Parental Involvement in Eighth Grade: Administrator, Teacher, and Parent Attitudes and Perceptions

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctor of Education in Leadership and Management.

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Abstract

Parent involvement is considered a vital educational factor to a child’s educational endeavors. The level of parental involvement changes over the course of a child's educational journey. The issue regarding lack of parental involvement is more apparent in upper-grade levels at schools in low socioeconomic communities. This qualitative case study examined the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents about parental involvement in eighth grade at a Title 1 school. Through the lenses of Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement and the Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model, the study analyzes how the parental involvement is conceptually different among all stakeholders and the importance of school, parent, and community partnerships to improve parental involvement.

There were nine themes identified in this study: 1) Definition of Parental Involvement, 2) Stakeholder Expectations, 3) Level of Parental Involvement, 4) School Activities, 5) Benefits of Parental Involvement, 6) Importance of Parental Involvement in Middle School, 7) Race/Socioeconomic Status Effects, 8) Relationships and 9) Suggestions to School. Findings obtained from the in-depth one-on-one interviews allowed the ten participants to provide their views and experiences with more detailed responses in a private setting. The accounts of administrators, teachers, and African American parents provide insight on the conceptualization of what parent involvement means to them and suggestions to improve the level of involvement in eighth grade.

Keywords: African American parents, Middle school parental involvement, Parent Involvement, Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model, Attitudes, Perceptions
Acknowledgments

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord,

“My refuge and my fortress; my God in whom I trust.” -Psalm 91:1-2

First, thank you God for Your protection, grace, strength, and guidance to make it through this journey. Thank you for the mind to go after this dream and the wisdom to acquire it. I've learned so much about myself during this season of my life. There were times of frustration and doubt, but Your Spirit sustained me. I know without a doubt that You continually hold me in Your hands. My ups and downs, good and bad have both made me a stronger woman for my future. I am very excited to enter my next season.

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair Dr. Czelusniak, who continually supported me and encouraged me when I wanted to take a break. He motivated me to be consistent and make it to the finish line. Without his guidance and persistent help, this dissertation would not have been possible. Thank you for your dedication to this process. I appreciated our video conferences, phone calls, text messages, and emails. You were always prompt with responding to my many questions and queries. Finishing this work would have been all the more difficult were it not for your support. I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Gentles and Dr. DiGiacomo, who provided feedback and added support during this process.

Without a community of loving individuals around me, it would have been harder to maintain balance and focus beyond the darker moments. That community of individuals is abundant for me. Thank you, Mom, for birthing me into this world. The selfless love you deliver is indescribable. Thank you, Aunt Linda, for the phone calls, text messages, prayers, and encouragement. Thank you, Uncle Alvin, for helping me dream
and stick to pursuing every goal I set for myself since I was young. You're my biggest cheerleader! I owe the most profound gratitude to Mrs. Carolyn Smith for her friendship when God knew I needed it most. You showed up in my life when I didn’t realize this friendship was necessary for my mental and spiritual well-being. I appreciate you for praying for me and with me. You encouraged me to keep going, celebrated my milestones, motivated me to want more, and reminded me of God's faithfulness! I love you and I’m blessed to call you friend.

I appreciate my family and close friends for understanding my absences at times spent focusing on my studies. It was hard to express myself and tell you everything I was experiencing during this process. However, I felt your prayers. Thank you for the freedom to be me and grow. I am grateful to my church family, co-workers, and students for the enthusiasm shown to me and their encouragement to stay on course.

The completion of this undertaking could not have been possible without those that directly or indirectly played a role during my doctoral journey. I especially thank those that kept asking "When will you be finished?" That both frustrated and motivated me to get finished. It took hours of counseling, prayer, and alone time to get it done. For it all, I am grateful!
Dedication

This study is dedicated to the people in pursuit of more. It is dedicated to those that push themselves beyond their personal strengths and areas of weakness. I committed myself to pursue these educational goals and completing this dissertation because of my ancestors and family that are no longer here.

To my circle of influence and those that watched me finish, this is for you. Part of me finished because of those that watched me from afar. This is for those that were waiting for me to be a testimony for them and those that are still in the race. It is my turn to push you into your greater. With the successful completion of this dissertation, I now have the opportunity to pull those up that need me. It is my pleasure to assist the individuals that don’t have personal cheerleaders or a support system. It is my prayer that I can now take this knowledge and skills to improve the field of education. I look forward to impacting the lives of children, adolescents, adults, colleagues, and other influential people.

To my grandparents, Dorothy Williams, Dorothy and Johnnie Laster, who implanted history in me and taught me about God. They gave me a sense of belonging and instilled hope in me. Their ability to persevere as African Americans in a hostile world, motivated me to pursue greater and do more in life. Additionally, they always had faith in me and displayed unconditional love to me. I wish they were here to share in my accomplishments and see my pursuit of happiness in making their dreams come true as well. Their lives helped me appreciate education as the vehicle giving my dreams momentum. It is because of them that I kept pushing in those tough times during this doctoral adventure. I am forever grateful to them for believing in this “little black girl”.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing concern about the quality of education in many schools in the United States (Munn, 2018). School districts have many legal responsibilities and must follow state and federal laws as it pertains to providing a quality education for all learners (Finch, 2010; Goellar, 2017; Sell, 2017). School leaders are expected to create learning environments that support student learning through active parental involvement (Sheninger and Murray, 2017; Tran, 2014). Partnerships between schools and parents have shown to promote student achievement (Barr and Saltmarsh, 2014; Fullan, 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Perkins et al., 2016). Dotterer and Wehrspann (2016) concluded that there is a significant concern about the minimum parental involvement of students within the upper-grade levels. As children enter their adolescent years, parental involvement tends to decline at the middle school level (Carpenter et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2007; Wang and Sheikh-Khalil, 2014; Weiss & McGuinn, 2016; Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey, 2013).

As an experienced middle school educator, the poorly attended open house events and little or no teacher contact initiated by parents throughout the school year are evidence of low parental involvement. There could be multiple reasons for the lack of parental support and attendance at these and other school functions. The minimum involvement of African American parents may be due to their lack of knowledge in
becoming active at their child’s school to assist school leaders with building school culture (Wang and Eccles, 2012; Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). Some parents need guidance on how they can assist in creating a collaborative learning environment with their children through parental support (Kim and Chin, 2015).

This study examined the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade. The goal of the study is to fill a gap in literature where there is little known about the attitudes and perceptions of the African American parents’ ability or knowledge of requirements to get involved during their child’s adolescent years in middle school (Austin, and Growe, 2013; Greene, 2013; Dotterer and Wehrspann, 2016; Jackson et al., 2015). Further research needs to be done regarding sociodemographic factors that may result in the decline of school-home partnerships at the middle school level (Abell, 2014; Bellibas and Gumus, 2013; Evans and Radina, 2014). The guiding research question for this study is: What are the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade? This research could expose themes that may identify strategies administrators and teachers can implement within their schools to engage African American parents and improve parental involvement (Dotterer and Wehrspann, 2016; Goodall and Montgomery, 2013; Ho and Kwong, 2013).

The specific problem is the decrease of parental involvement once students leave primary school and enter their middle school years (Kim and Chin, 2015; Kocygit, 2015; Roland, 2012; Yoder and Lopez, 2013). The problem is more apparent in the low socioeconomic communities and has been shown to affect the achievement levels of those students (Abrams and Gibbs, 2002; Ankrum, 2016; Epstein, 1995; Evans and
Radina, 2014; Sun and Li, 2011; Lareau, 2000; O’Connor, 2001; Yoder and Lopez; 2013). This decline also affects the school-home partnerships and lack of support from the local community (Sui-Chu and Willms, 1996; Henderson et al., 2007; Kim and Chin, 2015). This study extended prior research on the topic by outlining the administrators’, teachers’, and African American parents’ attitudes and perceptions of collaboration among schools and parent. It provides African American parents with a greater understanding of the type of parental involvement needs in middle school; discredit the misconception that parents do not desire to be involved; highlight the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade.

This study used a qualitative case study to collect the attitudes and perceptions of principals, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade. This study took place at a Title 1 PK-8 school in South Florida. An interview guide was utilized to gather information from the principals and teachers to examine their attitudes and perceptions about the parental involvement and analyze findings. To triangulate the data, the researcher reviewed the Code Book for Student Conduct as a documented artifact and a demographic survey to gather other aspects of the participants that may relate to the level of involvement (Taylor, Bogden, and DeVault, 2015). Participants were required to complete an online survey as part of the interview session to provide sociodemographic information and answer more in-depth questions about the phenomenon if any arose during the interview. In this study, purposive sampling was employed and participants were intentionally selected based on their knowledge and experience of the case study phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Plano, 2011; Etikan,
Participants consisted of middle school administrators with at least one full academic year of experience, eighth-grade teachers with at least one year of experience teaching any subject or content area, and African American parents with a child in eighth grade that is recommended by the eighth-grade teacher.

The sociodemographic information for all participants were identified at the time of the interviews. This data provides a greater understanding of how sociodemographic correlates and influences the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents. This information is critical for understanding how to encourage parental involvement of African American parents who have a child in at the eighth grade.

The first chapter includes the background, context, theoretical framework, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, rational, relevance, significance of the study, the nature of the study, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations. The conceptual basis of this study focused on parental self-efficacy, parent perception, and parental involvement models to explore how connections with administrators and teachers can increase family-school partnerships.

**Background, Context, and Theoretical Framework**

Local school districts must implement parental involvement policies as mandated by the federal government. These policies can be linked to school improvement plans and school improvement grants. Title I, Part A funding to those local school districts and individual schools make them accountable for developing a written school parental involvement policy to comply with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines (Cowan &
Edwards, 2003; United States Department of Education, 2015). The parental involvement policy must be developed jointly with parents of children participating in Title I, Part A services. The NCLB guidelines require schools to continuously seek ways to involve parents and members of the community in educating students. Administrators are responsible for developing a Parental Involvement Plan that promotes parent engagement and student achievement.

Throughout time education has gone thru many changes. Students whose parents engage in home-school activities have shown statistically significant academic gains (Gonida and Cortina, 2014; Jeynes, 2011). The NCLB guidelines mandated by the federal government seek to establish parental involvement plans that promote parent participation in the educational process. NCLB states explicitly each school must have a school-parent compact that shall:

(1) describe that school’s responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and productive learning environment that enables the children served under this part to meet the State’s student academic achievement standards and how each parent will be responsible for supporting their children’s learning; and

(2) address the importance of communication between teachers and parents on an ongoing basis through, at a minimum

(A) parent-teacher conferences in elementary schools, at least annually, during which the discussion includes the individual child’s achievement;

(B) frequent reports to parents on their child’s progress; and
reasonable access to staff, opportunities to volunteer and participate in their child’s class, and observation of classroom activities (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Parent involvement may decrease at the middle school level due to parents lacking the educational background or knowledge to assist the child with new content and skills in middle school versus that learned in elementary.

The majority of research conducted with young children and their families (Robinson & Harris, 2015). Parental expectations affect student academic achievement and school-family behaviors affect learning outcomes (Munn, 2018). According to Wang et al. (2014), students that are transitioning from elementary to middle and high schools can experience a decline in the areas of academic performance, motivation, and have an increase in negative behavior. These students can also display a decline in academics (Wang et al., 2014). Wang et al. noted a decline in parental involvement between elementary and secondary grade levels. Wang et al. suggested this can be due to parents renegotiating their roles within the monitoring process. As it relates to parental involvement, Wang et al. determined African American parents tend to monitor teachers rather than connect with them. According to Malone (2015), African American parents experience cultural influence challenges that affect individual’s attitudes and beliefs when it comes to parental involvement.

The theoretical framework of this study derived from Epstein’s (1995, 2001) six types of parental involvement, Grolnick and Slowiaczek’s (1994) multidimensional model, and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) theoretical model of the parental involvement process. These researchers articulated how parents play an essential role in
their child’s development and education. Epstein’s (1995) six types of parental involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. This combination of parental involvement is a framework for successful parenting. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) presented a three-dimensional parental involvement model--behavioral involvement, personal involvement, and cognitive/intellectual involvement--that affects the schooling and motivation of a child. Behavioral involvement relates to parents’ actions and interest outside of a regular school day. Personal involvement demonstrates the parent's positive attitude about the school and education of their child. Cognitive and intellectual involvement requires parents to help children develop their academic knowledge and intellectual skills. Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994) proposed in their multidimensional model that parental interactions affect student motivation, competence, and belief of control. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997) theorized a multidimensional concept includes academic, social, and emotional learning of students that motivates parental involvement. These theories are explained further in the literature review.

A qualitative case study was used to collect the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade. An interview guide was prepared for the administrators, teachers, and African American parents to examine their views about parental involvement in eighth grade. During the interviews, participants were asked previously prepared questions. The study was limited to one school in South Florida and focused only on the eighth grade. The study consisted of 10 participants, which included administrators, teachers, and African
American parents that were interviewed to identify the position, understanding, and interpretation of parental involvement in eighth grade.

**Statement of the Problem**

This study addressed a problem that little research exists to understand administrators’, teachers’, and African American parents’ perceptions of parent involvement. The study explored how African American parents formulate their attitudes and perceptions about parental involvement. The problem is a concern at the middle school level where parental involvement is lower compared to the elementary level (Juvonen and Rand, 2004; Rolland, 2012). The specific problem reviewed is the lack of parental involvement once students leave elementary school and enter their middle school years (El Nokali et al., 2010; Kim and Chin, 2015; Rolland, 2012). The problem is more apparent in the low socioeconomic communities and has been shown to affect the achievement levels of some students (Bellibas, 2013; Greene, 2013; Williams and Sanchez, 2013). Although this is an issue for the low-income communities, parental involvement can affect any student regardless of socioeconomic status (Jackson et al., 2015; Williams and Sanchez, 2013; Yoder and Lopez, 2013).

Administrative leadership and educational support may increase parental involvement by providing support to the overall school vision for improving student achievement and building home-school relationships. This study sought to understand how perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents can be a factor that fosters parent-school partnerships at the middle school level to encourage parental involvement. There is a gap in the literature regarding the parental involvement of African American
parents of children in the eighth grade. Other research has shown that focusing on one variable can provide insight into different groups of individuals (Creswell, 2014). Local districts have a responsibility to increase student achievement and implement parental involvement policies. Researchers demonstrated that parental involvement benefits children’s social and emotional development (El Nokali et al., 2010; Fox & Olsen, 2014).

The specific problem is at the secondary-level (i.e., middle school) where parental involvement is lower than at the primary grade levels (i.e., elementary) (El Nokali et al., 2010; Kim and Chin, 2012; Wang and Eccles, 2012). The purpose of the qualitative case study is to determine the factors that influence African American parents’ involvement in their child’s middle school experiences. Research has long documented a healthy relationship between family background factors, such as income and parents’ educational levels, and student achievement (Booth and Dunn, 2013; Eshetu, 2015; Greene, 2013; Jackson et al., 2015). Studies have shown that parents can play an important role in supporting their children’s academic achievement at any educational level (Young et al., 2010; Wilder, 2014). Parental involvement influenced by effective school leadership and educational support can assist schools in fulfilling the Title 1, Part A requirement mandated by the government (Evans and Radina, 2014; Fox and Olsen, 2014; Fullan, 2011).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in an eighth grade located in South Florida. The qualitative case study offers administrators and teachers with an understanding of how to get African American
parents engaged at the small Title 1 PK-8 school in South Florida. Interview guides were utilized in the study to gather information from the administrators, teachers, and African American parents. All participant groups, administrators, teachers, and parents, had a different set of questions in the protocol. Research has long documented a strong relationship between family background factors, such as income, and the parents’ educational levels (Greene, 2013; Jackson et al., 2015). Studies have shown that parents can play an important role in supporting their children’s academic achievement (Wilder, 2014).

Parental involvement is explored in the literature from the school’s perspective, but few empirical studies were conducted that explore parental involvement from the perspective of African American parents. The results of this study will provide insight into the perspective of administrators, teachers, and African American parents about parental involvement in eighth grade. The findings will allow exploration of strategies that can be used to increase African American parental involvement in their children’s educational experiences.

The qualitative case study was triangulated through the use of interviews with open-ended questions, a survey, and field notes to gain valid and reliable data (Bogan and Biklen, 2007). The data analysis is narrated and presented as a story with identified themes (Patton, 2015). The researcher discovered the administrators’, teachers’, and African American parents’ position, understanding, and interpretation of parental involvement. The study identified, compared, and analyzed the divergent perspectives of administrators, teachers, and African American parents.
Research Questions

The primary research question that guided this study was as follows: What are the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade? The primary research question steered the development of this study.

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance

Rationale

Researchers have well supported the benefit of parental involvement. However, many districts and schools continue to struggle with improving the home to school relationship. Parental involvement can affect students’ attendance in school, graduation rates, as well as their behavior at school (Goodall and Montgomery, 2013; Hornby, 2011). With the continued parental support, regardless of the age of the child, there can be a positive outcome in those challenged areas. Further research can improve the outcomes of involvement and assist African American parents with getting involved from the administrative level of the school (Barr and Saltmarsh, 2014).

Yin (2015) determined that the qualitative method can cover social and cultural forces that affect participants in the study. This study seeks to provide an understanding of the phenomenon guided by the research question (Stake, 1995, 2010). Leedy and Ormrod (2010) defined the case study as “a type of qualitative research in which in-depth data is gathered relative to a single individual or event” (p. 108). Yin (2009) suggested the qualitative design case study when researchers are seeking to answer how and why questions.
By using a qualitative case study, the researcher can identify themes and explore the phenomenon in its natural settings (Creswell, 2014; Esterberg, 2002; Malone, 2015; Yin, 2009). These themes and the multiple perspectives of attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents can provide pathways of encouraging parental involvement. Strategies can provide administrators with ways to enhance parental involvement in Title 1 schools. African American parents’ feedback during data collection provided schools with valuable insights to help build positive school-home relationships. Building and strengthening relationships with parents, administrators, and teachers can create a positive atmosphere that will encourage open communication among all stakeholders, such as principals, teachers, parents, and students.

According to Wang et al. (2014), students that are transitioning from elementary to middle and high schools can experience a decline in the areas of academic performance, motivation, and have an increase in negative behavior. Along with the decline in academics, Wang et al. also noted a decline in parental involvement between elementary and secondary grade levels. Wang et al. suggested this can be due to parents renegotiating their roles within the monitoring process. As it relates to parental involvement, Wang et al. determined African-American parents tend to monitor teachers rather than connect with them. According to Malone (2015), African Americans experience other cultural challenges that are not misunderstood by school leaders that could affect their attitudes and belief when it comes to parental involvement. The findings from this research will determine factors that will increase levels of engagement of African American parents.
Relevance

Researchers have found racial and ethnic disparities, concerning parental involvement in United States schools, where parental involvement is defined as a parent’s direct contact with a child’s school (Greene, 2014; Jackson et al.; 2015; Malone, 2015; Turney and Kao, 2009). Similarly, Jeynes (2011) and Lim (2012) stated that some schools reported a higher level of involvement from non-minority parents and significant differences between levels of minority and non-minority parental involvement. Hayes (2014) argued that, when exploring the phenomenon of African Americans parental involvement, the primary focus has been on underprivileged African-American and not across various income statuses.

Researchers have determined when children reach adolescence parental involvement tends to decline (Powell, File, and Froiland, 2012). The reasons given for the decline was argued by Metzger, Ice, and Cottrell (2012) as the relationship between parents and children and how both perceive parental monitoring. Parent involvement can also be affected by the age and gender of a child. According to Metzger et al. (2012), parental involvement occurs more frequently in younger children and girls than older children and boys. A more significant decline in parental involvement and parental monitoring indicated by Metzger et al. is most often noticed within single-parent homes, families with more than one sibling and low-income families. Despite the existence of literature focusing on parental involvement for students of different ethnic groups, there is limited research that identifies best practice that will support the parental involvement of African-American eighth-grade students.
Robbins and Searby (2013) stated middle schools possess an abundance of resources that can be used to encourage parental involvement. However, Robbins and Searby indicated that middle schools are only doing the minimum as it relates to engaging parents in their child’s education. The decline in parental involvement at the post-elementary level has become a concern for school administrators given the impact that parental involvement has on a child’s academic performance (Marshall and Jackman, 2015). When parents are involved with their children’s education during the elementary years, it mainly consists of classroom visits, social interaction, and interacting with teachers (Kim and Chin, 2015; Koeyigit, 2015). Researchers have suggested this type of involvement increased the parents’ knowledge about the curriculum and had a major impact on their relationship with their child at home (Marshall and Jackman, 2015; Parker, 2013; Perkins et al., 2016). According to Epstein (2014), while parents tend to be highly visible during a child’s elementary years, parental involvement tends to decline in middle school. During the middle school years, parental involvement tends to shift parents attending before, during, and after-school activities which may not provide or create a relationship between parents and teachers (Marshall and Jackman, 2015). This study may contribute to the field of knowledge by determining factors that influence African American parents’ involvement in their children’s middle school experience. The findings of this study could identify strategies that will assist stakeholders, such as administrators, teachers, parents, and students, with the opportunity to close the gap that exists within the area of parental involvement as it relates to African American parents with children in eighth grade.

Significance of the Study
The significance of this qualitative case study was to examine the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade. Parental involvement has been explored from the perspective of what schools can do to engage families, but few studies have explored parental involvement from the administrator, teacher, and African American parent perception. The results of this study will be useful to schools seeking to engage African American parents and increase their involvement in their child’s school. Additionally, the results of this study may be useful to African American parents who seek to become more involved in their children’s education and participate in the student’s school. The results of this study could be useful to teachers who pursue ways to include African American parents in their children’s education (Abel, 2014; Hornby, 2011; Jackson et al., 2015).

The role of school administrators in school-family partnerships is frequently overlooked in research studies (LeBlanc, 2011; Mlezko and Kington, 2013). School administrators are essential contributors to the parental involvement equation because they are responsible for many of the aspects affecting parental involvement partnerships (Ho and Kwong, 2013). School administrators are frequently responsible for (a) developing and implementing policies and procedures; (b) initiating involvement of parents in shared leadership roles; (c) allocating necessary funding for implementation of partnership programs; (d) providing the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary in schools for planning and implementing efficient parental involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance; (e) coordinating and integrating parental involvement strategies to comply
with district, state, and federal mandates; (f) conducting annual evaluations of the content
and effectiveness of the parental involvement policy; (g) identifying barriers to greater
participation by parents in parental involvement activities; and (h) using the findings of
the evaluation to design strategies for more effective parental involvement (Barr and
Saltmarsh, 2014; Epstein, 2010; Finch, 2010; Goellar, 2017).

**Nature of the Study**

After signing a consent form, all participants were provided instructions on how
to complete the study process. This qualitative case study provides information to
administrators, teachers, and African American parents. This information can assist in
illuminating the focus of the attitudes and perceptions that can change the level of
parental involvement in eighth grade. A case study design was used to address the
research question. The case study design provides in-depth information and details of the
participants (Creswell, 2014). This single case study used a purposive sampling which
will represent a larger population (Gentles et al., 2015; Lavrakas, 2008). The study
presents the perspectives of administrators and teachers and expresses how school-
parental partnerships can improve involvement and awareness. The goal of the data
collected is to examine the principal, teacher, and African American parent perceptions to
encourage parental involvement and identify efforts to involve parents (Leech and
Onwuegbuzie, 2011). By better understanding how perceptions of involvement differ
between principals, teachers, and African American parents, the leaders of this school can
implement new ideas and strategies to increase parental involvement in eighth grade.
Definition of Terms

Administrators. The school administrator will be the term used to refer to school principals and assistant principals (Kochhar-Bryant and Heishman, 2010).

Attitudes. The attitudes of individuals were observed in the study. These attitudes will include how a person sees a situation and reacts to it. According to Oskamp and Schultz (2005), it is the cause of a person’s behavior toward another person or an object.

Family-School Partnerships. The family-school partnership is a term commonly used in place of school, family, and community partnerships. A partnership is a relationship between individuals or groups that is characterized by cooperation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal. Family-school partnerships are used to refer to collaborative efforts on the part of schools, families, and communities to support student success (Epstein, 2016; Sheldon, 2003).

Middle School. Middle school is education level between elementary and high school, typically including grades five through eight (Casas, 2010). For purposes of this study, only parents and school administrators of students (ages 12-15) in grade eight were asked to participate.

Parent. For this study, the term parents will be used to describe guardians, regardless of family structure, of middle school students from the school selected to participate in the study (Ho and Kwong, 2013).

Parental Involvement. The role that a parent or guardian plays in supporting the learning path of their child at school (Khosa, 2014). Involvement of parent participation at least once during a regular school year by attending a meeting, event, or volunteering (Garcia and Thornton, 2014).
Perceptions. In this study, the average human limits will be observed according to the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses. Perception associates with the process by which people are aware of objects in the external world (Douglas, 2013).

Teacher. A person who imparts knowledge or skill to others (Kincheloe, 2012).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumption

The following assumptions were present in this study:

1. The researcher assumed that participants answered all questions honestly and truthfully. During and after the study, anonymity and confidentiality are preserved. Participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time with no ramifications.

2. The participants may assume parental involvement merely is assisting with homework, being a caregiver, or attending sports events with their child. During the interview, participants were asked to explain their perception of parental involvement.

Limitations

The following limitations were present in this study:

1. This study focused on one grade level in middle school and one ethnic group of students at a Title 1 school in South Florida where the participants’ child attended.
2. The sample size of participants was limited in size and does not fully reflect the representation of the schools’ total population.

3. Qualitative research experts acknowledge that the collection of data in a qualitative study can be affected by the researchers’ presence while gathering data.

4. The school participating in this study has a small population of middle school students compared to other middles within the districts.

5. Unintended or deliberate misrepresentations by participants when completing the interviews.

**Delimitations**

The following delimitations were present in this study:

1. The administrators and teachers must have at least one year of experience in their area of practice. This qualification will ensure the participants had prior experiences with African American parents.

2. The participating teachers were asked to identify African American parents of the students they teach for the study. The study focused on those African-American parents whose child was taught by the teacher.

3. The study was conducted at one middle school and focused only on eighth grade parental involvement.

4. A quantitative research method was not considered to answer the research question. The study provides insight into the phenomenon studied.
Chapter 1 Summary

This study identified the attitudes and perceptions of the administrators, leaders, and African American parents to explore ways to improve parental involvement. Understanding how to communicate the needs of all stakeholders and reduce any roadblocks that could extend from the perception of those in this study. The study provides the schools with a guideline to influence African American parents that may not feel adequate in the academic skills or levels at the middle school level. Researchers have well documented the positive impact of school-parent involvement, but actions to implement policies to increase parental involvement at all levels of the student’s educational journey are needed. Schools can obtain numerous benefits by implementing identified strategies and perceptions of stakeholders (Walker et al., 2005). These strategies can help African American parents with getting them engaged in the educational process at their child’s school.

The sociodemographic factors provide the participant's background and experience in the analysis that may identify how they affect the level of parental involvement (Kunjufu, 2012). Parent participants were asked to identify all of the following factors: (a) ethnicity, (b) education, (c) income, (d) occupation, (e) material status, (f) parental structure, and (g) socioeconomic status (SES) to include free and reduced lunch participation. This information will help identify how these factors affect the African American parents’ school-home involvement (Gonida and Cortina, 2014). Administrators and teachers were asked to identify the following factors that may affect their perceptions of parental involvement: (a) teaching experience, (b) ethnicity, (c) education, (d) income, (e) marital status (Dettmer et al., 2012).
Chapter two examines the current research on the significance of parental involvement and provide a detailed literature review of relevant studies. Chapter three includes a description of the methodology for this study, including a restatement of the problem and the research questions as well as details of the research methodology and design. The data collection procedures and data analysis are explained in Chapter three. Chapter four presents the findings and the results of the analysis conducted. Lastly, Chapter five discusses the findings of this study, makes conclusions, recommendations, and presents suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade. Research has long documented a healthy relationship between family backgrounds factors, such as income and parents’ educational levels, and student achievement (Gonida and Cortina, 2014; Greene, 2013; Macartney, Bishaw, and Fontenot, 2013). Studies have shown that parents can play a vital role in supporting their children’s academic achievement (Wilder, 2014). This study may prove significant in filling, at least partially, a perceived gap in the current body of knowledge concerning the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade.

This literature review is organized into several sections that include a discussion and analysis of five general subtopics. The subtopics are: 1) Barriers of Parental Involvement; 2) Types of Parental Involvement; 3) Perceptions of Parental Involvement; 4) Family Structure and Socioeconomic Status, and 5) Influence of school leadership. Chapter two includes information gathered from current (2011 to 2016) peer-reviewed articles published in scholarly journals as well as relevant information from primary literature about parental involvement.

This literature review was conducted through resources provided by St. Thomas University’s online library (e.g., EBSCO host and ProQuest) as well as scholarly books used in other St. Thomas University courses in the Doctor of Education in Leadership and Management program. Other resources used for this literature review included
outside electronic sources and databases (e.g., ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar) as well as standard and other education websites. The primary keywords and phrases used to obtain literature for this proposed qualitative action research study were the following: *parental involvement, African American parents, administrative leadership, teacher perceptions, qualitative action research, parent perceptions, school culture, secondary education, middle school, and types of parental involvement.*

The research intends to establish ways parents can improve involvement in their child’s middle school experience and become more active in the school-home partnership with the school leaders. Gonida & Cortina (2014) aimed to provide new evidence on several aspects of parental involvement and the possible relation with academic and socio-emotional functioning during primary and secondary school. El Nokali et al. (2010) suggested parent involvement researchers should try to collect extensive and comprehensive data on a variety of the practices considered to be parent involvement.

The purpose of this literature review is to provide an understanding of the history and issues regarding parental involvement, benefits, and barriers of parental involvement, types of parental involvement, perceptions of parental involvement, family structure and socioeconomic status influence on parental involvement, and influence of school leadership that guides the momentum for parental involvement. In understanding these meaningful components, the sense the urgency is experienced for improving parental involvement in school as a primary focus of education reform. The value of all contributing stakeholders, such as administrators, teachers, parents, and the community bears significantly on the child’s progress in school.
Theoretical Framework

Several popular theories of parental involvement explain how and why parents get involved in their children’s education and much research regarding what effect this has on children’s success in school and life. Epstein (2001) discussed four separate theories that may explain the value of parental involvement in student education. These include (a) the Separate Influence Theory, which states that children obtain different benefits from their experiences at home and school; (b) the Sequential Influence Theory, which suggests that parents are influential in the early years as they prepare their children for school and then, once children enter school, it is the school that carries the primary responsibility for education; (c) the Embedded Influence Theory, which is an ecological theory states that students are influenced by many of the different systems in which they are involved; and (d) the Overlapping Influence Theory, another ecological theory, which states that these many spheres of influence overlap with one another and influenced by time (developmental changes) and behavior. DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane (2007) differentiated among types of factors that influence how and why parents become involved in their children’s education. For example, they wrote that parental factors including socioeconomic status (SES), parents’ level of education, and parents’ knowledge about specific academic subject areas influence parents’ involvement. They also discuss school and teacher factors that influence parents’ involvement, including how much encouragement the school provides for parents to become involved, teacher time constraints, and even teachers’ sense of efficacy.

This study describes the Overlapping Spheres of Influence model as part of the theoretical framework. Partnerships between parents and schools are essential for the
development of a student’s learning experience. Epstein (2010) regarded partnerships as overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein noted schools disengaged from the student’s family and the home-school relationship is kept separate. The stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and students, must work together to form successful relationships to support students in their academic endeavors. All participants in the overlapping sphere of influence model must recognize their role in the development of these partnerships.

Hiatt-Michael (2006) explained the overlapping sphere of influence is the most comprehensive model that includes the community as a partner in the home-school relationship. When parents and communities leave interaction up to the schools, the school gains power over the type and level of interaction they would like to maintain with the other spheres. This model extends previous theories because it allows the sphere also to be independent of each other and allow the student to be the center of the model as shown in Figure 1. The student can benefit from the support of all three partners. Leaders within schools who strive to care for students have a responsibility to both student growth and the inclusion of their families (Epstein, 2010). The No Child Left Behind Act incorporated a mandate that schools develop a way to collaborate with parents to receive federal funding from the Title I portion of the law, indicating the importance of this collaboration in children’s academic paths. Epstein viewed this partnership as overlapping spheres of influence. Epstein noted when schools are disconnected from student’s family, the relationship between school and home is more isolated. There is a need for parents, teachers, students, and administrators to work together to cultivate successful relationships to support children in their academic endeavors and overall growth. Each participant must recognize their distinct role while developing this unique
relationship. The collaboration of families, schools, and communities can help students succeed in school and life after that (See Figure 1).

![Overlapping Spheres of Influence](image)

*Figure 1: Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein, 2010)*

Another prevalent model in the literature on parental involvement is Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model (1995, 1997, 2005). The model states the extent to which parents become involved in their children’s education depends on how parents define and perceive their role; how confident they are in assuming that role; whether they perceive that the school, teachers, and their children want them to be involved; and how they feel about challenges from life context variables such as skills and knowledge as well as time and energy. This study of parental involvement followed this model. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s revised model (2005), which applies to home- and school-based involvement, describes seven main constructs in three different categories concerning why parents become involved in their children’s education. The first level includes the parents’ motivational beliefs in two constructs: (a) parents’ role construction, or how parents view and understand their roles and how that understanding affects which home and school-based activities they believe necessitate their participation; and (b) parents’ level of self-efficacy, or the belief parents have that, through their involvement, they have the ability to help their children learn and perform better in school. Next is parents’
perceptions of invitations from others to involvement, which include general invitations from the school and specific invitations from teachers and children. Lastly, there are two life-context variables: (a) parents’ perceptions of the skills and knowledge they have to help their children with their schoolwork and be involved with the school, and (b) parents’ perceptions of the time and energy they have to be involved.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) reported that the role of construction—what parents think they should do—is one of the most important predictors of parent involvement. The researchers theorized this is followed in importance by self-efficacy or how parents feel about their ability to do what they think they should do. The theory stated self-efficacy might moderate how parents feel about their roles.

Walker, Shenker, and Hoover-Dempsey (2010) expressed how the cultural background of parents influences their school involvement into four levels. Level 1 addressed the reason why parents become involved in, or what encourages them to participate in, their children’s education. One of the most constant factors affecting parents’ motivation was notifications parents received from their child’s school. The result of a parent receiving an invitation to participate in some way, regardless if the invitations were from their child or a teacher, and the parent’s reports of the invitation were positive, that parent is more likely motivated to get involved. Levels 1.5 and 2 focused on the definition of parental involvement. According to the observed literature, parental involvement can be expressed in many different forms; however, participation in schools was referred to as the traditional type of involvement (Walker, Shenker, and Hoover-Dempsey, 2010). Walker et al. specified parental involvement could also be defined as the reinforcement and encouragement parents give to their children. Level 3
involvement refers to the responsibility of the students to become involved in their achievement.

**Review of the Research Literature**

**Barriers to Parental Involvement**

The literature indicates that many barriers may prevent parents from getting involved in their children’s education. Limited resources, limited access to technology, work schedules, language barriers, and a sense of disenfranchisement are only a few of those barriers (Bellibas & Gumus, 2013; J. Smith et al., 2011; Williams & Sanchez, 2013; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Parent involvement can positively affect the students’ classroom learning experience and school environment. According to Jeynes (2014), “The relationships between parents and their children and the connections between parents and teachers are important, but so also are the interactions among various families, among various teachers, between students and students, and between students and teachers” (p. 268). The role of families and schools are important in building the morale and expectation of learners. Parents that are more involved in the education of their child also have positive relationships with their child’s teachers and schools (Pena, 2000). Teachers are continually seeking ways to get parents involved in the education of students to minimize behavior problems and engage learners.

The teacher-parent-student relationship is beneficial to the students’ path toward success. Jeynes (2014) further substantiated the importance of comprehensive parental involvement practices that reflect a school culture that includes parents in systematic ways rather than through activity-based parental involvement strategies that make isolated overtures to parents. A partnership between schools and parents can social and
emotional learning. This partnership can promote positive behavior and learning outcomes.

According to Gonzalez-DeHass (2005), “parent involvement generally benefits children’s and adolescents’ learning and academic success” (p. 100). Variables such as time spent on homework, school retention, and educational aspirations are all indicative of how much student’s value education and how motivated they are to succeed academically. Parental involvement can increase interest and support of school programs and the students’ progress. Jeynes (2014) expressed “parents that are involved intend to develop positive attitudes toward their child’s teachers” (p. 2). These positive attitudes will cause parents to cultivate higher education aspirations and parent-child communication (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991). Teachers and parents can bridge the gap between lack of motivation a child may experience. State and school administrators, as well as teachers, can implement a variety of programs that will develop procedures for involving parents that have considerable support for their effectiveness.

**Types of Parental Involvement**

Parental involvement can be school-based or home-based (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). The home environment involves other correlations affect student achievement levels. Communication about school, supervision, and parental expectations are important components to research to identify the levels of parental involvement to support student achievement (Marzano, 2003). School-based involvement includes parent-teacher communication, attendance at school events, and volunteering at school. Home-based involvement includes the provision of structure for homework time and
leisure time. The type of involvement or amount of time parents spend with the child can change as the child matures. These changes can occur between the elementary and secondary school years partly because of adolescents’ growing needs for autonomy and independence (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Developing a plan to remain an involved and increasing form of involvement can enhance learning capabilities.

Parents can support their children's schooling by attending school functions and responding to school obligations, such as parent-teacher conferences. They can become more involved in helping their children improve their schoolwork by providing encouragement, arranging appropriate study time and space, modeling desired behavior, monitoring homework, and actively tutoring their children at home. Epstein et al. (2009) explored the types of parental involvement that could provide advantages to schools with encouraging positive parent-school relationships. Epstein et al. developed a framework of six types of parental involvement that can create and develop successful relationships with parents, teachers, and the community.

Parenting (Type One). Parents and schools are supported with understanding their role in the school-home relationship. Families learn to recognize the development of their child’s adolescent development and learn ways to support the student at each age and grade level. Parenting can help schools better understand and incorporate the student’s family life to what is being learned at school. Teachers can use this information to understand better and gain respect for their students’ families (Epstein, 1995).

According to Domènech Rodriquez, Donovick, and Crowley (2009), it was Diana Baumrind who first said that parenting styles fall into three different categories: authoritarian, authoritative and permissive. In 1983, Maccoby and Martin identified a
fourth parenting style: neglectful. Domènech Rodriquez et al. (2009) noted that parents who exhibit authoritarian styles also showed lower levels of responsiveness and self-governing but maintained a high level of demandingness. The permissive styles were opposite, with high levels of both responsiveness and self-governing, and low levels of demandingness. While the authoritative style is high on all three levels, the neglectful parenting style is low in all three areas. In the case of neglectful parenting, parents become disengaged as well.

Domènech Rodriquez et al. (2009) discussed the use of all four parenting styles in the context of non-minority culture, but when it comes to minority cultures, the four parenting styles are less robust. Domènech Rodriquez et al. noted this might be due to minority parents having different views when it comes to child rearing and different observable behaviors. Domènech Rodriquez et al. described each characteristic of the four parenting styles as having a relationship with a child’s academic outcome. In that study, three out of four parenting styles had a direct correlation with students’ positive academic achievement. Based on the literature, researchers do not agree on the type of parenting styles that will produce a positive academic outcome for Latino students. The debate between authoritarian and permissive parenting types suggest that although Latino parents may be nurturing, there are no findings that either authoritarian or permissive types produce a positive result when it comes to students’ academic achievement. However, in the case of European Americans students’ academic outcomes, findings suggested there was a positive relationship with authoritative parenting styles.

Some researchers agreed that although authoritative parents exhibit behaviors that highlight student success, reinforce rules, and provide needed materials, that parenting
type was not consistently related to a positive academic outcome in minority students (Domènech Rodríguez et al., 2009; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). According to Hines and Holcomb-McCoy, Latino and African American families are more authoritarian than Asian and European American families, who tend to be more authoritative. Hines and Holcomb-McCoy noted the parenting styles of African Americans and European Americans are similar despite a few variations. Differences between the two cultures seem to be more prevalent when it comes to the demands of their children.

European Americans tended to give end more to their children than African American parents (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013).

Researchers found no relationship between parenting styles and grades of African-American high school students. Conversely, Rivers, Mullis, Fortner and Mullis (2012) disagreed with prior researchers and had determined that authoritative parents tend to have children who perform better academically than children of parents who exhibit authoritarian styles. Rivers et al. found that parents who displayed permissive parenting styles, as well as those displaying the negligent parenting style recognized by Maccoby and Martin (1983), could be uninvolved, lax discipline, and not engaged in their children academic activities.

Rivers et al. (2012) suggested that parenting styles not be a sole indicator of students’ positive academic performance based on the existence of intrinsic and extrinsic variables such as motivation and performance goals. Ishak, Low, and Lau, (2012) stated that psychologists had taken an interest in parenting styles and their relationship to the development of children. According to Ishak et al., parenting style is defined as a
“constellation of attitudes toward the child that communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parents’ behavior is expressed” (Ishak, Low, & Lau, 2012, p. 487). When parents exhibited being supportive of their children’s needs, Ishak et al. defined this as warmth. Ishak et al. argued when parents exhibit responsiveness or warmth. They allow their children to express their individualism. These researchers also found that parenting styles have an impact on students’ academic outcome and that they can be used as an indicator to predict higher educational goals. It is reported that parents who are highly involved in their children academic activities tend to have children who are high academic achievers (Ishak et al., 2012). Not only does parenting style affect parental involvement, but it may also influence positive academic outcomes for some students.

**Communicating (Type Two).** Partnerships are built between schools and parents to provide information about programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications. Risko and Walker-Dalhouse (2009) indicated that communication influences parental involvement. The study indicated the lack of communication between parents and teachers is described as frustrating by both parents and teachers. Teachers and administrators must have the skills to communicate effectively to interact more with parents. Dotger (2011) found that those skills required to make decisions are different from the skills necessary to communicate those decisions.

According to Romano (2012), making a telephone call to parents can be very stressful teachers regardless of teaching experience. Romano found that new teachers are more reluctant to call parents than veteran teachers. New teachers often choose to use more modern technology such as email instead. Romano suggested this could because
writing an email allows the teacher more time to prepare and collect their thoughts. Some parents consider receiving emails less personal and prefer receiving a telephone call from their child’s teacher.

Sanchez and Walsh (2010) discussed the use of technology as a method to increase and maintain parental involvement. Researchers have determined that various types of communication can be used to strengthen the learning environment for students. Communication methods can consist of emails, class and school newsletters, class and school web pages, and the internet. Sanchez and Walsh cautioned schools against relying solely on communicating with families through the use of technology. Researchers have found that not everyone owns a computer or have accessibility to specific technology and teachers must find ways to communicate with parents of all their students.

Romano (2012) indicated the preferred method of communication by veteran teachers was via phone calls. Pakter and Chen (2013) found that the preferred method of communication between teachers and parents was through email. According to Pakter and Chen, the number of homes in the low socioeconomic status (SES) communities with internet access ranged between 60% and 85%. However, in some cases where parents do not have a high school diploma, internet access could be lower than 40%. Despite limited access to the internet, email was still considered a more desirable way for teachers to communicate with parents as compared to telephone calls (Pakter & Chen, 2013).

Pakter and Chen (2013) suggested sending text messages as an alternative to using e-mail to contact parents. The research showed that there are more mobile phones in homes than there are landlines and using such devices as the mobile phone to text message parents is viewed as an essential communication tool. Pakter and Chen (2013)
recognized that past researchers did not include text messaging as a form of communication. However, these authors noted that some schools have begun to use mass communication such as email and text messaging to communicate with parents. According to Pakter and Chen (2013), researchers have not determined whether there is a relationship between electronic communication and student performance. The researchers agreed texting may have other benefits for teachers and students.

Volunteering (Type Three). Provides opportunities to get families involved as volunteers at school or during other events to support students. Parents can become involved in their child’s education through in-school volunteering. Gronlund et al. (2011) determined in the United Kingdom and the United States volunteering was considered as working without receiving monetary compensation. Since cultures have different customs and ideas, Gronlund et al. (2011) these cultures had different reasons for volunteering. Some cultures will dictate the opportunity for and the type of volunteering. These authors stated that in Sweden and Germany volunteering can be defined as idealistic.

Research has discovered the relationship between volunteering and a person’s willingness to help (Gronlund et al., 2011). It was recommended that volunteering divided into two categories: informal and formal. Informal volunteering refers to someone who helps within their community, whereas formal volunteering is when someone volunteers outside of his or her community. According to Gronlund et al. (2011), minorities typically prefer informal volunteering. These authors noted there might be different reasons for volunteering and Theodosopoulou and Papalois (2011) suggested those reasons could involve a person’s ability to participate in civic and community activities as well as their personal goals.
The benefits of parental involvement in the form of volunteering are enormous for a child who may be struggling with the day-to-day educational routine. Parental involvement can play a vital role in their child’s life when classroom expectations become overwhelming. Parents can be part of the classroom, participating in activities such as reading to students, checking papers for teachers, as well as being additional help during testing. When parents are engaged in the school learning experiences of their child, teachers and students can benefit from the involvement.

When parents volunteer, it can be an added benefit for the schools. It allows parents to become readily accessible if they are needed to assist in their child’s classroom. It also allows teachers to have access to the parent for information regarding the students’ welfare. Having a parent in the classroom gives the teacher more time to work one-to-one with a student who may be struggling with obtaining and implementing new knowledge that is being taught. This additional help in the classroom may decrease the likelihood of negative behavior issues and promote mentoring.

Mentoring can be developed as a result of combining volunteering with learning. Researchers define mentoring as “the positive relationship with and contribution by a non-parental adult to the life of a young person” (Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, & Boyd, 2009, p. 280). Researchers have discussed the effectiveness of mentoring and determined the benefits can be seen in students’ social and listening skills, as well as academic performance (Gutiérrez, 2012). This research has indicated that there is a relationship between mentoring and students’ academics. However, Gutierrez also found that mentoring was valuable outside of students’ academic environment. Gutierrez indicated that those students who had a mentor tended to do well in education and areas
such as professional skills and networking long after leaving the educational setting. When students are paired with the right mentor, both having similar interest, this relationship had a positive effect on a student’s capability to perform academically. Gordon, Iwamoto, Ward, Potts, and Boyd (2009) also found mentoring could be used as an intervention strategy. Gordon et al. agree with Gutierrez that mentoring can provide the mentee with a positive role model. Additionally, Gordon et al. documented that mentoring had an impact on minority educational outcome.

**Learning at Home (Type Four).** Involve families with chances to assist their child with learning and extracurricular activities at home. Some cultures believe that parents who are involved with their children at home are just as influential as those parents who are involved with in-school activities. Epstein (2010) determined that learning at home should consist of school activities that allow students an opportunity to involve their families. Research has suggested that teachers design and implement homework that will encourage learning at home (Caudle, Bayan, Harrington, & Barnes, 2012). In their study, Caudle et al. (2012) discussed the involvement of African American parents living in rural areas. The researchers found that minority parents believed that education was a way out of poverty and therefore were inclined to be a part of learning at home.

Caudle et al. (2012) surveyed 213 minority parents concerning supporting students at home with school-assigned learning activities. Caudle et al. found that many of the minority parents structured the living environment in a way that affected student learning indirectly. Parents indicated that they spent time at home with their children, engaging in activities such as homework, household chores, scheduled play, eating, and
sleep time. The findings also indicated that having conversations with children about grades, classroom performance, and overall school performance was equally significant to fathers as it was to mothers.

Minorities such as Mexican Americans tend to favor home-based involvement more so than their non-minority counterparts. Home-based involvement consists of parents introducing their children to an early working environment to teach them the value of a good education (Altschul, 2012). According to Altschul (2012), this type of involvement is thought to be beneficial and is known as life experience. Mexican American parents use the concept of life experience to encourage their children to do well in school so that they will not have to work low paying jobs. Mexican American parents also use this method as a way to become involved without communicating with their child’s school directly.

Bower, Powers, and Graham (2010) found that using the home learning approach can be a valuable tool, not only for mothers and fathers but other caregivers. Home learning allows parents and caregivers to become actively involved in their children’s education outside of the school. Learning at home, according to this study, gave families an opportunity to reinforce what the student was learning in school and had a direct impact on the students’ attendance and academic outcome.

**Decision Making (Type Five).** Decision-making improves recruitment and input of families as participants in school decision making and the development of possible parent leaders. Wanat (2010) examined parent groups and their involvement in the decision-making process of schools. Researchers suggested when parents are involved in networking groups, they tend to participate more in decision-making committees. Wanat
(2010) found opposing viewpoints on how these networking groups should be organized to encourage parent involvement. Bourdieu (1983) argued that networking groups should extend to the social capital of its members. As it pertains to decision-making within schools, Coleman (1988) argued that networking groups should only involve parents who have a relationship with their children’s peers.

Coleman (1988) indicated a close networking group builds trust and increases students’ academic achievement. The benefits of a networking group and allowing families to be part of decision-making initiates how information gets distributed between school and home. Wanat (2010) found that parents established in a community share information about schools with parents who are new to the community when part of a networking group. Using a case study approach, Wanat (2010) found members of a networking group frequently reached out to other groups when it came to decision making. Parents who were not a part of a networking group but attended meetings and participated in school activities were also included in the school decision-making process and indirectly became part of that school’s networking group (Wanat, 2010).

According to Baeck (2010), parental involvement can range from parent participation in school activities, parent-teacher conferences, making physical and non-physical contact with schools, helping children with homework, as well as having a place inside the home for children to do homework or school projects. Parents may also become involved by showing an interest in what children are doing in school, through discussion with children, as well as other methods. Gordon and Louis (2009) indicated that there are multiple reasons for parents and the community to join forces and become
involved in students’ academics; one of these is that involvement increases students’ academic performance.

**Collaborating with the Community (Type Six).** Organizing resources and services for school-family-community collaboration to improve student learning. Parents with low SES have faced many barriers in the area of parental involvement. The community in which parents live and become engaged in can have a significant impact on their attitude and their involvement in the children’s education (Reece, Staudt, & Ogle, 2013). According to Reece et al., parents have released obligation to the schools to determine the resources that enhance community involvement. Reece et al. agreed with a study performed by Lawson (2003) that indicated parents believed schools should be the nucleus for community involvement.

The partnership between communities and schools originate in the neighborhoods local schools. Reece, Staudt, and Ogle (2013) indicated that because community involvement can impact parents’ involvement in school, parents should pay close attention to their surrounding neighborhoods. Neighborhoods like this can be an indication of the support provided to schools by the community. The length of time parents live in a neighborhood was linked with the parents’ attachment to the community and the school that services the community (Reece, Staudt, & Ogle, 2013).

Wanat (2010) agreed with Reece et al. (2013) that there was a relationship between collaboration and students’ academic achievement. According to Bryan and Henry (2012), stakeholders need to collaborate with schools. These authors suggested that collaboration decreases the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students. Bryan and Henry found that collaboration can build strength and resilience in
Meaningful collaboration can benefit both students and teachers. Students gain knowledge in problem-solving, skill building, and leadership. Teachers have the opportunity to teach, as well as build relationships with students and other stakeholders (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Epstein and Van Voorhis (2010) also indicated that a partnership can result and a wide range of goal setting activities that can have an academic impact on students. However, according to Bryan and Henry (2012), schools have struggled with community collaboration. Wanat (2010) in her single qualitative case study noted the relationship between home and school could be a vague process. Teachers and parents were described as being worlds apart due to their roles and responsibilities when it comes to children.

Perceptions of Parental Involvement
Epstein's (2009) model of family involvement is utilized to examine parent involvement programs at twelve charter schools across six United States. Smith et al. (2011) explored strategies that linked to increasing parents' self-efficacy and comfort level in participating in their children's education. Parent perceptions of the expectations of them need to be clear and presented from leaders educating their child. There is a lack of research on the new family structures and how they may affect the level of achievement. Jeynes (2011) cited new family structures inevitably yield unique challenges to parent-school involvement which most school-based strategies for fostering parental engagement do not address. Families with both parents present are far more optimally positioned to demonstrate a high level of engagement with schools than single-parent households; yet, research on single-parent school involvement frequently highlights that these parents genuinely desire a higher level of participation in their students' academic lives (Gonzalez, Borders, Hines, Villalba, & Henderson, 2013).

Some families criticize school personnel for not understanding the dilemma of single-parents, grandparents, foster parents, or other caregivers. Others say they lack transportation to attend school events or have no child care for younger siblings. While some schools have made great strides in engaging parents and others in the educational process, there is still more to be done. Collaboration between parents and teachers needs to be more transparent while educating parents on the expectation of their students’ education.

Goodall & Montgomery (2013) proposed a continuum between parental involvement with the school and parental engagement with children’s learning. The research supports the progression of parental involvement with schools and parental
engagement with children’s learning. School improvement goals should incorporate strategies to include the community (Auerbach, 2012). Building the school-community relationship is vital in promoting growth in students and developing successful schools locally. Gonida & Cortina (2014) predicted different types of parental involvement in homework associated with different outcomes with parent autonomy support to be the most beneficial one.

**Self-efficacy.** Self-efficacy is the belief in the capability to perform a specific task (Bandura, 1977) and task-specific self-efficacy predicts the success in performing the task. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy influences “initiation and persistence with a task” (p.193). Bandura suggested that parental efficacy plays an essential role in influencing parenting behavior. Bandura (1995) reported the most effective way of getting a strong sense of efficacy is through success. Evidence of this is in parents’ believing that they were capable of parenting successfully in two areas that are especially important in rearing adolescents: (1) overcoming negative peer influences, which the adolescent is exposed and (2) impacting schools and other community agencies for youth positively. In part, the analyses in the present study tested the extent to which those two observed variables assessed a latent variable of parental efficacy. Researchers suggested parental involvement increases teachers’ sense of efficacy and enhance beliefs about parents’ efficacy for helping children learn (Shumow & Lomax, 2002; Van et al., 2015).

Shumow & Lomax (2002) investigates the effect of parental efficacy on the academic and social-emotional adjustment of adolescents. It supports the relationship between parental efficacy, parenting behaviors, and adolescent outcomes. The subtopic explores how self-efficacy is viewed as a resource for anticipating a positive outcome of
parental involvement. Self-efficacy beliefs provide the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment (Van et al., 2015). Self-efficacy is also a critical element of the self-regulatory practices in which individuals engage as they go about the important task of self-correcting their actions and perceptions. Children’s motivation changes as they mature and their academic efficacy decreases (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002).

Ice and Hoover-Dempsey (2011) examined whether involvement activities predicted student self-efficacy. Their results suggested that parental self-efficacy for involvement and specific invitation from their child are positively related to home-based parental involvement. The study showed parent perceptions of their social support was a small role in home-based parental involvement. Hoover-Dempsey (2011) believed parents with higher parenting self-efficacy tend to give feedback to their child regarding success and failure. Hoover-Dempsey associated this success to being more involved with their child. Teachers with professional self-efficacy can encourage parents to become more engaged in their child’s learning, which can potentially improve students’ academic performance (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987).

**Family Structure and Socioeconomic Status**

Parental involvement can take on many forms and parents respond differently to schools’ efforts to increase involvement. For example, invitations sent to parents from schools to encourage parental involvement in school activities have been highly effective for non-minority parents but less effective for Latino parents. The Latino culture limits their involvement in a child’s education to the home (Shah, 2009). Researchers have
indicated that Korean parents thought they could best help their children in school by being involved inside the home (Lim, 2012). Johnson, Baker, and Aupperlee (2009), as well as Lim (2012), agreed that parental involvement in school activities has little benefit on Korean students’ educational outcome. This type of involvement created a positive effect on a Korean student’s educational outcome. Therefore, minorities’ view of parental involvement does not necessarily fit the traditional non-minority European Middle-class definition of parental involvement.

Bower and Griffin (2011) conducted a case study in one urban elementary school that utilized the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement as a framework. The case study school had a student population 60.5% of African American, 33.1% Hispanic, and 6.4% Multi-Racial and Caucasian. The school was considered high-poverty since it contained 92.5% of the students that received free or reduced-price lunches. The researchers identified two themes in the study related to the Parental Involvement Model, which were frustration and engagement. Bower and Griffin noted the level of parental involvement remained low regardless of the school's efforts which lead to frustration of the teachers. Teachers were most frustrated when weekly reports and requests went unanswered by parents. Parents were frustrated with teachers’ delivery of lessons and other methodologies. Another frustration among parents and teachers was lack of parental engagement. The researcher listed there was some engagement between teachers and parents, but no engagement between parents. According to Bower and Griffin (2011), “Cultural differences and practices, individual differences, and misunderstandings that can occur between teachers and parents and among parents themselves can impede
parental involvement practices” (p. 85). Researchers suggested more work is needed to explore how to facilitate relationships between parents and improve parent involvement.

Hayes (2011) study was the difference in academic performance between African American students and their White counterparts. In his quantitative study, Hayes divided the participants into two groups; the first group consisted of 67 parents from a large urban school district and the second group consisted of 65 parents who mainly attended a predominantly African American church. Hayes found evidence that African American students living in urban communities and attending primarily urban schools had lower achievement levels than white students in reading and math. Hayes did not mention in his study whether or not White students attended the same schools as their African American counterparts. Based on this study and others, research has shown that positive benefits of parental involvement exist, but the challenge of how to increase minority parental involvement still exists.

To increase minority parental involvement, factors that hinder or prevent these parents from getting involved need to be identified and addressed. Hayes (2011) also discussed parental involvement as being two-dimensional; parental involvement comprised of both in-school participation and out-of-school participation. Researchers do not agree on whether in-school or out-of-school parental participation is the better predictor of a student’s educational outcome. According to Hayes, researchers have also indicated that improvement in a student’s academics may not come from one single source, such as a parent volunteering inside the school, but can also be influenced by a student’s interpretation of their parents’ involvement.
Parental involvement links to specific positive behaviors, but some schools have had difficulty finding ways to get parents involved without micromanaging their students (Hayes, 2011). When examining the factors that predict parental involvement, it is significant to understand that each stakeholder can yield a different form of involvement from the parent. Hayes stated that parental involvement does not fall into a “one size fits all” model (Hayes, 2011). The drivers that make a parent choose to become involved need to be examined not just from one angle such as socioeconomic status (SES), but from every possible angle. Although research has been presented on minority parental involvement, Hayes stipulated that much of that research is lacking a full view because it does not consider those African American students, not from a low SES background.

Before the NCLB Act of 2002, Title I- Elementary and Secondary Education paved the way for parental involvement (Smith, Woblstetter, Kuzin, & DePedro, 2011). Even with the passing of both laws, minority parents are still lagging behind their white counterparts in the area of parental involvement. There are many reasons why minority parents lag behind majority parents; these reasons can range from low-income to work schedules. Smith et al. stated that for low-income parents to become involved, their children have to show they are doing well in school first. However, these authors also stated that the connection between parental involvement and students’ academic achievement was unclear.

The indicators of parental involvement, such as classroom performance and test scores, imply that these benefits are the only result of high parental involvement. Not only does parental involvement impact academic achievement, however, it also impacts a student’s social and emotional behavior. Smith et al. (2011) and Hayes (2011) agreed that
the most substantial impact of parental involvement is when the parent becomes involved in the home aspect of children’s academics. Smith et al. found in the literature that the nature of parental involvement and how it impacts students’ academic outcomes is unclear to parents and teachers. These researchers suggested that there may be a difference between minority parents’ and the teachers’ view of parental involvement and that this may be one reason for the difference in parental involvement between groups.

**Influence of School Leadership**

Districts and leaders must find ways to engage parents in ongoing support of their child (Finch, 2010). Parents see roadblocks to in their children’s education with the lack of support or resources from teachers, school leaders, or districts. Alliances must exist among educators, families, and community groups that value relationship building, dialogue, and power-sharing as part of socially just, democratic schools. School leaders are increasingly called upon to pursue meaningful partnerships with families and community groups, yet many leaders are unprepared to meet the challenges of partnerships, to cross cultural boundaries, or to be accountable to the community (Auerbach, 2012). According to Barr & Saltmarsh (2014), there is considerable variation in the ways that schools manage their relationships with parents, as well as variation in what parents themselves view as important for engagement with their children’s schooling. The school leaders can adopt a change in developing a collaboration between teachers and parents to improve learning in the classroom environment. Leaders can have success with including parental involvement through the effectively organizing the school culture to obtain gains for all learners.
Hornby (2011) provides some insights useful for teachers and professionals who work with schools. This subtopic suggests strategies that can be implemented by schools as well as skills that can be developed by teachers to improve parental involvement. Ho & Kwong (2013) described the representation of parental involvement in school from the experiences of principals and teachers as well as the practice of parental involvement at home and in school from the experience of parents. School administrators can develop ways to incorporate parent involvement into the school improvement goals through a parent-school-community partnership. Successful school leaders will have a plan in place to invite parental involvement to meet student achievement goals. Parents are more likely to be engaged where principals are perceived as supportive and open to their involvement. Barr and Saltmarsh (2014) observed parents considered the attitudes, communication and leadership practices of school principals to play a crucial role in fostering and maintaining relationships between parents and schools.

Goodall & Montgomery (2013) proposed parental involvement with the school in parental engagement with children’s learning. The subtopic models the progression or continuum of parental involvement with schools and parental engagement with children’s learning. School improvement goals should incorporate strategies to include the community. Building the school-community relationship is vital in promoting growth in students and developing successful schools locally. Gonida & Cortina (2014) predicted different types of parental involvement with homework are associated with different outcomes with parent autonomy support to be the most beneficial one.

Critique of Previous Research
Teacher education programs and school districts can do more to include parental involvement experience and criterion. Understanding how to get parents more involved with their child’s educational path can improve the hands-on approach to increase parental awareness of the varying aspects of the child and their learning. Educational programs can prepare teachers and provide them with ways to get their students’ parents involved. These programs can educate teachers on how to work with families regardless of type.

Researchers have shown that parents want to be more involved but are not sure how and are in need of support from their child’s school (Epstein, 2010). Educators can strategize ways to help get parents more engaged. Teacher and parent perceptions are essential to building relationships that will encourage support and the opportunity to acquire skills to impact school-related support.

The need for parental involvement has become clear to schools and school districts, but how to encourage new, as well as keep existing, parental involvement has become an issue that many schools now face. As states become more diverse and grow, so does their school system. Schools must rise to the challenge of meeting the academic needs of every student (LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011). The decline in parental involvement during the secondary school years has become a phenomenon among researchers (Marshall & Jackman, 2015). Marshall and Jackman (2015) noted the shift of parental involvement levels between elementary and middle schools. During elementary school, parents tend to focus more on a visit to the classroom and interacting with the teacher, and middle school parents divert their attention to attendance and school activity (Marshall & Jackman, 2015).
According to LaRocque et al. (2011), families must be involved to meet every student's academic needs in school. The present challenge is for schools to deal with the difference in participation by parents of minority versus non-minority students in their children’s schools (Shah, 2009). This study will include information on identifying best practice that will support the parental involvement of African-American sixth and seventh-grade students. The significance of this research will be to add new knowledge to the field based on the examination of African-American sixth and seventh-grade students’ parental involvement. Addressing this problem will benefit both parents and students by increase test scores, increase attendance and an overall increase in academic performance.

**Chapter 2 Summary**

This literature review exploration has considered many factors that increasing parental involvement is likely to be a successful means of equalizing educational outcomes. Hornby (2011) suggested parental involvement tends to decline throughout the middle school and secondary school years. Researchers suggest that parents’ educational involvement plays an important role in adolescents’ self-evaluation and academic achievement. The literature review has widely acknowledged that parental involvement has a significant effect on pupil achievement throughout the years of schooling and overall growth in the future. This study illustrates the information provided by other researchers and will add to the body of knowledge.

Parental involvement has been and continues to be measured and defined in different ways. Some researchers measure it via particular behaviors such as hours
helping with homework, while others are more interested in parents’ values and beliefs. Other researchers break parental involvement into different categories and assess multiple aspects of how a parent can support their child’s education. Even with all of these measures, there is growing evidence that parental involvement has a positive impact on a child’s intrinsic motivation, effort in school, search for challenging tasks, mastery orientation, and academic, and self-concept. Thus, more research is needed to determine the influence of parental involvement on the motivation of diverse populations who have been shown to have lower academic achievement.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Introduction to Chapter 3

This study addressed a problem that little research exists to understand administrators’, teachers’, and African American parents’ perceptions of parent involvement. This study explored how African American parents formulate their attitudes and perceptions about parental involvement. The problem is a concern at the middle school level where parental involvement is lower compared to the elementary level (Juvonen and Rand, 2004; Rolland, 2012). The specific problem reviewed is the lack of parental involvement once students leave elementary school and enter their middle school years (El Nokali et al., 2010; Kim and Chin, 2015; Rolland, 2012). The problem is more apparent in the low socioeconomic communities and has been shown to affect the achievement levels of those students (Bellibas, 2013; Greene, 2013; Williams and Sanchez, 2013). Although this is an issue for the low-income communities, parental involvement can affect any student regardless of socioeconomic status (Jackson et al., 2015; Williams and Sanchez, 2013; Yoder and Lopez, 2013).

Administrative leadership and educational support may increase parental involvement by providing support to the overall school vision for improving student achievement and building home-school relationships. This study presents findings of how perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents can be a factor that fosters parent-school partnerships at the middle school level to encourage parental involvement. There is a gap in the literature regarding the parental involvement of African American parents of children in the eighth grade. Other research has shown that focusing on one variable can provide insight into different groups of individuals (Creswell, 2009). Local districts
have a responsibility to increase student achievement and implement parental involvement policies. Researchers demonstrate that parental involvement benefits children’s social and emotional development (El Nokali et al., 2010; Fox & Olsen, 2014). The specific problem is at the secondary-level (i.e., middle school) where parental involvement is lower than at the primary grade levels (i.e., elementary) (El Nokali et al., 2010; Kim and Chin, 2012; Wang and Eccles, 2012).

**Purpose of the Proposed Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in an eighth grade located in South Florida. This qualitative case study gathered administrators’ teachers’ and African American parents’ positions, understandings, and interpretation of parental involvement in eighth grade. The findings will provide administrators and teachers with knowledge of improving engagement of African American parents at the small Title 1 PK-8 School in South Florida.

Studies have shown that parents can play an important role in supporting their children’s academic achievement (Wilder, 2014). The collaboration of schools, community, and parents can improve the learning experience of all students. This study utilizes Epstein’s Six Types of Parental Involvement to measure the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents concerning parental involvement. The six types of parental involvement include parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community (Epstein et al., 2002).
Chapter three includes a discussion of the research methodology for this qualitative case study. After reviewing the research questions, Chapter three includes a discussion of the research method and design appropriateness, triangulation, participants and sampling methods, methods for ensuring confidentiality, ethical considerations, obtaining informed consent, instrumentation, and data collection procedures. Included are discussions of data analysis, validity and reliability, and lastly, a summary of the research methodology to be used in this proposed qualitative action research study.

**Research Questions**

The primary research question guiding this study is as follows: What are the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade? The primary research question guided the development of this study.

**Research Design**

This study used a qualitative case study design. This design provided greater insight into the minds and actions of the research participants. The data analysis uncovered the real reasons why some African American parents were involved or uninvolved at their child’s school. According to Arghode (2012), the advantage to using this design does not depend on the population size as the quantitative method design does. Yin (2009) defined case study research methods as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon. The case study followed the proposed six steps researchers like Yin (2009) and Stake (1995) suggested techniques for organizing and conducting research. These steps include: (1) determine the research question, (2) state how data will be collected and analyzed; (3) data collection methods; (4) collect data in
the field; (5) analyze data; (6) prepare report.

Qualitative studies require only a small number of participants before identifying consistent themes. The qualitative research method offers insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. According to Patten (2014), “qualitative researchers gather data that must be analyzed through the use of informed judgment to identify major and minor themes expressed by participants” (p. 9). Qualitative research seeks to uncover and explore possibilities of problems. Qualitative research methods seek to understand the central phenomena from the perspective of those living it (Hatch, 2002).

The qualitative research in this study, incorporated triangulation, such as interviews, interview field notes, and surveys, to gather a broader spectrum of evidence and perspectives to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of an analysis (Saldana, 2011). There are different types of triangulation. Bekhet and Zauszniewski (2012) suggested methodological triangulation is most beneficial due to its ability to confirm results, provide more in-depth data and increase validity and understanding. Triangulation has many benefits, but it is not without limits. Having incorrect data and trying to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods incorrectly can affect the results when performing triangulation (Azulai & Rankin 2012; Walsh, 2013). When used correctly, triangulation can reinforce the results of data (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012; Walsh, 2013; Azula & Rankin, 2012). The qualitative case study best fits the study due to the nature of the study and the nature of the data collection that will accurately obtain the desired finding for this study.
Target Population, Sampling Method, and Related Procedures

Target Population

This study includes ten (10) participants consisted of two administrators, three teachers, and five African American parents. Participants interviewed to identify the attitudes and perceptions regarding parental involvement in the eighth grade. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using open-ended questions as part of an interview guide. All required permissions were obtained from the participants as part of the IRB process.

Sampling Method

The study used a purposive sampling by selecting a generous amount of information on the topic. The identification and selection of individuals were chosen due to their insight and experience with the phenomenon (Etikan & Alkassim, 2016). According to Eikan and Alkassim, “The purposive sampling concentrates on people with particular characteristics will better be able to assist with the relevant research” (p. 3).

In qualitative research, purposive sampling technique possesses some limitations like nonrandom selections about the population, which can impede the researcher’s ability to draw inferences from the population (Etikan et al., 2016). According to Tongco (2007), “unlike random sampling, purposive sampling is not free from bias” (p. 153). However, data collection via purposive sampling may still be valid when it provides external validity. Correctly measuring the sample can provide internal validity.

Sample Size

The qualitative case study explored the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents regarding the parental involvement of African American parents at the case study school. The study consisted of administrators,
teachers, and African American parents to make up the ten participants that were interviewed to identify the attitudes and perceptions regarding parental involvement at the case study school.

Qualitative researchers consider samples to have reached saturation when meetings (interviews, observations, and surveys) with new participants no longer lead to the emergence of new themes and developments (Kuper, Lingard, & Levinson, 2008), which means the study achieved a thorough understanding of the phenomenon. The study sample of 10 participants was sufficient as it “facilitated the researcher’s close association with the respondents and enhance the validity of fine-grained, in-depth inquiry in naturalistic settings” (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 483). Doing this helped in the case that a participant decided to drop out of the study. However, enough participants were present to reach data saturation based on the requirements of a qualitative study because data saturation can occur with as few as five participants (Kuper et al., 2008).

Setting

The case study site was purposefully selected. In this qualitative case study, the research site was selected following a strategy called purposeful sampling. This qualitative case study was completed at a Title 1 school, which will remain anonymous to protect the anonymity of all participants in this qualitative case study. The school is a small urban school with a population of about 700 students in a large urban district in South Florida. The student population is mostly African American and is considered a Title-1 school; over 90% of the student population receives free or reduced-price lunches. There is a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) at the school comprised of four African
American parents, with students attending the case study school and one teacher. All parent participants are African American women.

**Recruitment**

Participants were asked to sign the consent form approved through the IRB process. Recruitment of participants took place by using direct invitation and personal request of the teacher participants. Eighth-grade teachers were asked to identify five African American parents of students they teach to volunteer for the study. Before data collection took place, meetings were set up with the two Administrators to express the topic and expectations of the study.

The research study involved human subjects and an informed consent form was developed in accordance with IRB requirements to ensure the safety of all subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Respondents were asked to verify that they consented to be interviewed and complete a survey by signing the form. All subjects were assured that their responses will be kept strictly confidential and that the interview will last no more than 30 minutes. It was shared with the participants that they would not benefit in any way from participating in the study, nor will any negative consequences result from non-participation or withdrawal from the study. Participants were informed that notes would be taken during the interview as part of the data collection process.

The interviews allowed for an open discussion with all participants who have been at the school during the research period. Interviewing allowed for more personal and descriptive information as opposed to a questionnaire or survey. Additionally, the open discussion permitted room for more clear reflection to take place and allowed the discussion of topics as they evolve. Hatch (2002) explained, “the logic behind the
researcher as instrument approach is that the human capacities necessary to participate in social life are the same capacities that enable qualitative researchers to make sense of the actions, intentions, and understandings of those being studied” (p. 7).

**Instrumentation**

One crucial distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is the role the researcher plays in the process. It is clear that the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in case study research was the researcher, she was the primary tool for the data collection. It is vital for researchers to consider their own biases, limitations, and views—throughout data collection, analysis, interpretation, and the reporting phases of the process. As a researcher-instrument, the desired effect is to capture the authentic voice of all participants, including the researcher. Qualitative research assumes that the researcher’s biases and values impact the outcome of any study (Merriam, 2002).

**Data Collection**

After receiving IRB approval from the school district, the researcher presented the school principal with a letter asking permission to conduct interviews with administrators, teachers, and parents. An introduction to the dissertation research and the purpose behind it was given to the school’s administration to gain support. The researcher interviewed administrators and teachers at a private location of their choice. The face-to-face interviews took no longer than thirty (30) minutes. Administrators and teachers were not identified by their position within the school to preserve confidentiality and anonymity. The administrators and teachers had to have at least one year in their position, know the school's culture, and practices.
Parents were asked to meet for one-on-one interviews at a private location that was free of noise and distraction. The participants completed a demographic survey before the interview and asked follow-up questions for clarification of root responses when needed. The interviews were no longer than thirty (30) minutes. During this study, participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity and to keep their confidentiality throughout the data collection process. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder. The interviews were transcribed verbatim within twenty-four hours of each interview. Reflective notes were written during all interview sessions regarding nonverbal communication and other responses (Glense, 2006).

Once the interviews were transcribed, the transcriptions were analyzed for emerging themes and identified areas for further examination. The collected data was read line by line and themes were coded following recurring words. The documents will be kept in a safe, locked location.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analysis and Procedures

Qualitative research provides observations, anecdotes, conversations and descriptions of how researchers, teachers, and administrators deal with day-to-day issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The qualitative researchers are continually considering a variety of possible interpretations and explanations about what they observed. The quality of qualitative research comes from the depth and extent of its observations.

The narrative data from the interviews were analyzed by means of the Quirkos software. Quirkos, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to help manage transcriptions. The responses of the transcripts of the interview were placed into Quirkos
to analyze the collected data for emerging themes (Leech & Qnwuegbuzie, 2011). Quirkos is a data analysis software used to analyze qualitative data from interviews for emerging themes (Leech & Qnwuegbuzie, 2011). After placing the data into Quirkos, the studies significant themes were identified.

Consistent with using Moustakas (1994) analysis approach, the process of horizontalization assisted in obtaining relative expression. Viewing each statement as equal allowed for a new horizon that might result in new ideas emerging from the collection of data (Moustakas, 1994). The data collected was analyzed, categorized, and recorded using index cards that are coded. The information collected was done using different data collection techniques such as surveys, questionnaires, assessments, strategies, and student behaviors (Mack et al., 2005). The survey questions were written to represent two specific areas of parental involvement and included the parents’ demographic.

The methodical evaluation of qualitative data analysis examined its validity (internal and external) and reliability. Validity is the degree to which a study accurately reflects what the research is attempting to measure. Triangulation, peer review type, was the method used in this proposed qualitative case study to increase internal validity. Peer review involved having colleagues review and comment on the research study, including the raw data.

**Credibility.** Credibility determines whether the research is focused and whether the data collected is in line with the focus on the study (Schreier, 2012). A structured interview was used in this study to reduce guiding participants’ responses. All interview
questions were the same for all participants depending on their role in the study. Interview transcripts were used to minimize bias during the interviewing process (Schreier, 2012).

**Transferability.** Transferability requires that all data and the results be extrapolated to other similar findings. The findings in this study were generalized. Further research suggestions are provided at the end of Chapter Five to have data transferred in other settings.

**Dependability.** Dependability requires raw data collected and the results obtained are stable over time. The data collection will be kept in a safe place and confidential for the next five years locked in a cabinet.

**Conformability.** Conformability refers to the objectivity of research during data collection and data analysis. Congruency of the data is presented and will be accessible in the manner received from the participants.

**Ethical Issues**

**Researcher's Position Statement**

As an educator, with sixteen years of middle school experience, I understand and am aware of the importance parental involvement can play in a child’s educational experience. However, I possess no prior knowledge of what it is like to have a child in middle school since I have no children of my own. I desired to understand more about parents’ perceptions about parental involvement and explore ways school-home
relationships can be ideally different for all stakeholders. I further want to understand how school leaders can use the data to improve parental involvement at any level.

**Conflict of interest assessment.** The researcher does not have a conflict of interest related to the research. The outcome of the research does not directly or indirectly affect the value of interest.

**Position statement.** Parental involvement for all ethnic groups is important in student growth educationally and throughout the adolescent years as in younger years. Collaborative relationships between all stakeholders can improve the educational path and personal growth of all learners.

**Ethical Issues in the Study**

Giordano, O’Reilly, Taylor, and Dogra (2007) stated the principal concern with the ethical conduct of research is the confidentiality of participants’ identity and information gained from participants. The researcher is responsible for protecting the identity of each participant prior to the start of the research study (Giordano et al., 2007). Confidentiality refers to information that has been communicated in trust and confidence that could cause harm if disclosed. In carefully designed research studies, confidentiality involves managing private information and entails three dimensions: 1) the independence of individuals and their freedom to maintain and have privacy to any degree they select, 2) the concept that confidences can be shared as the individual chooses, and 3) knowing that the guarantee of confidentiality is mandatory. All parties in the study must also acknowledge the individual’s desire and right to share information.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), once data is stored in public documents or records, these documents and files are considered to be open to investigation and
interpretation by researchers. However, when researchers gather information by asking individuals to participate in a study, these individuals have the right to participate based on their comfort level. That comfort level may prohibit including their names, workplace, or geographic location. As such, participants had the right to discontinue the study or withdraw from the study at any time. Participation in this proposed qualitative action research study was strictly voluntary and based on informed consent.

Munhall (1988) noted that ethical considerations in qualitative research involved knowing the ethical means and goals of a research study. Additionally, the researcher is responsible for describing the experiences of others in the most truthful way possible. The researcher is also ethically obligated to illustrate and report the most accurate information given by the participants, even if that information is contrary to the researcher’s objectives, biases, and hypotheses. The identity of the individuals participating in this qualitative research study was protected at all times.

Before being interviewed, each participant received an information sheet about the study. Participants remained anonymous and each account of the interview was held in a secure location agreed upon by both parties involved. Participants felt comfortable knowing that the location of the interviews was kept secret. The interviewees’ participation was completely voluntary and were advised they could refuse to participate or choose to discontinue their participation at any given time. Participants were identified only by a randomly assigned number (e.g., S1, P1) and the researcher stored all data in a securely locked container only accessible to the researcher. Only the researcher has access to the forms of communication with the participants. Each participant agreed that they consented to the results being published; however, all participants’ privacy was
upheld. Additionally, after five years of storage in a locked container in a secure location. All materials, documents, and pertinent information with any participant’s name and any other personal information about the participants will be shredded after five years.

Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter three included a detailed discussion and rationale of how the research methodology of this proposed qualitative research study will address the general research problem regarding parental involvement increasing student achievement. Chapter three also included a discussion of the research method and design appropriateness, the population and sampling methods, the methods for ensuring confidentiality along with ethical considerations and obtaining informed consent, the instrumentation and data collection procedures, and finally, data analysis, validity, and reliability. The methodologically-sound findings of this proposed qualitative action research study will hope to show how school leadership and educational support can assist parents with becoming involved in their child’s education to improve overall achievement and efficacy.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to discover the similarities and differences between administrators’, teachers’, and African American parents’ perspectives regarding parental involvement, in the eighth grade. The results of this study will help educational leaders encourage parental involvement among African American parents, understand how those perspectives affect parental involvement, and to explore any possible factors that influence that involvement. This study will utilize face-to-face interviewing and document collecting while seeking to explore the differences within and
between the identified themes. Chapter four will contain a summary and analysis of the data.
CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade. Overlapping Spheres of Influence model was the theoretical framework for this study because relationships between parents and schools were regarded as partnerships that are important in the learning development of students (Epstein, 2010). The qualitative case study was selected as the most appropriate method for observing similarities and differences of those perceptions. The qualitative case study was focused on the following research question: What are the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in eighth grade?

Description of the Sample

The sample of this study consisted of two administrators, three teachers, and four parents. The administrators and teachers had at least one year of middle school experience in their current job position. All parents were of African American ethnicity and had at least one child in eighth grade at the case study school. Since the sample size was small, the ten study participants were labeled using a pseudonym with a letter and number system (i.e., S1= Staff 1, P1= Parent 1, etc.). This was the preferable route for anonymity to avoid the possibility of pseudonyms being read as real names and to protect the anonymity of all participants.

Before proceeding with the findings yielded by the interviews with study
participants, it is important to present their key characteristics. This information was solicited through the Survey Monkey questionnaire. Table 1 and 2 below shows the characteristics of the participants involved in this study. Table 1 shows demographic information of the administrators and teachers. Table 2 shows the demographic information of the parents. The sample for this study consisted of 9 women and 1 male. For a total number of participants (10), 60% have a college education and 40% had at least a high school education with some or no college experience. The parent participants were asked specific questions regarding their socioeconomic status (SES) as it related to the study and data collection. Approximately 60% of the parents’ annual income was over $20,000 and all have a child that receives free or reduced lunch (FRL) at the case study school.

Table 1

*Administrator and Teacher Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/ Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education/ Highest Degree</strong></td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

### Parent Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Level of Education</strong></td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Status</strong></td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Income</strong></td>
<td>Over $20,000</td>
<td>Over $20,000</td>
<td>Under $20,000</td>
<td>Under $20,000</td>
<td>Over $20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td>Single/ Never Married</td>
<td>Single/ Never Married</td>
<td>Single/ Never Married</td>
<td>Single Never Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Receives Free or Reduced Lunch</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of the Results**

The interviews were conducted in a private setting agreed upon by the participants. This provided a comfortable environment, while also supplying the needed privacy to ensure participants answer questions more freely and openly. The open-ended structured interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder on a laptop using Microsoft OneNote 2016 and a cell phone digital voice recorder app as a backup source. During the interviews, field notes were recorded in a non-obstructive manner to allow the recording of non-verbal cues when appropriate.

Following the interviews, voice recordings were transcribed and checked for accuracy. The transcriptions were reviewed by participants for accuracy and clarification of root responses. The participants were asked follow-up questions if there were further clarification of responses needed. Once transcribed and reviewed by the participants, the interviews were coded using Quirkos qualitative data analysis software (QDA). Codes for the interviews were conducted using broad codes, which uses general ideas of interviews.
to generate codes (Houghton et. al., 2015). The data was then coded, reexamined, and compared for similarities and differences among the participants. A copy of the initial coding is provided in the Appendix.

Figure 2 shows the major codes that developed themes from the interview responses. The number of the codes show the frequency of quotes added to each identified theme in the study. The major codes were generated from overlapping themes gathered from the interviews.

**Figure 2** Major Codes from Themes
The following consistent themes were identified: 1) Definition of Parental Involvement, 2) Stakeholder Expectations, 3) Level of Parental Involvement, 4) School Activities, 5) Benefits of Parental Involvement, 6) Importance of Parental Involvement in Middle School, 7) Race/Socioeconomic Status Effects, 8) Relationships and 9) Suggestions to School. Direct quotes were taken from the different participants’ interviews to explain further and support the themes.

**Detailed Analysis**

**Theme 1: Definition of Parental Involvement**

The ten participants were asked to define parental involvement. Some responses were similar and many of the participants used examples of what they thought parental involvement was to them. Some overlapping occurred in the responses (see Table 3). All participants agree that parental involvement is engaging in their child’s education and participating at school. Many examples of parental involvement were provided by most of the participants. 2 out of 5 staff participants agreed that volunteering in the classroom, attending field trips, and coming to school activities were forms of parental involvement. Communication with teachers was another example of involvement. Three participants similarly described initiating and attending parent conferences were considered involvement.
Table 3

Research Question 1 Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Definition of Parental Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions and Attitudes</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2: To me, parental involvement means communicating with my child’s teacher, assisting with homework and projects, making sure my child stays on task and behaves in school, participating in school activities and communicating concerns about the school with the administration.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1: Parents being involved in their child’s education. Whether it’s volunteering in the classroom, assisting their child at home, or assisting the teacher on a continuous basis from an alternate location.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3: “Parents participating in after-school activities and also coming and participating and teacher conferences.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4: By parent communication with the teachers as well as parents reaching out or conferences and attending conferences and attending different events at school whether it’s like staff meetings or performances.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff 5 described having a very different description of parental involvement.

Researcher: How would you define parental involvement?

S5: “For parents and school staff to be able to work together and encouraging parents to be part of the decision making in the school.”

Theme 2: Stakeholder Expectations

Participants were asked about the type of expectations the school has regarding parental involvement (see Table 4). The administrators and teachers were asked to share the expectations the school has for parental involvement. Two out of five staff participants stated the school expects parents to attend conferences, open houses, school advisory council meetings (SAC), and other school-sponsored events.
Table 4

Research Question 2 Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Stakeholder Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What expectations, if any, does the school have about parental involvement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions and Attitudes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S4: The school expects parents to attend conferences and to communicate directly with the teachers with parent questions or concerns. Respond to communication when it comes from the school, whether it is from teachers or administrators.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P1: There could be a lot more parent involvement, but it has to come from the administrators. When the administrators get involved with different things, then the parents will follow. When administrators get more involved and active at school, then the parents will become more involved in their children's academic work, volunteer, attend Field trips, and everything.

P2: “Each school expects for a parent to participate; however, it isn’t as easy to participate for parents as you may think. Parents must be an approved volunteer, they must get permission from the administration and final wait approval from the teacher. The only thing you get to participate in is maybe field trips, award assemblies or short programs at the school. I think the requirements are necessary for student safety. However, it can be a bit discouraging as a parent.”

P5: Being involved in certain events and asking about things that have been going on.

Staff 1 and Staff 2 shared similar outlooks about how the school expects parents to attend school activities like PTA and SAC meetings. However, there was very little communication of the expectations at the start of the year.

Researcher: Is the message communicated to the staff? If so, how? If not, why not?
S1: “The message of parental involvement was not communicated to the staff this year. Because at the beginning of the school year because all of us were new and we were trying to get the operational side of the school year started.”

S2 believed the value of parental involvement was communicated to the staff, “but the value of community and parental involvement is communicated to all stakeholders including staff”. Additionally, Staff 3 believed more could be done to ensure that the staff is aware of the expectations of parental involvement and engaging parents.

Researcher: What are the expectations of the school for parents to participate?

S3: “I think we have really fallen short with that. I think that encouraging parents is very minimal. I think our particular school looks at African American teachers to get their African American parents involved.”

Parents were asked if they were aware of the school’s expectations of parents to participate. 3 out of 5 parents stated the school had no expectations for parental involvement. In Table 2, feedback was provided by the parents that knew of the schools’ expectation of parental involvement.

**Theme 3: Level of Parental Involvement**

The majority of the participants acknowledge the school’s expectation or lack of expectation for parent involvement (see Table 5). Despite knowing of the school’s expectation of them, the parents share some responsibility in meeting those expectations by their level of involvement. All five parents shared they were very involved in their child’s education. Some of the parents shared some examples of involvement as attending parent conferences, school events, and going on field trips when able to go.

**Table 5**


**Research Question 3 Findings**

**Research Question 3**

How involved are you in your child’s education?

**Theme 3** Level of Parental Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions and Attitudes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1: I go to parent-teacher conferences for my kids, I go on their field trips when I'm able to go, and I'm the PTA president.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2: I am very involved. I advocate for him to ensure he is receiving the proper education or educational assistance that he needs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4: Very involved. For example, he's in sports; I make sure his grades are good so that he can stay in sports. Because if his grades aren't good, he won't play sports. Because he loves football, so I make sure I stay on top of him. When his report cards and progress reports come out, I asked him why a grade may be a C and what he will be doing to bring it up by the next quarter or he can't play football. So that's how I get involved with his education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sub-Theme: Teacher Initiatives to Encourage Parental Involvement**

There are specific expectations the staff has regarding the parents. Staff 1 expressed “the school depends on the teacher expectation of getting parents involved”.

Examples were provided of ways teachers initiate parent involvement. Three participants shared collective experiences of having contacted parents when there was an issue with a student. The participants provide access to their classrooms and make calls about school events or other happenings at the school.

Researcher: How do you get parents involved in the education of their child?

S4: “I call them and I communicate that with my students at the beginning of the school year. I communicate with parents at Open House that I like open communication with them and I let my students know that I do communicate with their parents. I do call parents when their students are doing well or really unexpected in an area.”

S5: “I have called parents about specific events that their child should be involved in and encourage students to communicate with their parents about what they
learn daily; I believe that way the parents are involved in their children’s education although they can’t physically be there.”

Theme 4: School Activities

Most of the participants identified the school activities as a way parents can get involved (see Table 6).

Parent 4 was very informed about the school activities but feels “it is overrated sometimes”. There are several activities identified that provide the parents with other opportunities other than attending a program.

Table 6

Research Question 4 Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 4</th>
<th>What type of parental involvement activities are held at the school?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>School Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions and Attitudes</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
S1: “We have the School Advisory Council and PTA meetings. We also have a volunteer service where parents can sign up online at Get Involved in Education, so they can come in and assist inside the classroom.”

S2: Currently, in terms of school advisory meetings and things of that nature. However, moving forward through Title 1, one of the funding for Title 1 there will be Literacy Nights and other Curriculum Nights. There will be opportunities for parents to become more invested in what's happening on the academic side of the school.

S3: The school does little things like History programs, holiday programs to kind of get the school involved.

P2: The only thing you get to participate in is maybe field trips, award assemblies or short programs at the school.

Theme 5: Benefits of Parental Involvement

Participants had similar viewpoints regarding how parental involvement in middle school is needed to help the student in many areas (see Table 7) Parent 2 and Parent 5 stated two benefits are “getting to know your kids more” and “seeing my child be successful”, respectively.

Table 7

Research Question 5 Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 5</th>
<th>Benefits of Parental Involvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions and Attitudes</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
P1: “I’m always there with my kid. It’s when they see me more active at their school and they have to pay more attention to their work at school. When you don’t pay attention to what your children are doing, they will think that you don’t care.”

P4: To me, the benefits are your child being more respectful of other adults and other children. When you're involved, your kids know that when they act out my mother may come and embarrass me all. So, when you're involved, it teaches them how to respect others and respect other spaces like respecting his peers.

S1: “When students get to middle school parents feel like they (students) don't need them anymore. But you know we need them even more to help them transition from the elementary to the middle school and to get ready for high school so I think that as my kids are getting older I don't need to be involved as much as they needed to be involved in elementary author the kids don't want their parents around because they feel like they're being watched and then embarrassed sometimes turn to take a back seat instead of being involved so again it depends on the school and teacher to encourage those parents to be involved and when that happens I think we'll see different results.”

S2: “In upper middle grades and high school, I think parents feel that that's a time where they should back off. So, they don't realize that that is the time that they are needed most. Parental involvement is a focus of especially high schools and transitioning kids into becoming independent, but yet still being a part of what they're doing. That could be from grades in courses their taking from what their passions are in terms of what they want to do when they do move toward graduating. So, I think that that’s kind of needed at each level.”

S4: “Just because middle school is such an important stage for students. It’s that stage where they (students) kind of decide who they want to be or just to figure out who they are.”

Theme 6: Importance of Parental Involvement in Middle School

Each participant was asked to share their thoughts on the importance of the African American parent’s involvement during their child’s middle school experience (see Table 8). 2 out of 5 staff participants provided their response to the question.
**Table 8**

*Research Question 6 Findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 6</th>
<th>Why should African American parents be involved in their child’s middle school experiences?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 6</strong></td>
<td>Importance of Parental Involvement in Middle School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions and Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3: “I think as a parent, we all have an expectation for our children and we all want our children to succeed as an African American parent. So, I think in order for our children to be successful, we have to be involved in the process. We just can't let them go because once they get a certain age, we kind of give them their independence but we need to take the reins back and just get involved with them.”</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5: “African American parents should be involved in their child’s middle school experiences because there is a lack of understanding of the culture and a lack of commitment by white leaders who are put in charge of our black schools. We need our parents to speak up on how schools take advantage because of the lack of presence. It is viewed as if you don’t care or we don’t care.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1: “As their kids are getting older you need to pay more attention to them because they have other kids there that are peer pressuring them with drugs, sex, and doing stuff that they don't have any business doing. You can stay on top of them and they won't have time to do that and it'll let them know not to get involved with those things.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2: “African American parents should be more involved in their child’s middle school experiences because, at this age, the children are more impressionable and susceptible. Without our guidance, they can easily be manipulated or a statistic.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5: “It is my responsibility as a mother to help them understand the importance of having an education.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 7: Race/Socioeconomic Status Effects**

All participants were asked if they felt race and/or socioeconomic status influences parental involvement. None of the participants felt race affected the level of parental involvement within the African American race. 3 out 5 of the parents did not
think SES influences parental involvement at the school. 7 out of 10 participants agreed that socioeconomic status could hinder the parent’s ability to be involved more (see Table 9). The administrators and teachers share the idea that work schedule or not having a job can cause parents not to be as involved. Staff 1 and Staff 2 both stated: “parents have to work, and their schedules make it difficult for them to attend programs at the school at night”.

**Table 9**

*Research Question 7 Findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 7</th>
<th>Theme 7</th>
<th>Perceptions and Attitudes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel race and/or socioeconomic status influences parental involvement?</td>
<td>Race/SES Effects</td>
<td>P2: “Parents work many hours and the “lack of finances hinders parental involvement.”</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P4: “The amount of money you make or don't make does not affect parental involvement.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S2: “I think because the ability of one to not have to work or not have to work multiple jobs is a major advantage as opposed to those who have to. So, for example, when your socioeconomic status leads to what would be classified as poverty, you have to work. Sometimes you have to work nights and sometimes you have to work both jobs and days and nights leaving less opportunity for you to be as actively involved as those who may come from a household where financially their stable and they may not need to work allowing them to have much more free time to become actively involved in the school.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S4: “I do feel like socioeconomic, for sure, because our parents may not make as much money as they do have to work harder They have to work more than one job. They're less likely to be able to pick up the phone if you call in the middle of the day or to attend after-school events. A lot of our students have parents who work nights or who work double shifts to provide for them.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S1: “I always tell parents about my personal experience because I had a father who was a blue-collar worker and he worked out in the sun all day”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
but he always made it a point to attend every PTA meeting every SAC meeting and so I’ve seen what difference it made for me and I always share with the parents at my school because my dad did that he was still involved and even up until I got into college my performances he was always there with our secret handshake secret ways because we build that relationship and when you have parents involved as a child you want to do better because your parents are always here (at school).”

**Theme 8: Relationships**

Many participants felt one way to encourage African American engagement at the school was by building relationships among stakeholders (see Table 10). The participants provided ways they engage with the administrators, teachers, and parents with other parents. The parents that are active at the school were part of the PTA, SAC, and attend other school events. The following parents share their perceptions of the relationships they’ve built with others at the school.

Researcher: How would you classify your relationships with your child’s teachers or school staff?

P1: “Everybody knows me out there I have no problem with communicating with the staff I’ve been participating at this school. Some of the strong relationships I have are with the teachers because some of the teachers that my previous two children had are my current children who attend the school.”

P2: “My relationship with my child’s teacher and the staff is great. I’m there when they need me, and they are there when I need them. I’ve formed a relationship with some of the older teacher that is now teaching middle school. My relationship is stronger with some of the older than others.”

Staff 1 and Staff 2 believed some relationships of the active parents have formed out of a need the parents and filled at the school.

**Table 10**

*Research Question 8 Findings*
What type of relationships have you formed in regard to encouraging parental involvement?

**Theme 8: Relationships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions and Attitudes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1: “I initially call due to behavior problems with their students and also academic problems.”</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2: I think the relationships were formed out of needs that they saw and them reaching out to be actively involved to close the gap between the needs that they have seen. I do feel like the parents that I communicate with they appreciate it. They appreciate hearing from somebody at the school, especially when it's not a negative phone call. They appreciate getting to know their children's teachers and administration especially when it's not a negative phone call.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1: Some of the strong relationships I have are with the teachers because some of the teachers that my previous two children had my current children who attend the school also have.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3: Most of my relationships with my parents was formed because of behavior problems with their students and also academic problems.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 9: Suggestions to School**

Parents were asked a follow-up question about ways to improve parental involvement and how the school can possibly get others involved (see Table 11). The parents that responded agree that the school “must communicate more with the parents” by using different outlets, such as flyers or emails. Parent 1, Parent 2, and Parent 5 collectively agree “adequate communication between teachers and administrators would raise parental involvement”.

**Table 11**

*Research Questions 10 Findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 9</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What suggestions would you give teachers and/or administrators that could improve parental involvement at the school?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 9</strong> Suggestions to School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceptions and Attitudes

P2: With adequate communication between teachers and administrators, parental involvement would rise to the next level. If teachers and administrators are more accessible to parents, parental involvement would increase.

P1: “There could be a lot more parent involvement, but it has to come from the administrators. When the administrators get involved with different things then the parents will follow. When administrators get more involved and active at school, then the parents will become more involved in their children's academic work, volunteer, attend field trips, and everything. Talk to parents at the pickup and drop off; they need to come to the events that are going on. Maybe go around to the community and talk to everyone. Let the community know that we have a PTA. They need to let staff know that support the school.”

P5: I think the school should communicate more with the parents.

Chapter 4 Summary

Chapter four presented the results of the in-depth interviews in a narrative format by themes identified themes. Through detailed pattern analysis and coding, the research findings were organized according to the eight major themes discovered. The findings revealed the administrators, teachers, and African American parents’ attitudes and perceptions of parental involvement in middle school. A strong emphasis was placed on defining parental involvement, expectations, level of parental involvement, school activities, benefits of parental involvement, the importance of parental involvement in middle school, race/SES effects, relationships, suggestions to the school.

Chapter five will include a summary of the study as well as the study conclusions, recommendations, and reflections. The conclusion section will present an analysis of the findings presented in Chapter four as they relate to answering the research question followed by the researcher’s recommendations and reflections.
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to discover the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in the eighth grade. The intent was to discover how the attitudes and perceptions of these stakeholders affect the level of parental involvement in eighth grade. The primary objective of this chapter is to summarize and interpret the study’s findings in relation to the study’s problem, the literature, and the theoretical framework that guided this study. Additionally, this chapter discusses the limitations of this study and shares implications of the results for practice. Finally, recommendations for future research that can further expand the subject of African American parental involvement in eighth grade are provided.

Discussion of the Results

A careful analysis of the interview data allowed for interpretation of the essence of the ten participants’ lived experiences. The data analysis process from Chapter four generated nine major study themes which included 1) Definition of Parental Involvement, 2) Stakeholder Expectations, 3) Level of Parental Involvement, 4) School Activities, 5) Benefits of Parental Involvement, 6) Importance of Parental Involvement in Middle School, 7) Race/Socioeconomic Status Effects, 8) Relationships, and 9) Suggestions to School.

Definition of Parental Involvement

The majority of the participants described parental involvement in similar ways and provided examples of ways parents get involved in their child’s education. It became
very evident that African American parents who volunteer, request meetings with teachers, and attend school functions are perceived as being involved in their child’s education by all participants. The findings show congruent perceptions of how parental involvement is identified by the administrators, teachers, and African American parents. It is evident by the detailed descriptions of what parental involvement is that actively being engaged in the child’s educational endeavors is a form of involvement.

The type of parent engagement was expressed by 8 out of 10 participants at the school level. The examples expressed how parents are involved with the students’ education at the school. Other participants shared that parents are involved outside of the school setting when they attend to the students’ educational concern at home. As Staff 1 shared:

I think parental involvement is when parents are assisting their child at home or assisting the teacher on a continuous basis from an alternate location.

Parent 2 shared:

I think it is assisting with homework and projects. Making sure my child stays on task.

These findings suggest the need for communication between all stakeholders as to what parent involvement is to address the schools concern about the lack of involvement. As seen in the different responses, parent involvement can be what the parent does at school or at home. However, all participants agree that either form of involvement is participating in the educational experience of the student in some way. The findings reveal the need for the school to seek ways to share what involvement is or could be within the school’s climate and at home.
Stakeholder Expectations

The administrator and teacher participants of this study shared some differences in their experience of the schools’ expectations of parental involvement. There were expectations of parental involvement the school administrators believed the staff should have previous knowledge of, but there were participants who were unclear of those expectations. There were some commonalities and differences in the staffs’ perceptions of parental involvement expectations at the school. As for similarities, teachers reported their assumptions about the role they play in getting parents involved. As for the differences, administrators believed all stakeholders, to include teachers and parents, know the school’s expectation of parental involvement.

The African American parent participants shared a wide variety of perceptions of their knowledge of the school’s expectations for parent involvement. Some of the African American parents expressed that there was no expectation, but felt it was their duty as a parent to inquire about things related to their child’s education or happenings at the school. Some similarities included participants sharing their experiences with parent-teacher conferences and/or participating in school activities.

These findings highlight the need for clear expectations from the administrators to the teachers and parents, teachers to parents, and parents to school. The expectations of all participants stem from different areas of concern and/or interest. The school policy should document the role of families and schools in the implementation of parental involvement. All stakeholders have a responsibility and play a vital role in the educational endeavors of the students. These stakeholder responsibilities include teachers keeping parents informed of the students’ academic progress; parents visiting their
child’s school and supporting their educational experience; and administrators providing meaningful opportunities for parent participation. The findings suggest the need for schools to let parents know the value of their presence and how important it is student growth. Ensuring all stakeholders are clear about what the expectations are can encourage more participation and increase the participation of those that are not currently involved in the learning process of their child.

Level of Parental Involvement

The data analysis procedure revealed this central theme in Chapter 4 following the parent participants interviews. All parent participants rated themselves as being very involved in their child’s education in some way. The following theme, “School Activities”, provides a list of ways parents say they get involved and school opportunities for parental involvement.

The parent participants revealed the level of parental involvement they have is not associated with negative issues that may arise, like their child’s behavior or low academics. This was not the initiating factor of their involvement. However, there was information that made this point more illuminating since all parents did not share in the need for involvement all the time if their child was doing well in school. Other parent participants shared that their involvement was to ensure their child is being successful in school and ties the involvement to outside entities that support or encourage their child. As Parent 4 shared:

Very involved. For example, he's in sports, I make sure his grades are good so that he can stay in sports. Because if his grades aren't good, he won't play sports. Because he loves football, so I make sure I stay on top of him. When his report cards and progress reports come out, I asked him why a grade may be a “C” and
what he will be doing to bring it up by the next quarter or he can't play football. So that's how I get involved with his education.

The findings show parents do rate their level of involvement in different ways for many different reasons. Each parent participant rated themselves on being involved with their child as it related to educational activities outside the home. Three of the five parents rated themselves as frequently and the other two parents rated themselves as almost all the time. These findings show other ways parents may be involved to encourage their child’s educational growth outside of school. This may account for the level of involvement the parent feels they provide for their child. This finding implies that there are reasons parent feel they are involved even when schools do not see them at events or activities.

In contrast, the level of parental involvement is measured by the administrators and teachers differently. The findings show the school may only focus on the parent’s attendance at school-sponsored events, volunteering efforts, and/or participating in conferences requested by the administrator or teacher. The findings reveal the need for educators to provide other ways parents get involved with the student’s education at school, home, and outside the home.

**School Activities**

This theme emerged from the definition and examples provided by the participants were the type of involvement. The school shared their expectations of parental involvement and parents expressed ways they get involved. However, there was a difference in the types of activities associated with the level of parental involvement at the school. The findings show the type of events at the school, whether they are academic
events or activities outside the classroom like field trips. One of the school’s expectation is for parents to volunteer. However, they must be cleared by different security measures set up through the district to receive access to certain aspects of the student’s educational experience. Several parent participants have attended field trips when their schedules permit it once they complete the security clearing requirements.

The findings show that the school provides some ways for involvement to happen within the parent-school relationships. However, due to the lack of opportunities and the parents work schedules, there is a need for the school to find other creative ways to engage parents. As Staff 1 shared:

I think the more specific it is, the more likely you are to have parents who are willing to come out. Because many times they don't know what it is that they're needed for. If they don't know and can’t identify what they are needed for, their actually not going to get involved. I think that that plays a major part in it.

The findings reveal the need for schools to have clear expectations and model that expectation by communicating all the ways they can get involved. The findings suggest the need for more communication between the parents and schools as to the way they are involved and how they can increase that involvement by sharing with parent’s ways that can be done for any parent regardless of the amount of time they have available to participate in their child’s education. Since time is an issue that arose from the findings, schools providing activities that are not just at night but are a reasonable time for certain activities that could increase attendance at the school activities or events.

**Benefits of Parental Involvement**

Collectively, the parent participants agree the benefit of getting involved is to help their child succeed and grow. As shared by Parent 1:
“The benefit is that I'm always there with my kid. It's when they see me more active at their school and they have to pay more attention to their work at school. Because if you don't pay attention to what your children are doing, they will think that you don't care.”

The findings revealed what is important or is made meaningful by the parents can become as important to their child. This shows that parent involvement can help with academics and encourage the student if they see their parent actively monitoring them and showing interest.

The parent participants expressed how important it was for them to know what was going on with their child at school, which lead to them being more involved or not at all. As Parent 3 shared “I’m involved to help her learn to be successful”. The findings revealed that African American parents have a desire to assist their child in the learning process. However, there are times about the type of involvement needed at the school. School personnel can minimize this confusion by making an effort to create a positive and welcoming climate that allows pares to feel their input matters and encourages them to participate.

The findings suggest the need for educators to inform parents of the positive benefits associated with their involvement and to remind them of their shared responsibility in educating their child. As shared by Staff 3:

“I think as a parent, we all have an expectation for our children and we all want our children to succeed as an African American parent. So, I think in order for our children to be successful, we have to be involved in the process. We just can't let them go because once they get a certain age, we kind of give them their independence but we need to take the reins back and just get involved with them.”

**Importance of Parental Involvement in Middle School**
All participants agreed that the middle school years is a significant time of growth in the student’s life. The findings reveal students are impressionable at this developmental stage and are in need of guidance from their parents. Parents shared that it is important to assist their child by staying on top of their assignments and keeping up their grades. As Parent 1 shared:

“Their kids are getting older…you need to pay more attention to them because they have other kids there peer pressuring them with drugs, sex, and doing stuff that they don't have any business doing. You can stay on top of them and they won't have time to do that and it'll let them know not to get involved with those things.”

The parent participants shared the attitude that their child is more susceptible to negative encounters in middle school and can be influenced if there is no support present. Parent 2 shared:

“As a parent, I want my child to achieve any goals whether it is small or big. For him to achieve these goals, as a parent, I must be involved in his education progress and social activities outside of education.”

The findings reveal the need for schools to provide support to parents and students on the social changes they experience in middle school. Discovering the unique dynamics of the parents and students at the school may increase the level of parental involvement and assist in providing services to students with academic or social-emotional needs. Some participants believed students need help with understanding new requirements in middle school that are vastly different in elementary. As Staff 1 shared:

“Parental involvement is a focus of especially high schools and transitioning kids into becoming independent, but yet still being a part of what they're doing. That could be from grades in courses their taking from what their passions are in terms of what they want to do when they do move toward graduating.”

Providing parents with resources, support, and the proper understanding of how their child can successfully navigate middle school may help parents feel more equipped
to assist their child. Educating the parents and providing this type of assistance is necessary to help parents become more active participants in their child’s education and support their child directly.

Race/Socioeconomic Status Effects

The findings show that none of the participants felt race was a factor that influenced African American parental involvement. However, they all agree that the socioeconomic status of the African American parent has a great influence on the level and type of involvement parents provide. The findings suggest a need for administrators to address the types of school events and activities that offer. The timing of the activities is affected by the parents work schedule or dynamics of the family structure. As Parent 4 shared:

“Parents work, especially of African-American parents, because 90% of the African-American parents are single-parents. I mean once in a blue moon you actually find parents that have two parents in the home. But I feel like sometimes you don't have the time to be involved when you have a situation like that. Sometimes you have to stay on top of your child even when you don't stay on top of the school.”

The findings share the contributions to low African American middle school involvement levels can be SES levels, single-parent families, and work schedules. These findings emphasize the need for schools to make efforts to build meaningful relationships with the parents. These relationships could provide the school with information to assist the families in their school and community and make modifications that allow an increased number of African American parents to become involved.

Relationships
The findings revealed that some parents might not be as involved as expected because their child has never been in academic or behavioral trouble at school. This finding revealed that some parents are not always present in their child’s academic or schooling because they are doing well. Parent 3 shared “No, I don’t have to speak to my child’s teacher(s) at all. There are no problems with her.” This finding indicates that parents see contact from schools as a need to know basis only. The administrators and teachers can change this culture of thinking by finding ways to contact parents for reasons other than school events or when a problem with their child arises.

When asked to describe how or why some relationships formed to encourage parent participation, administrators and teachers revealed a range of factors that affect the level of involvement. The school personnel, to include administrators and teachers, have initiated relationships with parents out of compliance with a rule or school expectation. Other factors included contact was made because the student was in disciplinary trouble due to low academic grades or misbehavior at the school. Parent participants expressed the need for administrators and teachers to improve on their level of communication and improve the way they inform parents about certain situations. Therefore, it is important for schools to invest more time and resources into formulating positive relationships with African American parents since this can be a determining factor as to whether parents are involved or uninvolved in their child’s education. The findings show teachers need to seek other ways to form positive relationships with the parents that will encourage ongoing, authentic relationships.

The parent participants all shared that the relationships they have with the teachers are great and strong. Parent 2 shared “I’m there when they need me, and they are
there when I need them.” The study finding emphasizes the positive relationships parents feel they have with the teachers their child has and the ones they have contact with from past encounters. The relationships parents have with the administrators are less apparent from the findings. The parent participants only shared the relationships built between them and the teachers. It is not apparent from the findings that type of relationships, if any, that are formed between parents and administrators directly. The majority of parent contact is made at the School Advisory Council and PTA meetings. Being open to the parents at the school can improve relationships among all stakeholders and possibly encourage more parental involvement. As a result, parents believe their presence is needed and desired at the school. When administrators take time to build relationships with parents, it can encourage them to make an effort to participate at their children’s school. Building these relationships can help administrators get to know the parents on a more personal level and discover the unique backgrounds of their students.

The findings also shared the parents have relationships with each other that are positive as well. Some of these relationships originated from friendships between their children. Others were formed from seeing parents at the school functions, volunteering at the school, or participating in the school’s PTA. Parent 5 shared “I know a couple of the parents because of their friendships with my kids.” The findings have shown that those relationships can motivate the parents to stay involved and possibly encourage other parents they may know at the school. Parent 2 “We only communicate if it is about an activity or concern at the school.” This finding reveals that the relationships may only exist at school and not become long-term. However, this is an excellent start at having a positive impact on the increase of parental involvement of other parents since individuals
will feel like they are part of a more significant cause in the educational process of their child.

**Suggestions to School**

When asked to share suggestions to the school that may help increase African American parental involvement, parents shared some similar ideas for the staff. Some suggestions included sending out flyers, parent links, emails, communicating with parents when they drop off and/or pick up students, and attend events that are going on at the school. These suggestions will be incorporated into a later section of this chapter, “Implication of the Results for Practice”.

**Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

The majority of the study findings support and extend the scope of the current literature as well as the theoretical framework that guided this study. The relationship between the study’s findings, the theoretical framework, and the reviewed literature are discussed at greater length below.

**Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory.** The findings of this qualitative case study confirmed the theoretical framework. This theory provides a model that emphasizes the significance of different overlapping spheres of influence including the school, the family, and the community which all affect a child’s acquisition of knowledge and future development. The level to which these spheres overlap dictate the degree to which children are able to develop and learn. The model stressed the importance of each group in the spheres understanding their role while developing a relationship.
Despite the multifaceted relationships between the administrators, teachers, and the African American parents, there is increased overlap of the parent and family relationships. After interviewing the ten participants, the findings revealed there was more of a parent-teacher relationship than those between parents and administrators. This degree of overlap between the family and parent spheres is beneficial because it allows parents and teachers to work as a team in the educational endeavors and overall growth of the student. Only two spheres of influence overlapped in this study since no parent participants mentioned any type of school involvement in the community. It is suggested that schools place effort in developing ways to involve the community and parents to encourage student growth overall.

**Epstein’s Parental Involvement Model.** Epstein’s model supports six different forms of parental involvement to promote positive and effective partnerships between schools, parents, and the community. The six forms include 1) parenting, 2) communication, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at home, 5) decision-making, and 6) collaborating with the community (Epstein, 2009). The framework assists in interpreting the level of effectiveness of parent-teacher partnerships in the study and provides suggestions for improving the partnerships at the school.

The parent participants involvement applied to the forms of parenting, communicating, and volunteering from the model. The participants provided several examples of being involved in their child’s education. These positive ways were shared among all parents and validate the model’s findings. Majority of the parents expressed being involved on an on-going basis, some more frequently than others. The frequent communication with the teacher showed positive relationships exist between the parents
and teachers. Also, the administrators shared several routes the school takes to inform the parents via calls and flyers. However, those parents that did not have regular communication with their child’s teacher, was not able to share whether the relationship could in some way increase their involvement. Conversely, these parents may show a more complex relationship with the teachers in communicating in other ways that are less positive. The findings reveal positive partnerships can be successful in this involvement form. Parents shared their involvement was expressed through volunteering at their child’s school. Epstein’s Parental Involvement Model was supported since there were both positive and less positive partnerships between the parents, teachers, and the school. The parents did not mention being involved in the decision-making at the school or share opportunities provided by the school to get the parents and school involved with the community. It is suggested that schools develop a plan to get the community more engaged in the school culture. Also, the parents provided suggestions to improve parental involvement by communicating more with them and allowing them to provide feedback concern school operations and/or events.

**Limitations**

Qualitative research studies contain certain limitations that may be unavoidable or recognized in hindsight. One limitation of this study was the small number of participants. The ten participants were from a small school setting in one county in Florida. The limited population size does not lend itself to obtaining generalized findings to the greater African American populations. These findings should be considered with significant caution. The sample cannot represent the majority of all middle school grades and population. Two grade levels are eliminated from this case study and data collection.
Implication of the Results for Practice

According to the findings, this study has many implications. The study uncovered those positive relationships found within teacher-parent partnerships. None of the parent participants shared any experiences of partnerships or relationships they had with the administrators. The negative perceptions of and experience with the administrators were not accounted for within this study. The parents reported there is a need for more communication and interaction with the administrators. Despite the minimum rapport with the administrators, parents were present in the educational endeavors of their child. As a result of the absent relationships with the parents, action must be taken by the Administrators to ensure that they implement ways to engage the parents and strategies that would build rapport. Taking measures to alleviate this issue could promote more positive parent-administrator relationships that may lead to higher parental involvement from the African American parents at the Title 1 school.

There were suggestions provided by the parent participants that may aid in increasing African American parental involvement in middle school. One of those valuable suggestions was for administrators to communicate more with them about the school activities, expectations, and improving the parent-administrator partnerships. The majority of the participants revealed they believed the parent-teacher and parent-to-parent relationships were influential factors in their level of involvement. It is essential that the school administrators establish and sustain positive relationships among the African American parents at the middle school. District or school level training, experiences, and communication with the student’s community could help improve cultural awareness. This could provide the schools with more insight into strategies that will improve the
level of African American participation and develop positive relationships among all stakeholders. Understanding how to formulate relationships with African American parents and other diverse cultures can improve involvement among all racial groups.

The parent participants also proposed that the school implement multiple ways of communicating information to the parents such as sending emails, flyers, newsletter, and one-to-one conversations with the parents. One of the study participants recommended more hands-on activities and events for parents to participate with the students and staff as a whole. The most common suggestion was to have administrators play a more intricate part in encouraging African American involvement. The lack of administrator-parent relationships can be resolved by administrators making themselves more available and present at the school activities to encourage parental support. The findings shared the perceptions of parents that were not clear of the school’s expectations. This too can be resolved when administrators express those well-detailed expectations directly to parents through one-on-one interactions and by putting forth the effort to include them in the decision-making aspects of building more positive school cultures. Fulfilling these suggestions given by the parent participants can transform the level and type of African American parent involvement at the school. These recommendations should be considered and applied within the school culture to promote higher levels of school involvement.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The following are recommendations for further research on this study:

- Use a quantitative case study to measure the different factors that affect African American involvement. This method can incorporate statistical
data to the complement the existing data. This measure would allow for
deepen understand the level of impact that different factors can have on
African American school involvement.

- The study could invite additional schools to participate and involve a
larger sample. More staff and parents would help validate the above
findings of this study.

- Since the study only sought the attitudes and perceptions of
administrators, teachers, and African American parents, the student
perceptions could be added to compare the level of engagement parents
think they have. This will also allow the Overlapping Spheres of Influence
Theory to be measured and give voice to the need for more parental
engagement at the middle school level.

- Using the case study basis to include another ethnicity and compare the
findings to observe the levels of involvement from other races.

- This case study can be used in a focus group setting with the
administrators, teachers, and parents to observe if the attitudes and
perceptions show different responses. The use of different questions could
provide further insight on building stronger partnerships and developing
strategies to improve involvement levels.

- To compare the experiences of other middle school administrators,
teachers, and African American parents, use this study in other grade
levels to include grades 6, 7, and high school. The findings would reveal
whether a difference exists between the relationships and the level of African American parental involvement.

Conclusion

The attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents revealed many positive outlooks regarding the level of parental involvement in middle school. Since parents are perceived as their child’s first teacher, providing them with ways to assist with the educational journey at school and home can improve the type of involvement administrators and teachers see as a change in the student’s overall growth. Building working relationships between parents and schools is an important element in increasing involvement and creating policies that will clearly state the expectations of all parties. The data collected from the interviews helped to analyze the similarities and differences of perceptions of the level of parental involvement in middle school.

There were many outcomes produced from the study. All participants shared a need for more involvement and how that would help improve the overall success of all learners. School partnerships were identified in the findings to be a great way to increase parental involvement and develop a more positive attitude about the school. Resources are needed to continually improve ways schools engage all stakeholders to ensure the student success. Collaboration can benefit administrators, teachers, parents, and students throughout all levels of education. These partnerships must have defining parameters and all stakeholders must be allowed to lend voice within the decision-making process to help
inspire more involvement. The literature addresses how meaningful collaboration of all stakeholders can benefit the students’ educational success. The study’s findings express similar perceptions among the participants. Educators must further address strategies to improve parental involvement and its value to the school culture.

There are several ways schools can engage more parents, families, and communities in the educational process. Schools can survey parents to identify needs and interest and provide professional development to parents and community for engagement to school faculty. Training for parents and community stakeholders can create effective communication and partnering skills. Developing outreach strategies for parent involvement opportunities and training school-community liaisons who build relationship with communities’ history, language, and cultural background to contact parents and coordinate activities. Also, regularly evaluate the effectiveness of family involvement programs and activities.

School leadership is an important component in building a school culture that is welcoming of parents to participate both physically and verbally. Developing creative ways to encourage parents is one way to improve the presence of parents during school events and activities. However, building working relationships with parents will take the school leaders becoming more available and the development of policies that identify multiple types of parental involvement. Effective school leaders must possess the knowledge to create a school culture that empowers stakeholders, provides clear expectations, and fosters relationships between active participants that share a sense of
ownership. Establishing a shared vision among the parents, teachers, and administrators can result in a school environment that is both open and supportive.
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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

Institutional Review Board

16400 N.W. 32nd Ave., Miami, Florida 33054
Proposal Approval Form
St. Thomas University

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S): Vernon Czelusniak Supervising Doctoral Student
Melissa Laster

PROJECT TITLE: Parental Involvement in Eighth Grade: Administrator, Teacher, and
Parent Attitudes and Perceptions

In accordance with St. Thomas University policy and national guidelines governing the
ethical use of human participants in research, the university Institutional Review Board
certifies that the above stated project:

_____ being exempt from full review was peer reviewed by the IRB under the
expedited review process and in its original form was

__x__ was revised according to suggestions made by the IRB to the investigators
and was

_____ being subject to a full review by the IRB was

REVISION REQUESTED ON:

APPROVED ON: 5/22/18

DISAPPROVED ON _______________________

Human Subjects are adequately informed of any risks:

Gary Feinberg, Ph.D.

Signature: Gary Feinberg, Ph.D.
Chair, St. Thomas University IRB
Date: 05/24/2018
Appendix B

Statement of Original Work and Signature

Copyright Acknowledgement Form St. Thomas University I, Melissa C. Laster, understand that I am solely responsible for the content of this dissertation and its use of copyrighted materials. All copyright infringements and issues are solely the responsibly of myself as the author of this dissertation and not St. Thomas University, its programs, or libraries.

Signature of Author
__________________________________________

Date
__________________________________________

Witness (Type Name Here)
__________________________________________

Date
__________________________________________
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Parental Involvement in Eighth Grade: Administrator, Teacher, and Parent Attitudes and Perceptions

Researcher: Melissa Laster

Email Address and Telephone Number: mlaster@stu.edu

Research Supervisor: Vernon Czelusniak, PhD

Supervisor Email Address: vczelusniak@stu.edu

You are invited to be part of a research study. The researcher is a doctoral learner at St. Thomas University in the School of Arts and Education. The information in this form is provided to help you decide if you want to participate. The form describes what you will do during the study and the risks and benefits of the study.

If you have any questions or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the researcher. Do not participate in the study unless the researcher has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY ABOUT? The purpose of this Qualitative Case Study is to examine the attitudes and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and African American parents on parental involvement in an eighth grade. The proposed Qualitative Case Study will provide administrators and teachers with an understanding of how to get African American parents engaged at the small Title 1 PK-8 School in South Florida.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE IN THIS STUDY?

Ten (10) participants will be in this study.

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO BE IN THE STUDY?

You are invited to be in the study because you are: Adult

All participants will be between ages 20 - 79.

If you do not meet the description above, you are not able to be in the study.

WHO IS PAYING FOR THIS STUDY?

The researcher is not receiving funds to conduct this study.
WILL IT COST ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You do not have to pay to be in the study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study, your participation will last about 30 minutes to 1 hour during interview time. About 1 per week for 1 consecutive week of participation is required.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you decide to be in this study and if you sign this form, you will do the following things:

• Give personal information about yourself, such as years of work in your particular area of expertise.

WILL BEING IN THIS STUDY HELP ME?

Being in this study may help you if you have children in middle school and would like to best understand the need for parental involvement at the secondary level. Information from this study might help researchers help others in the future.

ARE THERE RISKS TO ME IF I AM IN THIS STUDY?

No study is completely risk-free. However, we do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed during this study. You may stop being in the study at any time if you become uncomfortable. You should be aware, however, that there is a small possibility that responses could be viewed by unauthorized parties (e.g. computer hackers because your responses are being entered and stored on a web server).

WILL I GET PAID?

You will not receive anything for being in the study.

DO I HAVE TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decide not to be in the study and you can change your mind about being in the study at any time. There will be no penalty to you. If you want to stop being in the study, tell the researcher.

WHO WILL USE AND SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT MY BEING IN THIS STUDY?
Participants will be kept anonymous and you will not be identified by name, age, or other personal information in this study. Data will be stored on a password secured private computer. In any written reports or publications, no one will be able to identify you.

The researcher will keep the information you provide in a home office and only the researcher, researcher’s supervisor, and dissertation committee will have access to the study data.

**WHO CAN I TALK TO ABOUT THIS STUDY?**

You can ask questions about the study at any time. You can call the researcher at any time if you have any concerns or complaints. You should call the researcher at the phone number listed on page 1 of this form if you have questions about the study procedures, study costs (if any), study payment (if any), or if you get hurt or sick during the study.

St. Thomas University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) has been established to protect the rights and welfare of human research participants. Please contact us at 1-888-111-1111, for any of the following reasons:

- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You wish to discuss problems or concerns.
- You have suggestions to improve the participant experience.
- You do not feel comfortable talking with the researcher.

You may contact the IRB without giving us your name. We may need to reveal information you provide in order to follow up if you report a problem or concern.

**DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THIS STUDY?**

By clicking the link below you agree to the following statement:

I have read this form, and I have been able to ask questions about this study. I voluntarily agree to be in this study. I agree to allow the use and sharing of my study-related records as described above.

I have not given up any of my legal rights as a research participant. I will print a copy of this consent information for my records.
APPENDIX D

Initial Codes and Themes