers cited. Most of all, these schools recognized parent involvement programs as being crucial and essential to African American student achievement (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Seven reoccurring themes, from the studies analyzed, outline those social and school factors that are aspects of school climate and encourage African American parent involvement. They include an individualized comprehensive program, non-traditional parent involvement, parent education, teacher professional development, improved home school contact/communication, parent empowerment, and community collaboration.

Effective parent involvement programs address the individual needs of the students, parents, and the community as a whole through their daily practices. Successful programs use an "integrated ecological approach" that promote policies and institutional
attitudes which are sensitive to the school community it serves (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Zelazo, 1995; Starkey & Klein, 2000). Whether simple or comprehensive, parent partnership programs demonstrated small to significant gains in student achievement along with other student outcomes (Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1997; Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1997; Van Voorhis, 2001). The program should promote an atmosphere where teachers and administrators value family involvement (Dauber & Epstein, 1989; Mapp, 2002; Pena, 2000) with meaningful roles for parents (Comer & Haynes, 1991). When families feel comfortable in schools, they become actively involved (Zelazo, 1995). When families feel welcomed in schools, it relieves parent anxiety and improves parent communication, thereby impacting at home parent involvement and increasing student learning outcomes (Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Unfortunately, school staffs were found to be selective as to which African American parents they wholeheartedly welcomed (Lareau & Horvath, 1999). This suggests that our schools still mirror the inequalities which exist in society and uphold barriers to African American parent involvement in the schoolhouse. Effective programs were found to seek first to build strong relationships with parents and then develop partnerships crucial in educating elementary children at-risk of academic failure (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Payne & Kaba, 2001). Although these ideas have proven to be true, few parent involvement programs were found to target parents of secondary students, provide teachers professional development on working with African American parents, or even challenge the way schools interact with parents (National Council of Jewish Women, 1996).

The acceptance of a non-traditional definition of parent involvement also was found to enhance African American parent involvement. By expanding the traditional
definition from simply volunteering, homework helper, and fund-raiser to include parenting, communicating, at-home learning, decision making and collaborating with the community, African American parents were better able to be considered actively involved at home as well as at school (Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1993; Catsambis, 1998; Ho Sui-chu & Willms, 1996; Marcon, 1999; Pena, 2000). Moreover, when schools accommodated for parent participation practices, it was found to significantly impact student performance (Griffith, 1996; Comer & Haynes, 1991). The more active the participation, the greater the achievement benefits recorded (Cotton & Wikelund, 2004; Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1993; Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1993). African American parents reported slightly higher involvement than whites in all types of parent involvement at home while at school involvement was about the same (Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Desimone, 1999). This shows that parent involvement varies by ethnicity. It is important for teachers and administrators to take this into consideration when designing comprehensive parent involvement programs. It also refers back to Epstein’s research expanding the definition of parent involvement in order to include the ways African American parents support their children at home.

Parent education through workshops was the modality frequently used to encourage active verses passive parent participation. As previously stated this was most effective in the early childhood, elementary and middle grades. Epstein’s TIPS program was cited in five different studies as an effective comprehensive program to get African American parents involved at both the elementary and middle school levels (Van Voorhis, 2001; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Hara & Burke, 1998; Epstein, 2001; Epstein, Simon & Salinas, 1993). This program was successful in educating parents on how to help their children at home to complete homework. Van Voorhis (2001) reported
80% of her families either “sometimes”, “frequently,” or “always” involved with science homework completion. Additionally, comprehensive parent involvement programs were found to be most effective when combined with some kind of parent education to lend support and guidance in understanding home work concepts and developmental characteristics concerning their children (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Simmons, Stevenson, & Strnad, 1993). These programs also taught parents how to create a supportive home environment that fosters learning (National Council of Jewish Women, 1996; Quigley, 2000; Simmons, Stevenson, & Strnad, 1993). Programs that used parent education as part of the intervention resulted in the unintended outcomes of improved parent self-efficacy and self-esteem (Simmons, Stevenson, & Strnad, 1993; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Coupled with parent education, parent empowerment was found to be yet another effective intervention for parent involvement. Many of the comprehensive parent involvement programs cited parent empowerment components (Quigley, 2000; Simmons, Stevenson, & Strnad, 1993; Kreider, 2002). Parents were encouraged to take part in decision-making, checking homework, volunteering at school, attending events, and participating in committees (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1993). By incorporating parent education with parent empowerment, effective programs promoted parent confidence and a sense of efficacy (Kreider, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Payne & Kaba, 2001). This, in turn, gave parents skills to help their children complete the required assignments at home (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1993; Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1993). The more involved parents were at home, the better African American students performed academically at school.
Another commonality uncovered in the analysis that could be attributed to school climate was teacher professional development. Studies contained in this body of research illustrated the need for professional and in-service training to educate teachers on how to work effectively with families in order to yield positive academic results (National Council of Jewish Women, 1996; Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000). By teaching teachers how to build strong parent relationships along with how to efficiently manage their time in order to increase the quality and frequency of parent contacts, teachers became more effective as well as efficacious at garnering parent support for school initiated academic programs (Westat, 2001; Izzo, Weissburg, Kasprów, & Fendrich, 1999; Payne & Kaba, 2001). Additionally, the training served to change school staff attitudes towards working with parents from diverse populations (Pena, 2002; Mapp, 2002). By schools taking the initiative to make institutional changes through professional staff development, some of the personal parent barriers previously mentioned along with social capital issues were addressed.

Akin to professional teacher development, increased communication and frequent parent contact emerged as being one of the strongest interventions to improve African American parent involvement. In many of the studies, frequency of parent-teacher contact/communication correlated to positive student outcomes (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprów, & Fendrich, 1999; Westat, 2001; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Maron, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Hara & Burke, 1998; Quigley, 2000; West, 2000, Simmons, Stevenson & Strnad, 1993). It was especially noted to help in the areas of literacy (Faires, Nichols, & Rickeman, 2000; Hara & Burke, 1998; Quigley, 2000; West, 2000; Shaver & Walls, 1998) and math (Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Epstein, 2001, Shaver & Walls, 1998; Starkey & Klein, 2000). In schools with high parent
contact, Westat (2001) found that test scores were 40 percent higher than those schools with low parent outreach. Parent outreach, in these studies, were defined as meeting parents face-to-face, sending materials home, and routine telephone contact. The increased parent communication strategy was found to be most effective with parents of low-achieving/at-risk students (Westat, 2001; Shaver & Walls, 1998; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Marcon, 1999).

Finally, the research showed that community collaboration helped to foster African American parent involvement. Community involvement in schools was defined in two different ways. First of all, community schools were year-round full-service schools that enlist volunteers from the community to aid in school decision-making. Dryfoos (2000) found in her evaluation of these types of programs that 73 percent of them cited improved student performance. Community partnerships were the other way that community involvement was used to improve student outcomes. In these studies, schools concentrated on building trusting relationships with students, parents, and community leaders (Payne & Kaba, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp, 2002; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Several school improvement models (i.e., The Comer School Development Program, Accelerated Schools, Community For Learning, etc) sought to actively involve and coordinate family as well as community support in the school decision-making/restructuring process. By involving the families and communities in the change process through partnerships, stakeholders became part of the solution. Just by providing welcoming school environments, several studies documented a noticeable improvement in parent/community connectedness to the school and its initiatives (Mapp, 2002; Pena, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Simon, 2000). Above all, the best results for African American children when a partnership between
school, home, and community occurs (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Christenson & Christenson, 1998; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Several areas emerged as needing further research with respect to possible additional barriers to African American parent involvement. Gutman and Midgley (2000) found that a combination of African American parent involvement with either a high sense of belonging or high teacher support yielded higher academic grades. This suggests the importance of school connectedness and parent involvement with respect to student achievement. Since school connectedness and/or sense of belonging is an aspect of school climate, this topic necessitates further research. It was also found in several studies that a "Protective Effect" exists with respect to active parent involvement and African American student achievement. Students were documented to improve academically and behaviorally when they had consistent support at home and at school. In these studies, the home influence was found to improve the likelihood of student social adjustment, academic performance, and college aspirations (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Shumow & Miller, 2001; Trusty, 1999). Parent sense of efficacy also emerged as another area for additional research. A parent's ability to help their child academically was also shown to have an impact on their involvement within schools especially at home (Shumow & Miller, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This suggests that parent efficacy is related to parent involvement. Further research is necessary to better understand what schools can do to foster parent efficacy in their African American parents. Since relationships matter most to African American parents, the research showed a need for school staffs to build relational trust (Payne & Kaba, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). In these studies, it was found that highly effective schools
worked to develop relationships built on trust with their African American parents and among their staff.

In summary, the combined effect of at home and at school support was found to significantly impact African American student achievement (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Henderson & Berla, 1994). By making these supports part of a comprehensive parent involvement program, research has shown gains in African American student standardized test scores, grades, behavior, and attendance (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Trusty 1999). Schools where these studies have been conducted have exhibited similar characteristics or school factors which have served to enhance African American parent involvement. The factors include expanding the definition of parent involvement, parent education, parent empowerment, teacher professional development, community collaboration, and increased school contact/communication. By implementing these strategies, the personal as well as the institutional barriers which serve to keep parents away from schools can be eliminated.

Recent studies support previous findings citing a link between parent involvement and student achievement (Roulette-McIntyre, Bagaka, & Drake, 2005). With the browning of the public school system, cultural perceptions are being cited as a viable barrier to parent involvement. Improving the home-school connection through improved parent-teacher partnerships has been found to be the key. It is all about the cultural competencies of the teacher and not the parent involvement activities. These findings substantiate the need to pay closer attention to parent perceptions of school factors verses the existence of a comprehensive program.
CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between African American parent perceptions of their involvement in schools and their children's achievement on the Virginia Standards of Learning. The following sections in this chapter describe the research questions, sample, instrumentation, and method of data collection, along with discussing the ethical considerations associated with this study.

Statement of the Problem

This study examined parent responses on a brief questionnaire surveying parent/teacher relationship, parent involvement/volunteering, parent endorsement of school, and parent-teacher contact. By disaggregating 4th grade parent perceptions from a questionnaire by school, by race, and school type (Title I and Non-Title I), then correlating these means with published 2007-2008 SOL scores disaggregated in the same way, the data collected attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are African American parent perceptions of their schools in the areas of parent/teacher relationship, parent involvement/volunteering, parent endorsement of school, and parent-teacher contact?

2. How do African American Parent Perceptions of their parent involvement compare to those of Non-African American Parents?

3. Is there a significant difference between African American and Non-African American parents by school type (Title I vs. Non-Title I)?

4. Is there a relationship between African American parents' perceptions and African American student achievement by school type?
5. To what extent are Non-African American parent perceptions of their own involvement related to SOL school means by school type?

6. What do parents report as being barriers and facilitators of their involvement?

Research Design and Methods

The participants for this study were the parents within 10 elementary schools (5 Title I and 5 Non-Title I) from a school district consisting of 26 elementary schools (16 of them classified Title I). Specifically, 941 fourth grade parents were surveyed to determine their perceptions of their parent involvement. Approximately 78% of the surveys were returned and analyzed for this study. Return rates from the 10 schools ranged from 56% to 92% with the Title I schools returning at a lower rate. Of those 738 participants, 54.6% identified themselves as African American, 39.7% identified themselves as being from another race other than African American, and 5.6% did not respond to the ethnicity question.

In this correlational study, a 32 question survey with a 5-point scale was used for the quantitative portion and a two-question qualitative component to determine parents' perceptions of their involvement (independent variable) and then correlated it to mean student pass rates in reading and math by race to SOL school student achievement (dependent variable) from the 2007-2008 school year as reported online by the Virginia Department of Education. In order to test for the relationship between the two variables, a bi-variate correlation using the Pearson r formula was used to plot the data in order to determine the relationship between the aforementioned variables.
Table 1:

Research Question Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Type of Statistics</th>
<th>Type of Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are African American parent perceptions of their schools in the areas of</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Means and standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parent/teacher relationship, parent involvement/volunteering, parent endorsement</td>
<td></td>
<td>deviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of school, and parent-teacher contact?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do African American Parent Perceptions compare to those of other races?</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Independent Sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is there a significant difference between African American and Non-African</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Independent Sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American parents by school type (Title I vs. Non-Title I)?</td>
<td></td>
<td>T-Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is there a relationship between African American parents’ perceptions and</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>Pearson R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American student achievement by school type?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To what extent are Non-African American parent perceptions of their own</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>Pearson R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement related to SOL school means by school type?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What do parents report as being barriers and facilitators of their involvement?</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Descriptive Statistics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants and Sample

The school district used for this study is located in Tidewater, Virginia. The city has approximately 180,000 residents that earn the median income of $46,000. Only 21% of the city’s families have children. Approximately 70% of its residents have a high school diploma, 2% have had some college, 8% hold a bachelor’s degree, and 5% had a graduate degree. This school district consists of five early childhood centers, 26 elementary, nine middle schools, and five high schools serving over 32,000 students.

Within this school district are three types of schools: Title I, Non-Title I and Magnet schools. The magnet school programs are schools that offer specific academic programs of interest. They offer programs in environmental science, international
studies, math, science, the arts, communication and technology. The majority of their student body is determined by a voluntary lottery system. All of the other school populations are mainly populated by students from their neighborhood school zone while a percentage of students are still bused within the city according to the federal desegregation plan. By Virginia standards, 87% of this school district’s schools are fully accredited with 100% of its elementary schools meeting their SOL benchmarks.

The school district reports the following ethnicity as of October 2008: 30% White, 57% African American, 7% Hispanic, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, .5% Native American, and 2.4% Unspecified. On average, 50% of the students in this district are considered economically disadvantaged. The percentage of African American students ranges from 31.3% to 73.1% in the individual elementary schools with Title I schools having a proportionally higher number of African American students.

By federal law, school-wide Title I schools are determined by having 40% or more students who receive free and reduced lunch. Of the 26 elementary schools, 16 are categorized as Title I schools and 12 of those 16 have school-wide Title I programs. In the Title I schools in this district, the percentage of African American students is measurably higher ranging from 49.9% to 73.1%.

Generalizability

The findings in this study should be generalized with caution to populations with similar demographics. It is important to reiterate that although there was a relatively large pool of parent respondents, the responses captured only represent those parents that chose to respond thereby making it a convenience sample. Therefore, the views of those parents that chose not to respond were not captured and are not represented in these findings. Although not generalizable to all populations, data collected from parents of
students that attend Title I schools as well as African American parents’ responses across school types yield some interesting information for further research.

Instrumentation

*Parent Involvement Questionnaire*

A modified version of the Fast Track Parent Involvement Questionnaire (PIQ) was used with permission from the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (1991) at Duke University to survey parent perceptions of their parent involvement. This questionnaire in its original form (Appendix A) had 26-items and four domains consisting of the following four subscales:

- Quality of the relationship between parents and teachers
- Parent involvement and volunteering
- Parent endorsement of school
- Frequency of parent-teacher contact

The items were coded on an item specific five-point scale where 0 represents no involvement and 4 represents high involvement. Technical reports by Miller-Johnson and Maumary-Gremaud (2000) showed that after a factor analysis using a varimax rotation, a three factor solution minimizes double loadings and combining the “quality of relationship between parents and teachers” subscales with the “parent endorsement of the school” subscale.

The reliability coefficients on the 3-factor solution for:

- Parent comfort and endorsement of schools = .93
- Parent involvement = .79
- Parent-teacher contact = .68
Correlations between parent involvement and parent comfort/endorsement of schools rate \((r=.64)\). More specifically, items 12-18, 20 and 21 assess the “parent’s comfort in their relationship with the teacher and the school.” One example question from this subscale would be “You enjoy talking with your child’s teacher.” To assess parent involvement and volunteering, survey items numbered 5, 6, 7, 11, and 19 were used. One example of this subscale “this past year, you stopped by to talk to your child’s teacher.” Finally, survey items numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9 assess parent-teacher contact. An example of this line of questioning is “this past year, you have called your child’s teacher.” Survey question number 10 (frequency the teacher invited the parent to a PTA meeting) was deleted from analysis due to low loadings. A copy can be found at www.fasttrackproject.org.

**Modified PIQ**

Permission was granted in writing by the author of the survey to use and slightly modify it if credit was given. Therefore, there are essentially five sections consisting of a total of 39 questions (Appendix B). Section I consists of 10 questions (numbers 1-10) with the answer choices of: “never, once or twice, every month, every week, and more than once a week”. Section II consists of 12 questions (numbers 11-22) with the answer choices of: “not at all, a little, some, a lot, a great deal”. Section III is on the reverse side and consists of 10 questions (numbers 23-32) that are in the reverse order with respect to the response choices of: “strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree”. In order to make the survey more valuable to the school district and meet the requirements outlined by the authors, the researcher added 8 questions that reflected research-based parent involvement strategies. The researcher also added two open response questions in Section IV (numbers 33 and 34) that ask parents to list the barriers
("What keeps you from becoming more involved in your child’s school?") and then possible facilitators ("What could the school do to help you become more involved?") to their involvement with the school. Finally, Section V has four questions (number 35-39) that ask demographic information with respect to number of children currently attending the school, years the parent has been associated with the school, marital status, ethnicity, and education level. At the far bottom right corner was a code that indicated school number, Title I status, and Magnet school status for statistical purposes.

Student Achievement

Data for student achievement were drawn from the Virginia Department of Education website (www.doe.virginia.gov) on October 14, 2008 for the SOL results from the 2007-2008 school year for the specific schools surveyed. These SOLs were given to the third grade students of the parents surveyed in May 2008. This web report provided the Grade 3 English/Reading and Math pass rates for African American and White students. Data for other minority racial groups was not reported by the state due to the small number of students in that particular category and confidentiality concerns. For the purpose of this study, the pass rates for English/Reading and Math were determined by school then averaged together by race in order to obtain a mean pass rate score by race to correlate with subscales obtained from the PIQ analysis.

Data Analysis

As previously stated, the researcher used statistical data analysis to answer the research questions. This data were analyzed using SPSS, a statistical computer program. The unit of analysis was the individual parent. A factor analysis, an independent t-sample test and the Pearson r correlation were used to analyze the data in an effort to test for statistical significance between mean scores.
Data Collection Methods

In the summer of 2008, 26 elementary principals were invited via email to have their fourth-grade parents take part in the Parent Involvement Survey. Ten schools volunteered to participate (five Title I and five Non-Title I). All five of the Title I schools had school-wide Title I programs. Within this grouping, three of the schools were magnet schools (one Title I and two Non-Title I). In preparation for survey distribution, preliminary research was done that included gathering teacher email addresses and student counts. The survey forms were then discretely coded by school indicating school and school type (Title I, Non-Title I).

A tiered incentive program was specifically designed to illicit parent, student, and teacher participation and to maximize survey return rate. Parent packets included a yellow introductory letter entitled “have a cup of tea with me, then keep the pencil for free” (Appendix C) complete with a Lipton tea bag and a golf pencil along with the survey. The letter outlined the purpose of the study and the importance of their responses.

Teachers were given a box with 25 numbered parent packets and an information/incentive packet. On the front of the information/incentive packet was a sticker with the steps outlined wherein teachers were asked to pass out the packets in alphabetical order so they would know at a glance which students did not return their packets. Inside the teacher packet was a formal introductory letter (Appendix D) reiterating the steps and purpose in more detail. Teachers were given $1.00 for distributing and keeping track of parent survey packets. Their instruction letter was themed “have a coke and a snack on me” to encourage their participation. Also inside the teacher packet was a short scripted “kid friendly” paragraph on blue paper (Appendix E).
introducing me as a college student that needed help completing a homework assignment. The letter also introduced the Fruit Roll-up student incentives, as well as explained the 100% classroom participation incentive for a pizza party. Classes that had 100% participation were placed in a drawing for a Pizza Hut gift card. Finally, inside the packet were 25 Fruit Roll-ups as immediate incentives for students that returned completed parent surveys. The survey distribution and collection timeline was one week (October 13th – 17th).

In early October, the researcher scheduled a convenient time with principals via email to deliver the boxes of surveys a week prior to distribution. Appointments were made on the early dismissal days of October 8th and 10th to give the researcher an opportunity to meet the principals as well as the fourth-grade teaching teams personally. At this meeting, the researcher gave a brief explanation explaining the teacher, student, and classroom incentives and then distributed classroom survey packets individually boxed by classroom teacher to be distributed on October 13th and collected on October 20th. On the Sunday prior to survey distribution (October 12th), each teacher was emailed to remind them to distribute the surveys. In this email, teachers were reminded that the researcher was going to pick up the packets in their school office on the following Monday (October 20th). On the day before collection, a “thank you” email was sent. The better than expected return rate may have been encouraged by the tiered incentive plan, personal contact, organization, and attention to detail. For parents and students, the brief instrument, convenience, and the immediacy of valued incentives maybe the reason why the return rates exceeded expectations. The data were entered into SPSS by the researcher for data analysis.
Ethical Considerations

The researcher is committed to protecting the confidentiality of the survey participants. Care has been taken to address ethical concerns. This study was submitted to the Human Subjects Review Committee at the College of William and Mary for approval. Upon receipt of approval from the committee and the school district, the researcher conducted the survey with acceptable and ethical research practices.

Care was taken to make sure that there was not any risk for adult participants and the classes chosen for survey distribution were chosen equitably. Numbers were assigned to survey packets so that surveys remained anonymous, and confidentiality was maintained. Each survey was coded numerically for statistical purposes. The code sheet was kept secure at all times and the researcher was the only one that knew the meanings of the numbers associated with the code. At the conclusion of this study, the code sheet will be destroyed. Principals will be provided the opportunity to receive the PIQ results for their particular school, but they will not be able to identify specific parent responses. Any findings disseminated from this research will reference participants by broad classification maintaining the anonymity of the school district and its participants.
CHAPTER 4 - ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to explore the possible relationship with African American Parent Perceptions of their involvement within the elementary schools their children attend and student achievement on the Virginia Standards of Learning. Fourth-grade parent survey responses to a modified version of the Fast Track Parent Involvement Questionnaire were used to measure their involvement perceptions and then the data results were correlated to the 2007-2008 third grade mean SOL pass rate scores by race.

Findings

Demographic Descriptive Data

Ten schools (five Title I and five Non-Title I) volunteered the use of their fourth-grade parent pool to take part in this convenience sample. A total of 941 fourth-grade parents were surveyed with 738 parents responding. Of these 738 parents, 39.7% were Non-African American, 54.6% were African American, and 5.6% did not self-report their ethnicity. It is also important to note that 43.8% of the respondents were parents of Title I students while 56.2% were from Non-Title I schools. Further descriptive analysis of the demographics show comparisons of the educational level, marital status, years associated with the school and number of children attending the school in the following table.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Non-Title I</th>
<th>Title I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-AA</td>
<td>AA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>39.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some High School</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>79.7</td>
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<td>Divorced</td>
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<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Single</td>
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<td>33.5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Years with School</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>18.4</td>
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<td>3 Years</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>14.6</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or More Years</td>
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<td><strong>Number of Children At School</strong></td>
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<td>2 Children</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Comparatively, Table 2 shows 79% the Non-Title I and Title I parent respondents reported having some college or a college degree. African American parents reported having less education than their Non-African American counterparts with respect to obtaining post bachelor’s degree education. Additionally, a larger percentage of Non-African American Title I parents reported only having a High School Diploma or just some secondary education.

In the category of Marital Status, it is evident that a greater percentage of Non-African American parents reported being married while a greater percentage of African American parents reported being single. These statistics held true for both Non-Title I and Title I populations.

With respect to the number of years that parents had been associated with the school surveyed, the data indicated that a large percentage of Non-African American parents, about 35%, had been with a school for 5 or more years. These percentages were double what African American parents reported in this same category. Although 19% of African American Title I parents reported being with a school for 4 years, 29% reported only being with the school 2 years. Another interesting point to note is that 29% of Non-Title I African American parents reported only being with the school for 1 year. These numbers in one respect for Non-African American parents may be a sign of stability.
while for African American parents may be a sign of transiency. Finally, the descriptor concerning number of children at the school indicated that the majority of parents surveyed had 1 or 2 children attending the school.

*Analysis of Modified PIQ*

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, technical reports from the Fast Track PIQ reported a 3-factor solution after a factor analysis with a varimax rotation. The same process was followed in analyzing this data set. After a principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the data, seven factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were found (Table 3).

Table 3

*Cumulative Variance Summary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>% of Variance</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.702</td>
<td>12.339</td>
<td>33.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.602</td>
<td>8.673</td>
<td>42.461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.882</td>
<td>6.274</td>
<td>48.735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.499</td>
<td>4.996</td>
<td>53.731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.336</td>
<td>4.454</td>
<td>58.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.126</td>
<td>3.752</td>
<td>61.937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analysis revealed 7 factors cumulatively accounting for 61.94 percent of the variance (for a more detailed rotated factor analysis see Appendix F). These subscales replaced the three formerly mentioned subscales from the Fast Track PIQ assessed in the first research question (i.e. parent/teacher relationship, parent
involvement/volunteering, parent endorsement of school, and parent-teacher contact).

Although the measurement still assessed parent perceptions of these topics, our pool of parents demonstrated different loadings with respect to the pattern in which the items co-varied.

Table 4

**Subscale Factor Description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Survey Item Numbers</th>
<th>Reliability Coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Teacher</td>
<td>Parent-Teacher Comfort</td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Confidence</td>
<td>Parent confidence in school and staff</td>
<td>23, 24, 25, 26, 29</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Presence</td>
<td>Physical presence of parent in school</td>
<td>5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 18, 22</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Communication</td>
<td>Written teacher/parent communication</td>
<td>3, 4, 9</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Home</td>
<td>Parent initiated school related activities with child at home</td>
<td>19, 20, 21</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Interest</td>
<td>Afterschool activities for parents to help child</td>
<td>27, 28, 30</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Contact</td>
<td>Parent/teacher phone contact</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After examination of the factor analysis, questions 31 and 32 were dropped due to low loadings. These questions dealt with attending conferences after 4 p.m. and
attending conferences in the neighborhood. Although these items were dropped, it was noted that quite a few parents answered the questions indirectly when responding to the barriers and facilitators open response questions. An item analysis was done using the 30 items, and an alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .765$ was found. Questions 33 and 34 were not involved in this level of quantitative analysis because they were free response questions and a frequency descriptive analysis was done by assigning codes to similar parent responses in order to analyze this data.

Table 5

**SOL Pass Correlations for All Parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Presence</th>
<th>Comm.</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOL Pass</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.149**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.320**</td>
<td>.318**</td>
<td>.231**</td>
<td>.274**</td>
<td>.180**</td>
<td>.132**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.106**</td>
<td>.086*</td>
<td>.094*</td>
<td>.407**</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.431**</td>
<td>.292**</td>
<td>.122**</td>
<td>.392**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.132**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.062</td>
<td></td>
<td>.397**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.142**</td>
<td>.077*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td>.069</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5 represents the SOL correlation and inter-correlations between the subscales of the modified PIQ for all the parents surveyed. A correlation was found between the SOL Pass rate and the Communication subscale ($r = .15$, $p < .01$). This shows
a relationship between passing the SOL and written communication between the home and school. This communication could take the form of notes or written progress reports. Although there was only one correlation found with respect to SOL achievement, it is also important to note the large number of inter-correlations within the subscales found in Table 5.

Each of the seven subscales characterizes a different aspect of parent involvement. The Teacher subscale deals the parents' comfort with the teacher. Significant correlations (see table 5) were found for this subscale at the p. ≤ .01 level among all six of the subscales: [Confidence (r = .32, p < .01), Presence (r = .32, p < .01), Communication (r = .23, p < .01), Home (r = .27, p < .01), Interest (r = .18, p < .01), Contact (r = .13, p < .01)]. These results signal that if parents feel comfortable with the teacher then they are more likely to have confidence in the school, attend events/conferences, self-help workshops, and share in two-way written, as well as phone communication.

The confidence subscale in Table 5 refers to the parents' confidence in their school. Similarly, correlations were found in the Presence (r = .11, p < .01), Communication (r = .09, p < .05), Home (r = .09, p < .05), and Interest (r = .41, p < .01). These inter-correlations suggest that parents that are confident in the school and staff will also be more likely to show their physical presence in the school, communicate in written form, work with their child at home, along with showing an interest in after-school self-help workshops. It is interesting to note that the correlation was not significant in relation to phone contact.

The Presence subscale refers to the parent physically attending meetings and events in the school. Inter-correlations in Table 5 were also found between the Presence
subscale and the four remaining subscales [Communication (r = .43, p < .01), Home (r = .29, p < .01), Interest (r = .12, p < .01), Contact (r = .39, p < .01)]. These correlations signal that parents that attend meetings/conferences will also probably participate in two-way communication with the teacher, will work with their child at home, would be interested in attending workshops, as well as would initiate phone contact with the teacher.

With respect to the Communication subscale, only two significant inter-correlations were recorded (See Table 5). The inter-correlations were between the subscales of Home (r = .13, p < .01) and Contact (r = .40, p < .01). These relationships indicated that parents that participate in two-way written communication with the teacher would also be more likely to work with their child at home as well as be more likely to participate in two-way phone communication. It is interesting to note that no correlation was found between the Communication subscale and Interest subscale, indicating that parents who participate in this kind of communication would probably not be interested in attending after-school self-help workshops.

Finally, in the Home subscale, two significant inter-correlations were reported. They were found in regards to the Interest (r = .14, p < .01) and Contact (r = .09, p < .01) subscales. This would indicate that parents that work with their child at home on school-related activities would be more likely to be interested in attending after-school workshops, as well as initiate phone contact/communication. Collectively, these correlations indicate relationships/interdependence between the majority of subscales represented. These relationships illustrate a possible connection between parent responses to school factors that may impact their level of involvement in their child's school.
Analysis of the Research Questions

Each research question was addressed by using SPSS to perform descriptive analysis, independent samples t-test comparisons, or Pearson R correlations. Data collected from 738 parent respondents (293 Non-African American, 403 African American and 42 did not self report) were analyzed using descriptive statistics to ascertain parent perceptions of their involvement with their child’s elementary school. This level of content analysis yielded seven subscales describing seven different levels of perceived parent involvement. After disaggregating these responses by school type and race and comparing their means, the data were then correlated to subscale means in order to test for a possible relationship on the dependent variable of SOL achievement. It is important to note that the PIQ consisted of a five-point scale. Parents responded with the numbers 5 (strongly agree/ more than once a week/ a great deal), 4 (agree/ every week/ alot), 3 (neutral/ every month/ some), 2 (disagree/ once or twice/ a little), or 1(strongly disagree/ never/ not at all) that represented the numerical weights assigned to each response. In this case, 5 represented the most positive response and the highest weight and conversely, 1 represented the most negative response. Although section III had reverse ratings, the researcher reconfigured the ratings to a positive direction before the descriptive analysis was done.

Research Question 1: What are African American parent perceptions of their schools in the areas of parent/teacher relationship, parent involvement/volunteering, parent endorsement of school, and parent-teacher contact?

This research question was addressed using descriptive statistics. By performing a Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation, seven subscales emerged
(replacing the four subscales referenced in the above question) that better explained the interpretation of this survey by this pool of respondents. Table 6 represents the perceptions of African American Parents with respect to the factors of teacher comfort, confidence in school, physical presence in school, communication, school related home activities, parent interest, and parent teacher contact.

Table 6

**African American Parent Perceptions Means**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three factors emerged as areas with low averages for parents where mean scores fell in the negative range. In the area of Presence (M=1.77; SD=.56), African American parents reported that on average they had only been physically present within the school once or twice. Another factor with low scores was Communication. Parents reported a mean score of 1.88 (SD = .75) indicating that they had limited communication with respect to written communication either teacher-to-parent or parent-to-teacher and/or parent-teacher conference. Consistent with these findings (M = 1.77; SD = .79), African
American parents also reported low teacher-to-parent and parent-to-teacher phone contact.

**Research Question 2: How do African American Parent Perceptions compare to those of other races?**

After performing a two-tailed independent sample t-test (p<.05) comparing the means of Non-African American parents with the means of African American parents, the difference between the means was found to significant in two subscales. Statistical significance was found in the Interest (t(693) = -5.01; p <.01) and the Contact (t(690) = -3.51; p <.01) subscales (See Table 7). The Interest subscale dealt with parent interest in self-help workshops, afterschool programs, and parent networking opportunities. African American parents reported (M = 4.07; SD = .68) “agree” to these participation statements. Non-African American parents reported (M = 3.80; SD = .70) when rounded also signals they agree, but the means were found to be statistically different.

Another subscale that showed a statistical difference in parent report was in the area of Contact. The Contact subscale refers to phone calls either by the parent or teacher. Non-African American parents reported (M = 1.38; SD = .59) or “never” receiving/initiating phone calls between home and school, while African American parents (M = 1.57; SD = .79) reported “once or twice”. In both comparisons, the African American parents rated their participation statistically higher than their Non-African American counterparts.
Table 7

Comparison of Parent Perceptions by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-AA N = 291</th>
<th>AA N = 403</th>
<th>Independent Samples T-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Std. Err. Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

According to Table 7, African American parents essentially have the same perceptions as Non-African American parents on 5 out of 7 of the subscales measured by this survey. Parents rated the areas of Teacher and Confidence positively; rated Presence and Communication negatively; and then reported a neutral opinion in the area of Home. The Teacher subscale represents questions dealing with the parents’ comfort with the child’s teacher. Non African American (M = 4.18; SD = .75) and African American (M = 4.16; SD = .75) parents alike reported that they experienced “a lot” of comfort with the teacher. Additionally, Non-African American (M = 4.40; SD = .65) and African American (M = 4.39; SD = .64) parents “agreed” with statements referring to their confidence in the school’s/staff’s ability to educate their child.
Both groups reported low means in the areas of Presence and Communication. The subscale of Presence measured how often and when the parent physically visited the school. These questions dealt with the parents’ attendance at special events, conferences, along with impromptu visits. Non-African American parents (M = 1.84; SD = .49) and African American parents (M = 1.77; SD = .56) reported that they had physically visited their child’s school only “once or twice.”

Another subscale that yielded low ratings was in the area of Communication. The Communication subscale refers to written communication i.e., notes or emails that are either generated by the teacher or the parent. Non- African American parents (M = 1.97; SD = .76) and African American parents (M = 1.88; SD = .75) alike reported initiating or receiving this type of communication only “once or twice.”

Finally, a response difference was denoted in the Home subscale when the mean scores are rounded, although no statistical significance was found between the means. Non-African American parents reported doing school related activities with their child at home (M = 3.34; SD = .85) less often than African American parents (M = 3.46; SD = .92). These questions dealt with reading to your child, going to the library, and playing educational games with your child. Non-African American parents reported they performed these activities “some” while African American parents self-reported performing these activities “a lot”. In this category, it is important to interject that the large standard deviations denote a high amount of variability with respect to parent responses.

It is important to note with respect to all of these findings that the surveys went out in mid-October and that parents had few opportunities to interact with teachers/school before being asked to respond to these types of interaction questions. Therefore, this
could have negatively impacted some of the parents’ ratings/responses on these survey items.

*Research Question 3: Is there a significant difference between African American and Non-African American parents by school type (Title I verses Non-Title I)?*

As evidenced in independent two-tailed sample t-test at the \( p < .05 \) level contained in Table 8, African American parents shared some of the same perceptions of their school involvement as their Non-African American counterparts by school type. Only three areas emerged as being statistically significant between Non-African American and African American parents by school type with one of those three subscales being found statistically significant for both groups.

*Non-Title I Parents*

In the case of Non-Title I parents as shown in Table 8, the two areas that reported significant mean differences were Home \( (t(391) = -2.88; p < .01) \), and Interest \( (t(392) = -4.58; p < .01) \). More specifically, Non-Title I African American parents reported that they would be more likely to work with their children at home on school related activities “a lot” wherein Non-African American parents reported that they would do so “some.” With respect to the subscale of Interest, although the means were found to be statistically significant, the rating scale when rounded to nearest whole number still details that African American \( (M = 4.13; SD = .60) \) and Non-African American parents \( (M = 3.83; SD = .70) \) were equally interested in attending parent workshops, parent networking activities, and sending child to after-school help programs.
Title I Parents

In the case of Title I schools, the African American parents’ perceptions were found to be significant in the areas of Interest and Contact (see Table 8). The mean differences were significant in the subscales of Interest \( (t(299) = -2.95; p < .01) \) and Contact \( (t(299) = -2.67; p < .01) \). As stated above, the subscale of Interest deals with attending activities outside of school. Although there was found to be a significant difference \( (p < .01) \) between the means, when rounded, the mean scores indicate agreement in this area between African American and Non-African American parents. In the area of Contact, African American parents reported \( (M = 1.62; SD = .86) \) that they had had phone contact with the teacher “Once or Twice”, while Non-African American parents reported \( (M = 1.34; SD = .61) \) the “Never” response.

Another pattern that emerged when analyzing Table 8, in all of the areas denoted as having significant differences, African American parents reported higher mean scores than Non-African American parents. It is also interesting to note that the one area the Non-Title I and Title I parents had in common was Interest. This commonality may indicate that African American, as well as Non-African American parents may be interested in workshops, afterschool activities and parent networking opportunities.
Table 8

*Independent T-test Comparison of Parent Perceptions by School Type and Race*

**Non-Title I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Non-AA N = 212</th>
<th>AA N = 182</th>
<th>Independent Samples T-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Std. Err. Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Title I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Non-AA N = 80</th>
<th>AA N = 221</th>
<th>Independent Samples T-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Std. Err. Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Research Question 4: Is there a relationship between African American parents’ perceptions and African American student achievement by school type (Non-Title I verses Title I)?

As evidenced by the data contained in Table 9, when African American SOL pass rates were correlated with the seven African American parent involvement perception subscales by school type, no correlations were found between African American parents’ perceptions and student achievement regardless of school type. Therefore with respect to this data set, no relationship was found between the aforementioned variables.
Table 9

African American Parent Involvement and Student Achievement Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Title I African American</th>
<th>Title I African American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA-SOL Pass</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>-.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>.288**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Research Question 5: To what extent are Non-African American perceptions of their own involvement related to SOL school means by school type?

When the Non-African American SOL pass rates were correlated with the seven parent involvement perception subscales, only one correlation was found for Title I Non-African American parents between Student Achievement and Contact ($r = .23$, p.≤.05). No other subscales showed a correlation to student achievement for Non-African American parents in either Title I or Non-Title I schools (See Table 10).
Table 10

Non-African American Parent Involvement and Student Achievement Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Title I Non-African American</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N = 212</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>Comm.</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non AA-SOL Pass</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.289**</td>
<td>.344**</td>
<td>.251**</td>
<td>.198**</td>
<td>.133</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.175*</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.388**</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.153*</td>
<td>.295**</td>
<td>.174*</td>
<td>.218**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.139*</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                      | N = 81                           | Teacher  | Confidence| Presence | Comm.    | Home     | Interest  | Contact  |
| Non AA-SOL Pass      | -.063                            | -.051    | -.037    | .099     | .077     | -.028    | .232*    |
| Teacher              | ---                              | .374**   | .401**   | .234*    | .496**   | .322**   | .104     |
| Confidence           | ---                              | .205     | .009     | .299**   | .231*    | -.003    |
| Presence             | ---                              | .311**   | .517**   | .217     | .084     |
| Communication        | ---                              | .155     | -.102    | .402**   |
| Home                 | ---                              | .267*    | -.095    |
| Interest             | ---                              | .017     |
| Contact              | ---                              |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Research Question 6: What do parents report as being barriers and facilitators of their involvement?

In the final two questions on the survey, parents were given an opportunity to openly respond concerning “what keeps them from becoming more involved in schools” and “what could the school do to help parents become more involved.” The researcher assigned common responses numbers and input them into SPSS. Descriptive statistics was used to calculate frequencies. Table 11 represents the barriers parents reported to their school involvement and seeks to compare their responses by school type.

Barriers to Parent Involvement

The major barrier to parent involvement across school type regardless of race was work as reported by 50.3% of the 738 parents surveyed. Only 5.3% of the parents reported they were already involved. Several parents cited that their work schedules precluded them from being involved. One parent commented, “My work hours, I work fulltime and am unable to participate in activities during the school day.” Several commented “I work two jobs,” and “my work schedule is such that I am unable to take days off to attend activities.” In some cases, they were military. One mother stated, “my husband is currently overseas, therefore, I have to balance everything.” Yet another commented, “the mother is gone on a deployment; I have 3 kids to take care of and there is not enough time in the day.” Additionally, parents reported getting off work too late to be involved, problems volunteering around their work schedules and just the sheer lack of time. Childcare or having other children was cited by approximately 4.9% of the parents as the reason why they were unable to be involved. One parent stated, “I am a single mother of 3 and one of my children is disabled. I try to do the best I can to be involved
as much as I can. I wish I could do more.” It was evident by many of the comments that although parents wanted to be involved many of them lacked the time.

Table 11

**Barriers to Parent Involvement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BARRIERS</th>
<th>Non-Title I</th>
<th>Title I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Non-AA</td>
<td>% AA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=212</td>
<td>N=182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare/Other children</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduling of Events</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Attitudes</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already Involved</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Blank</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note some patterns in the parent responses that may be important for schools to address. Title I parents reported a higher percentage of communication and scheduling of events as additional obstacles to their parent involvement. Approximately 8% of Title I African American parents reported no barriers to their involvement.

With respect to childcare, 14 Non-African American Non-Title I parents out of a total of 35 respondents for this category cited childcare as a barrier to participation.
Additionally, transportation was not a concern for this group, although it was reported as a barrier for a small percentage of the rest of the parents surveyed. Furthermore, Non-Title I Non African American parents also reported staff attitudes at a higher percentage than the other parents as being an obstacle to their involvement. One parent stated, “if the teacher or staff are unfriendly, it could make me feel uncomfortable, also feeling unappreciated for my contributions/volunteering.”

Facilitators to Parent Involvement

Table 12 represents what parents reported the school could do to encourage their involvement. Although many of the facilitators parallel the aforementioned barriers, some interesting ideas emerged from parent responses. In Table 11 parents reported overwhelmingly, “work” as the main barrier to their participation with schools. Related to this admission, parents stated four facilitators that would help them be more involved.

Parents reported four interrelated facilitators that would help them become more involved in schools. They suggested that schools “provide childcare” (1.6%), “advanced notice of meetings,” (2.7%), “schedule meetings/conferences after 4 p.m.”(7.3%), and “more/better communication” (6.2%). Parents commented, “change some event times,” “have more things in the evenings,” and “give more advance notice of events.” They even suggested events/activities be scheduled on evenings and weekends. They mainly wanted schools to have more convenient events so that working and single parents with children could attend. Table 12 shows that African American parents requested meetings after 4 p.m. at a higher percentage rate than Non-African American parents.

With respect to daily communication, parents requested more or better communication from the school to aid them with involvement. They suggested more flyers, notes from teachers, emails, and newsletters. One parent commented “continue
weekly contact and updates for child’s work with agendas and email study packets.”
Another parent suggested “weekly progress reports and notes in agendas.” It is
interesting to note that Title I parents requested more or better communication at a higher
percentage than their Non-Title I counterparts.

Another area that challenged the traditional parent involvement definition was
“Work At Home.” Parents offered to support the school by volunteering to work from
home to help their child’s teacher. Parents suggested that schools “provide a list of things
they need help with,” and “provide more volunteer projects that could be done at home.”
Some of these parents had non-traditional work schedules or had younger children and
were unable to volunteer at the school during the school day. One parent stated, “have
events that I can volunteer and have my infant son with me.” In this case, Table 12
shows Non-Title I parents requested “work at home” at a higher percentage than Title I
parents.
Table 12

Facilitators of Parent Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACILITATORS</th>
<th>Non-Title I</th>
<th>Title I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% Non- AA</td>
<td>% AA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=212</td>
<td>N=182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work at Home</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More/Better Communication</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advance Notice</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings after 4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After-school Programs</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Me</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left Blank</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that approximately 17%-32% of the parents wrote in “nothing.” One parent stated, “nothing—I need to make myself available.” “It’s not the school, it’s my work hours,” cited another parent. Many of them responded that the school was doing a good job and it was their fault they were not more involved. One parent stated, “I think the school has lots of things to get parents involved. I will just have to make time to attend.” Yet another parent stated, “I don’t think the school can do too much more. The needs I have are from home not from school.” Another interesting point
was that approximately 35%-48% of the parents left this question blank, while 3%-4% of the parents responded “don’t know”. This was the last survey question and this could have been due to instrument fatigue.

It was evident from all the parent responses that parents desired to be involved. They were essentially happy with their schools’ efforts in this regard and they tended to blame themselves for not being involved instead of the school. These results indicate that parents need the schools to be more responsive to their family dynamics. Although this list of facilitators may be unique to this pool of parent respondents, they do allude to some possible recommendations to enhance school parent involvement practices.
CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Findings

Introduction

Over fifty years have passed since Brown versus Board of Education integrated the American public school system and our country is still grappling with how to close the minority achievement gap. Although No Child Left Behind (NCLB), with its Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement, has narrowed the achievement gap for some of the low achieving subpopulations that include minorities, disadvantaged students, and students with special needs, the disparity between these minority subpopulations and their majority counterparts still exists (Johnston & Viadero, 2000). This has spurred schools to look for ways to motivate student achievement in those subpopulations that have traditionally performed poorly on standardized tests. These subpopulations include African American students who in some cases are still lagging behind their Caucasian counterparts.

Years of research has revealed a myriad of causes along with multitude of solutions. One possible answer which has shown merit as an intervention is increasing African American parent involvement in the educational process. Previous research, as well as current research supported by empirical data suggests that African American parent involvement could be the missing link to student achievement. Although a direct link was not found in this study, data collected from African American and Non-African American parents suggest the possibility of an indirect link that would support the existing body of literature on African American parent involvement. It alludes to some
promising research-based parent involvement school practices that may deserve a second look. Furthermore, it points to some areas that may warrant further research.

This study investigated the relationship between African American perceptions of their parent involvement and student achievement according to state standards. In an effort to capture and compare differences between Title I and Non-Title I parent responses as well as African American and Non-African American parent perceptions, 738 fourth-grade parents were surveyed using a modified version of the Fast-track Parent Involvement Questionnaire. These responses were correlated to 2007-2008 SOL third-grade pass rates as measured by the Virginia Standards of Learning. This study also collected qualitative data concerning the perceived barriers and facilitators of parent involvement in schools.

Limitations

This study was limited due in part to the fact that schools were allowed to volunteer. Additionally, the parent pool of respondents represents a convenience sample of the willing. The opinions/perceptions of the parents that did not respond are not represented in this data set. Finally, parent surveys reflect self-report and could be inaccurate. Therefore, the findings in this study cannot be generalized to other elementary schools in Virginia, thus, affecting the external validity of the study.

Given that the SOL data is from the previous school year, if parents moved or relocated the following school year, the previous year's pass rates may not directly align with the current fourth-grade population. Because all state standardized tests vary by state, this measure of achievement may not be generalized to other states.

Given that the school district surveyed was located in the Tidewater Area of Virginia and this area had a large population of military families that presents a unique
dynamic. It also is not an urban area where a greater dichotomy might be more evident due to the difference in population composition. Therefore, all of these implications for further research and findings may only be applicable to this pool of respondents and should not be readily generalized to other populations basically because group dynamics often vary by ethnicity, region, education level, and economic status.

Discussion of Findings

Jeynes (2003, 2005) performed two meta-analyses containing current research showing a link between minority parent involvement and student achievement. However, in this study, the findings did not show a correlation between the subscales on the parent involvement instrument and student achievement as defined by the Standards of Learning. Although the study did not find a relationship between African American parent involvement and student achievement, it did yield some interesting findings with respect to school practices that may encourage parent involvement.

Demographics previously shared in Table 2, showed diverse family dynamics across school types. Non-African American parents were married at a greater percentage than African American parents. Eighty percent of Non-Title I Non-African American parents were married compared to 33% of Title I African American parents. The converse was also true; 7% of Non-Title I Non African American parents were single compared to 53% of Title I African American parents. Furthermore, 34% of Non-Title I African American parents reported being single as well. Sixty-five percent of African American Title I parents were either single or divorced. The “single” dynamic coupled with work being reported as a major barrier to parent involvement supports parent reports of a lack of time to be involved.
When parent perceptions were compared by race, the findings revealed two statistically significant areas with respect to the seven PIQ subscales. Significance was found in the Interest (t(693) = -5.01, p<.01) and the Contact (t(690) = -3.51, p <.01) subscales. The Interest subscale asked if parents would be interested in afterschool programs, self-help workshops, and networking opportunities. African American parents reported that they were more interested (M = 4.07, SD = .68) in these types of activities than their Non-African American counterparts (M = 3.80, SD = .70). With respect to the Contact subscale, African American parents reported initiating and receiving phone contact with the teacher more often (M = 1.57, SD = .79) than Non-African American parents (M = 1.38, SD = .59).

Parent perceptions were compared by race as well as by school type (Title I and Non-Title I). Independent Sample T-tests revealed no statistical significance by race or school type in the areas of Teacher Comfort, Confidence in School/Staff, Physical School Presence, or Communication (written). In these categories, parent views of their parent involvement were essentially the same. Only in the areas of Home(t(391) = -2.88, p<.01) and Interest (t(392) = -4.58 p<.01,) for Non-Title I parents and Interest (t(299) = -2.95, p<.01 ) and Contact (t(299) = -2.67, p<.01) for Title I parents did statistical significance occur.

It is interesting to note that in all of the areas that statistical significance was found, African American parents’ self-report of means were statistically higher than their Non-African American counterparts. More importantly, the fact that there was not any statistical significance between five out of seven of the subscales may indicate a departure from previous findings in parent opinions that is not race specific. Essentially, within the subscales that accounted for the majority of the cumulative variance, parents
desired the same things from schools regardless of race or school type. Therefore, SES does not impact parents’ desire to be involved, although it is evident from the barriers reported, that SES may impact some parents ability to be more involved. More testing would be needed with larger parent pools in order to see if this pattern holds, but according to the data collected in this survey, the possibility exists.

Further statistical analysis probed for correlations between parent involvement perceptions and student achievement. When the correlation was done for all parents, a statistically significant correlation was found between communication and student achievement \( (r = .15, p < .01) \). When the correlation was then done by race and school type, only one statistical significant correlation was found for Title I Non-African American parents and that was between Contact and student achievement \( (r = .23; p < .05) \). This signals the importance of communication in various forms with respect to student achievement. Although no other correlations were noted, several inter-correlations occurred. Notably, Teacher Comfort was related to every subscale at the \( p < .01 \) level for Title I African American Parents [Confidence \( (r = .32, p < .01) \); Presence \( (r = .33, p < .01) \); Communication \( (r = .20, p < .01) \); Home \( (r = .23, p < .01) \); Interest \( (r = .16, p < .05) \); Contact \( (r = .18, p < .01) \)] and all but one of the subscales [Confidence \( (r = .29, p < .01) \); Presence \( (r = .24, p < .01) \); Communication \( (r = .17, p < .05) \); Home \( (r = .23, p < .01) \); Interest \( (r = .20, p < .01) \)] for African American Non-Title I parents. This signaled a strong effect that the teacher has on parent involvement.

Other inter-correlations were also found in the areas of Confidence, Physical Presence, Communication, Home, and Interest subscales at varying confidence levels. Essentially, the seven PIQ subscales represent research-based parent involvement practices. These correlations collectively illustrate that although a strong relationship
was not found between parent perceptions of their involvement in schools and student achievement, there is a possible relationship between these school practices and that could impact parent involvement. For example, if childcare is a concern, then the school could provide childcare on conference night; if language is a concern, then the school could provide interpreters; if transportation is a concern, then the school could provide off-site locations for conferences, etc.

Data displayed in Tables 11 and 12 represent parent perceptions of barriers and facilitators of their parent involvement. It was evident from parent responses to these open ended questions that they basically desired the same things regardless of school type and race. When the facilitators and barriers were analyzed, they fell into two categories: those personal factors that were able to be controlled by the parent and those school related factors that could be controlled by programming. The first category consists of those items that could be controlled by the parent (i.e., transportation, childcare, time, etc.) but often due family dynamics are not. It was interesting how this group of parents blamed themselves for lacking these personal factors that ultimately kept them from being involved. Ironically, these personal factors of the parents that are in effect barriers to their parent involvement can be influenced by the school in order to improve parent involvement.

The second category are those factors that could be controlled by the school (i.e., advanced notice of events, more/better communication, scheduling of meeting after 4 p.m., school related workshops, etc). These factors represent those things schools could change to support working families thereby encouraging parent involvement. Given that all of these groups (Title I and Non-Title I alike) reported “work” as a major barrier to their involvement, schools should rethink the traditional schedule of service delivery, so
that it is more responsive to the needs of the parents and students it serves. It is the school’s responsibility to assess parent needs, address them through scheduling/programming, and then communicate the changes in a way that all parents have the opportunity to be actively involved in non-traditional ways. For example due to work and time constraints, Title I parents reported at a higher percentage rate the need for “more/better communication,” “scheduling of events,” as well as “advanced notice of meetings” in order to be more involved. If schools would make a concerted effort to work collaboratively with this particular group of parents to develop a “year at a glance” school calendar, parents could schedule conferences and school programs around their work schedules.

When data were calculated individually by school, one last pattern emerged. Parent responses, although still leaning towards the mean, were unique to each school. This was especially evident when analyzing the free response questions on barriers and facilitators. This indicates a need for schools to assess ever-changing and evolving parent needs. As populations change, so do the compositions of schools. Therefore, no two schools are alike and parent involvement initiatives should not be “one size fits all.”

This study serves to show that sometimes in finding no significant relationships, researchers inadvertently reveal data that represents opportunities for further research. In this case, traditionally held parent perceptions by race and Title I status may be shifting towards the center—demonstrating that all parents desire not only to be involved, but also desire the same things for their children. Therefore, it behooves schools to assess, adjust, and embrace the families their schools serve in an effort to enhance parent involvement thereby indirectly impacting student achievement.
Recommendations for Schools

Although a relationship between parent involvement and student achievement was not found between the instruments that were chosen in this study, historical research compiled in the literature review offers a large body of data that substantiates a strong positive correlation between the two variables. This study does, however, support existing historical findings as well as offers some suggestions for schools to consider in order better address the needs of their parents and thereby increase parent involvement. These suggestions include completing an annual parent needs assessment, being responsive to those parent needs, and expanding the definition of parent involvement in an effort to encourage schools to develop a comprehensive parent involvement initiative.

Annual Parent Needs Assessment

From the data collected in this study, several aspects of parent involvement became evident. First of all, schools are as unique as a fingerprint. After disaggregating the data by school, the barriers and facilitators of parent involvement varied by school more so than by school type. Each population reported distinctive wants and needs specific to the parents and their school environment. For example, a Title I school located in a high crime neighborhood reported “safety” as a barrier to their involvement. This school also had a high population of Hispanic students and additionally was the only school to report “language” as a barrier along with a need for an interpreter as a “facilitator” of parent involvement. For this reason, an internal audit in the form of a school climate survey coupled with an external audit in the form of a parent involvement questionnaire (similar to the one used in this study) is recommended to help schools better assess their strengths and weaknesses with respect to school community relationships. Research shows that effective parent involvement programs are responsive
to the school population and seeks to address the individual and unique needs of the students, parents, and community (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Zelazo, 1995; Starkey & Klein, 2000).

If there is a concern about cost and time, schools should then consider surveying one grade level of parents annually to assess parent needs, thus performing an external audit. By analyzing data collected from parent surveys, schools will be able to position themselves to be more responsive to their parents. For this reason, it is important for schools to first build strong relationships and then seek to cultivate partnerships (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Payne & Kaba, 2001). This way schools can determine the school related factors that they have control over in order to help parents be more involved.

Adjusting School Practices to Meet Parent Needs

Once the data are collected through a parent survey, the data should be analyzed in an effort to address parent needs. For example, many of the parents reported that both parents worked or that they were single parents. This finding would behoove schools to be more cognizant of the "time" factor. Schools should heed the suggestions parents made with respect to scheduling of events, advance notice of events, along with more and better communication. If schools would be more responsive to parents' needs, then parents might be more inclined to be involved.

It is important to note that the school district surveyed was in the process of addressing the contact and communication concerns. They were implementing an online grade check program on the elementary and secondary levels. In the middle schools, they had begun to implement a bi-weekly core progress report, and at the elementary level, Title I schools had full-time parent coordinators.
Other things that schools could consider to help working parents feel more connected are weekly newsletters from the teachers reminding parents of upcoming assignments, weekly/monthly newsletters from school administration reminding parents of events, an annual calendar of events by grade level so parents can arrange their schedules in advance along with scheduling meetings at convenient times for parents to attend. Research shows that increased and frequent parent contact positively impacts parent involvement, especially among minorities (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999; Westat, 2001; Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, 1993; Maron, 1999; Miedel & Reynolds, 1999; Hara & Burke, 1998; Quigley, 2000; West, 2000, Simmons, Stevenson & Strnad, 1993). By performing an annual parent needs assessment, schools can be more responsive to parent needs and build lasting relationships in the process.

*Expanding the Definition of Parent Involvement.*

Because the traditional family structure has changed, previous research suggests that the traditional definition of parent involvement must also change. Parents in this study reported overwhelmingly that the main barrier to their involvement was work. This was regardless of marital status, race or SES. For this reason, this study supports the accepting of Epstein’s (1993) six types of parent involvement that expands the traditional definition to include parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at-home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. This could include such things as school supplies, appropriate bedtimes, attendance, home activities, and student preparedness for school along with valuing parents. By doing this, previous research has shown that parents felt more actively involved at home and student achievement was positively impacted (Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1993, Catsambis, 1998; Ho Sui-chu & Willms, 1996; Marcon, 1999; Pena, 2000).
A problem is that neither schools nor parents have embraced this expanded definition. They still limit their definition of acceptable parent involvement to attending school activities and completing homework assignments. It was evident from the responses recorded in this study that parents blame themselves for not being involved rather than the school. The parents were very much aware of their personal limitations, but were not aware of the options available to them to be involved from home. Therefore, it behooves schools to find ways to involve all parents—not just the ones that are active in the PTA. By creating ways for parents to be actively involved in schools, research shows that parents feel empowered and are more inclined to take part in decision-making, serving on committees, volunteering at school, attending events and checking student homework (Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Epstein, Clark, Salinas, & Sanders, 1993).

Fourteen percent of the parents surveyed in this study reported that they would welcome opportunities to be involved from home. It has been found that if at school practices are coupled with at-home practices, then other desired student outcomes like behavior, attendance and self-esteem can be indirectly improved along with achievement (Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Catsambis, 1998). Just by generating and publishing a list of activities that parents could do from home, schools could help parents feel more valued and involved thus improving their school comfort level. Therefore, expanding the traditional definition of parent involvement could help expand parent involvement for non-traditional families.

All of these suggestions represent the components of an effective comprehensive parent involvement program. An “integrated ecological approach” that promotes policies and institutional attitudes, which are responsive to the school community it serves, (Comer & Haynes, 1991; Zelazo, 1995; Starkey & Klein, 2000) is key to any parent
involvement initiative’s success. Garnering buy-in by the staff as well as by the parents is essential. One way to do this is by using the staff to help collaboratively develop a succinct way of communicating the importance of improving parent involvement. A comprehensive parent involvement program involves the entire staff - from the custodian, to the secretary, to the teacher, to the principal. By everyone working together to achieve the same end, very positive outcomes can be achieved.

One Title I school in this survey that was located in a high crime neighborhood had the best school climate. The custodian was fluent in Spanish and greeted parents and students alike by name in their native language with a smile. The school was bright and cheery—filled with student art, color, and light. The school was immaculate. The floors were shining like it was the first day of school. The secretaries smiled with ease and although the principal was not there, everyone was helpful and willing to oblige. This was the same school that reported language as a barrier, requested an interpreter as a facilitator, and safety was a major concern. Of all the Title I schools surveyed, this school had the highest reading/math pass rate for African American students at 92.5%; the second highest for Non-African American students at 97.5%. There is something to be learned from this school. The example set by this school demonstrates that schools can mitigate personal parent barriers that impact parent involvement and student achievement.

Implications for Further Research

Webster’s defines a generation as being “a group of individuals born and living at the same time; the average length of time between the birth of parents and that of their offspring.” Generations have passed since the Civil Rights Movement and segregated schools. For the parents that were surveyed, it is only a topic in the history books. The
vast majority of them have not known segregated schools or been directly involved in
civil rights activities, therefore they have not directly experienced some of the negative
emotions associated with segregation or even with the early days of integration. The
farther they are removed generationally from the experience, the less it impacts their
perceptions. This may serve to explain the difference between the research found in the
literature review and the data collected in this study.

Given the recent election of Barack Obama, an African American, to the office of
President of the United States, it would stand to reason, that our nation’s social
consciousness may have shifted. It also may signal a further graying of the Black-White
divide at least among parents. Although there may still be some areas where ethnicity
colors opinions and covert racism abounds, a cultural mind-shift is in the air. From the
data collected in this survey, African American parents’ responses were not statistically
different from their Non-African American counterparts with respect to what they wanted
and needed from schools to be involved. This too could be indicative only of this
particular parent data set, but it does warrant more research to see if a cultural shift in
African American parent perceptions is occurring.

While this study did not find any major differences between parent responses by
race, it is important to note that it only explored the two categories of African American
and Non-African American. Elementary schools are a melting pot of ethnicities.
Although in this case there was not a representative number of respondents from other
races, the views of this small group of parents is important in order to develop a
comprehensive parent engagement program. The opinions/perceptions all Non-African
American groups represents a missed opportunity in order to expand the base of
knowledge with respect to improving parent involvement practices and the impact that culture may have on student achievement.

The data collected in this study also alluded to external or environmental factors that were beyond the school’s control. This data was captured within the Presence, Home, and Contact subscales of the PIQ. These areas could be related to SES. Furthermore, within this data set there was not a significant difference found between the African American parent responses and Non-African American parent responses by Title I school distinction. It was also evident from the commonalities between parent responses concerning the facilitators and barriers to parent involvement by race and school type that their concerns could not be attributed solely to ethnicity, but rather some of them could be attributed to SES. For example, Title I parents reported a higher need for better communication, more convenient scheduling of events, and transportation. They were also more likely to give “compound” reasons as to why they were not involved. Coupled with the demographics, it is possible that in some cases, a lack of resources and/or non-traditional family dynamics may negatively impact parent participation. Moreover, this may signal a change in the school environment, where African American parent involvement in the past had been race sensitive, may now be more impacted by other external environmental factors.

Out of the seven subscales, four represent internal school factors. These include the subscales that involve parent comfort with the teacher, parent confidence in the school/staff, written communication between the parent and the school along with parent interest in afterschool programs. With strong statistically significant inter-correlations being found between the subscales of the parent involvement scale regardless of school type, the data collected support the possibility that some school factors may have a
stronger impact on parent involvement. This would suggest that when parents are comfortable with the teacher; when they have confidence in the school/staff; when they have frequent contact/communications, and when the school provides activities of interest; then parents are more likely to be involved. To further support these findings, when parents reported their facilitators and barriers, it was apparent that many of their responses referred collectively to school factors that could be controlled by administrative programming (i.e., meetings after 4 p.m., more communication, after school programs, etc.). This would suggest that schools have the power to enhance parent perceptions of their involvement just by assessing and then addressing their shared needs.

Final Thoughts

The results of this study suggest that regardless of race and school type, all parents want to be involved. If schools would be proactive about communicating the expanded definition of parent involvement, assessing parents’ needs and then developing an individualized parent involvement plan to meet those needs, the reported barriers to parent involvement could be minimized. By creating a symbiotic relationship between parents, teachers, and students alike, schools can collaboratively develop meaningful changes to school programs that would serve to enhance parent participation and thereby potentially improve the home-school connection.
Appendix A - Fast Track PIQ
Parent and Teacher Involvement Questionnaire

Do you have the skills and tools needed to succeed? Have you ever used a computer? Would you like to learn more about computers?

Please check the box that best describes your situation.

- I have never used a computer.
- I have used a computer but need help with specific tasks.
- I am comfortable using a computer and would like to learn new skills.

Please indicate your level of involvement in your child's education.

- I am actively involved in my child's education.
- I am interested in becoming more involved.
- I would like to learn more about how I can support my child's learning at home.

Please provide any additional comments or suggestions:

[Space for comments]
Appendix B – Modified PIQ
# Parent and Teacher Involvement Survey

**Directions:** The following are statements about your school. Please circle the number to indicate how often each occurs from Never (1) to More than once a week (5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Once or Twice</th>
<th>Every Month</th>
<th>Every Week</th>
<th>More than Once a Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This school year, you have called your child's teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. This school year, your child's teacher has called you</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. This school year, you have written your child's teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. This school year, your teacher has written you</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. This school year, you stopped by to talk to your child's teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. This school year, you have been invited in your child's school for a special event (such as a book fair).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. This school year, you have visited your child's school for a special event (such as a book fair).</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. This school year, you have been invited to attend a parent-teacher conference.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. This school year, you have attended a parent-teacher conference</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. This school year, you have attended PTA meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Directions:** Please circle the number to indicate the extent to which each occurs, from Not at all (1) A Little (2) Some (3) A Lot (4) A Great Deal (5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A Lot</th>
<th>A Great Deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. You feel welcome to visit your child's school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. You enjoy talking with your child's teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. You feel your child's teacher cares about your child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. You think your child's teacher is interested in getting to know you</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. You feel comfortable talking with your child's teacher about your child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>You feel your child's teacher pays attention to your suggestions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>You ask your child's teacher questions or make suggestions about your child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>You send things to class like story books and other things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>You read to your child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>You take your child to the library</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>You play games at home with your child to teach him/her new things</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>You volunteer at your child's school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Directions:** The following are statements about your school. Please **circle** the number that reflects your opinion, if you Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (5).

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Your child's school is a good place for your child to be</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>The staff at your child's school is doing good things for your child</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>You have confidence in the people at your child's school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Your child's school is doing a good job of preparing children for their future</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I would attend workshops on how to help my child with homework</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I would be interested in networking with other parents</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I would welcome a newsletter from my child's teacher about what my child is learning each marking period</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. I would allow my child to stay after-school for extra help
   1  2  3  4  5

31. I prefer parent conferences to begin after 4:00 p.m. in stead of earlier in the day
   1  2  3  4  5

32. I would attend conferences if they were held in my neighborhood
   1  2  3  4  5

Your comments . . . We welcome your suggestions.

Directions: The following questions concern your opinions about your involvement at your child’s school. Please help us learn more by responding freely.

33. What keeps you from becoming more involved in your child’s school?

34. What could the school do to help you become more involved?

35. How many children do you have currently attending this school?
   _1  _2  _3  _4  _5 or More

36. How many years have you had a child attending this school?
   _1  _2  _3  _4  _5 or More

37. Marital Status
   _Single
   _Married
   _Divorced

38. Ethnicity
   _African
   _Asian
   _Caucasian
   _Hispanic
   _Other

39. Education
   _Some High School
   _High School Diploma/GED
   _Some College or Trade School
   _Associate’s Degree
   _Bachelor’s Degree
   _Post Bachelor’s Degree
   _Other

Thank you for your time!
Appendix C – Parent Letter
Dear Parent or Guardian;

Hello, my name is Melody Camm and I am a doctoral student at the College of William & Mary. As part of my research project, your school district has given me permission to survey your opinions concerning parent involvement practices at your child's school.

In order to capture your opinions, I personally, need your help. Please take a few minutes to answer the enclosed survey. As a token of my appreciation, enjoy a cup of tea while you fill it out.

Additionally, your child will receive a treat just for returning your completed survey. For every class that has 100% class participation, their teacher's name will be placed in a drawing to receive a Pizza Party.

Please be mindful that your participation today is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime. Be assured that your responses are completely anonymous and will be held in the strictest of confidence. To report any dissatisfaction with the study, please contact the project advisor, Dr. Michael DiPaola (757-221-2344, mfdipa@wm.edu) or the Chair of the W&M Human Subjects Committee, Dr. Michael Reddenes (757-221-2778, mrdes@wm.edu).

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete the short survey. I look forward to sharing your opinions with NNPS.

Sincerely yours,

Melody L. Camm
Appendix D – Introductory Teacher Letter
Dear Fourth Grade Teachers,

My name is Melody Camm and I am a doctoral student at the College of William and Mary. Thank you for agreeing to distribute and collect my parent survey packets. For my dissertation, I have chosen to survey fourth grade parents concerning their perception of school involvement. In order for my study to be a success, I need your help. For your time and trouble, please accept this small token of my appreciation. Hopefully, it will serve to quench your thirst on one of those long school days.

In the packets that students will take home is a 40 question Likert-type survey. I have also included a golf pencil, an introductory parent letter, and a tea bag. It should not take parents over 20 minutes to complete the survey and it is my hope that the incentives will help boost return rates.

In your teacher packet you will find the exact number of healthy treats you will need as incentives for your students upon returning the completed survey. As an added incentive, classes that have 100% participation will have their teacher’s name placed in a drawing for a pizza party at the end of the quarter. There will be three pizza parties awarded.

Truly, this survey process is not supposed to take away valuable instructional time. Please try and squeeze in the distribution and collection of surveys during your morning unpacking and attendance administration time. Feel free to determine just when your students are allowed to eat their Fruit Rollup, so that this incentive is not a distraction/disruption to your academic routine.

Monday, October 13, 2008, is the day when all ten of my elementary schools are scheduled to send the surveys home with students. In true Dr. Harry Wong fashion, each of the student envelopes is numbered. All I ask is that on Monday, October 13th, you pass out the packets in alphabetical order. This way, you will at a moment’s glance know who has not returned their survey.

After this initial distribution on Monday, please take 2 minutes Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday to collect, reward, and then remind students to turn in surveys. Please hold onto your returned surveys until Friday, October 17th. Then bundle the returned envelopes with a rubber band and turn in the bundle to a box in the office. I will collect the surveys on Monday, October 20th. Please feel free to keep the leftover Fruit Rollups for your class incentive box.

Thank you again for consenting to distribute and collect my parent surveys. I am eternally grateful for your help and support. Please be sure to have a “Coke and a smile” on me.

Sincerely yours,
Melody L. Camm
W&M Doctoral Student
Appendix E – Kid Friendly Teacher Script
Good Morning Boys and Girls,
My name is Mrs. Camm and I am a student at the College of William and Mary. I need your help in order to complete my homework assignment. My assignment is to survey your parents to find out what they think about your school.

Your teacher is going to give each of you an envelope to give to your parents. In side this envelope is a pencil, a letter with a surprise, and the parent survey. Just for bringing the survey back completed you will receive a surprise as well. If everyone brings back their survey, your class will be placed in a drawing for a pizza party to celebrate the end of the first marking period. The last day to turn in surveys is Friday, October 17th.

Thank you for your help with my homework assignment. I hope you enjoy the treats.

Sincerely yours,
Your friend,
Mrs. Camm

WE DID IT!!!

(Teacher’s Name) class
at Elementary School
had 100% of our surveys returned.

Please place this form in the drawing for the pizza Party.
Appendix F – Detailed Rotated Factor Analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROTATED FACTOR ANALYSIS BY QUESTION</th>
<th>TEACHER</th>
<th>CONFIDENCE</th>
<th>PRESENCE</th>
<th>COMM</th>
<th>HOME</th>
<th>INTEREST</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You feel comfortable talking with your child's teacher about your child</td>
<td>.859</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You feel your child's teacher cares about your child</td>
<td>.843</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You enjoy talking with your child's teacher</td>
<td>.829</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You feel your child's teacher pays attention to your suggestion</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You think your child's teacher is interested in getting to know you</td>
<td>.794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You feel welcome to visit your child's school</td>
<td>.569</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>You ask your child's teacher questions or make suggestions about your child</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The staff at your child's school is doing good things for your child</td>
<td></td>
<td>.872</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Your child's school is doing a good job of preparing children for their future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.859</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have confidence in the people at your child's school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.855</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your child's school is a good place for your child to be</td>
<td>.834</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would welcome a newsletter from my child's teacher about what my child is learning each marking period</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, you have visited your child's school for a special event (such as a book fair).</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, you have attended PTA meetings</td>
<td>.720</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You volunteer at your child's school</td>
<td>.641</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, you have been invited in your child's school for a special event (such as book fair).</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, you stopped by to talk to your child's teacher</td>
<td>.582</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, you have been invited to attend a parent-teacher conference</td>
<td>.341</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You send things to class like story books and other things</td>
<td>.340</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>This school year, your teacher has written you</td>
<td>.816</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, you have written your child’s teacher</td>
<td>.805</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, you have attended a parent-teacher conference</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You play games at home with your child to teach him/her new things</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You read to your child</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You take your child to the library</td>
<td>.674</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would attend workshops on how to help my child with homework</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be interested in networking with other parents</td>
<td>.797</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would allow my child to stay after-school for extra help</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, your child’s teacher called you</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>This school year, you have called your child’s teacher</td>
<td>.798</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
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