

UNDERSTANDING FATHER INVOLVEMENT REGARDING THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS
OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES IN URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS

by

Temujin H. Taylor

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2019

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ABSTRACT

There is a great deal of evidence that parental involvement is positively related to how children and adolescents perform in school (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; McLanahan, Tach, & Schneider, 2013). Few studies (Battle & Scott, 2000; Reynolds, Howard, & Jones, 2015) have specifically looked at the influence of fathers and non-biological father figures on the educational outcomes of African American adolescents. Father involvement is crucial to the academic success of African American males. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of involved African American fathers regarding the academic success of their high school age sons? For the purpose of this study, father involvement is broadly defined as engagement (interacting with the child directly), accessibility (being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child), and responsibility (monitoring and providing for the child; Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985). Social ecological theory will be used to guide the study. Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that socio-cultural systems and environmental factors influence a child's development. Data was collected primarily from African American fathers who were involved in their high school age sons' academics through interviews, a focus group session, and document analysis. Phenomenological data analysis procedures as described by Moustakas' (1994) seven step model were utilized. The findings suggests that through the lived experiences of 10 African American fathers three themes were developed: getting to the next level, father-son relationships, and the importance of education. The study concluded that father involvement is a crucial component in assisting African American males with becoming academic successful in urban high schools as well as life.

Keywords: African American fathers, involvement, high school, academic success, sons

Copyright Page

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my wife and my children who made countless sacrifices and remained patient as I navigated the doctoral process and assisted me in believing that I had the intelligence and fortitude to complete a doctoral program. A special dedication is to my son Tyriq, consistent father involvement is what I vow to provide as we grow together as father and son. I would also like to dedicate this study to my mother, who as a single parent taught me whatever I put my mind to, through God's guidance I can accomplish it. Lastly, I dedicate this study to the 10 African American fathers whose participating made this study possible. You men are a true inspiration for all fathers who attempt to provide educational guidance, daily support, and be a role model for their sons.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone who assist me in completing this journey. Dr. James Swezey and Dr. Gary Carrington, your guidance, patience, and insightful recommendations assisted me in completing my doctoral process. I greatly appreciate all that you did for me.

I would also like to thank the following people who assisted, provided guidance, and motivated me to “Don’t Quit” and “See it through”; Dr. Kelene Robinson, Dr. Terrence Robinson, Dr. Theodore Robinson, Dr. Ryan Durr, and Dr. Kelvin Watson. You all are the epitome of perseverance.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Urban African American youth are among the most disadvantaged and troubled demographic groups in the United States (Li, Nussbaum, & Richards, 2007). More specifically, African American males of high school age have been faced with numerous social and cultural disadvantages that negatively influence successful academic achievement (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008). This pattern of cultural disadvantage can be traced all the way back to slavery in this country and persists today through a myriad of compounding life circumstances. These circumstances include factors that prevent African Americans from living lives as fulfilled as others, including poverty, single mother headed households, crime involvement, racial discrimination, and lower levels of education and academic performance (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008).

In addition to high levels of poverty, being reared in a single mother household, and the notion of experiencing criminal activity, many African American males continue to have difficulties with academic success while enrolled in school. Numerous studies (Noguera, 2012; Nord, 2004; Schott, 2010) have documented that African-American males enrolled in school often lag behind their peers academically, have less access to rigorous coursework, experience racial bias from school personnel because of lower expectations, and are more likely to drop out. According to Davis (2005), minority males are consistently at risk for academic failure for various reasons, such as inadequate test scores, increasing referrals for special education services, and high rates of disciplinary action, such as suspension and expulsion. Further, the long-term consequences of negative environmental factors may be more impactful to developmental trajectory of African American males (e.g., academic performance, financial

mobility, and employment) compared to their White counterparts (Swisher, Kuhl, & Chavez, 2013). These effects may be mitigated by higher levels of parental monitoring (Poulin & Denault, 2012), and higher levels of meaningful interactions with and closeness to biological fathers (Coley et al., 2007; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2004).

Parental involvement is one of the most widely recognized factors that impact a child's learning and development (Abel, 2012). Studies report that children whose parents are involved in their schooling are more likely to earn high grades and enjoy school than children whose parents are not involved (Brown, Michelsen, Halle, & Moore, 2003). Much of the literature points to two parent households or single mother households. Several studies (Lamb, 2012; Carlson & Magnuson, 2011; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003) have reported that father involvement in some cases appears to have an impact on their children's outcomes. The limited research (Abel, 2012; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Dunn, 2004; Fagan, 2000; Nord, 1998a) that has been conducted suggests that fathers' involvement has a significant relationship on a variety of academic outcomes for children and adolescents. More research is needed, therefore, to better understand factors affecting fathers' decisions to become involved in their children's learning and how they choose to be involved. This need is particularly significant for African American fathers who are more likely to be classified as non-residential (U.S. Department of Education, 1998) and have lower levels of educational attainment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015) than fathers in other ethnic groups.

The purpose of the study was to highlight the experiences of African American fathers by exploring their voices, perspectives, and involvement practices as they relate to their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their high school age sons. For the purpose of this study, academic success is defined as the long-term goals for

improved academic achievement, as measured by proficiency on the annual statewide reading/language arts and mathematics assessments, for all students (Ohio Department of Education, 2018). The researcher sought to answer the following central question: What are the experiences of involved African American fathers regarding their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their high school age sons? This chapter provides information and introduces key aspects of the proposed research study. The subsections in this chapter include background, situation of self, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, and research questions. This chapter also discusses the research plan of the proposed study.

Background

African American children are twice as likely as all other children to grow up in households without their biological father (Cheadle et al., 2010; Julion et al., 2016). Thus, the number of non-resident fathers (fathers living apart from their children) are more prevalent in African American families (Julion et al., 2016; Livingston & Parker, 2010). Disparities in the number of children growing up without their father in the household may be linked to the fathers' and mothers' upbringing. Since African American fathers may not have directly reaped the benefits of their own father's involvement in their upbringing (Hunter et al., 2006; Julion et al., 2016), they may lack the experience of learning about fathering from their own fathers and, thus, may be unprepared. Research supports the importance of positive father involvement to the wellbeing of children. Fathers who are positively involved with their children actively contribute to their children's well-being by being engaged, accessible, and responsible (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011; Julion et al., 2016; Lamb et al., 1987). Fathers who are positively involved can improve their children's academic achievement by employing parenting styles (Jeynes, 2015;

Julion et al., 2016; McKinney & Renk, 2008) that can complement or augment the contributions of mothers (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Julion et al., 2016). Parents are their children's first teacher and, therefore, play an integral role in developing the children's orientation toward achievement. Substantial evidence supports the benefits of father involvement for child development, including improved academic achievement, social and cognitive skills, mental health, and self-esteem (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Pleck, 2010; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2008).

Historical

African American fathers have often been classified as non-residential (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Additionally, negative images of African American fathers have been reinforced by dominant societal stereotypes in the academic literature (Mirande, 1991). Bowman (1994) noted that African American men have been portrayed as uneducated, unemployed, and inadequate models for fathering. This portrayal has resulted in nullification of the fatherhood role for African American males. In particular, this depiction fosters the perception that African American fathers are not involved in their children's education (p. 14). In response to the aforementioned assumptions, it has been claimed that social scientists have concentrated too heavily on the lowest income group of African-American families while neglecting other African-American families (Billingsley, 1968). However, when African American fathers are studied, Cazenave (1979) points out that there is more concern with his "absence rather than his presence" (p. 583). This negative chronicling "deflects attention away from the many African American fathers who are present in the home and actively involved on all fronts of their family's lives" (Bright & Williams, 1996, p. 257). Contrary to these findings, recent empirical literature offers a different perspective, reporting

African American fathers are more visible than typically portrayed (Cabrera et al., 2000; Connor & White, 2011; Hammond et al., 2011; Shears, 2007; Young, 2011). Over the past couple of decades, there has been a shift in parenting roles for fathers, who are beginning to take on—and be seen as capable of taking on—caregiving roles traditionally thought to be filled solely by mothers (Finn & Henwood, 2009). Roopnarine (2004) suggests that African American fathering is likely to highlight ethnic and racial identity of minority oppression. This makes fathering involvement a matter of cultural pride among African Americans and influences early childrearing participation. In addition to identity, African American men contribute domestically as well. In married, working [African American families], 40% of fathers changed diapers, 77% played with the baby, 68% disciplined children, 49% helped children with homework, and 49% often took children to the doctor and dentist (Cazenave, 1979).

There was a thin body of research that spoke to African American father involvement. Generally speaking the literature on African American fathers within intact families was limited (Cazenave, 1979; Cochran, 1997). Prior to the mid-1980's, some of literature exploring the contributions of African American fathers to the family systems had been situated in a deficit model highlighting limited aspects of fathering and African American family experience as well as minimizing and misrepresenting the role of the African American father (Bryan & Ajo, 1992; Cazenave, 1979; McAdoo, 1988, 1993). Moreover, the literature relied on White middle-class families as a reference point for the African American experience (Bryan & Ajo, 1992) which showed a cultural discrepancy in representing African American fathers in a more accurate picture. In general, the accumulated body of knowledge on African American families prior to the mid-1980s largely ignored, distorted, or minimized the parenting role of African American men (Boyd-Franklin, 1989; Bryan & Ajo, 1992; Cazenave, 1979; Hutchinson, 1992; Lewis,

1988; McAdoo, 1988a, 1988b, 1993; McAdoo & McAdoo, 1994). McAdoo (1993) argued that African American men have been viewed differently for men of other ethnic groups. Previous literature utilized reports of wives to understand the roles of the African American fathers whereas White men's response to this issue was well documented (McAdoo, 1986).

McAdoo's (1993) theoretical paper on the importance of African American fathers concluded that historical, cultural, and contextual differences in the ecology of African American families reinforces the need for positive relationships between African American fathers and their young children. Some research (Black et al., 1999; Bronte-Tinkew, Carrano, Horowitz, & Kinukawa, 2008; Downer et al., 2008) with African American fathers has confirmed this and has demonstrated that African American fathers who are highly involved and provide positive opportunities for learning and development in their homes prior to school entry have children with enhanced academic competence.

During the past several decade, the literature on African American fathers, although it is not extensive, has changed dramatically. Today, we know that fathers are spending more time with children than ever before (Lamb, 2010) and that there are a myriad of positive outcomes for children whose fathers are involved in positive and meaningful ways (Paquette et al., 2013). Additionally, contrary to the belief that African American fathers are uninvolved in their children's education, research has shown that African American fathers who are involved in their children's academic lives set high expectations, provide support for meeting expectations, and take an interest in their children's extracurricular activities (Grief, Hrabowski & Maton, 1998; Perry, Harmon & Leeper, 2012, p. 699).

As research on the roles of fathers have increased in the past 30 years, operationalization of father involvement has broadened to include multiple dimensions of meaningful contributions

by fathers to their children's development (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987). Lamb et al. (1987) furthered fathering scholarship when they expanded the construct of father involvement to include three core domains in which fathers are involved with their children: accessibility, engagement, and responsibility. *Accessibility* is defined as being emotionally present and physically available to the child; *engagement* refers to interaction with the child in one-on-one activities such as playing, feeding, or putting the child to bed; and *responsibility* refers to making important decisions about the child's life and helping plan and assist in providing needed resources for the family.

Over the last several decades, research has sought to understand father-child relationships, father influence on child developmental outcomes, and father influence on the family well-being. Specifically, research has shown the importance of father involvement in children's educational attainment (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005), fewer behavior issues (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003), economic stability of the family, influencing juvenile delinquent behaviors (Coley & Medeiros, 2007), and child development (Lamb, 2004).

Despite a number of very thoughtful efforts, there is still no comprehensive theoretical framework to guide the next generation of research on what fathering is, why fathers parent in the manner they do, and how paternal actions directly and indirectly help determine children's development (Lamb, 1997; Palkovitz, 2002; Paquette, 2004; Pleck, 2007, 2010). Maddox-Smith and Maddox (2001) suggested that an in-depth analysis of issues surrounding father or father figure involvement in children's education may assist politicians and policy makers who make decisions that affect the lives of men, especially African American men.

Social

The phenomenon of absent fathers is a social issue that appears to be escalating, especially in African American households across the United States (Baskerville, 2004; Wilson et al., 2016). According to Horn and Sylvester (2002), the United States leads the world in the number of fatherless homes. In 2011, for example, approximately 25% of children experienced substance abuse, truancy, unwed pregnancies, and psychological disorders in contrast to children whose fathers played an active role in their lives (Baskerville, 2004; Wilson et al., 2016).

There is a gap in the literature regarding African American father involvement and other subgroups. Nonresident fatherhood remains an area of intense scrutiny concerning the situation of African American fathers. The increase of nonresident African American fatherhood is often demonstrated by data such as reports that 51% of African American children live in single mother households, 34% of African American children live in two married-parent households (Child Trends 2014a), and 73% of all births given by African American women in 2013 were by unmarried women (Child Trends 2014b). Additionally, some past studies (Castillo et al., 2011; Cochran, 1997; Kreider & Elliott, 2009) that argue nonresident African American fathers are uninterested in performing traditional paternal duties with some having drawn the conclusion that African American absentee and nonresident fathers are ineffective or irresponsible when involved in the lives of their children.

There are many factors that may have potentially influenced the decline in African American father involvement. Gibbs (1988, 2010) emphasized that African American males are victims of 200-plus years of slavery, legally enforced segregation, and decades of racial discrimination and prejudice in every aspect of their American life. African American males have few, if any, positive role models; they lack access to high quality education, or adequate

employment. Additionally, African American fathers are more likely to live in areas with concentrated poverty, reduced amenities and services, and limited employment opportunities than men of other races (Edin & Nelson, 2013; Hamer, 2001; Sampson, 2011). Further, the father's own family background has been another factor considered in the research on father custody. A number of studies (Gersick, 1979; Mendes, 1976a, 1976b) of custodial fathers have indicated that the fathers identified more or had more intense relationships with their mothers and more emotionally distant relations with their fathers. Gersick (1979) attributed this to the fact that their mothers were more likely to have been homemakers. Disparities in the numbers of children growing up without their father in the household may be linked to fathers' and mothers' upbringing. In 2006, 65% of African American men grow up in single-mother-headed households and apart from their biological fathers (Hunter et al., 2006; Julion et al., 2016). Since African American fathers may not have directly reaped the benefits of their own father's involvement in their upbringing (Hunter et al., 2006; Julion et al., 2016), they may lack the experience of learning about fathering from their own fathers and may be unprepared.

It is imperative that fathers become more involved in the lives of their children, specifically African American fathers. Fathering is critical to support for African American children and can serve to form a solid foundation for the family as a whole (Revell, 2015). African American father play a crucial role in the lives of their children. Empirical studies (Dubowitz et al. 2002; Furstenberg & Harris, 1993; Lamb, 2004; Gonzalez-DeHass & Reynolds, 2008; Williams & Bryan, 2013) on African American fathers that exists suggests that involvement from African American fathers reaps academic, personal, and social benefits. For instance, African American fathers who are nurturing and satisfied with their parenting roles produce children who have better cognitive and receptive language scores (Dubowitz et al.,

2002). Furstenberg and Harris (1993) found that when African American fathers have an active presence and established long-term relationships with their sons or daughters, they were: (a) more likely to enter college or find stable employment after high school; (b) less likely to be teenage parents or to have been in jail; and (c) less likely to report depressive symptoms. Similarly, Lamb (2004) found a general trend that sees African American children living in father-present homes performing better in school than those from father-absent homes.

Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) proposed an ecological perspective on human development that has become highly influential. His model is perhaps most well-known for making distinctions among different ecological “levels” or “systems” as they bear on the child’s development. Starting from the innermost level, these ecological systems are: microsystems (face-to-face relationships the child has with parents, peers, teachers, and other adults); mesosystems (linkages between microsystems; e.g., the relationship between microsystem partners such as parent and teacher, and between mother and father); exosystems (relationships in which the child’s microsystem partners are embedded, but in which the child does not participate directly; e.g., parent’s relationship with a job supervisor or co-workers); macrosystems (social policies and programs as well as broader “cultural scripts” influencing the prior systems; e.g., parental leave policies, cultural ideology about the role of the mother versus the father); and chronosystems (historical change in the prior systems, as well as developmental change during the life course of the child in these systems).

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory offers a useful framework for examining reciprocal interactions between individuals and the social-ecological environment. The ecological systems perspective is particularly appropriate for studies and interventions

focused on individual preadolescent and adolescent males of color, in part, because of its conceptualization of individuals as “nested” within a series of social systems, or structures (Neal & Neal, 2013). In addition, an ecological systems perspective functions as a useful conceptual guide for envisioning and operationalizing preventive and intervention strategies given the focus of the model on understanding human individuals as evolving organisms progressing through various developmental stages (Sabri et al., 2013). The ecological approach emphasizes the importance of examining the parenting experience in its environmental context and according to the value system of a family’s indigenous culture or subculture (Cheatham & Stewart, 1990; McAdoo, 1993; Peters, 1988). The extent to which ecological factors influence the academic success of African American students has a long history in educational research (Horton, 2004; Reynolds, 1989; Wooley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). The ecological theory will assist with developing a broad perspective on the interconnectedness of environments as they relate to African American sons, father involvement, and academics. The ecological systems theory allows researchers to explore the historical and social influences on African American fathers (McAdoo, 1993). Research has generally addressed two ecological dimensions: school environment (e.g., teacher expectations) and the social environment (e.g., family, neighborhood). According to McAdoo (1993), the ecological theory is a useful framework for understanding the complex external and internal influences on African American men and on their role as father. The research can be important for school officials, researchers, and parents who seek meaningful ways to become actively involved in the academic success of their high school age males. Specifically, African American fathers of sons in urban high schools.

Situation to Self

I have been a public-school educator for 18 years and have worked predominantly with young men of color in urban school settings for the entire time. I developed strong relationships with these young men because I saw myself in them and had a genuine desire to see them succeed in life. Through my interactions with these young men, I found that in most cases there was not a father in the household nor a positive male to provide guidance. Therefore, the guidance that I provided was not just beneficial for employment, but beneficial for life.

Like many of the young men, I was raised in a single-parent household; therefore, I too could relate with much of the adversity that these young men of color experienced. Like most of them, I did not have a father in the home, nor a positive male role model to provide guidance as I navigated through young adulthood. I grew up in a home with a single mother who led with a firm hand, valued education, and made daily sacrifices to provide for her children.

My life experiences as an African American male, son, brother, uncle, student, military officer, teacher, educational leader, and father has developed my perceptions and disposition regarding father involvement. My axiological assumptions may be a hindrance to the study, but I want to understand the phenomenon as other fathers experience it. Because of my life experiences as a son of a single parent, working with children from single-parent households, and raising a son in a dual parent household, my interpretation in conjunction with the interpretations of the participants will shape the narrative (Creswell, 2013).

In the study, I sought to understand the experiences of African American fathers as they related to the involvement in the academic success of their high school age sons. Additionally, I sought to conduct the study from an advocacy/participatory worldview. According to Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998), participatory actions are focused on bringing about change, and at the end

of this type of study, researchers create an action agenda for change. It was my goal to strengthen the voices of African American fathers and change the lives of the participants and the institutions in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013). By providing a platform to hear the fathers' voices, I hope I have motivated other fathers to become more involved in the academic success of their sons.

Problem Statement

The African American father has been depicted as uncaring or non-family oriented (Boyd-Franklin, 2013). Additionally, because of the overwhelmingly percentage of African American children who live in single parent homes, African American fathers are commonly perceived as poor fathers and husbands, irresponsible and uninvolved fathers (Smith et al, 2005; Taylor, 1977). However, the theoretical literature suggests that African American fathers face systemic factors that, at times, paralyze their ability to parent and have influenced the data that research presents (Boyd-Franklin, 2013). The problem is that there is a disparity between African American father involvement and other subgroups. *Father involvement* is defined as engagement (interacting with the child directly), accessibility (being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child), and responsibility (monitoring and providing for the child; Lamb et al., 1985). The researcher believed this topic was of high importance given the limited body of research, documenting the participation of African American fathers in the high school setting. It was the researcher's goal to understand the lived experiences of involved African American fathers regarding their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding the academic success of their high school age sons?

Purpose Statement

Given the significant disparity between African American father involvement and other subgroups, the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of involved African American fathers as they relate to the engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding involvement in the academic success of their sons in urban high school. For the purpose of this study, *father involvement* is broadly defined as engagement (interacting with the child directly), accessibility (being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child), and responsibility (monitoring and providing for the child; Lamb et al., 1985). From a phenomenological lens, this study attempted to understand the lived experiences of African American fathers/father figures as they relate to their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding their involvement in the academic success of their African American sons in urban high schools.

The Social Ecological Theory was used to guide the study. Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that socio-cultural systems and environmental factors influence a child's development. Bronfenbrenner Social Ecological Theory is influenced by five sub-systems: macrosystem – social values, norms, and customs; exosystem – public policy and societal institutions; mesosystem – linkage between institutions and individual life experience; microsystem – community, school and home; and chronosystem – time experienced by individual and families. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Social Theory (1979, 1986) of child development states that children are embedded in ever increasing "levels" of environmental complexity. Their most proximal level is comprised of family members and intimate others, including mothers, fathers, and other primary caregivers from whom they learn to negotiate the world in a very basic way. These kinds of interactions may have a profound impact on child development. This is

illustrated most explicitly in the home environment in which the reciprocal nature of parent-child interactions can serve to foster opportunities for enhanced academic achievement for children (Baker, 2014; Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986). According to this theory, fathers' interaction with their children is dynamic and may be influenced by such factors as economic status, fathers' relationship with their children and their mother, and their own developmental maturity and the way that they see themselves in the fathering role (Palkovitz & Palm, 2009).

Significance of the Study

There has been extensive research regarding parental involvement as it relates to student's academic outcomes. Parental involvement is one of the most widely recognized factors that impact a child's learning and development (Abel, 2012). Levels and types of parent involvement vary for a myriad reasons, including socioeconomic status, educational background, residential status, and sex of parent (U.S Department of Education, 2003). Fathers, in general, tend to be less involved than mothers. Nonetheless, the limited research that has been conducted suggests that fathers' involvement has a significant relationship on a variety of academic outcomes for children and adolescents (Abel, 2012; Amato & Rivera, 1999; Dunn, 2004; Fagan, 2000; Nord, 1998).

This research study sought to make contribution to the modest body of literature regarding African American father involvement. More research is needed; therefore, this study sought to provide additional data as it related to father involvement regarding the academic success of African American males in urban high schools.

This research study has sought to provide a better understanding of the factors that affect the decision-making process of African American fathers becoming more involved in their son's academics. Additionally, research in this area can provide valuable insight into how father

involvement contributes to the well-being and development of their children. Understanding the experiences of fathers regarding the academic success of African American males in urban high schools can provide information that can assist with home and school relationships. Jenkins (2004) stated that the most accurate predictor of African American's school achievement was the extent to which their parents encouraged learning. Galindo and Sheldon (2012) stated that the two most influential contexts in which children learn and develop occurs at home and school. According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), children's behavior and development are influenced by their interactions within each context, as well as the connections between settings, including joint participation, communication, and the existence of information in each setting about the other. Epstein (2001) argued that the home and school constitute overlapping spheres of influence on children's development and academic achievement, and that the degree to which educators and family members maintain positive relationships with one another helps determine children's academic success.

It has been reported that government, private industry, and local nonprofit agencies are beginning to review their policies and practices to reflect new thinking about men and fathers and to make their environments more conducive to fathers and to remove barriers and obstacles when men want to become involved with their children (Seiderman, 2003). Therefore, policymakers can create and enhance programs that may assist and support fathers in their development as parents and their involvement with their sons. Community coalitions can form to address the needs of African American males, and they will work with families and schools to advocate reform of policies that adversely affect African American males (Barbarin, 2010).

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of involved African American fathers regarding their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their high school age sons in urban high schools?

Sub-questions

1. What is involvement as it relates to African American fathers?

Father involvement is broadly defined as engagement (interacting with the child directly), accessibility (being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child), and responsibility (monitoring and providing for the child; Lamb et al., 1985).

2. What does the term accessibility mean to African American fathers?

According to Lamb et al. (1985), the term accessibility means being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child. I sought to determine exactly what the term accessibility means to involved African American fathers of urban high school age sons.

3. What are the responsibilities of African American fathers regarding the education and academic success of their sons?

Theory and research on parental involvement in education often do not distinguish between fathers and mothers, and are most likely to be based on mothers only, even in two-parent families (Greif & Greif, 2004). This calls for a systematic review of the literature to determine the extent to which fathers are engaged in family school relationship strategies and whether it is positively related to student achievement, and whether the strength of the relation is comparable to that of mother involvement (Kim &

hill, 2015). I sought to find out what African American fathers of school age urban high school males believed their responsibilities are regarding the education and academic success of their sons.

Definitions

1. *Academic Success* – the long-term goals for improved academic achievement, as measured by proficiency on the annual statewide reading/language arts and mathematics assessments, for all students (Ohio Department of Education, 2018).
2. *Fathers* - The biological fathers or the stepfathers of the study participants.
3. *Father Figures* - Males involved in children’s upbringing and education. These males may include grandfathers, uncles, mentors, foster fathers, or older brothers (Furstenberg & Harris, 1993).
4. *Father involvement* – Father Involvement according to Lamb et al. (1985) is broadly defined and comprised of three components; engagement (interacting with the child directly), accessibility (being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child), and responsibility (monitoring and providing for the child).
5. *Parental involvement* – Parent involvement in education has been defined as parents’ interactions with school and with their children to benefit their children’s educational outcomes and future success (Hill et al., 2004).

Summary

The first chapter of this research proposal provide background information and statistical data regarding father, and African American father involvement. An overview of the literature was also discussed outlining the lack of research conducted in regards to correlation between

father and African American father involvement and how more research must be completed. The problem of the study, the disparity between African American father involvement and other subgroups was introduced. Additionally, the purpose of the study, to conduct a transcendental phenomenological study to understand the lived experiences of fathers as they relate to their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding their involvement in the academic success of African American males in urban high school was shared. The chapter concluded with a brief overview of the significance of the study, the research questions, and definitions for the research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two begins with the theoretical framework. This provides an understanding of the social ecological theory, the theory that will guide the research and its importance as it relates to the study. The related literature is also discussed. In this section recent information is provided regarding the proposed study, additionally instrumental subheadings that will drive the study (parent involvement, father involvement, father's role, and academic achievement). The chapter concludes with a summary of what was discussed in the chapter.

Theoretical Framework

The social ecological theory was used to guide the study. The social ecological theory is relevant to this study by assisting the researcher with understanding the impact of environment and cultural influences on the individuals. An ecological perspective posits that human development occurs as a result of active participation in progressively complex, reciprocal interactions with persons, objects and symbols in the individual's immediate environment. These interactions in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Parental involvement is one such interaction occurring between adolescents and their parents over time (Bogenschneider, 1997). The most proximal process is comprised of family members and intimate others, including mothers, fathers, and other primary caregivers from whom the adolescents learn to negotiate the world in a very basic way.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986) proposed an ecological perspective on human development that has become highly influential. His model is perhaps most well-known for making distinctions among different ecological "levels" or "systems" as they bear on the child's development (Pleck, 2007). Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized that socio-cultural systems and environmental

factors influence a child's development. Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory is influenced by five sub-systems: macrosystem -social values, norms, and customs; exosystem – public policy and societal institutions; mesosystem – linkage between institutions and individual life experience; microsystem community, school and home; and chronosystem – time experienced by individual and families. There are three major contexts in which students learn and develop: (a) the family, (b) the school, and (c) the community. These structures, found in Bronfenbrenner's microsystem, have the potential to overlap in the mesosystem and be impacted by the exosystem, macro system, and chronosystem (Abel, 2010). For this study, the macrosystem, mesosystem, microsystem, and the chronosystem were utilized. Each one of these systems assists with the development of the child. The macrosystem build upon the family's social values, norms and customs. The chronosystem builds upon the experience learned within the family structure. The microsystem describes aspects of the environment that directly influence the individual and includes contexts such as the home and school (Hill & Taylor, 2004). The linkages between contexts such as the individual and school are referred to as the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

As part of his ecological theory, Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1986) posited that family/parental factors have the ability to protect against negative peer influences (deviant behavior, delinquency and physical aggression), implying a moderating role of family and peer variables. Other researchers have proposed more specific theoretical models of parenting styles and their influences on child behavior (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Wentzel, Feldman, & Weinberger, 1991).

The social ecological theory has been used in numerous studies to impact findings around child development. The social ecological theory supports the premise that homes and schools

are important microsystems for the developing child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The extent to which ecological factors influence the academic success of African American students has a long history in educational research (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Horton, 2004; Reynolds, 1989; Wooley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Research has generally addressed two ecological dimensions: school environment (e.g., teacher expectations) and the social environment (e.g., family, neighborhood). For example, a study conducted by Stewart (2007) examined student predictors of academic achievement using regression-based techniques. Stewart (2007) found that, among 10th grade African American students, individual-level predictors such as student effort, parent-child discussion, and associations with positive peers play a substantial role in increasing students' achievement. Further, the results also suggested that environmental factors such as school climate - in particular, the sense of school cohesion felt by students, teachers, and administrators - are important to successful student outcomes.

Family structure is another ecological factor that may play a significant role in the development of African American males. Boyce-Rodgers and Rose (2001) conducted a study, including a diverse sample of 2,153 students, which examined the effects of personal and family structural factors (one-parent vs. two-parent households) and school factors on the academic achievement of the students. They found that parental monitoring and parental support were higher for intact families (e.g., married parents) than for step families or single-divorced families. Additionally, Boyce-Rodgers and Rose (2001) concluded that parental monitoring and support were predictive of academic success in single, step, and intact families and especially in single-parent family structures.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's theory, one can easily argue that children's school experience is not just made up of interactions between them and the school or teacher. It also includes a

broader system involving parents, family, and community. As a result, understanding the influences of a child's environment provides theoretical support for the idea of parent involvement in young children's education (Tekin, 2011). Ecological theory supports the premise that homes and schools are important microsystems for the developing child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

There has been a plethora of research conducted on parental involvement, some research on African American parental involvement, but limited research on African American father involvement. It is my intent to use past research paired with current research to understand the experiences of African American fathers as they relate to involvement with academic success of African American males in urban high schools.

Related Literature

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of African American fathers as they related to their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility with their involvement in the academic success of their African American sons in urban high schools.

African American males are facing major challenges regarding academic success and employment in the new millennium. According to a 2006 New York *Times* article, Columbia, Princeton, and Harvard University experts agree that the rapidly increasing population of poorly educated African American men is "becoming ever more disconnected from the mainstream society" (Eckholm, 2006; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). National statistics and studies have indicated that African American males are overrepresented in juvenile detention centers and prisons (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006), overrepresented in special education classes (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Garibaldi, 2009), underrepresented

in secondary school honors and advanced courses (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Whiting & Ford, 2009), underrepresented on college campuses (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Toldson, Braithwaite, & Rentie, 2009), and consistently reported as academically underachieving in today's schools (Entwistle, Alexander, & Olson, 2004; Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013; Mandara, 2006). According to McGhee (2013), only 41 % of African American males graduate from high school in the U.S. (Schott Foundation for Public Education 2012), leaving more than half of African American males between the ages of 16 and 19 unemployed (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010). The situation is more acute in urban cities where only 30 % of African American males graduate from high school; of these, only 3 % obtain a bachelor's degree by the age of 25 (Sum et al., 2011). Additionally, the six-year graduation rate for African American males at 4-year public institutions and private nonprofit colleges is less than 40% (Farmer & Hope, 2015).

There are staggering statistics that outline the obstacles that African American males face educationally and socially in the United States. But, research and theory suggest that parenting is an important determinant of behavior among adolescents in general (Spera, 2005) and among young African American males in particular (Mincy, 2006). Poor parental supervision and monitoring, inconsistent disciplinary practices, and infrequent parent-adolescent communication have all been linked to negative behavioral outcomes among adolescents (e.g., Clark & Shields, 1997). Moreover, 43% of African American families are composed of single-mother households as opposed to 12% of non-African American families (McKinnon, 2003). Also, 48% of African American families are married-couple families compared with 82% of non-African American families (McKinnon, 2003). However, relatively few studies (Annunziata et al., 2006; Hines &

Holcomb-McCoy, 2013) have investigated the effects of parental, family functioning, and environmental factors on the academic achievement of African American male adolescents.

Parent Involvement

One factor that has been consistently related to high levels of academic achievement has been parent involvement (Fan, 2001). Parental involvement in education has been defined as parents' interactions with school and with their children to benefit their children's educational outcomes and future success (Hill et al., 2004). The degree to which parents are involved in their children's schooling has been directly link to positive educational outcomes (Jeynes, 2005). The importance of parent involvement in their children's education is not a new issue, as a matter of fact it has been a topic of discussion for decades.

Parental participation has been an integral part of the rearing of children in America for much of its history (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Jeynes, 2007, 2015). Parents began to become involved in nursery schools at the beginning of 20th century in the United States. Parent cooperative nursery schools bloomed from the 1920s to the 1960s. Most of these educational centers were located in college or suburban towns and welcomed primarily stay-at-home mothers who served as paraprofessionals in the classrooms, assisting a teacher and taking physical care of the facility (Gestwicki, 2007; Tekin, 2011). However, these types of parent involvement program were exclusively for middle-class families.

Historical research has demonstrated the many ways African American parents participated in their children's education, particularly during the era of segregated schooling. In fact, African American parents' fervor in the pursuit of education was evident during slavery when slaves risked severe punishment and even their lives to learn to read because they equated freedom with literacy (Gadsden & Wagner, 1995). After emancipation, African American parents continued to

pursue education, often in violent climates in which white leaders did not value educational equality through common schools and largely ignored the issue of educating African American children (Anderson, 1996).

While involving parents from lower socioeconomic and culturally and ethnically diverse background began during the Depression and grew during World War II through programs that supported parent involvement in activities such as parental self-development training and learning, extensive parent involvement was introduced via Head Start in the 1960s and 1970s (Tekin, 2011; Wright, Stegeli, & Hartle, 2007). In the mid-1960s, President Lyndon B. Johnson focused on empowering poor parents to help themselves by using the resources of the school system for economic advancement (Edwards, 1995). Head Start was designed for particularly disadvantaged families. Nevertheless, educators were uneasily tolerant of parents perceived as lacking knowledge and skills (Gestwicki, 2007; Tekin, 2011).

There have been several parent involvement efforts introduced since the 1960s and 1970s with emphasis being placed on being family centered, supporting students with special needs, fostering school and parent relationships, providing parent choice, and encouraging father involvement.

Even Start Family Literacy Program was one of those efforts. Even Start was brought in as a family- centered education program that funded local efforts to improve educational opportunities for children, with an emphasis on a family-centered literacy program, and mandated involvement of parents via an agreement signed by parents. In this agreement, parents agreed to ensure that their children attended school, attended orientation sessions for parents, participated in parent/child/staff events during the year, read with the child, and attended at least

five hours of family-school partnership workshops offered by the school (Gestwicki, 2007; Tekin, 2011).

Parent involvement was also mandated by the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, later reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Act in 1990 Amendments of 1997, and Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act of 2004. Parents of children with special needs were required by these programs to monitor whether the individualized education program (IEP) for their children was in line with state standards for achievement. Families were also required to be involved in all aspects of the planning process for their children's education (Gestwicki, 2007; Tekin, 2011).

Additionally, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act was passed into law in 1994. Its emphasis was on parent involvement. The Goals 2000 project required every state to develop policies that help local schools and agencies to increase parent-school partnerships (Patte, 2002). Goals 2000 also aimed to have every school actively engage parents and families in a partnership that sustains the academic work of children at home and shared educational decision-making at school, including parents of children who were disadvantaged or bilingual, or parents of children with disabilities (Epstein et al., 2002).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation was signed into law in 2002. One of the major goals of NCLB was to provide more choices for parents, including new options for making changes for children in low-performing schools (Thurston, 2005). Parents have been given more rights by law. For example, schools are required to provide parents with more information about their child's progress in school and the performance of the school (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). In 1994 the Ford Foundation funded the "Strengthening Families Initiative" a multi-state coordinated effort to support low-income, non-resident fathers to remain involved

with their children (Sylvester & Reich, 2002). Most recently to compound on the “Strengthening Families Initiative,” The Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009, promoted by President Barrack Obama, was developed to facilitate and encourage responsible fatherhood.

Theorists have posited that parental involvement includes a variety of parenting practices that include both home-based and school-based involvement strategies (Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2016; Epstein, 2001; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey, Ice, & Whitaker, 2009). In order to understand parent involvement in education and make better use of it in both research and practice areas, several parent involvement models have been developed that are accepted in the field. Some of these models are more popular and considered as more practical than others. For example, Epstein and Hoover-Dempsey are two major figures in the field whose parent involvement models are the most widely recognized and broadly used (as cited in Tekin, 2011).

Building on the work of theorist like Bronfenbrenner (1979) and other in education, psychology, and sociology, Epstein (1995) developed a seminal theory of parental involvement. Epstein’s model of overlapping spheres and home-school partnerships (Epstein & Sanders, 2002) provides an excellent framework for conceptualizing the relationship between school-specific involvement and early parenting. On the basis of this model, it is hypothesized that not only do early parenting behaviors indicate parents’ willingness to engage in other child activities (i.e., indicative of family philosophy), but such involvement also creates parent–child relationship processes that may motivate parents to engage in the child’s schooling (McBride et al., 2009). The six types of involvement interactions that operate within the theory of overlapping spheres act as a framework for organizing behaviors, roles, and actions performed by school personnel and family and community members working together to increase involvement and student achievement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Griffin & Steen, 2010). These six types of

involvement are defined and categorized in the follow ways: 1.) Parenting - helping families (e.g., parents and extended family members) to become aware and knowledgeable about child development, and providing resources that enable them to establish home environments that can enhance student learning. 2.) Communicating - effective, appropriate, relevant, two-way contact about school events (e.g., open houses, conferences, testing workshops), student academic or personal development and progress, and/or insight (e.g., success or challenges) within the home environment. 3.) Volunteering - organizing and participating in activities initiated by school personnel (e.g., parent-teacher association) or generated by community members aimed at supporting students and school programs, such as service -learning projects, Big Brothers Big Sisters programs, or violence- reduction assemblies. 4.) Learning at home - providing information to parents and families about school procedures (e.g., homework expectations, grading scales) in order to help them augment their children's academic activities. 5.) Decision - making - including parents and family members from all backgrounds as representatives and leaders on school committees. 6.) Collaborating with the community - identifying and integrating resources, services, and other assets from the community to help meet the needs of school personnel, students, and their families (Griffin & Steen, 2010). Integrating these six types of involvement into the daily lives of parents and their children can assist with adding structure and provide organized activities that can be used by parents to support their children in accomplishing high levels of academic achievement. Although each type of involvement can consist of a number of different types of initiatives, it is imperative that the right partnership activities are selected and completed with fidelity.

Although parent involvement is a critical factor in children's educational lives, much less is known about the psychological factors that motivate parents' involvement practices (Green,

Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandier, 2007). Therefore, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandier (1995, 1997) presented a comprehensive model from the perspective of parents about the parent involvement process grounded in psychological and educational research (e.g., Sheldon, 2002) which has been empirically tested by researchers (e.g., Reed, Jones, Walker, & Hoover-Dempsey, 2000).

Based on a psychological perspective, this model not only contends with specific types of parent involvement but also endeavors to explain why parents choose to be involved (Fan & Chen, 2001), how they choose specific forms of involvement, and how parent involvement makes a difference (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandier, 1995). By focusing on the most prominent specific variables of the parent involvement process from parents' perspectives, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandier (1995, 1997) suggested that parents often become involved in their children's education for three reasons: (1) they build up a parental role construction about their participation in their children's education; (2) they develop a positive parental efficacy for helping their children succeed in school; and (3) they perceive opportunities or demands for involvement from children and school.

According to Hoover-Dempsey and Sandier (1995, 1997), their model can address parent involvement process in a multifaceted and dynamic way. They offered a framework for their model to depict and analyze the parent involvement process in a holistic way. They outlined five levels of parent involvement in this model. Some ingredients of these five levels were also drawn from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory (Hoover Dempsey & Sandier, 1997).

In the first level of the model, Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggested that parents become involved in their children's education for four major reasons: (1) parental role construction for involvement (Do parents believe they should be involved?), (2) parental efficacy for helping the

child learn (Do parents believe that their involvement will make a difference?), (3) parental perception of invitations to involvement from the school (Do parents believe that the school wants their involvement?), and (4) parental perception of invitations to involvement from the child (Do parents believe that the child wants or needs their involvement?).

Level 2 includes three factors that shape parents' choices of involvement, such as home-based or school-based activities. These three constructs are: (1) parents' perceptions of their own skills, interests, and abilities (e.g., Do they believe they have the knowledge to help the child with reading assignment?); (2) parents' perceptions of other demands on time and energy (e.g., Do their work schedule allow time to read together?); and (3) parents' perceptions of specific invitations to involvement from children, teachers, and schools (e.g., Do teachers invite them to volunteer at school) (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

In Level 3, the model suggests that parents' involvement influences students' outcomes through the mechanisms (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandier, 1997). These mechanisms are: (1) modeling of appropriate school-related skills (e.g., showing the child how to solve a specific type of math problem); (2) reinforcement of learning (e.g., praising the child verbally when he or she solves a problem); and (3) instruction (e.g., offering teaching help with specific homework; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Level 4 of the model focuses on the tempering/mediating constructs influenced by Level 3 variables to the extent that parents use developmentally appropriate strategies (e.g., supervising child's homework) and the fit between parents' choice of activities and the school's expectations for involvement (e.g., parent and teacher make similar assumptions about appropriate student learning habits; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandier, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Level 5 of the model addresses the outcomes of parent involvement for the child (e.g., achievement, skills

and knowledge, and personal sense of efficacy for succeeding in school; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandier, 1997).

The implementation of strategies and programs based on these two theories has led the charge on how parents have become involved in the educational process and academic success of their children. Parent involvement is multidimensional and refers to a wide range of activities that tap nearly every facet of schooling. Parent involvement not only includes attending school events like parent–teacher conferences, supervising children with homework, and making sure children are well fed, well rested, and ready to learn when they arrive at school. It could also entail involving children in enrichment activities like chess clubs or piano lessons, serving on a local school board, choosing a magnet or charter school, or intervening on behalf of one’s child for placement in a particular classroom or program (Marschall & Shah, 2011). It must be mentioned that both theories have posited that parental involvement includes a variety of parenting practices that include both home-based and school-based involvement strategies. According to Hoover-Dempsey (2009), parental involvement in school may also increase parents’ knowledge about school expectations and policies, allowing them to reinforce adolescent behaviors that are beneficial for school success. School districts, for the past several decades, have implemented strategies that were based on these theories to assist with improving school and family relationships, student and parent relationships, and parent and community relationships, which in turn improved the academic success of their children.

Father Involvement

Lamb et al. (1987) highlight three distinct domains of paternal involvement: accessibility, engagement, and responsibility. Accessibility refers to fathers’ availability for interaction with

their child, whether or not this interaction occurs. Engagement concerns fathers' direct contact with their child through shared activities. Finally, responsibility refers to the role of fathers in ensuring their child's needs are taken care of, such as by taking the child to day care or providing for the child financially. Consistent father involvement is crucial to the development of children and can assist in providing children with homes that are both emotionally and financially stable, thereby creating a positive environment where it is possible for children to thrive. Not only are fathers critical to the healthy development of all children, but the relationship of father involvement to the positive development of young men sets the tone for expectations in a father lead household. Researchers (Krampe & Fairweather, 1993) have found that fathers can positively impact self-esteem, learning and psychological functioning. Furthermore, father involvement is known to be an asset to children's development and well-being, and can be especially critical to a boy's socialization (Lawrence, Watson, & Stepteau-Watson, 2013). Assessments of father involvement conclude that a positive father-child relationship yields higher levels of achievement or psychological well-being in adulthood (Amato, 1994; Barnett et al., 1992; Harris et al., 1996).

Research on parenting has typically paid much less attention to fathers than to mothers, in both early childhood research and intervention. Nevertheless, available evidence clearly demonstrates the importance of fathers to the developmental health and well-being of their children. While fathers' traditional breadwinning role remains important, the paternal role is now recognized to be much broader than this, reflecting societal change in role expectations for women, as well as increasing knowledge about the contribution of paternal influences to children's developmental well-being (Wilson & Prior, 2011). Additionally, early studies (Palkovitz, 1997; Pleck, 1997) of father involvement focused on the amount of time spent in

direct interactions with children, some scholars have argued for broader conceptualizations. Of particular importance is the quality of fathers' involvement with their children, as scholars increasingly recognize that mere father contact is insufficient and that not all father involvement, in and of itself, benefits children (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999).

There is a diversity of views regarding the associations between quantity and quality of father involvement. Some argue that a close father–child relationship requires fathers to spend more than a small amount of time interacting with their children, in order to develop sensitivity to their characteristics and their needs, and to learn skills and confidence in parenting. Others claim that it is predominantly the emotional domain of parenting which has beneficial effects independent of time applied, or that a father who spends lots of time interacting with his children but does so in a critical or demeaning way may be doing harm rather than good (Wilson & Prior, 2011).

Ideals around fathering have evolved from the stern disciplinarian and moral teacher to the bread winner of the family to the modern involved father and finally, the father as co-parent (Lamb, 2010; Pleck, 2012). Although there are more similarities than differences between mothers and fathers, and positive parenting characteristics are similar for both, mothers and fathers tend to have different interactional styles, with fathers more playful and mothers more nurturing. Fathers' typically more physical, unpredictable and arousing play is greatly enjoyed by children, particularly boys, and this unique paternal style contributes to children's attachment security. Experience with this type of play is also thought to be important for helping young children to manage intense emotions and reduce aggressive behavior, with important implications for children's social skillfulness and peer acceptance (Wilson & Prior, 2011).

A growing number of studies (Downer, Campos, McWayne, & Gartner, 2010; Jeynes, 2013; Lamb & Lewis, 2010; Palm & Fagan, 2008) have been done that examine the impact of father

involvement on the general population. Whereas the expectations for and experiences of fathering have increased, the parenting literature is still focused largely on mothers. Despite of the growing literature on fathering that highlights certain aspects unique to fathers and provides a framework to understand fathering (e.g., Lamb et al., 1985, 1987; Pleck, 2012), fathers' involvement in education has not been systematically distinguished from general fathering or from more general research on parental involvement in education and family school relationships. As a result, most individual studies can offer little guidance to family members and educators regarding which aspects of father involvement are most important (Fagan & Palm, 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006). Second, a large number of these studies (Lee & Bowen, 2006; Palm & Fagan, 2008) have small samples that make it difficult to estimate the influence of paternal involvement on the general student population. Third, a large number of the studies (Cowan et al., 2009; Pianta et al., 2005) focus on only certain groups of students in particular situations. Literature and research examining father involvement has focused primarily on outcomes associated with the well-being and development of children. The contextual factors (e.g., ethnicity/culture, family socioeconomic status, and neighborhood/community) associated with fathers, and how these factors shape fathers' involvement with their children, have received limited attention in literature (Castillo, Welch, & Sarver, 2011).

Although developing research on fathers is becoming more extensive, few studies (McAdoo, 1988; McAdoo & McAdoo, 1997) have examined African American fathers' perceptions about their fathers, the importance of father involvement, and the psychological well-being of fathers. Most of the research on father involvement addresses effects on child emotional, psychological, and mental health outcomes with little emphasis on men's perceptions of the concept of father involvement and where or how these perceptions were developed (Lamb,

1997). There is a need for more specific research that speaks to African American father involvement.

Any examination of father involvement requires recognition that families are complex systems, involving a network of overlapping and sometimes competing relationships (Pasley, 2007; Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993) that are affected by larger contextual factors (Doherty et al., 1998; Hofferth, 2003; Pasley, 2007). Thus, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) ecological framework is particularly useful to this area of study. Ecological theory focuses on the ways in which the individual interacts with his/her environment to affect development. Minority fathers tend to take on more responsibility for childrearing than do White fathers (Hofferth, 2003; Pasley, 2007), and older fathers tend to be more involved than younger fathers (Pasley, 2007; Pleck, 1997). Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, the dynamics of fathers' specific influence as parents can be formulated in two ways. First, fathers function as microsystem partners with whom children can experience good "proximal process" promoting development. The second view is that fathers are a unique kind of microsystem partner. Because fathers' personalities differ from mothers', children's proximal process interactions with fathers differ those with mothers in ways that are potentially important for development (Pleck, 2007).

African American fathers are as different from one another as they are from other groups. They come in all shades, shapes, and types, yet the stereotyped Black father is seen—by those who are not of color—as a visitor to his family, underemployed, marginal to his family, inattentive to his children, rather violent, and plainly not in the family picture. In reality, African American fathers are as dedicated to their children and families as are men of other racial groups (McAdoo & McAdoo, 1997). According to McAdoo (1997), African American fathers want to have a strong and lasting relationship with their children. When there is a weak relationship

between the child and mother, children who had a strong relationship with their nonresident father showed less internalizing and externalizing problems than adolescents who had a weak relationship to both parents (King & Sobolewski, 2006). Furthermore, fathers' and mothers' involvement are likely to be differentially associated with achievement across children's grade levels because of differences in gendered parenting roles at various developmental periods. On the one hand, mothers were found to engage more in direct forms of involvement, such as assisting with homework or school involvement, compared with fathers, especially for children in elementary school (Lamb, 2010; Parke, 2002). On the other hand, fathers' involvement remained relatively stable over time because they were not that intensively involved when their children were younger and continued to be involved at similar rates as children reached adolescence (Nord, 1997). This suggests that mothers are more likely to display a larger variability in their involvement compared with fathers as children grow out of their developmental needs for direct parental participation in their education (Kim & Hill, 2015).

Numerous literature reviews (e.g., Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000; Downer, Campos, McWayne, & Gartner, 2010; Lamb, 2010; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Sarkadi et al., 2008) have concluded that there is a positive relation between father involvement and child academic outcomes. Furthermore, meta-analytic studies focusing on nonresident fathers (Adamsons & Johnson, 2013; Amato & Gilbreth, 1999) equally found a positive association between father involvement and achievement. Another meta-analysis focused on young children (ages 3 to 8) within a 10-year period (1998–2008) found an even stronger positive relation between fathers' direct involvement and their children's cognitive outcomes (McWayne, Downer, Campos, & Harris, 2013).

Father's Role

Toward the second half of the 19th century, fathers in the U.S. moved away from farms and small business to the emerging industrial economy seeking work in big cities. This left the responsibility of raising children to the mothers and narrowed the perception of the father as one of breadwinner and provider. Under this framework of family, the female constant in-home perspective emphasizing the importance of presence of the mother became the model of a good family, and the father's paternal presence inside the home became irrelevant (Cabrera et al., 2010). In homes such as these, if the father was providing for the family financially, he was considered a good father. Morman and Floyd (2006) have examined what it means to be a good father. They took a grounded theory approach and interviewed both fathers and sons regarding "good fathering." Through an open-ended questionnaire, the researchers asked, "What does being a 'good father' mean to you?" (p. 120). The open-ended responses were coded through an iterative approach and condensed to 20 categories. The top five responses from fathers included expressing love, being a role model, available, a teacher, and provider. The sons' top five categories included expressing love, support, involvement, availability, and being a role model.

Researchers have examined how the collapse of a formidable industrial employment sector has been a causal force in the reduction of job prospects for many African American fathers. Although African American men are not the only victims of this transition, the downturn in employment prospects has caused a great crisis for African Americans because of their over-representation in manufacturing employment sectors (Hamer 2001; Johnson 2000; Johnson & Oliver, 1992; Kletzer 1998; Sampson 2011; Wilson 1987, 1996; Young 2006). Additionally, African American fathers are more likely to live in areas with concentrated poverty, reduced amenities and services, and limited employment opportunities than men of

other races (Edin & Nelson, 2013; Hamer 2001; Sampson 2011). Thus, research on African American fathers and employment has explored how the availability of social and material resources matter for African American fathers' fulfillment of paternal commitments (Edin et al., 2009; Hamer 2001; Jarrett et al., 2002; Roy 2004b; Sullivan 1989). Studies find that African American fathers and family members experience tensions due to some African American men's failure to fulfill traditional roles as economic providers.

According to Hochschild (2003) in her book *The Second Shift*, she discussed how mothers are the primary caregivers and communicators for their children's education concerns. Historically, this is due to women being stay at home mothers while the fathers have been the "bread winner" for their family. As a result, mothers internalize the responsibility of maintaining the home and children (p. 8). The image of the ideal mother changed after the 1960s with the abundance of two parents working outside the home (Cabrera et al, 2010). As a result, the two-parent home with the father as the sole breadwinner perspective declined. Although the mother has always worked inside the home, prior to the 1950s work outside the home was confined to family businesses.

The father's role was to financially provide for the family, protect the family, and be the leader of the household. Fathers have expressed tension as they try to fulfill the breadwinner role while simultaneously striving to become a more involved parent (Hatter et al., 2002). So much tension, in fact, the lack of energy to fill these two roles, breadwinner and involved parent, is considered a barrier to fathering involvement (Freeman, Newland, & Coyl, 2008).

Lamb et al. (1985, 1987) have proposed a three-part model of father involvement that was conceived in the 1990s that is still is relevant today. Part one is the interaction (or engagement)—interacting directly with the child in the context of caretaking, play, or leisure.

Part two is accessibility (or availability)—being physically and/or psychologically available to the child. Part three entails responsibility—assuming responsibility for the child’s welfare and care, including organizing and planning children’s lives (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Nonresident fatherhood remains an area of intense scrutiny concerning the situation of African American fathers. In the U.S., 11% of fathers with children under the age of 18 do not live with their children and that number continues to increase (Castillo et al., 2011; Kreider & Elliott, 2009). According to Sorensen and Zibman (2001), approximately 7–10 million fathers report having a biological child with whom they do not live. Research has shown that in many cases if the father is not in the home consistently the relationship between the children and the father dwindles. Using data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) and Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), researchers found that non-resident fathers are more likely to be ethnic minorities, never married, younger, less educated, unemployed or underemployed, earning less money—14–24% of non-resident fathers have household incomes below the poverty line—and engaging in risky behaviors, including the use of alcohol and drugs (Sorensen & Zibman, 2001).

According to research conducted by Pleck (1997), the role identity of fathers has become one of the central constructs defining the concept father involvement and is particularly important because fathers’ behavior is discretionary and less scripted by societal norms than mothers’ behavior. Research suggests that fathers behave in ways that are dynamic and fluid in nature, reflect their role investments, and change dramatically following major life transitions—birth of a child, change in marital and non-marital relationships, and change in familial and household composition (Castillo et al., 2011; Fox & Bruce, 2001). According to Habib and Lancaster (2006), after the birth of a child, fathers face the difficult task of putting their own

fatherhood self-image into practice. If their self-image is conflict-free (man's perception of himself in the status of father is likely to influence his involvement with his children), fathers are able to experience a motivational force for greater involvement with their children. If their self-image is not conflict free, fathers find it difficult to deal with the demands of their new role and easily experience feelings of exclusion and disconnect from their social surroundings, leading to less involvement with their children (Strauss & Goldberg, 1999).

Children whose fathers are stable and involved are better off in every cognitive, social, and emotional measure developed by researchers. High levels of father involvement are associated with sociability, confidence, and high levels of self-control in children (Anthes, 2010). Research (Goldman, 2005) has shown that fathers who are committed and involved with their children's school are linked to better behaved children at school, including a reduced risk of school suspension or expulsion. Fathers' familial, economic, social, and cultural characteristics are important indicators when considering fathers' involvement with their children. While several studies (Castillo et al., 2011; Volling & Belsky, 1991) find no association between father involvement and fathers' race and ethnicity, educational attainment, employment and income status, and residential status others find clear associations. Additionally, several studies have found that nonminority fathers tend to differ from minority fathers in their form of involvement with their children. Compared to White fathers, African American fathers are more likely to perform child-care tasks for preschool age children (Ahmeduzzaman, & Roopnarine, 1992; Castillo et al., 2011). Seltzer (1991) found that African American non-resident fathers are more likely to participate in childrearing decisions than are White and Hispanic non-resident fathers.

Researchers (Barth, 2009; Mathew, Wang, Bellamy, & Copeland, 2005; Sanders & Turner, 2005) continually suggest that children are greatly influenced by the behaviors, attitudes,

and parenting styles of their caregivers. In order to adequately understand a parent's style, it is vital to understand the parent and the influences that have shaped the parent's development. Ogbu (1981) advocated that to understand the parenting norms of particular groups, it is vital to understand the ideas regarding success among a particular culture. Parenting practices are molded toward shaping children into that culture's definition of a successful adult. Ogbu contended that "certain populations possess unique instrumental competencies that meet their societal needs, and they adapt their child-rearing techniques to inculcate these needs" (p. 417).

Even though there is limited research on single African American fathers and their involvement with their children's education, it has been suggested that a father's involvement plays a significant role in a child's academic outcomes (Dunn, 2004; Nord, 1998). Considerable research has demonstrated that early parenting is an important predictor of academic achievement throughout elementary school. Parents who support their children's learning at home through participation in activities such as shared book reading have children with better academic and social-emotional skills (Burchinal, Campbell, Bryant, Wasik & Ramey, 1997; Burchinal et al., 1996). Burchinal et al. (1997) conducted a study, including 161 African American children from low-income families, which examined multiple influences, including early childhood interventions and characteristics of the child and family on longitudinal patterns of children's cognitive performance. Results indicated that more patterns of cognitive development were associated with intensive early educational child care, responsive stimulating care at home, and higher maternal IQ. In accordance with a general system model, analysis also suggested that child care experiences were related to better cognitive performance in part through enhancing the infant's responsiveness through his or her environment. Additionally, an early review of 49 studies by Henderson (1987) indicated that (a) a positive learning

environment at home had a powerful impact on student achievement; and (b) school-based training programs for low-income families improved language skills, test performance, and school behavior for their children (Zhang et al., 2011).

Research rarely examines the affective roles and functions of men in African American families; moreover, poor urban African American male youth are typically portrayed as a monolithic and homogeneous group who lack positive relationships with their biological fathers (Richardson, 2009). Although much of the work on African American fatherhood has focused on the role of the biological father (and, to some extent, the stepfather), minimal attention has been given to men within extended familial networks and their impact on successful adolescent development among young African American males (Richardson, 2009). In many African American households in the United States, the African American uncle play a vital yet overlooked role as a form of social support and social capital in the lives of adolescent African American male sons living in single-female-headed households. To date, there is limited qualitative research studies that examine the role of non-biological African American fathers within family networks—namely, the role of the African American uncle as a primary source of social support and social capital to single-female-headed households and male youth. Data from a recent qualitative research study on social capital in the lives of at-risk African American male youth reveal that single-female headed households often rely on their biological brothers, brothers-in-law, and older male extended family members (i.e., grandfathers, cousins) to serve as father figures for their adolescent boys in the absence of biological fathers (Richardson, 2009).

Research is sorely needed on how fatherhood is defined and mediated in African American families and what role men in extended family and fictive kinship networks play in creating mechanisms that foster positive life outcomes, monitor and regulate youth behavior,

sustain informal social controls, and provide emotional and psychological support for at-risk male youth (Richardson, 2009). According to Auerbach (2007), the goal of parent involvement is not only centered on raising student achievement, but to enrich and expand the educational opportunities and equity for all students. Although there has been limited research focusing on school-specific father involvement, data indicates that this type of paternal involvement may have a positive influence on child outcomes beyond that of mothers' school-specific involvement (McBride et al., 2009).

African American Fathers and Academic Achievement

There are staggering statistics that speaks to father absenteeism, in particular African American father absenteeism. 23.6% of US children (17.4 million) lived in father absent homes in 2014 (US Census Bureau, 2015). In 2011, children living in female-headed homes with no spouse present had a poverty rate of 47.6%. This is over four times the rate for children living in married couple families (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2012). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the number of children with an incarcerated father grew 79% between 1991 and 2007. African American fathers accounted for nearly half (46%) of all children with an incarcerated father. According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education (2015) the national graduation rate for Black males was 59%, something has to change.

According to Livingston and Nahimana (2006), in an attempt to remedy the current state of education as it relates to African American males, we have to question the relevance of what our schools are teaching our kids and why the students are not yielding the desired results on so-called objective measures. Additionally, in an attempts to answer these questions and improve the performance of African American males, we have overlooked important factors that may impact success in educating African American male children: 1) What are the structural, social,

and psychological challenges our young African American males have to navigate, and 2) What are the pervasive expectations of African American males in our schools (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006).

Success with young African American males requires understanding the social context in which they exist. This journey of cultural understanding begins by recognizing preconceived assumptions about urban African American male children. African American children, particularly urban youth, are very keen on picking up the adults' perceptions of them. Thus, understanding the behavior and dynamics of urban African American families will greatly aid in understanding and educating the African American male child (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006).

In a study on African American adolescent males, spending time with their fathers was related to lower levels of depression and anxiety and receiving emotional support from fathers was related to greater life satisfaction (Lipscomb, 2011; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998). Several studies (Lipscomb, 2011; Menestrel, 2003) have found that when fathers spend more time on child-care tasks, children benefit. Additionally, when fathers assume an active role in their children's education, there is a positive impact on student achievement (McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Moon-Ho Ho, 2005). Another study showed that contact between a father and a child was associated with better social-emotional and academic functioning. According to this study, children with more involved fathers scored higher on reading achievement tests and experienced fewer behavioral problems.

Family structure is an ecological factor that may play a significant role in the development of African American males. Boyce-Rodgers and Rose (2001) conducted a study, including a diverse sample of 2,153 students, which examined the effects of personal and family structural factors (one-parent vs. two-parent households) and school factors on the academic achievement

of the students. They found that parental monitoring and parental support were higher for intact families (e.g., married parents) than for step families or single-divorced families. Additionally, Boyce-Rodgers and Rose (2001) concluded that parental monitoring and support were predictive of academic success in single, step, and intact families and especially in single-parent family structures (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013).

A study on African American male adolescents found regardless of family structure, adolescent males who reported their fathers role models exhibited lower school dropout rates than those who did not (Battle, 2000; Lipscomb, 2011). The fathers in this study of African American adolescent males seen as vital to their sons success when these sons were able to look to own fathers as examples of academically successful black males (Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998; Lipscomb, 2011).

African American father's expectations for their sons must be set and discussed consistently. A study conducted by King and Sobolewski (2006) found that father's expectation was a negative predictor of GPA for African American males. According to the authors' results, they believed that it may further confirm the importance of boys' relationships with their fathers. Although the results were in contradiction to what previous research has indicated about high parental expectations having a positive effect on academic success, high parental expectation may not be defined or manifested in the same way in the African American father-son relationship. Perhaps the boys' perceived negative perceptions of their fathers' expectations reflect another aspect of their father-son relationship. Clearly, this finding should be further explored in future research. King and Sobolewski (2006) results strongly suggests that African American fathers' educational backgrounds and expectations and the family structure of African

American homes play a more significant role in the academic development of African American males than parenting style and other parental and ecological factors.

Research has generally addressed two ecological dimensions: school environment (e.g., teacher expectations) and the social environment (e.g., family, neighborhood). For example, Stewart (2007) examined student predictors of academic achievement using regression-based techniques. Stewart (2007) found that, among 10th grade African American students, individual-level predictors such as student effort, parent-child discussion, and associations with positive peers play a substantial role in increasing students' achievement. Further, the results also suggested that environmental factors such as school climate - in particular, the sense of school cohesion felt by students, teachers, and administrators - are important to successful student outcomes (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013).

Additionally, educator engagement plays a critical role in African American male academic achievement. According to Tucker, Dixon, and Riddine, (2010) an overarching concept that has been deemed related to student success is that of mattering. Students' mattering to others at school correlates with a healthy school climate and cohesion, which translates into increased academic achievement. To this end, each education stakeholder can play a role in having an impact in the lives of students. African American males, in particular, have been disenfranchised by schools and other power systems (Harris, et al, 2014; Noguera, 2003) and could benefit from more targeted efforts in this regard. The expectations of teachers, for example, and their impact on student achievement have long been researched (Harris et al., 2014; Wineberg, 1987). It is suggested that teachers interact with students in such a way that aligns with their expectations of them; in response those expectations are later fulfilled (Harris et al., 2014; Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, & Dixon, 2010). As such, when teachers

have high expectations of students, this positively influences students' academic achievement (Harris et al., 2014).

Also, the faculties at the schools must reach out and collaborate with the fathers to assist with improving academics for African American males. A partnership must be formed not only to assist the students with academics, but in many cases to assist the fathers as well. Epstein's model of overlapping spheres and home-school partnerships provides an excellent framework for conceptualizing the relationship between school-specific involvements (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). The six types of involvement interactions that operate within the theory of overlapping spheres act as a framework for organizing behaviors, roles, and actions performed by school personnel and family and community members working together to increase involvement and student achievement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2002; Griffin & Steen, 2010). Through this model school counselors and therapists can help educate and provide parents with resources for positive role models, exposure to experiences beyond their immediate environment, extracurricular activities, and a persistent emphasis on parental involvement in education. Additionally, parents should be knowledgeable of the critical juncture that young men experience in emerging adulthood and be supportive and involved in the lives of their sons during this significant time. School counselors and therapists can play a significant role in fostering flourishing environments for healthy African American male development through parenting education and family support and counseling (Gordon, Nichter, & Henrikren, 2012).

School administrators play a vital role in the academic success of African American males. According to Harris et al. (2014), they can directly influence the structural framework through which education is experienced in schools. For African American males, in particular, administrators are able to create systems that promote equitable learning experiences for all. The

master schedule, for example, is a systemic change tool in that it can be orchestrated in such a way that maximizes the involvement of all in a rigorous curriculum with built-in supports (e.g., study hall) throughout the day. Similarly, principals and assistant principals are ultimately responsible for enforcing discipline, employing equitable policies and, more importantly, intervening in preventive ways that can help to decrease the disproportionate numbers of suspensions among groups. And, given that African American males are disproportionately assigned to special education, it is critical for administrators to appropriately implement systematic identification procedures, such as Response to Intervention (RTI; Harris et al., 2014).

According to Coleman (1988), a father's educational background is linked to social capital (e.g., family and community relations that benefit children's cognitive and social development), which denotes the amount of knowledge that he has about the schooling process, his relationship with others who can share pertinent and important information, and/or his capability to assist his son with academic work. Maton, Hrabowski, and Greif (1998) conducted a qualitative study on 60 high-achieving Black males and their parents in an effort to investigate parenting and contextual factors that contribute to outstanding academic achievement in this population. There were four themes that emerged from their investigation. (1) Parents maintaining a persistent and determined academic engagement that began in preschool and persisted throughout their educational career. According to the research, the parents and sons commented that there were very high expectations, a continued focus on the importance of education, and continued involvement and advocacy regarding school and educational placements. (2) Strict discipline and limits were set. Participants shared that in a society where juvenile pranks by a Black male can be easily construed as criminal behavior, it is vital to vehemently instill in them the difference between right and wrong. (3) The presence of love,

support, communication, and modeling. Fathers were described as positive role models who worked hard daily to support their family financially and were simultaneously available to help with homework and attend sports practices. They provided time, unconditional love, and open, honest communication (Greif, Hrabowski, & Maton, 1998; Gordon, Nichter, & Henrikren, 2012). According to the researchers, the fathers remarked that they spoke with their sons as opposed to lecturing them. (4) The final theme that emerged from the study by Maton et al. (1998) included a sense of connectedness to the community and to community resources. Extended family members, extracurricular activities, peers, and teachers were seen as influential in the son's academic development. The fathers in the study acknowledged to their sons that they would encounter additional challenges because they are both African American and male, but the fathers encouraged their sons to not allow stereotypes or bias to deter them from achievement (Greif et al., 1998). The fathers drew on their own achievement despite the odds, pride in African American history and achievements, and their faith, as strength to overcome the barriers that stand before African American men; they encouraged their sons to do the same (Gordon et al., 2012).

Some researchers state that African American fathers have the greatest tools with which to shape themselves into heroic figures for their children; they have their minds and they have their culture (Battle, 2000; Lipscomb 2011). Swain and Battle (2000) believe that fathers are the hidden parent in most research about the educational attainment of student. The father's strong identity as an African American male and the support fathers receive from the broader community is linked to successful academic outcomes in their children (Battle, 2000; Lipscomb, 2011).

Researchers have recognized that racial–ethnic socialization by parents may insulate children from racist and negative stereotypes and encourage them to persevere and be successful (Branch & Newcombe, 1986; Smith et al., 2003). With the various challenges facing African American children, Peters (1985) argued that it is critical that parents not only help children to overcome negative societal expectations but that they also instill a positive sense of identity to buffer against the negative effects of racism and discrimination. In an important study examining the developmental course of racial–ethnic attitude formation, Spencer (1983) found that parent’s proactive values toward teaching their children about their race and ethnicity predicted more positive and less stereotypical attitudes of the children toward their own racial–ethnic group. This result surfaced among a sample of preschool to early-elementary African American children who initially tended to exhibit more positive attitudes toward other racial–ethnic groups. The children began to develop more positive attitudes toward their own racial–ethnic group over time. Spencer’s work helped to clarify that among young African American children the formation of racial–ethnic attitudes for this group is both dynamic and developmental. Further work has focused attention on parent’s attitudes and their racial–ethnic socialization. Bowman and Howard (1985) found that youth whose parents communicated a sense of pride and preparation for racial barriers reported a greater sense of efficacy and higher academic achievement measured by their grades in school.

Research has also shown that the higher the fathers' educational level, the more likely they were to serve as guides and mentors academically to their sons (Hrabowski et al., 1998). A study on African American male adolescents found that regardless of family structure, adolescent males who reported their fathers as role models exhibited lower school dropout rates than those who did not (Battle, 2000; Lipscomb, 2011). The fathers in this study of African

American adolescent males were seen as vital to their sons success when these sons were able to look to own their fathers as examples of academically successful black males (Hrabowski et al., 1998).

Hrabowski et al. (1998) identified six factors that lead to academic success in children. They are as follows: (1) Parents reading to their children, (2) Parents view of education, (3) active encouragement, (4) Close interaction between the parents and their (child's) teacher, (5) Strong parental interest on homework, and (6) considerable verbal praise. Again, African American fathers must improve their involvement with their children.

Although young African American males are faced with a number of challenges in their communities, there are strategies that have proven to be effective in addressing the problems that many of these young men face (Kunjufu, 2001; Mincy, 1994; Wynn, 1992). According to Livingston and Nahimana (2006), there are six strategies: (1) Encouragement of continued professional development among teachers in an effort to better understand and work with urban African American male children from economically disadvantaged communities. (2) Identification and recruitment of more male teachers, in particular more young urban men of color. (3) Creation of opportunities for early career exploration and development (i.e. intern and apprenticeships) inside the classroom and as a part of school curriculum. (4) Utilization of male professionals from the community as mentors for students as early as elementary school, in particular men of color. (5) Creation of multi-disciplined research centers to assess what factors are associated with healthy development for African Americans and develop interventions to address challenges facing these young men. (6) Creation of community collaboratives made up of schools, businesses, government, churches, and various community stakeholders to create

experiences (i.e., rites of passage, job shadowing), which will enable healthy social and psychological development of African American males.

The literature on father involvement among African American fathers has been steadily increasing over the last two decades, with a large focus on nonresidential fathers from low-income communities (Connor & White, 2011). Although numerous educators have focused on the importance of father involvement if children are to excel in school, no meta-analysis that examines the influence of this involvement on the academic achievement and behavior of the general student population has ever been published in an academic journal (Jeynes, 2015).

Summary

As mentioned, African American males have an almost unsurmountable number of obstacles to overcome in route to achieving a better life academically, socially, and financially. According to research, one factor that can assist with making these life changes is consistent parent involvement, particularly father involvement. Although research is limited, it has shown that fathers who are consistently and actively involved in their son's lives contributes to increased cognitive competence, empathy, self-efficacy, fewer behavior problems, and overall improved school performance (Amato 1994; Pleck 1997; Radin 1994). All of these things will assist in making progress toward accomplishing life goals.

The research on father involvement is still growing, and the limited studies on African American father involvement, it has been concluded that more research has to be completed to assist African American fathers with not only consistent father involvement but programs, resources, and employment opportunities that can put them in a better space so that they have the knowledge, skills, and means to assist their sons. Thus, the researcher was hopeful that the data collected from this research study will assist with understanding the lived experiences of

involved African American fathers regarding their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility as it relates to the academic success of their sons in urban high schools.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Chapter Three will discuss several aspects of the proposed study, in particular the methods of the planned study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the experiences of fathers as they relate to engagement, accessibility, and responsibility as it relates to the involvement in the academic success of their African American sons in urban high schools. The chapter begins with a discussion of the design, the research questions, site of the study, and the criteria for choosing the participants. The chapter continues with an explanation of the procedures, the role of the researcher, data collection methods, and how the data was analyzed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the trustworthiness of the research study, relevant ethical considerations, and how I investigated what factors contributed to African American fathers becoming involved in the academic success of their sons in urban high schools.

Design

The research study was qualitative, incorporating a transcendental phenomenological design. A qualitative study was utilized to provide a broad view of the phenomenon that can be generalized to the population. According to Creswell (1994), qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The focus was to describe what all the participants had in common as they experienced the same phenomenon. This description consists of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology seeks to find a universal description of an experience

(Creswell, 2013). The common phenomenon among the participants in this study was the lived experiences of involved fathers as they related to the engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding the academic success of their African American high school age sons. The researcher sought to determine and understand the shared experiences of urban African American fathers and what types of involvement yield academic success for their high school age sons.

The phenomenological design was selected as the proper qualitative design type because through the research a common meaning of the lived experiences were identified; data was collected in the form of interviews, a focus group, and document analysis; and the essence of the lived experience was discussed. In the study, the phenomenological research approach provided an opportunity to research the experiences of fathers being involved in the academic success of their African American high school age sons. It also allowed the researcher to answer the research questions.

Research Questions

The research questions investigated the phenomenon of characteristics that contribute to African American fathers becoming actively involved in the academic success of their urban high school age sons. The research questions for this inquiry were as follows. The central research question was: What are the lived experiences of involved African American fathers regarding their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their high school age sons in urban high schools? The sub-questions were as follows: (1) What is involvement as it relates to African American fathers? (2) What does the term accessibility mean to African American fathers? (3) What are the responsibilities of African American fathers regarding the education and academic success of their sons?

Site

The site for this research was an urban high school, in an urban school district, in a Mid-western city in the United States. The site was a comprehensive high school servicing 850 students in grades 9 through 12. The leadership consisted of two principals, three assistant principals, and 75 staff members. The site was purposefully selected because the student population was 95% African American, 73% economically disadvantaged, 55% African American male, and had a 62% graduation rate. Additionally, father involvement had increased in the last two years. Jeynes (2015) found that father involvement had an overall positive influence on academic, psychological, and other outcomes. In addition, he found that the association between father involvement and educational outcomes was stronger for children of color. The site was chosen based on the percentage of African American males attending and graduating. Believe to Achieve High School was the pseudonym that was selected for the school that was studied and all participants were given a pseudonym.

Participants

The researcher included 10 participants in the study who were African American fathers of African American males of high school age. African American is defined as Black people living in the United States who are descended from families that originally came from Africa (Collins English Dictionary, 2010). The participants were purposefully selected and fit the description of an African American father/father figure (i.e. biological father, step-father, grand-father, uncle, or male guardian). The researcher met with the school leadership to discuss the criteria for the participants and asked for their assistance with identifying candidates. The researcher requested to attend two parent meetings and any other school events where African

American fathers attended to speak with prospective candidates. Additionally, the researcher provided written documentation for the fathers outlining the details of the study. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological studies may vary from three to four participants to 10 to 15 participants. All participants were given a pseudonym for confidentiality and was protected by agreed upon research ethics and Institutional Review Board procedures. It was the researcher's wish to have father/father figures representation for each of the four high school grade levels: 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th.

Procedures

As the researcher, I completed several steps. The first steps were to contact, submit my proposed study, and obtain approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the protection of the participants. Upon approval from the IRB, the second step was to contact the school district's personnel, both the superintendent and principal of the high school that was studied. I explained the research procedures to the administrators. Once approval was granted from the school district, I coordinated with the school's administrator to assist with identifying African American fathers/father figures for the research. After identifying the fathers/father figures, I provided the participants with pertinent information regarding the study (i.e. what the study is about, procedures, consent forms, and confidentiality documents). I then made myself available to the participant to answer any questions that arose as well as clarified the protocols of the study. I then scheduled times for the interviews and focus group, as well as collected the documents for analysis. The interviews and focus groups, were digitally recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The data was collected and analyzed to develop textural and structural descriptions which assisted with developing the essence of the father's/father figure's experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

The Researcher's Role

As I reflected on my experiences as an African American male, a son raised by a single mother, an uncle to my sibling's children, a father to my son, and currently a high school principal. I found myself at a crossroad as the human instrument. Within my experiences, I observed the interactions of both African American fathers/father figures that are involved academically in the lives of their sons and those that have not. I am very passionate about the study and I approached the study with an open mind and unbiased thoughts in order to understand the true essence of the experience. Although, I am a principal and a social member of the community, as the human instrument my relationship with the participants will be as a researcher collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, seeking to determine and understand the shared experiences of urban African American fathers/father figures and what types of involvement yields academic success for their high school age sons. Furthermore, I will not have any prior knowledge of the participants in the study.

As a high school principal, I have daily interactions with young men of color who do not have a male in their homes nor a positive male role model in their lives. In most cases I am their father and the positive male role model in their lives. Additionally, I conduct an African American male mentoring program that assists young men of color with academics, work force development, job placement, and life skills. I cannot allow my experiences of being a mentor to these young men of color influence the outcomes of the study. I believe God put me in the lives of these young men of color to assist them with academic achievement and to expose them to a better life for themselves and their families.

Data Collection

The research study incorporated triangulation. According to Patton (2002), triangulation means that at least three data sources or types are collected to compare the identified themes throughout the phenomenon. The three types of data collection that was used in the study were interviews, a focus group, and document analysis. The goal of phenomenological data collection was to obtain information that permitted the researcher to fully describe the meaning of the phenomenon as experienced by a small number of individuals (Creswell, 2013).

Interviews

Typically, in the phenomenological investigation the long interview is the method through which data were collected on the topic and question (Moustakas, 1994). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 10 African American fathers/father figures. Fifteen open-ended questions were developed to facilitate a conversation about the participant's parental and academic involvement with their high school age sons. The questions were derived from the literature to get a better understanding of how African American father are involved with their high school age sons (i.e. engagement, accessibility, and responsibility). The interview questions were open-ended, scripted, and peer reviewed by the dissertation committee. Two questions (one and two) were ice breaker questions that allowed me to develop a rapport with the participants. Questions three, four, and five gave the participants the opportunity to discuss their father – son relationships. This will aide in understanding the relationship between the participants and their sons. Fathers may be particularly important to the gender development of boys (Leavell Tamis-Lemonda, Ruble, Zosuls, & Cabrera, 2011). Questions six, seven, and eight were designed to seek the characteristics of parental behavior regarding the importance of

school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to Coleman (1988), a father's educational background is linked to social capital, which denotes the amount of knowledge that he has about the schooling process, his relationship with others who can share pertinent and important information, and/or his capability to assist his son with academic work. The purpose of questions nine, ten, eleven, and twelve was to gain insight into the nature of parental involvement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Additionally, to solicit the characteristics of parental behavior regarding the importance of school (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Questions thirteen and fourteen sought to discover the characteristics of parental influence (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Question fifteen allowed an opportunity for the participants to provide any additional information on the subject matter. The phenomenological interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended comments and questions (Moustakas, 1994). All interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed verbatim, coded into themes and saved to a computer file. The interviews were conducted at the school, in a conference room, with a table and chairs.

Standardized open-ended interview questions. Questions asked were as follows:

Introductions

1. What would you like to share with me about yourself?
2. How many sons do you have that are high school age?

Father – Son Relationships

3. Describe your relationship with your son(s), i.e. your level of engagement, accessibility, and responsibility(s)?
4. What was your relationship like with your father?

5. What do you and your son(s) do when you are together?

Academic Success

6. What are your current views regarding education?
7. What is your definition of academic success?
8. What are your academic goals for your son(s)?
9. What kind of student is your son(s)?
10. Does your son(s) enjoy school—Why or why not?
11. Tell me about your involvement with your son's homework.
12. Tell me about your participation in parent conferences.
13. What are your hopes for your son's future?
14. Tell me about your participation for helping your son plan his future.
15. What additional information would you like to share about the topic?

Focus Group

According to Creswell (2013), the purpose of a focus group interview is to collect information that may emerge through the interactions of the participants who have similar experiences. One focus group session was conducted after interviews had been completed. The focus group was arranged at the convenience of the participants on a specific date and at an agreed upon time. The focus group was held with 4 African American fathers, led by the researcher in a semi-structured environment. The focus group was led with predetermined open-ended questions with four participants in the session.

Ten open-ended questions were formulated to lead the focus group. Questions one, two, three, four, and five's purpose was to gain insight into the nature of parental involvement (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and to explore how African American fathers perceive father

involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). The purpose of question six was to account for the participants' personal educational experiences during adolescence. Based on research by Hrabowski et al. (1998), the higher the fathers' educational level, the more likely they were to serve as guides and mentors academically to their sons. Questions seven, eight, and nine were designed to solicit the characteristics of parental behavior regarding the importance of school (Chabra & Kumari, 2011; Fraser & Fraser, 2004; Young et al., 2013). Also, based on Epstein's (1992) framework of overlapping spheres of parent involvement ensured that fathers should be able to establish a home environment conducive to supporting their sons as students. The final question allowed the opportunity for the participants to provide additional information on the subject. The focus group session was audiotaped and later transcribed verbatim and saved to a computer file. The focus group session was held at the school in a large conference room that accommodated all participants comfortably.

Standardized open-ended focus group questions. Questions were as follows:

1. What is your definition of being a good father?
2. What does father involvement mean to you?
3. What are the responsibilities of an involved father?
4. What does the term accessibility mean to you as a father?
5. What obstacles, if any, hinder you from being involved in your son's life?
6. Describe your academic success in high school and or college.
7. What are your responsibilities as a father to educate you son and assist him with becoming academically successful?
8. How do you assist your son(s) with his schoolwork?

9. Describe the lengths you take in showing your son that you support him academically?
10. What else would you like to share with us?

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to illuminate the voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). Documents were examined to analyze interim progress reports, report cards, school transcripts, and other written sources of information. Progress reports and reports cards were evaluated to determine the level of academic performance and to compare alignment with parent expectations. High school transcripts were also evaluated for underclassmen. Transcripts and college acceptance letters were evaluated for students in their final year of high school. High school transcripts and letters of college acceptance were used to determine academic achievement. Grades from progress reports and report cards were also recorded and analyzed.

Data Analysis

I used Moustakas (1994) seven step method. (1) I reviewed each statement for how well it described the experience (horizontalization). In this study I used interview sessions, a focus group session, and progress/report cards (document analysis) to collect data in order to determine the experiences of the fathers/father figures regarding the academic success of their son(s). (2) I recorded all relevant statements, removed all statements that were redundant or overlapped, leaving key meaning units of the experience. Additionally, I analyzed and documented the data from the interview sessions, focus group session, and document analysis (i.e., progress/report cards). In doing this, the interviews were transcribed immediately and reviewed thoroughly for

accuracy. (3) I organized invariant meaning units into themes. The concept of coding and bracketing was utilized to develop themes from the participants' experiences. (4) I then coalesced/combined the themes into descriptions of the textures of the experience and augmented the descriptions with quotations from the text. (5) Using my imagination and taking multiple perspectives to find the possible meanings in the text, I constructed a description of the structures of the experience. (6) I created textual descriptions ("what") and structural descriptions ("how") of the experience. The Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) NVivo was used to assist with disaggregating the data and identifying patterns and assigning codes. (7) Finally, I integrated the data into a composite description of meaning and essence of the experience of the entire group.

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in 'qualitative' inquiry, Guba and Lincoln (1989) claimed that a study is credible when it presents faithful descriptions and when co-researchers or readers confronted with the experience can recognize it. Additionally, a researcher must appeal to the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility contributes to a belief in the trustworthiness of data through the following attributes: (a) prolonged engagement; (b) triangulation; and (c) member checks. The participants were involved in two activities that included nearly 8 hours of interviews and 120 minutes of interaction in a focus group setting. Triangulation was used through multiple and different sources and methods to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). To ensure trustworthiness, I utilized triangulation by using different data collection techniques including

interviews, a focus group, and document analysis to ensure the consistency between the different formats.

Member checking is considered to be the most critical technique for establishing credibility (Creswell, 2013). The process of member checking was used to allow the participants to review, judge, and check the accuracy and credibility of the data. Additionally, it was used for participants to review their responses and provide feedback to the researcher.

Dependability

Dependability can be determined by the documented, traceable, and logical process of the research (Schwandt, 2007). This was done by utilizing and documenting the IRB process to insure that the rights, welfare, and privacy of the participants were upheld. Additionally, there was on going interaction with experienced quality researchers who assisted with ensuring accuracy and consistency (Creswell, 2013) in the research process.

Transferability

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), transferability is dependent upon the degree of similarity between two contexts. In other words, how the results of the research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. The original context must be described adequately so that transferability can be made by readers. Rich, thick description allows reader to make decisions regarding transferability (Creswell, 2013). This was used as it allows other researchers in the field the ability to determine if the information can be used in other studies.

Confirmability

Confirmability requires one to show the way in which interpretations have been arrived at via the inquiry. For Guba and Lincoln (1989) confirmability is established when credibility, transferability and dependability are achieved. The peer review is the process involved a peer

that included a discussion session in which the reviewer listened to the researcher and ask questions regarding the methods, meanings, and interpretations (Creswell, 2013).

The peer review process was incorporated during the research process to keep me honest and provide feedback on the research. All peer reviews were documented in writing. Because of the passion, I have for the proposed research, peer reviews kept me focused on the essence of the experience.

Ethical Considerations

This study was very important to me; therefore, ethical considerations were adhered to from the inception to the conclusion of the study. This process began with the researcher obtaining the appropriate approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Additionally, written consent from the superintendent of the school district and school principal were acquired. All participants received transparent and detailed information about the study and were allowed to ask questions for clarification. The participants were informed about the usage of consent and confidentiality forms at the beginning of the study. The confidentiality of all participants were strictly enforced as pseudonyms were used for fathers and father figures and the site that was utilized. The data collected from the study was secured and password protected at all times. At the end of the study, the data was reported thoroughly and accurately.

Summary

A phenomenological research methodology and design was used for the research study. This chapter outlined and provided an overview of the features that were included in the study. The site and the participants for the study were properly identified. Three data collection methods were used: interviews, a focus group, and document analysis. This chapter discussed

how the sources were analyzed. The chapter concluded by discussing the process for ensuring trustworthiness and ethical considerations for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of involved African American fathers as they related to the engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding involvement in the academic success of their sons in urban high school. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings and analysis of the data collected from the participants of this study. In this chapter, I also included a full and detailed description of the 10 participants as involved African American fathers. Additionally, a description of the coding process and theme identification derived from the interviews, focus group, and document analysis is provided. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the identification of themes and how the central and sub research questions of the project were addressed and answered.

Participants

The participants in this study included 10 involved, self-identified African American fathers ranging from ages 40 to 60 whose sons attend Believe to Achieve High School (pseudonym). Each participant was either the biological- or step-father and resided in the home or had weekly engagement and accessibility to their son(s). Table 1 displays a demographical table of the participants' description containing pseudonyms, participant's identification and age, and the number of sons that were of high school age, followed by unique context to portray each participant.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Pseudonyms</i>	<i>Parent</i>	<i>Ages</i>	<i>Number of sons (high school age)</i>
1	Mr. Brown	<i>Father</i>	49	1
2	Mr. Gray	<i>Father</i>	55	1
3	Mr. Cyan	<i>Father</i>	60	2
4	Mr. Green	<i>Father</i>	43	1
5	Mr. Redd	<i>Father</i>	40	1
6	Mr. Gold	<i>Father</i>	46	1
7	Mr. Black	<i>Father</i>	58	2
8	Mr. Magenta	<i>Father</i>	42	1
9	Mr. White	<i>Father</i>	48	1
10	Mr. Blue	<i>Father</i>	56	1

Mr. Brown

Mr. Brown is a 49-year-old married African American father with two children: one son and one daughter. He has one son in high school. Mr. Brown is a graduate of Believe to Achieve High School himself. After graduating high school, he attended college and earned a bachelor's degree. After graduating from college, he returned to the community where he grew up and is currently a staff member and mentor at Believe to Achieve High School. He is an active member of the community and serves in various capacities; additionally, he is also a mentor. Mr. Brown has a very strong relationship with his son. He values education and believes that a public-school education will prepare his son for post-secondary education, just as it had prepared him.

Mr. Gray

Mr. Gray is a 55-year-old married African American father of two children: one son and one daughter. He has one son in high school. Mr. Gray is a product of the community and a graduate of Believe to Achieve High School. After graduating from high school, he attended college, earned two degrees. Currently, he works as a teen life coach and football coach. Mr. Gray has a very strong relationship with his step-son and teaches him that he needs more than a high school diploma to be successful in life. Mr. Gray values education and constantly stresses to his step-son that education is the key to success; he believes that a good education will get you to the next level.

Mr. Cyan

Mr. Cyan is a married 60-year-old African American father of two sons. Both sons are in high school. Mr. Cyan is a high school graduate. After graduating from high school, he went had a number of different experiences. He eventually became a city employee and has been employed by the city for close to 30 years. He currently serves as a union representative assisting others on his job. He stated that having his sons “was about the greatest thing happened to me in my life...I had to grow as a man, and I had to teach him how to be a man.” Mr. Cyan values education and instilled in his sons that education will assist with getting them to the next level.

Mr. Green

Mr. Green is a divorced 43-year-old African American father of one son. His son is in high school. He is a high school graduate, earned a bachelor’s degree, and most recently received a master’s degree. He is employed by the school district and works as a school resource officer. Mr. Green describes himself as a Christian man, who is involved in his community and

likes to mentor young men. He values education and instills in his son the importance of education. He believes that academics come easy to his son. Therefore, he pushes him to remain focused on his academics and set goals that will better prepare him for life. Mr. Green does not live with his son, but they communicate several times daily and interact several times weekly.

Mr. Redd

Mr. Redd is a married 40-year-old African American father of several children, with one of his sons in high school. He is not a high school graduate, but he believes that education and hard work will get you to where you need to be in life. Mr. Redd is employed as a security officer at a local university. He values family life, education, and hard work. His sons are gifted student athletes. Therefore, he feels that athletics and education will provide a better opportunity for them. He stated that he “chased fast money as a young man” but he wants his sons to know that “education is the real key to success in life.”

Mr. Gold

Mr. Gold is a married 46-year-old African American father of two sons. One of his sons is in high school. He graduated from high school and earned a bachelor’s degree. Currently, he is employed as a physical education teacher for the local school district. Mr. Gold had a great relationship with his father. He stated that the relationship he had with his father had a positive impact on the relationship that he has with his sons. He believes that education is vital. He stated that “It’s actually more vital than anything else because of the way our society is set up, and I think that, without a quality education, you can’t really be successful.”

Mr. Black

Mr. Black is a 58-year-old African American father of two high school age sons. He is employed as a local politician. He has been married for 40 years and is very proud of that fact.

Mr. Black grew up in a military family after the Vietnam War era. He stated that “his father was involved in his life but, coming up in that timeframe, he didn't have access to the same time to spend with his children as fathers are given the opportunity today.” He has a great relationship with his sons. Although both of his sons are gifted athletically, he tells them “the most important thing is to further your education and go to college.”

Mr. Magenta

Mr. Magenta is a 42-year-old single African American father of one son. He was born and raised in an inner-city community. He graduated high school and college and returned to his community to work as an educator. He never married his son's mother but has a very close relationship with his son. His father left his mother when he was nine years old, but he reconnected with him when he was 22. His father died when Mr. Magenta was 28. He stated “because I really didn't have a relationship with my father is why I must have a strong relationship with my son.” Mr. Magenta stated that he “makes the strongest attempt to be a part of every aspect of his son's life socially, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As an educator, he definitely values education. His son is a gifted athlete, and he often has conversations with his son about “maintaining his academic and athletic eligibility, and making sure that he has an understanding of the sequential steps that it will take for him to transition from one level to the next and continue to build a strong career in life for himself as a young Black man.”

Mr. White

Mr. White is a 48-year-old single African American father of one son. He was raised in a single-parent household. He graduated from both high school and college and is a local real estate entrepreneur. He values a college education, but “thinks that the trades, vocational education, and entrepreneurial internship programs are not being pushed enough.” He thinks

“more options has to be provided for those students who don’t want to go to college.” He has a great relationship with his son. He thinks that his son is an underachiever like he was.

Therefore, he has to stay on him to keep him focused on his academics. Mr. White wants his son to attend college (two or four year) if he chooses, but his focus is to steer his son towards more entrepreneurial opportunities in business or real estate.

Mr. Blue

Mr. Blue is a 56-year-old married African American father of two sons. One of his sons is in high school. He was raised in an inner-city community in a single-parent household. His father left his mother when he was three years old, and he took on the role of the man of the house when he became a teen after his older brother was murdered at the age of 18. Mr. Blue stated that “My father was a CPA accountant, real smart, educated, but didn't want to take care of his family, didn't want to take care of responsibility.” Mr. Blue’s relationships with his sons are strong because he did not have a relationship with his father. Mr. Blue graduated from Believe to Achieve High School. Even though he owns his own business and currently lives in the suburbs, he wanted his sons to attend the same inner-city high school he attended. He drives 30 minutes twice a day to ensure that his sons attend his alma mater. Mr. Blue values education and wants the best for his sons. He stated that “education, to me, is one of the most important things in life for my kids.”

Overview of Analysis

This section of Chapter Four outlined the results of the study. Through the use of multiple data collecting methods, which included individual and a group interview as well as document analysis. Ten African American fathers shared their experiences as a father being involved in the academic success of their high school age son(s). This section includes tables

outlining participant demographics and coding, theme development, central and sub research questions with answers, and a summary.

Interviews

All 10 participants were individually interviewed in a face-to-face format using open-ended, semi-structured questions, within a span of three months (August, September, and October). As Seidman (2006) indicated, interviews allow for intimate conversations with participants about a lived experience or phenomenon. The interviews were beneficial because they allowed me the opportunity to speak with the fathers directly to get a better understanding of their experiences as African American fathers involved in the academic success of their teenage sons. The interviews were digitally recorded. At the conclusion of all of the interviews, I transcribed the audio recordings into a Word document for data analysis. Each file was then uploaded into the Nvivo software program.

Focus Group

A focus group was conducted with four of the 10 fathers utilizing a face-to-face interview process. The focus group was conducted in a closed classroom at Believe to Achieve High School with the fathers in a circle, utilizing open-ended, semi-structured questions. The focus group was digitally recorded. At the conclusion of the focus group, the audio recording were transcribed into a Word document for data analysis and later uploaded into the Nvivo software program. All information was secured safely in a file cabinet.

Document Analysis

The documents collected for this study were quarterly progress reports, report cards, and transcripts. Five of the ten participant's sons were enrolled in AP or Honors courses, while the other five pursued general education diplomas. Average weighted GPA ranged between 2.55 to

4.15 with the Honors and AP programs being graded on a 5.0 scale (See Table 2). Two of the participants' sons who were pursuing a general education diploma was in the top 10% of their class. For the participants' sons who were pursuing a diploma in the AP or Honors programs, three of them were in the top 10% and the others were in the top 20% (See Table 3).

Table 2

Sons' Educational Track, Class, and Grade Point Average (GPA)

Fathers	Track	Class	G.P.A.
Mr. Brown's Son	General	Senior	2.92
Mr. Gray's Son	Honors	Senior	3.50
Mr. Cyan's Son	General	Sophomore	2.85
Mr. Green's Son	Honors	Junior	4.15
Mr. Redd's Son	General	Junior	2.55
Mr. Gold's Son	Honors	Junior	3.60
Mr. Black's Son	General	Sophomore	2.75
Mr. Magenta's Son	AP	Junior	3.18
Mr. White's Son	General	Senior	3.03
Mr. Blue's Son	AP	Freshman	3.02

Table 3

Sons' Class Ranking Data

Fathers	Year	Rank	Class Size	Percentile
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Mr. Brown's Son	2019	12th	79	Top 20
Mr. Gray's Son	2019	2nd	79	Top 10
Mr. Cyan's Son	2019	37th	127	Top 30
Mr. Green's Son	2019	1 st	87	Top 10
Mr. Redd's Son	2019	39th	87	Top 40
Mr. Gold's Son	2019	11 th	87	Top 20
Mr. Black's Son	2019	43rd	127	Top 40
Mr. Magenta's Son	2019	20 th	87	Top 10
Mr. White's Son	2019	19th	79	Top 20
Mr. Blue's Son	2019	3rd	90	Top 10

Document analysis confirmed that the sons of the participants were on track and making adequate academic progress. Additionally, the documents ensured that the sons of the participants did indeed make academic achievement as compared to both the African American student population and the general student population in the school district.

Theme Development

Initial theme development. The data collection process began with individual interviews with the 10 participants. The interviews and focus group were conducted with open-ended, semi-structured questions while interview notes were taken. Each individual interview and focus group interview was completed, digitally recorded, transcribed into Word documents, and uploaded into the Nvivo software program. At the conclusion of the study, each participant was contacted and briefed on the findings. They were also allowed to proofread their interviews to determine accuracy and to add any additional comments they may have wished to make.

Using collected data, codes were developed to help identify themes. The first cycle of coding began within Nvivo or verbatim coding. Nvivo coding is the practice of assigning a label to a section of data, such as an interview transcript, using a word or short phrase taken from that section of the data. This type of initial coding is especially useful at extracting a subculture's unique way of speaking or use of metaphors to frame them in context (Saldana, 2016). This method resulting in finding 50 codes (see Table 4 for a list of the top results).

Table 4

NVivo Results (Top Results)

NVivo Codes	# Times Mentioned	NVivo Codes	# Times Mentioned	NVivo Codes	# Times Mentioned
know, knowing, knows	1424	kids	226	teacher	140
like, liked, likes	557	talk, talked, talking, talks	220	level, levels	126
				success, successful	124
school, schools	491	work, worked, working, works	212	relationship, relationships	123
just	454	life	209	involve, involved, involvement	109
want	365	right	202	parents	97
going	346	father, fathers	156		
come, comes, coming	280	academic, academically, academics	152		
thing, things	264	college, colleges	152		
time, times	250	educate, educated, educating, education, educator, educators	151		
tell, telling, tells	229				

The phenomenological data analysis was rooted in Moustakas' (1994) description of epoche and phenomenological reduction. Epoche was the first step in the process. Moustakas (1994) stated that the process of epoche can prepare the researcher to be receptive to meeting

“something or someone and to listen and hear whatever is being presented without coloring the communication with my own habits, thinking, feeling, and seeing, removing the usual ways of labeling or judging, or comparing” (p. 89). It is used to ensure that researchers reflect, acknowledge, and share personal views about the topics they are studying. The process is ongoing throughout the dissertation but falls heavily on the data analysis section (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Using epoche assisted me with limiting my biases and preconceptions about the topic and the participants. This made the process easier for me to be open minded about the data.

Secondary theme development. Once initial codes were established, I began a second cycle of coding to develop categories from data analysis (see Table 5 for secondary categories and codes). As illustrated in the table, the items were reduced from 50 to only 11 categories and codes. These codes were as follows: involved father, academics, college, parent/teacher, teachers, next level, academic success, school, father-son relationships, father engagement/involvement, and parent engagement/involvement.

Table 5

Secondary Categories and Codes

#	Categories	Codes
1.	father, fathers	Involved Father
2.	academic, academically, academics	Academics
3.	college, colleges	College

4.	educate, education, educator	Parents/teachers
5.	teacher	Teachers
6.	level, levels	Next Level
7.	success, successful	Academic success
8.	school, schools	School
9.	relationship, relationships	Father-Son relationships
10.	involve, involved, involvement	Father engagement/involvement
11.	parents	Parent engagement/involvement

Additional codes were developed and the most frequent codes were separated into related topics. I then used phenomenological reduction, bracketing, and horizontalization to develop themes. Several themes emerged from the data analysis. These themes included: (1) getting to the next level, (2) father-son relationships, (3) academic success, (4) father/parent engagement, and (5) the importance of education. However there were three salient themes found throughout the data: (1) getting to the next level, (2) father-son relationships, and (3) the importance of education (see Table 6 for themes and supporting categories). I choose to eliminate academic success and father/parent engagement because after further analysis it became evident that these were categories rather than themes. These categories (academic success and father/parent engagement) played a vital role and impacted the development of the themes. Additional data analysis and discussion assisted with identifying theme development.

Table 6

Theme Development

Themes

Supporting Categories

Getting to the Next Level

Father/Parent Involvement, Academics, Academic Success, College, College Visits

Father - Son Relationships

Father Involvement, Father Engagement, Father - Son Relationships

Importance of Education

Parents, Fathers, Teachers, Academics, Academic Success, College

Emergent Themes

Theme One: Getting to the Next Level

“Getting to the Next Level” was a theme that many of the participants mentioned in regards to preparing their sons for their futures. Getting to the next level as described by the participants was the idea of their sons transitioning from high school to college or the workforce, with assistance from the fathers and school personnel and acquiring the skills to become successful in those environments. Mr. Gray stated “we talked just about every day and we talk about life. We talk about the next level. We talk about preparation and what it takes to get to where he's trying to go. I explained to him over the years, especially since he’s been to high school and it's my responsibility to get him where he trying to go.” Mr. Cyan stated, in preparing my son for the next level:

You have to teach him and give him the skill set to the best of your ability, so that he can be successful, so he can be productive. Like I said for problem solving skills, helping him with that and challenging him so that he can be successful.

Mr. Green continued with the sentiment by stating the following:

I worry about him sometimes because the work comes easy for him. So, I'm worried about the challenges at the next level. I mean, I know Believe to Achieve is a small school, but I just wonder how he's going to be when the competition mounts up against him, but so far so good.

The participants also stated that getting to the next level encompassed several other factors; education, athletics, and workforce development. On the educational side of getting to the next level, the participants discussed some of the measures in which they took to expose their sons to college life. Mr. Brown stated:

I've been preparing my son for the next level since he was small. I've been taking him on college tours since he was in the seventh and now he's a senior in high school, so he's been having exposure from college since he was in the seventh grade.

Mr. Gold added:

This past summer we went down to North Carolina. We visited North Carolina A&T, Duke University, and North Carolina State. Just try to expose them to different universities and colleges and just, let them see what the next level is like. And from there I think they can make a responsible decision, but I just feel like me and mom feel that, showing them and exposing them to different things, is going to help them make wiser decision.

Mr. Magenta also added to measures taken to prepare his son for the next level.

I talked to him about his level of responsibility as a young Black male, as a scholar, as an athlete. What his goals, dreams, and aspirations are, and how to get to the next level. I share with him, and we converse regularly about what that looks like, the planning aspect of that, having a multiple facet plan. That you cross off one goal and move the second

goal to the first goal and add another goal. That's how I was taught as a young man. So that's something that I've poured into him and encouraged him to do as well.

Several of the participants' sons were gifted high school athletes, aspiring to become college athletes, and wanting to compete on the next level. The following are the experience of the participants regarding preparing their sons for the next level of athletics. Mr. Redd shared:

We've discussed college, because he wants to play ball at the next level. I said okay, well in order to play college ball, you got to get there, which means you got to do right here in high school in order to get accepted into that next level. Go to school, get an education, play some ball while you are there. If you definitely want to go to the next level and you serious, then we either got to get the books right so that your grades could warrant you a scholarship or you got to keep the grades at a consistent level of goodness to where your athletics can get you there. And like I tell him, once you get there, the sky's the limit on how far you can take it. But you got to get there, which means this right here [education], got to be right first in order to get there.

All participants who were preparing their sons for the next level did not experience the phenomenon from the athletic or traditional education side of things. One father in particular was very adamant about preparing his son for the next level by introducing him to entrepreneurial opportunities. Mr. White expressed the following sentiment:

Preparing my son for the next level involves preparing him for entrepreneurial internships. Sometimes you need a degree or some type of trade or skill to kind of start you off, and then you kind of build your own business up. But again, I'm hoping that he'll get whatever that educational foundation is and be able to apply it to his life for him to be successful at the next level.

Based on the information that was provided by the participants, getting to the next level was a theme that was very important to them. All of the fathers expressed that they were determined to provide the necessary guidance and resources to assist their sons with getting to the next level.

Theme Two: Father-Son Relationships

Father-son relationships was a second theme that resonated from the data. The father-son relationship theme represented the close bond that the fathers and sons had with one another and how that bond has assisted in making them better fathers. Many of the participants stated that the relationships that they had with their fathers or male figures in their lives were influential in how they related to their sons. Mr. Brown was very honest about his relationship with his father and grandfather stating,

My father was deceased. He died when I was five years old, so I really didn't know my father. I was raised by my grandfather and he passed away when I was in the seventh grade. So my grandfather is the only real father that I knew. Because of my relationship with my grandfather is why I have a strong relationship with my son. Me and my son have an excellent relationship. I've been involved with him for his entire life. He come to me for anything, talk to me about anything. So, we have an excellent relationship with each other.

Mr. Blue added:

The relationship with my father. I was three years old. My father walked out on my mother. My father was a CPA accountant, real smart, educated but didn't want to take care of family, didn't want to take care of responsibility. He wasn't a father figure and I

said, I wasn't going to do that to my kids. Our kids will be taken care of, I won't do what happened to me. I'm not.

The negative experience that Mr. Blue had with his father has influenced a long-lasting relationship between him and his two sons. Mr. Blue is a role model for his sons as he models what he thinks a good father should be and do for his sons daily. Based on his experiences, the total opposite of what his father did, not take responsibility for his family.

Many of the participants had great relationships with their fathers, which impacted the great relationship that they have with their sons. Mr. Gold expressed his relationship with his father and sons by saying the following:

My relationship with my father was great. My father was very supportive of me. I can say that, any type of event that I had, he was always there. Even if I played or I didn't play, he was there. He did as much as he could as a father as far as exposing me to different things, travel, and just all types of things. I think I was blessed to have a father.....I try to do the same things with my sons. I try to take a little retreat with them. We'll go away for the weekend, just me and the boys and we just have man and boy talk and you know what I'm saying. We try to, so they can say some things that they're not comfortable telling their mom about that they can tell me about it and we try to make sure that we keep that information amongst us.

Similar to Mr. Blue, Mr. Magenta was not able to build a long-lasting relationship with his father. Mr. Magenta's relationship with his father was short lived as a child and as an adult. Based on his experiences with his father he has made the strongest bond with his son. Mr. Magenta discussed his relationship with his father and son by stating the following:

My parents were married up until the age of 9, divorced at that time. I had little interaction with my father from the age 9 through the age of 22. Reconnected with him at age 22. He passed when I was 28 at the age of 53 himself. We live in the same city but had very little interaction, didn't have an opportunity to see me play any other sports that I did in high school or any extracurricular. He was pretty nonexistent. Therefore, my son and I have a good relationship. I make the strongest attempt to be a part of every aspect of his life, social, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. Because we live in two separate homes, sometimes it's difficult for us to connect and stay in the best communication. But overall, it's a good relationship.

Mr. Redd was very descriptive about his relationship with his father. Almost to a point of anger. In most cases he felt betrayed, but refused to let the negative feeling he had for his father impact the positive relationships he has with his sons. Mr. Redd expressed the hurt as follows:

A father, I did not have one. I met him for the first time around the age of four or five, and the only reason I can remember that is because it was around my birthday and he brought me a remote-controlled car. Never forget it. It was a silver, BMW remote control car, had red stripes, blue numbers on the side. After that I didn't see him again until I was around 12. My mom made arrangements for me to go live with him. When we got to his house, it was empty. We looked through the windows, we knocked on the doors, and the house was totally empty. He moved. Didn't say a thing. So, there was no relationship with me and my pops. So, I just vowed in me, if I do the opposite of what he did to me with my children, I can't go wrong. So, I'm there for my sons, unconditionally.

Other times, these fathers discussed having good relationships with their fathers. For example, Mr. Black's experiences and relationship with his father came from a perspective of

when fathers were truly the sole bread-winners of the homes and strong discipline ruled the household. Mr. Black's stated the following,

My dad was actually an Army Recruiter when he returned home from Vietnam. So, discipline was one of the key things that we had. It wasn't overbearing, but, we were taught responsibility. He was in our life, but coming up in his time frame, he didn't have access to the same time to spend with children as fathers are given the opportunity today because he grew up in Alabama, the South. He actually didn't go to school. He picked cotton and took a buggy ride over that Pettus Bridge every day to take it to the cotton gin. He could never play ball with us because he never knew how to throw a football. He never knew how to hold a bat. He never knew how to drive, but he was a good father. He had time to talk and he always had time to explain things, and he was good to us. He made us men, the man I am today. I try to do the same things for my sons. They understand that. It's all about family. So that's what we spend a lot of time on.

Communicating and telling them about the world. Telling them what they need to watch out for. Let them know life is not easy and tell them, you got to be careful how you choose your friends and make life decisions.

The overall sentiment of the participants was that father-son relationships are crucial for the development of their sons (i.e. mentally, physical, socially, emotionally, and educationally). The fathers stated that their father-son relationships were fostered based on the relationship they had with their fathers. Some were very positive and others were negative. But, based on the perspective and the information that was provided by the participants, over time they have learned how to become good fathers and the bond that exists between the fathers and their sons are inseparable.

Theme Three: Importance of Education

Based on the data from the fathers, the final theme of the importance of education emerged. All of the fathers stated that in order for their sons to become successes in life, a quality education was vital. Therefore, the fathers ensures that their sons understood the importance of receiving a quality education. Mr. Gold stated,

I think education is vital. I think it's actually more vital than anything else because of the way our society is set up. I think that, without a quality education you can't really be successful. I think, there used to be a time when you could leave high school and go work at the post office and those types of things. But in this day and time, if you don't have a college degree, you really can't be as successful and be able to carry your family like you need to.

Mr. Magenta expressed his views on the importance of education from a father and educator's point of view by stating,

As an educator, I think that the system is a little warped, but certainly I see the value of education. I expressed to my son the importance of maintaining a strong grade point average. Maintaining his academic and athletic eligibility, and making sure that he has an understanding of the sequential steps that it will take for him to transition from one level to the next and continue to build a strong career in life for himself as a young black man.

Mr. Redd discussed the importance of education from the experience of not having a high school diploma and the difficulties he has encountered. He explained his experience by stating, Without education you really can't get anywhere, and I'm speaking from firsthand experience. That is why I push hard on education [to my son]. I never graduated high school. I'd rather chase the money than think about school. It was beautiful then, but in

the long run it doesn't get you anywhere. I'm making this amount of money, that's doing good. But in all actuality, you are still living check to check, not really doing that good. You are still looking for improvements. And had I taken the time then to further my education, no telling where I would be right now. So education is very important and I am making sure that my son complete his.

Mr. Black expressed that he wished that he continued his education after high school.

Therefore, he constantly pushes the idea of education to his sons and stated,

They know for a fact, and I tell them education is key. That's one of the things I wish I would have more of. Actually, I push it all time. It's a big difference in finishing school, which is the most important thing to me that they finished high school. Another important thing I tell them is to further their education. Go to college. Even if you get an athletic scholarship. I want you to have something to fall back on. Something that you can utilize and let you live a better life than what I live now. But education is the key [to success].

Mr. Green agreed that education was important for his son's future success and that education comes easy to him. Because it comes easy to his son, he emphasized the importance of staying focused and completing his educational goals. Regarding his son, Mr. Green stated:

Education is very important. I'm proud of him right now because he's excelling very well in academics. He's very gifted. He had an offer to be able to skip a grade, but he didn't. He's currently taking classes where he can have an Associates when he gets his high school diploma, which is fantastic. I think this age is very, very important for molding him and getting him to understand the seriousness of education. So I always tell him to

stay focused on his goals, stay focused on education, because one false move right now may hurt you bad.

Both Mr. Gray and Mr. Brown are graduates of Believe to Achieve High School and believe that the public-school education they received from their alma mater is adequate for their sons' academic success. They both expressed the importance of education and Mr. Gray stated:

Education from the state and the federal standpoint is needed. I tried to get my son to understand we live in a time of day where you don't just graduate from high school. Like when I came out of Believe to Achieve you were able to go work at Ford and things like RTA and the Post Office. I try to get him to understand that you got to get higher education, and I repeat that often. Like what President Obama said the last eight years, when he was in office, you must go to college, just so you can take better care of yourself, and your family.

Mr. Brown agreed by stating the following:

I'm real high on education. I always tell my son that. I want him to be better than me, so I want him to get more out of education than I did. My son actually attends the same high school that I attended [Believe to Achieve]. Basically kind of followed the same path that I followed all the way through school. So I think if this public education was good enough for me, it's good enough for him. So we talk about education all the time. So I'm real high on pursuing higher education.

Mr. White believes that education is important, but he feels that the trades and vocational educational should be pushed more, because there has to be options for students who don't aspire to go to college. He stated:

I think that education has been pushed so far and everybody needs to go to college and I don't think enough of the trades in voc. ed. and entrepreneurial internship programs are being pushed enough. Right now, I think that the business world has a heavy influence in education. But I don't think it's directed in the way that our kids who desire not to go to college have other options. I'm hoping that they'll get into that. My son, he's saying he wants to go to college. He's doing those things right now, so part of my goal is to make sure that he gets into a four-year college. If not a four-year college, then we'll probably look at a junior college. He may even go to a community college first and then step up. But, ultimately, I would like to see more vocational education options.

Textual Descriptions

Moustakas (1994) believed, “Ultimately, through the transcendental-phenomenological reduction we derive a textual description of the meanings and essence of the phenomenon, from the vantage point of an open self” (p. 34). Creswell (2013) described textual descriptions as the “what” (p. 193) phase of data analysis. What the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon (p.193). Moustakas (1994) stated that “the meanings and essence of the phenomenon” are revealed during this step as textual descriptions (p. 34). Creswell (2013) indicated that verbatim examples would be included in these descriptions.

For this study the “what” is the lived experiences of the participants as African American fathers involved in the academic success of their high school age sons. The “what” is the day-to-day experiences of the father as they prepare their sons for academic success and life. All of the fathers were actively involved in their sons’ lives in regards to engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. Several provided specific descriptions as to how they were involved. Some of these descriptions included: financial, emotional, and spiritual supports; goals and expectations

(personal and academic); personal conversations; father-son relationship; homework assistance; teacher conference involvement; college exposure trips; and future plan preparation.

Mr. Magenta provided a very heartfelt response by stating he “makes the strongest attempt to be a part of every aspect of his son’s life: educationally, socially, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.” He further began to describe how he makes those attempts. “As a father, I’m a protector and a provider, and I’m responsible for him and his life in every aspect.”

Mr. Magenta continued:

I talked to him about his level of responsibility as a young Black male, as a scholar, as an athlete. What his goals, dreams, and aspirations are. I share with him and we converse regularly about what that looks like. The planning aspect of that, having a multiple facet plan, and that you cross off one goal and move the second goal and add another goal.

That’s how I was taught as a young man. And so that’s something that I’ve poured into him and encouraged him to do as well.

Mr. White provided a response regarding father-son relationships. He stated the following about his son:

Since he has gone into high school, I’ve been heavily involved with him and trying to keep him focused. He’s very influenced by some of the hip hop culture and sports. But he’s managed to kind of balance those, but I’m double checking and triple checking behind him to make sure that he’s not hanging with the wrong people. I try to keep him involved in activities, not as many activities as it was when he was a middle school kid, because he kind of lost interest in some things. But right now, he’s really into music and sports, and now he’s looking to work at his first summer job, this coming summer.

Many of the fathers spoke to their experiences in regards to what additional efforts they have made to prepare their sons for success. College exposure trips was a category that came up often. Several fathers personally took their sons on college exposure trips to expose them to college life. Mr. Brown stated:

I've been taking him on college tours since he was in the seventh and now he's a senior in high school. He's been having exposure from college since he was in the seventh grade. He knows that I've been taking kids on college exposure trips since he was born. He's real familiar about college and having a career in general.

Mr. Gold added:

This past summer, we went down to North Carolina. We visited North Carolina A&T, Duke University, and North Carolina State. Just try to expose them to different universities and colleges and let them see what it's like. I think they can make a responsible decision. I just feel like me and mom feel that showing them and exposing them to different things, is going to help them make a wiser decision.

Mr. Magenta commented on his college exposure preparation as follows:

We've scheduled several college visits. Talked to several coaches on his behalf as he is an aspiring collegiate athlete. Make sure that he has things that he need on the high school level in terms of taking the right courses to position himself to gain admissions into the schools that he has interest in.

Structural Description

The structural description is comprised of the “how the experience happened” (Creswell, 2013, p. 194) and “the inquirer reflecting on the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced” (p. 194). For this study, the “how” is the life experiences of involved fathers

in the academic success of their high school age sons. The data revealed several categories to assist with the structural description. All of the fathers adamantly referenced that their responsibilities were to provide a solid home foundation, the basic necessities for their sons, and to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Additionally, they sought to provide social, mental, and, emotional supports. In regards to education and academic success, the fathers reported the experience of being responsible and ensuring that their sons received a quality education at home and in school. An example of this was from Mr. Gray who stated the following:

It is your job to make sure that they're doing what they supposed to be doing at school. That's your responsibility. You have to be on top of it. I tell my son all the time, I'm going to check behind the checker. You might tell me that this teacher said that, or you ain't been getting no homework for two weeks. I'm going to check. It ain't that I don't trust you, but I know some of the things that happens as a teenager. That if you don't have strong dad on your tail, you will get away with it.

Mr. White reported:

I ask him daily, "does he have homework" and I stay on him. I got the syllabus from his teachers. So, I kinda know what to expect. I'll try to look at his marks. They got a computer program where you can kind of see what they're doing in class. I kind of ask him questions based on that. I try to motivate him to do better, to get a better education.

The fathers also reported the experience of preparing their sons for "the next level". This includes the extra measures that the fathers take to ensure that their sons receive a quality education. Mr. Blue reported:

We started this summer with my son, when I found out they had a program for academics at the community college for Math and English (for 8th graders). He went

through the whole program all summer, picked up about seven credits coming out of eighth grade. At first, he didn't want to go through trying to get his associate degree. He just wanted to get his credit, get his English and Math out the way. So now he comes to me and say, "Dad, I just want to go on and get my associate's degree coming out of high school."

Mr. Gray reported,

He got that ACT book and that SAT book in front of him. I give him assignments, and on the weekend, I'll get him and I'm going to see is you actually putting the multiple choices down correctly. So, I give it to him verbally to see if I'm going to get the same answer. And I've been doing this for pretty much over a year and a half. He scored an 18 on the test, which I wasn't discouraged. I told him, you got to get back on it. Get back on it buddy, because that score needs to be higher. So, I challenge him. I push him. To hit those books so he can get what he trying to get. I continue to quiz him and we do this every single weekend.

Mr. White added:

Preparing my son for the next level involves preparing him for entrepreneurial internships. Sometimes you need a degree or some type of trade or skill to kind of start you off, and then you kind of build your own business up. But again, I'm hoping that he'll get whatever that educational foundation is and be able to apply it to his life for him to be successful at the next level.

Composite Description

The composite description incorporates both the textural and structural description as the "essence" of the experience (Creswell, 2013, p. 194). For this study this would be the lived

experience of involved African American fathers in the academic success of their high school age sons in urban schools. The lived experiences of the fathers were the different strategies they employed to prepare the sons for academic success and life. Many of the fathers reported the experience of “teaching their sons and giving them the skill set to the best of your [father] ability, so they can be successful.” Providing their sons with opportunities and positioning them in situations of success. In regards to education and academic success, the fathers reported the experience of being responsible and ensuring that their sons received a quality education at home and in school.

There were several categories that were developed based on the fathers’ experiences. The levels of engagement, responsibility, and accessibility of the fathers were crucial. All of the fathers reported that engagement, responsibility, and accessibility were instrumental in the academic success of the sons and in the father-son relationships. The fathers were candid when describing the relationships they had with their sons. They reported that the relationships they did or did not have with their fathers impacted the relationships that they now had with their sons, especially as they prepared their sons for “the next level.”

Answers to Research Questions

This section of Chapter Four answers the central and sub questions posed by this study. The questions were derived from a thorough review of the literature and the lack of research exploring the impact of father involvement regarding the academic success of African American males in urban high schools. The central question sought to explain the lived experiences of involved African American fathers regarding their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their high school age sons in urban high schools.

Research questions. What are the lived experiences of involved African American fathers regarding their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their high school age sons in urban high schools? This question was answered numerous ways throughout the study. To better understand the participants' experiences regarding engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their teenage sons. There had to be an understanding of three key components: (1) father-son relationships, (2) the importance of education, and (3) getting to the next level. All of the participants expressed the experience of having a great relationship with their sons. Additionally, a part of having a great relationship, the fathers had to be consistently engaged in their sons' lives (having direct contact). Many of the fathers stated that their experiences with engagement was "to be involved in every aspect of their sons' life whether it was in school or out of school." This level of engagement included their sons understanding the importance of education and making it to the next level. In addition, the fathers' engagement in the following: setting academic goals, having conversations about academics, assisting with homework, attending parent-teacher conferences, and planning for their son's academic futures. Mr. Magenta summed it up by stating, "I make the strongest attempts to be a part of every aspect of my son's life: educationally, socially, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually."

In regards to accessibility, these African American fathers were also available to interact in every aspect of their son's lives. All of the fathers stated that their accessibility experiences involved being available to interact and talk to their sons about anything (e.g., life, education, goals, expectations). Additionally, making themselves available to assist their sons with life preparation which included being available to assist with

homework, athletics, relationships, finances, and school and family situations. Mr. Gold summed up his experience by stating,

Me and the boys we have our own time, were we have father and son talks. I provide time so that they can talk about things that they're not comfortable telling their mom. A time were we can talk and keep things amongst us and where I can provide advice for their futures.

The participants also expressed that it was their responsibility as fathers to ensure that their sons understood the importance of education and that they were provided a quality education. All of the fathers stated that their experiences revolved around them becoming actively involved in their sons' educational process and that their academic needs were met. Whether that was by setting academic goals, assisting with homework, attending parent teacher conferences, participating on college exposure trips, or preparing for college entrance exams-- which in turn assist with preparing for the next level. These fathers were actively involved and responsible for the academic success of their teenage sons in urban high schools.

Sub-research question one. Sub-research question one consisted of the participant's description of what is involvement as it relates to African American fathers? It was evident from the participants' responses that involvement was not just important in their sons' academics but in their everyday lives as well. All of the participants expressed that involvement as it relates to African American fathers was having a consistent interactive presence in the lives of their sons. Whether that was daily, weekly, or on the weekends. The participants stated the interactive presence encompassed being involved in all aspects of their son's lives (e.g., home, school,

athletics, church, community). Mr. Redd expressed, “being an involved father is a full-time job, and it never stops.”

Sub-research question two. Sub-research question two consisted of the participants’ description of what does the term accessibility mean to African American fathers? Based on the participants’ responses, they felt very strong about being accessible for their sons. The participants’ experiences with accessibility was being available or having the time to interact with their sons. All of the fathers stated that their accessibility experiences involved being available to interact and talk to their sons about anything (e.g., life, education, goals, expectations). Additionally, making themselves available to assist their sons with life preparation which included being available to assist with homework, athletics, relationships, finances, and school and family situations.

Sub-research question three. Sub-research question three consisted of the participants’ description of what are the responsibilities of African American fathers regarding the education and academic success of their sons? Based on the participants’ experiences, they believed that the responsibilities of African American fathers regarding the education and academic success of their sons were the following. All of the participants stated that it was their responsibility as a parent to ensure that their sons understood the importance of education and that they became academically successful in school. Additionally, African American fathers had to take an active role in preparing their sons for academic success. Some of the responsibilities were as follows: having a clear understanding of what the educational expectations are for their sons (and their sons understanding those expectations); ensuring that their sons are prepared academically to perform at the appropriate level; provide supports (emotionally and in the form of homework assistance); consistently check on academic progress (report cards, parent-teacher conferences,

etc.); complete college exposure trips, complete college entrance exams; and ensure that they graduate high school. In all, the participants felt that it was their responsibility as fathers to ensure that their sons were academically successful in high school.

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study that included a detailed description of each of the 10 participants and their demographic information. The results of the study were discussed by describing the data collection methods and the three-step coding process that was used to identify codes, categories, and themes. This chapter was concluded by answering the central research question and each of the sub-questions of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of African American fathers as they related to the engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding involvement in the academic success of their sons in urban high school. This chapter will begin with the summary of findings of the study (i.e., answering the research questions). Followed by a discussion of both the theoretical concepts and empirical research that informed the analysis results. Additionally, this chapter will present the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study. Concluding with the delimitations and limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and finally, a summary of the study.

Summary of Findings

This section summarized the findings from Chapter Four. The summary is divided into four subsections that are associated with the central research question and the three sub-research questions. Each subsection provided brief overviews of the participant's experiences as they were revealed to the researcher.

Research Questions

Central research question. In addressing the central research question, what are the lived experiences of involved African American fathers regarding their engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their high school age sons in urban high schools? Ten African American fathers described their experiences in assisting their high school age sons with becoming academic successful in urban high schools. The lived experiences of these African American fathers were very similar in regards to the level of

engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in the academic success of their teenage sons. All of the fathers voiced that in order for them (as fathers) to assist their sons, not just with education, but life in general. There were three key factors: (1) strong father-son relationships, (2) their sons understanding the importance of education, and (3) getting to the next level. Based on the father's experiences, these three factors spearheaded everything else that the fathers had to do in regards to assisting their sons with becoming academically successful.

The fathers stated that they all had strong relationships with their sons, which in turn made it easy for them to engage with their sons, be accessible for their sons, and take on the responsibilities of being involved fathers. Many of the fathers reported that daily engagement with their sons was key. Whether it was spending time together, providing daily assistance, using non-coercive discipline to keep them on track, establishing clear expectations and boundaries, or engaging daily which were all vital to the success of their sons.

The fathers also expressed their experiences with being accessible for their sons. All of the fathers stated that their accessibility experiences involved being available to interact and talk to their sons about anything (e.g., life, education, goals, expectations). Additionally, making themselves available to assist their sons with life preparation which included being available to assist with homework, athletics, relationships, finances, school, and family situations.

The fathers were very adamant about being responsible for providing the basic needs for their sons. More importantly, the fathers stressed being responsible for ensuring that their sons understood the importance of education and that their sons received a quality education. All of the fathers expressed that it was their responsibility to become involved in the educational process that their sons were experiencing. In order for their sons to make it to the next level, they had to be actively involved in the educational process. For many of the fathers, this

included, but was not limited to setting academic goals, assisting with homework, attending parent teacher conferences, participating on college exposure trips, assisting with preparation for college entrance exams, ensuring that they graduate from high school, and eventually enrolling and taking their sons to college. These fathers were definitely engaged, accessible, and responsible for the academic success of their teenage sons in urban high schools.

Sub-research question one. Sub-research question one consisted of the participants' description of what is involvement as it relates to being African American fathers? African American fathers described involvement as having a consistent interactive presence in the lives of their sons whether it was daily, weekly, or on the weekends. Three of the fathers did not physically live in the homes with their sons, but they expressed the importance of being involved in the educational, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual development of their sons. The fathers indicated that the interactive presence encompassed being involved in all aspects of their son's lives (i.e. home, school, athletics, church, community).

Sub-research question two. Sub-research question two consisted of the participants' description of what does the term accessibility mean to African American fathers? The African American fathers in this study described accessibility as being available or making the time to interact with their sons. All of the fathers indicated that their accessibility experiences involved being available to interact and talk to their sons about anything at any time. Many of the fathers explained that their interactions involved day-to-day activities, academics, and life preparations for their sons (i.e. daily preparation for school; academic expectations; goal setting; assistance with homework; participation with athletics; conversations about relationships, financial responsibilities, sex, workforce development, and college preparation; college exposure trip; family).

Sub-research question three. Sub-research question three consisted of the participants' description of what are the responsibilities of African American fathers regarding the education and academic success of their sons? All of the participants indicated that it was their responsibility as fathers to ensure that their sons understood the importance of education and that their sons were academically successful in school. In doing this, African American fathers explained that they had to take an active role in the development of their sons' educational process. The fathers expressed that one aspect of their responsibilities was to ensure that their sons had a clear understanding of what their fathers' educational expectations were for them and that their sons followed through with those expectations. Additionally, the fathers ensured that their sons were prepared academically to perform at their current academic level or higher. To achieve this, the fathers indicated that they had to provide continued support, both emotionally and in the form of homework assistance; consistently check on academic progress (i.e. report cards, parent-teacher conferences); complete college exposure trips; encourage completion of college entrance exams; and ensure that their sons graduated from high school. In all, African American fathers believed that it was their responsibility to ensure that their sons were academically successful in high school.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of African American fathers as it related to engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding involvement in the academic success of their sons in urban high school. Through individual interviews, a focus group, and document analysis, the data collected in this study provided insight into the lived experiences of African American fathers involved in the academic success of their high school age sons. There were four major topics that lie within the

three themes of this study. They were (a) understanding the importance of education, (b) preparation for the next level, (c) importance of father-son relationships, and (d) preparation plan to graduate. These will add to the research documenting the lived experiences of the fathers as it relates to the theoretical framework employed in this study (i.e., Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory) and the empirical research related to father involvement.

Theoretical

The theoretical framework that assisted with guiding this study was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological theory. The social ecological theory was relevant to this study because it assisted the researcher with understanding the impact of the home environment and cultural influences that impact the development of the child. An ecological perspective posits that human development occurs as a result of active participation in progressively complex, reciprocal interactions with persons, objects, and symbols in the individual's immediate environment. These interactions in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Parental involvement is one such interaction occurring between adolescents and their parents over time (Bogenschneider, 1997). The most proximal process is comprised of family members and intimate others, including mothers, fathers, and other primary caregivers from whom the adolescents learn to negotiate the world in a very basic way. It is important to note that in this study, the most important or major topic that aligned with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological theory was the importance of the father-son relationships. The active participation that the fathers provided assisted with the development of their sons. The fathers expressed that one reason that their sons were excelling academically was because of their father son relationship. Many of the fathers indicated that the reason that their relationships were strong was because of the positive relationship or lack of relationship they had

with their fathers. According to McAdoo (1997), African American fathers want to have strong and lasting relationships with their sons. Based on the participants' experiences, this aligned with the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's social ecological theory. Bronfenbrenner's microsystem refers to immediate influences that assist with shaping a child's development. All ten fathers assisted in shaping their son's development by strengthening their father-son relationships. The fathers in this study made every attempt to develop those relationships. Many of the fathers expressed that they spent much of their time talking. Talking about academics, relationships, sports, goals, dreams, aspirations, and life. To this point, researchers have found that strong father and son relationships can positively impact self-esteem, learning, and psychological functioning (Krampe & Fairweather, 1993). Furthermore, father involvement is known to be an asset to children's development and well-being, and can be especially critical to a boy's socialization (Lawrence, Watson, & Stepteau-Watson, 2013). Assessments of father involvement conclude that a positive father-son relationship yields higher levels of achievement or psychological well-being in adulthood (Amato, 1994; Barnett et al., 1992).

The social ecological theory has been used in numerous studies to impact findings around child development. The social ecological theory supports the premise that homes and schools are important microsystems for the developing child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Research has generally addressed two ecological dimensions: school environment (e.g., teacher expectations) and the home environment (e.g., family, neighborhood). These ecological dimensions aligned directly with a finding of the study related to understanding the importance of education and how the school environment and home environment overlap. All ten of the fathers in the study valued and felt strongly about their sons receiving a quality education. The fathers expressed that one aspect of their responsibilities was to ensure that their sons had a clear

understanding of what the fathers' educational expectations were for them and that their sons followed through with those expectations. One of the educational expectations was that the sons understood the importance of education. The fathers often expressed to their sons that education was vital to their future success. Mr. Gold stated that he thought education is vital and that without a quality education one cannot really be successful in life. Mr. Blue and Mr. Redd echoed the sentiment and shared with their sons that education is the key to their sons' success and without it, one cannot get anywhere in life.

This mindset transferred the educational expectations of the fathers to the sons to perform well academically in school. A number of reliable studies have shown high levels of interest of fathers in their children's schooling and education, high expectations for their academic achievement, and their direct involvement in their children's education has assisted with academic achievement (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Goldman, 2005). The fathers, in the current study, expected for their sons to be academically successful in school. The fathers instilled in their sons the importance of education and assisted them with preparation. Therefore, they expected for their sons to have academic success in school. Based on the marks on their son's progress reports and reports cards as compared to their peers, they were academically successful in high school.

Building on the work of theorists like Bronfenbrenner (1979) and others in education, psychology, and sociology, Epstein (1995) developed a seminal theory of parental involvement. Epstein's model of overlapping spheres and home-school partnerships provides an excellent framework for conceptualizing the relationship between school-specific involvement and parenting (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). On the basis of this model, it is hypothesized that not only do parenting behaviors indicate parents' willingness to engage in other child activities (i.e.,

indicative of family philosophy), but such involvement also creates parent–child relationship processes that may motivate parents to engage in the child’s schooling (McBride et al., 2009). The six types of involvement interactions that operate within the theory of overlapping spheres act as a framework for organizing behaviors, roles, and actions performed by school personnel and family and community members working together to increase involvement and student achievement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2010). Three of the six types of involvement aligned with the experiences of the participants: (1) Parenting-helping families (e.g., parents and extended family members) to become aware and knowledgeable about child development, and providing resources that enable them to establish home environments that can enhance student learning. (2) Volunteering - organizing and participating in activities initiated by school personnel (i.e., parent-teacher conferences or parent-teacher organizations), and (3) Learning at home - providing information to parents and families about school procedures (e.g., homework expectations, grading scales) in order to help them augment their children's academic activities. Based on the participants’ experiences, this aligned with both major topics: preparation plan to graduate and preparation for the next level. Many of the fathers expressed that they assisted their sons with preparation for both high school graduation and getting to the next level. The fathers were extremely forthcoming about their involvement with the preparation process for their sons from early childhood to the present. Many of the fathers shared the experiences of setting academic goals, assisting their sons with homework (beginning in elementary school), assisting them with developing strong study habits, consistently checking on academic progress (i.e. report cards, parent-teacher conferences), completing college exposure trips; preparing for and completing college entrance exams; exposing to the trades; exploring internship opportunities; and ensuring that their sons graduate from high school, enroll in college, and get to college or

gain employment. The fathers indicated that much of this was done by developing relationships with teachers and staff members who assisted them.

Developing relationships with teachers and staff members was an expectation for both the fathers and the sons. Based on the data gathered from the research, this was done by the fathers consistently attending parent-teacher conferences and conducting school visits. This allowed the fathers the opportunity to have conversations with the teachers about their sons and about the teachers' educational expectations for their sons, as well for them to check on their sons' academic progress. Additionally, this gave the fathers the opportunity to ask clarifying questions regarding how they could better assist with daily assignments and homework, which in turn allowed the fathers the opportunities to better assist and prepare their sons for academic success, preparation for graduation, and getting to the next level.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, one can easily argue that children's school experiences are not just made up of interactions between them and the school or teacher. It also includes a broader system involving parents and family. As a result, understanding what influences children's environment provides theoretical support for the idea of parent involvement in the children's education (Tekin, 2011). The ecological theory supports the premise that homes and schools are important microsystems for the developing child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Empirical

In this section, I will discuss the four major themes that were identified from the data collected during the study from the empirical research related to the literature review. The four themes were as follows: (1) importance of father-son relationships, (2) understanding the importance of education, (3) preparation plan to graduate, and (4) preparation for the next level.

There were rich and thick descriptions provided for each of the themes based on the empirical literature.

Importance of father-son relationships. There is a limited body of research that speaks to African American father involvement. Generally speaking, the literature on African American fathers within intact families was limited (Cazenave, 1979; Cochran, 1997). During the past several decade, the literature on African American fathers, although it is not extensive, has changed dramatically. Today, fathers are spending more time with children than ever before (Lamb, 2010); consequently, there are a myriad of positive outcomes for children whose fathers are involved in positive and meaningful ways (Paquette et al., 2013).

Father involvement is defined as engagement (interacting with the child directly), accessibility (being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child), and responsibility (monitoring and providing for the child; Lamb et al., 1985). The participants of this study have illustrated that with the data that was collected father involvement is essential to the development of father-son relationships. Many of the fathers indicated that the reason that they had positive father-son relationships was because of the relationships or lack of relationships they had with their fathers. Empirical studies on African American fathers suggests that involvement from African American fathers reaps academic, personal, and social benefits (Dubowitz et al., 2002; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003). For instance, African American fathers who are nurturing and satisfied with their parenting roles produce children who have better cognitive and receptive language scores (Dubowitz et al., 2002). The fathers in this study indicated that they all had strong relationships with their sons, which in turn made it easy for them to engage with their sons, be accessible to their sons, and take on the responsibilities of being involved

fathers. Many of the fathers reported that daily engagement with their sons was key, whether it was spending time together, providing daily assistance, using non-coercive discipline to keep them on track, or providing clear expectations and boundaries, daily engagement was vital.

Furstenberg and Harris (1993) found that when African American fathers have an active presence and established long-term relationships with their sons, they were: (a) more likely to enter college or find stable employment after high school; (b) less likely to be teenage parents or to have been in jail; and (c) less likely to report depressive symptoms. Similarly, Lamb (2004) found a general trend that sees African American children living in father-present homes performing better in school than those from father-absent homes. The results of this study definitely provide empirical evidence of the importance of father-son relationships.

Understanding the importance of education. Understanding the importance of education is vital to the success of African American males, because knowledge is power. The fathers in this study were very adamant about their sons understanding the importance of education. All ten of the fathers in the study valued and felt strongly about their sons receiving a quality education. The fathers expressed that one aspect of their responsibilities was to ensure that their sons had a clear understanding of what their fathers' educational expectations were for them and their sons following through with those expectations. All of the fathers expressed that without a solid education it would be very difficult for their sons to become successful in life. Research has shown without obtaining a high school diploma or college degree, individuals will face barriers and obstacles regarding their ability to obtain employment (Chase, 2013; Murnane, 2013; Morrisette, 2018). Many of the fathers shared their experiences as proof of them not having a solid education. Mr. Redd stated that he never completed high school, and Mr. Black stated that he wished he would have continued with his education after high school. Other

fathers commented that they had college educations and based on their experiences, education assisted them with getting to their current positions in life.

Many of the fathers indicated that they were role models to their sons when it came to education. As fathers, they set the example for their sons regarding understanding the importance of education. A study on African American male adolescents found regardless of family structure, adolescent males who reported their fathers as role models exhibited lower school dropout rates than those who did not (Battle, 2000). The fathers in this study of African American adolescent males seen as vital to their son's success when these sons were able to look to their own fathers as examples of academically successful African American males, which was similar to findings in other research (Hrabowski et al., 1998; Lipscomb, 2011).

All of the fathers shared that they had real life conversations with their sons. One conversation in particular was acknowledging educational obstacles. A few of the fathers stated that as students they struggled a little academically in school. Therefore, when their sons had academic difficulties (an educational obstacle), they had to have conversations with them and provide additional supports. The fathers had to develop a support system. When fathers assume an active role in their children's education, there is a positive impact on student achievement (McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Moon-Ho Ho, 2005). For the fathers, the support system was in the form of additional time with homework, additional assistance at school, or in some situations tutor assistance. Much of the research speaks to how African American fathers are not involved in the educational aspects of their sons. According to the research, African American fathers have been historically described as ineffective (Frazier & Frazier, 1993) and as contributors to a negative pathology of poor parenting (Frazer & Frazer, 1993; McLoyd et al., 2000). But, current research (Grief et al., 1998; Perry et al., 2012) has shown that African American fathers who are

involved in their children's academic lives set high expectations, provide support for meeting expectations, and take an interest in their children's extracurricular activities. Moreover, consistent with the literature and other investigations are fathers' beliefs that involvement in their child's academic development is not monolithic; thus, it is a responsibility of parenting that they value (Hoover Demsey et al., 1995). In addition, the empirical data also illustrated a higher percentage of African American fathers who can be the motivator and supervisor for their child's homework and assist with homework and with a reasonable amount of confidence in their skills to help out at their child's school (Dyer et al., 2018).

Preparation plan to graduate. The participants in this study discussed how they received assistance from teachers and staff members with preparing a plan to graduate for their sons. Studies were found that support the idea that educator engagement plays a critical role in African American male academic achievement. Epstein's model of overlapping spheres and home-school partnerships provides an excellent framework for conceptualizing the relationship between school-specific involvements (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). The six types of involvement interactions that operate within the theory of overlapping spheres act as a framework for organizing behaviors, roles, and actions performed by school personnel and family members working together to increase involvement and student achievement (Epstein, 1995; Epstein et al., 2010). Through this model school counselors can help educate and provide parents with resources for positive role models, exposure to experiences beyond their immediate environment, extracurricular activities, and a persistent emphasis on parental involvement in education. The fathers in the study directly supported the idea of working together with the teachers and staff with creating a plan to graduate for their sons. Mr. Blue stated that he met with teachers to get his son enrolled in an Early College Early Career program in which his son could earn an

associate's degree in conjunction with his high school diploma. Mr. Gray stated that he met frequently with the guidance counselor to ensure that his son was on track to graduate and to request assistance with college entry exams. Others fathers discussed receiving resources to assist their sons with passing the state's graduation exam.

Research (Gordon et al., 2012) suggests that African American fathers should be knowledgeable of the critical juncture that young men experience in emerging adulthood and be supportive and involved in the lives of their sons during this significant time. This study showed that the fathers in this study took the appropriate measures to become and stay actively involved in the social and academic lives of their high school age sons.

Preparation for the next level. There are staggering statistics that outline the obstacles that African American males face educationally and socially in the United States. Numerous studies (Aratani et al., 2011; McGuire, 2005; Noguera, 2012) have documented that African-American males enrolled in school often lag behind their peers academically, have less access to rigorous coursework, experience racial bias from school personnel because of lower expectations, and are more likely to drop out. According to Davis (2005), minority males are consistently at-risk for academic failure for various reasons, such as inadequate test scores, increasing referrals for special education services, and high rates of disciplinary action, such as suspension and expulsion. Contrary to empirical data, the experiences of African American fathers in this study contradict the research (Davis, 2005; Noguera, 2012). The fathers in this study provided the supports needed in order for their sons to become academically successful and prepare for the next level.

The participants stated that the major topic preparation for the next level encompassed several factors; education, athletics, and workforce development. The fathers discussed the

measures they had to take to prepare their sons for the next level. The major influence was father involvement. Empirical studies (Dubowitz et al., 2002; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Nord & West, 1998) on African American fathers suggests that involvement from African American fathers reaps academic, personal, and social benefits. The benefits for the fathers and sons were academic success and preparation for the next level.

The educational perspective of preparation for the next level, the participants discussed some of the measures in which they took to prepare their sons for college and expose them to college life. Many of the fathers discuss that they wanted their sons to understand the importance of education and how a solid education was vital to their future success. Therefore, this concept became a mantra in their homes. Additionally, the fathers shared that they took their sons on college exposure trips, because they wanted their sons to understand the work that had to be completed in order to qualify for college and to provide them with an idea of what college life was like.

Several of the fathers had sons that were both academically successful as well as athletically gifted. Therefore, preparation for the next level involved the fathers providing guidance for their son's transition to college on possible athletic scholarships. One father in particular, Mr. Magenta, was a college athlete previously and needed his son to be prepared for the transition. Mr. Magenta stated:

I expressed to my son the importance of maintaining a strong grade point average.

Maintaining his academic and athletic eligibility, and making sure that he has an understanding of the sequential steps that it will take for him to transition from one level to the next and continue to build a strong career in life for himself as a young Black man.

Other fathers expressed the importance of being prepared for the transition and staying focused on their academics to ensure that they can make the transition successfully.

Workforce development was an additional topic that the fathers discussed regarding preparing their sons for the next level. Several of the fathers were self-made entrepreneurs and expressed that they valued and felt strongly about their sons receiving a quality education. In addition, they wanted to provide them with entrepreneurial and internship opportunities.

There were studies that found that support for the idea of School-to-Work opportunities for high school students. This was the central idea behind the federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (STWOA), which enabled states and school districts to fund a variety of programs and activities that would help high school students make informed decisions about their postsecondary education and career plans (Visher et al., 2004). The fathers expressed that opportunities like these would provide additional options in the event that their sons did not want to attend college immediately after high school. Several studies (Bishop et al., 2000; Visher et al., 2004) have found that career exploration programs are not only accomplishing their goal of introducing educational and career options to students, they are also opening doors to higher education for many students. Furthermore, these programs were created to prepare youth for transition into the workforce upon graduating from high school.

The fathers in this study wanted the best for their sons as they prepared them for the next level. Preparing them for the next level encompassed three concepts: education, athletics, and workforce development--with father involvement at the forefront. Contrary to the belief that African American fathers are uninvolved in their children's education, research (Grief et al., 1998; Perry et al., 2012) has shown that African American fathers who are involved in their

children's academic lives set high expectations, provide support for meeting expectations, and take an interest in their children's extracurricular activities.

Implications

This study was designed to describe the lived experiences of involved fathers in the academic success of their high school age sons. There were implications that came to light from the data during the study. This section will discuss the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications from the study.

Theoretical

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory offers a useful framework for examining reciprocal interactions between individuals and the social-ecological environment. The ecological systems perspective is particularly appropriate for studies and interventions focused on individual males of color, in part, because of its conceptualization of individuals as "nested" within a series of social systems or structures (Neal & Neal, 2013). This theory aligns perfectly with the data from this study. The fathers involved in this study alongside current literature fosters the idea that father involvement plays a significant role in a child's academic outcomes (Dunn, 2004; Nord, 1998). This type of interaction between fathers and sons is generally addressed in two ecological dimensions: the social or home environment and the school environment. The concept, the importance of father-son relationships illustrates the measures that the fathers had to take to stay engaged, accessible, and responsible for the well-being and academic success of their sons. The fathers' day-to-day interactions with their sons regarding academics, conversations, life lessons, and preparation for their futures speak to this concept. Additionally, the steps the fathers had to take to constantly interact with school personnel (i.e. parent-teacher conference, schools visits, guidance counselor visits) to ensure that

their sons were receiving a quality education and were prepared for the next level. The ecological theory assisted with developing a broad perspective on the interconnectedness of environments as they relate to African American sons, father involvement, and academics (Cheatham & Stewart, 1990; McAdoo, 1993; Peters, 1988).

The social ecological theory supports the premise that homes and schools are important microsystems for the developing child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The extent to which ecological factors influence the academic success of African American students has a long history in educational research (Horton, 2004; Reynolds, 1989; Wooley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). All of the evidence in this study supports the theory that influences from home and school assist with developing the sons academically. The influences of the fathers aligned with their educational expectations provided a framework for their sons to understand the importance of education. Bronfenbrenner (1979) discussed that the social ecological theory emphasizes the importance of examining the parenting experience in its environmental context. The fathers experiences with instilling in their son that education was vital to a successful future and without a solid education it would be difficult for them to succeed in life.

The social ecological systems also function as a useful conceptual guide for envisioning and operationalizing preventive and intervention strategies given the focus of the model on understanding human individuals as evolving organisms progressing through various developmental stages (Sabri et al., 2013). This concept aligned with the fathers' experiences with preparing their sons to graduate and with preparing their sons for the next level. The idea of African American males needing a plan on how to navigate successfully through the educational system. In this study, the fathers took the lead in developing a plan that their sons could understand, articulate, and successfully complete. In doing this, the fathers assisted that their

sons with becoming academically successful and the sons maintained that academic success as they prepared to graduate and matriculate to the next level.

Although there was limited research regarding African American fathers' involvement in the academic success of their high school age sons in urban high schools. The theoretical implications of this study are significant due to the alignment with the social ecological theory. The results of this study provide additional and previously unknown theoretical data to both practitioners and researchers on the topic of African American father involvement in the academic success of their sons in urban high schools. Moreover, the results of the study confirmed the assumption of the social ecological theory regarding father involvement and child development.

In light of the theoretical implications of this study, recommendations for practitioners and researchers include further research exploration of the social ecological theory and African American fathers. Specifically, how the complex external and internal influences of African American men and their role as fathers impact the academic success of their sons. This would provide more specific information on how the father's norms, values, and culture assist with shaping the academic success of their sons. Further recommendations includes policy makers creating and enhancing programs that may assist African American fathers with awareness, peer support, and counseling. This would assist the fathers with obtaining the skills to build healthy relationships, become a more responsible parent, and economic stability.

Empirical

The empirical implications of this study are significant due to the limited data that explored African American fathers' involvement in the academic success of their sons in urban high schools. This study has identified factors, based on the experiences of the participants that

assisted their sons in becoming academically successful. The major themes identified in this study strive to describe the experience of involved African American fathers as they relate to the academic success of their sons in urban high schools. The findings of this study are consistent with the literature in that substantial evidence supports the benefits of father involvement for child development, including improved academic achievement, social and cognitive skills, mental health, and self-esteem (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Pleck, 2010; Sarkadi et al., 2008). Every participant involved in the study described how their relationships with their sons assisted them with the social and academic development of their sons. Additionally, these relationships provided an opening for the fathers to further assist their son in becoming academically success in school. Over the last several decades, research has sought to understand father-child relationships, father influence on child developmental outcomes, and father influence on the family well-being. Specifically, research has shown the importance of fathers' involvement in their children's educational attainment (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; McBride, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Ho, 2005), fewer behavior issues (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003), economic stability of the family, influencing juvenile delinquent behaviors (Coley & Medeiros, 2007), and child development (Lamb, 2004). The importance of father-son relationships played a vital role in their son's academic success.

Understanding the importance of education was the second theme that the participants described as a factor that assisted them with their sons becoming academically successful. The fathers were very adamant about their sons understanding that education was vital to their future success and that without a solid education it would be very difficult for them to lead successful lives. Additionally, that at one time in history, African Americans were not allowed to have an education; hence, the importance of education. Historical research has demonstrated the many

ways African American parents participated in their children's education, particularly during the era of segregated schooling. In fact, African American parents' fervor in the pursuit of education was evident during slavery when slaves risked severe punishment and even their lives to learn to read because they equated freedom with literacy (Gadsden & Wagner, 1995). After emancipation, African American parents continued to pursue education, often in violent climates in which White leaders did not value educational equality through common schools and largely ignored the issue of educating African American children (Anderson, 1996).

Preparation plan to graduate was a major theme that emerged as a factor that assisted the participants' sons with becoming academically successful. Many of the participants expressed the importance of having a preparation plan to graduate for their sons. These preparation plans involved the fathers becoming actively involved in their son's educational process (i.e. setting academic goals, assisting with homework, attending parent teacher conference, assisting with college preparation exams). Several of the fathers shared the measures in which they took to assist their sons with preparing a plan. Mr. Blue enrolled his son in an early college-early career program that would earn his son an associate's degree in conjunction with his high school diplomas at the completion of both programs. Mr. Gray stated that he met frequently with the school's guidance counselor to ensure that his son was on track to graduate and to request assistance with college entry exams. Several authors have asserted that home-based parental involvement has the most significant impact on student achievement. Henderson and Berla (1994), after performing a meta-analysis of 66 studies, concluded that a home environment that encourages education is more significant to student achievement than socio-economic status, education level, or cultural background. Greenwood and Hickman (1991) further emphasized the significance of the family in educating children by suggesting that the family is critical. These

studies indicated that a learning environment in the home accounts for a significant portion of academic achievement.

Preparation for the next level was the final major theme that became apparent as a factor that assisted the participants' sons with becoming academically successful in high school. Preparing their sons for the next level also required the fathers to take an active role in all aspects of their son's lives. Mr. Magenta stated, "I make the strongest attempt to be a part of every aspect of his life educationally, social, mentally, emotionally, spiritually." Preparation for the next level encompassed three concepts: education, athletics, and workforce development. The participants became involved in assisting their son matriculating into college and careers. Mr. Brown stated, "I've been preparing my son for the next level since he was small. I've been taking him on college tours since he was in the seventh grade and now he's a senior in high school." Additionally, Mr. Magenta added:

I talked to him about his level of responsibility as a young Black male, as a scholar, as an athlete. What his goals, dreams, and aspirations are and how to get to the next level. I share with him, and we converse regularly about what that looks like, the planning aspect of that, having a multiple facet plan. That you cross off one goal and move the second goal to the first goal and add another goal. That's how I was taught as a young man. So that's something that I've poured into him and encouraged him to do as well.

Assisting their sons with preparing for the next level also involved developing relationships with teachers and school staff to provide resources for both the fathers and sons. This aligns with the literature because the faculties at the schools must reach out and collaborate with the fathers to assist with improving academics for African American males. A partnership must be formed not only to assist the students with academics, but in many cases to assist the

fathers as well (Epstein & Sanders, 2002). Additionally, the data matches up with current literature that support the idea of school counselors helping educate and provide parents with resources for positive role models, exposure to experiences beyond their immediate environment, extracurricular activities, and a persistent emphasis on parental involvement in education (Gordon et al., 2012).

Based on the empirical implications of the study it is recommended that practitioners assist in developing father-led forums in which involved fathers can engage with other fathers to provided information that can assist them with better preparing their sons academically (e.g. understanding the importance of education, preparing a plan to graduate, and preparation for the next level). Further recommendations include community policy makers and school staffs providing educational programming and resources that will provide fathers with resources for positive role models, exposure to experiences beyond their immediate environment, extracurricular activities, and a persistent emphasis on parental involvement in education. This would assist the fathers with broadening their experiences as being involved fathers.

Practical

There were several practical implications that emerged from data gathered from the study. There must be a strong father-son relationship in order for African American fathers to make a difference in the academic success of their sons. A trustworthy relationship has to be developed in which the fathers and sons both share an understanding that the father is there to assist with developing the son socially, emotionally, spiritually, and academically.

African American fathers must ensure that their sons' understand the importance of education and take a vested interest in their sons' academics and consistently monitor that progress. Monitoring their progress may include setting academic goals, assisting them with

homework, monitoring academic reports, attending parent teacher conferences, and providing additional academic assistance. Additionally, African American fathers have to set realistic goal for their sons and assist with preparing a plan for academic success and their futures. This plan has to include strategic steps that are attainable, that include assistance from teachers and staff members, and that will assist their sons with getting to the next level.

Finally, African American fathers have to assist their sons with getting to the next level, regardless to if it is educationally, through athletics, or by providing workforce development opportunities. African American fathers have to assist their sons by providing their sons with every opportunity possible in order for them to becoming academically successful in high school and as they navigate through life.

Given the practical implications of the study, it is recommended that policy makers, community organizations, and school systems make consistent efforts to assist African American fathers with obtaining the knowledge and skills to be able to effectively assist their sons with becoming academically successful. Further recommendations include creating organizations in which African American fathers are mentored by other successful African American fathers with the goal of becoming advocates for their son's academic success, educational resources, college preparation guides, and high school graduation supporters.

Delimitations and Limitations

There were several delimitations associated with this study. One delimitation was that the researcher delimited the study to a phenomenological design to capture the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013, Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological design also allowed the researcher the opportunity to present the lived experiences of the participants and gain insight into the perceptions of fathers who were involved in the academic success of their

high school age sons. Delimiting the study to only African American fathers of high school age boys addressed the research questions. The study did not include fathers from rural areas because they were not a focus of the research study. The primary focus of the research was fathers whose sons attended urban high schools. The study did not explore gender differences among African American or the lived experiences of other minorities. Finally, delimiting the site to a city in northeast Ohio and Believe to Achieve High School was ideal as it matched the needs of the study.

The major limitation of this study was the small sample size. A sample of 10 African American fathers is a very limited sample and is not indicative of the larger population of fathers who have sons in urban high school. Additionally, the fathers who participated in the study were fathers who had sons that shown academic success. This was not done intentionally, but there were no fathers involved in the study who had sons that were academically unsuccessful. Therefore, there was no comparison completed of African American fathers with academically successful sons and African American fathers with academically unsuccessful sons in urban high schools. This could lead one to believe that the findings from the study are generalizable. The findings are not generalizable because the experiences of these 10 African American fathers and the academic success of their high school age sons in urban schools is only a small representation of African American fathers. The findings from this study cannot speak to the involvement of all African American fathers. Finally, social desirability was also a limitation. Social desirability is the notion that some of the fathers answered the questions in a fashion that could have been viewed as favorable to the other fathers. Because the sons were academically successful and the fathers were providing educational guidance for their sons. There could have been a possibility

that the fathers were providing information that made themselves seem more involved than what they actually were.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study addressed the gap that exists in the literature regarding the experiences of African American fathers who were involved in the academic success of their sons in urban high schools. There has been limited research in this area and more needs to be conducted.

Quantitative research can be conducted to examine the contrasts between the fathers in the current study and fathers who are not involved in the academics of their sons and the reason why they are not involved. The information from the comparison can be used to develop programs to assist African American fathers with acquiring the skills to better assist their sons academically.

A phenomenological study can be conducted that captures the experience from the son's perspective of the fathers who participated in this study. This could shed light on the son's experiences as well as further validate the father's experiences. Quantitative research is also needed to compare academically successful African American daughters to the results of the study to identify if there are similarities and differences between the two. A case study conducted from educators' perspectives, identifying what they deem are factors that contribute to fathers assisting with their sons becoming academically successful in high school. Lastly, there should be a phenomenological study that inquiries into the factors that contribute to the academic success of African American males who have matriculated to college or the workforce that graduated from urban high schools. This is definitely a subject that needs further research into the experiences of African American fathers who are involved in the academic success of their sons in urban high schools.

Summary

African American men are not commonly thought of favorably as fathers, especially in regard to their children's education (Ransaw, 2014). Therefore, father involvement is crucial to the academic success of African American males. Substantial evidence supports the benefits of father involvement for child development, including improved academic achievement, social and cognitive skills, mental health, and self-esteem (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003; Pleck, 2010; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2008). Father involvement is defined as engagement (interacting with the child directly), accessibility (being available for the child, but not interacting directly with the child), and responsibility (monitoring and providing for the child) (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1985). There was a thin body of research that spoke to African American father involvement.

This study added to the research and described the experiences of African American fathers who were involved in the academic success of their teenage sons in urban high schools. Ten (n=10) African American fathers who had sons that attended urban high schools participated in the data collection portion of this study. Interview questions, a focus group, and documents analysis were all used to collect data. Three main themes were identified. The first was father-son relationships which were instrumental in the development of instilling the father's educational expectations in the sons. The second was the importance of education in which the fathers expressed to their sons that education was vital to their future success and the third theme highlighted how the father assisted in their sons' preparation with getting to the next level.

The data collection along with the literature review showcased that father involvement is essential to the social, emotional, and academic development of African American males. Fathers who take a vested interest in the academic success of their sons, set realistic academic

goals, and provide needed supports will assist their sons with becoming academically successful. Additionally, African American fathers who are engaged in the day-to-day activities in their sons' lives are accessible to their sons at all times and are responsible for the well-being and the academic success of their sons will develop men that will bring change to their communities and hopefully set the example for other African American males who have aspirations to lead productive and successful lives.

It is my aspiration that this dissertation will build on the limited research literature that speaks to African American fathers and their involvement in the academic success of their teenage sons in urban high schools. It was my goal to strengthen the voices of African American fathers and change the lives of the participants and the institutions in which they live and work (Creswell, 2013). By providing a platform to hear the fathers' voices, I hope to motivate other African American fathers to become more involved in the academic success of their sons.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 22, 2018

Temujin Taylor

IRB Approval 3304.062218: Understanding Father Involvement Regarding the Academic Success of African American Males in Urban High Schools

Dear Temujin Taylor,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY.

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APPENDIX B: LETTER OF RECRUITMENT

Date:

Participant Name:

Address:

Dear Participant,

My name is Temujin Taylor, I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Liberty University. I am conducting research to better understand how father involvement assists with the academic success of African American males in urban high schools. I am contacting you at this time, to invite you to participate.

If you are a father/father figure of an African American male currently attending high school and are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in an open ended interview, participate as a member of a focus group, and allow me to obtain a copy of your son's, high school transcript, interim grade report, and report card for an academic progress review.

The interview should take approximately 45 minutes to complete. I will need approximately 90 minutes to complete the focus group, and it will take an additional 20 minutes to review your son's transcript. Your name and your child's name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete and return the consent document, and contact me at (216) 551-6476 to schedule an interview.

A consent document is attached with this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

If you choose to participate, a meal will be provided before the focus group session.

Sincerely,

Temujin Taylor

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

The Liberty University Institutional

Review Board has approved
this document for use from

6/22/2018 to 6/21/2019
Protocol # 3304.062218

CONSENT FORM

Understanding Father Involvement Regarding the Academic Success of African American Males
in Urban High Schools

Temujin H. Taylor
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of how African American fathers are involved in the academic success of their high school age sons in urban high schools. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an African American father/father figure of a male student in an urban high school. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Temujin Taylor, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of African American fathers/father figures as they relate to the engagement, accessibility, and responsibility regarding the involvement in the academic success of their sons in urban high schools.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: 1.) Participate in an open ended, recorded interview. The estimated time will be approximately 45 minutes.

2.) Participate as a member of a recorded focus group. The estimated time frame will be approximately 90 minutes.

3.) Allow researcher to obtain copies of your son's high school transcript, interim grade report, and report card.

4.) Review transcripts of your interview and your focus group contributions for accuracy. Participants will be allowed to proof their input to determine accuracy and add any additional comments they may wish to make. This should take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from

6/22/2018 to 6/21/2019
Protocol # 3304.062218

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include the contribution to further understanding of the Social Ecological Theory in education research.

Compensation: Participants will be provided a meal prior to the focus group session for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Interview and focus group recordings, transcripts, interim grade reports, and report cards will be kept in separate folders and maintained inside a locked cabinet when not being used by the researcher. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. The researcher cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Temujin Taylor. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at TemujinTaylor@SBCGlobal.net and/or (216) 551-6476. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. James Swezey, at jaswezey@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introductions

1. What would you like to share with me about yourself?
2. How many sons do you have that are high school age?

Father – Son Relationships

3. Describe your relationship with your son(s) (i.e. your level of engagement, accessibility, and responsibility)?
4. What was your relationship like with your father?
5. What do you and your son(s) do when you are together?

Academic Success

6. What are your current views regarding education?
7. What is your definition of academic success?
8. What are your academic goals for your son(s)?
9. What kind of student is your son(s)?
10. Does your son(s) enjoy school—Why or why not?
11. Tell me about your involvement with your son's homework.
12. Tell me about your participation in parent conferences.
13. What are your hopes for your son's future?
14. Tell me about your participation in helping your son plan his future.
15. What additional information would you like to share about the topic?

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What is your definition of being a good father?
2. What does father involvement mean to you?
3. What are the responsibilities of an involved father?
4. What does the term accessibility mean to you as a father?
5. What obstacles, if any hinder you from being involved in your son's life?
6. Describe your academic success in high school and or college.
7. What are your responsibilities as a father to educate you son and assist him with becoming academically successful?
8. How do you assist your son(s) with his schoolwork?
9. Describe the lengths you take in showing your son that you support him academically?
10. What else would you like to share with us?

APPENDIX F: PRELIMINARY CODES

Table 4

NVivo Results (Top Results)

NVivo Codes	# Times Mentioned	NVivo Codes	# Times Mentioned	NVivo Codes	# Times Mentioned
know, knowing, knows	1424	kids	226	teacher	140
like, liked, likes	557	talk, talked, talking, talks	220	level, levels	126
				success, successful	124
school, schools	491	work, worked, working, works	212	relationship, relationships	123
just	454	life	209	involve, involved, involvement	109
want	365	right	202	parents	97
going	346	father, fathers	156		
come, comes, coming	280	academic, academically, academics	152		
thing, things	264	college, colleges	152		
time, times	250	educate, educated, educating, education, educator, educators	151		
tell, telling, tells	229				

APPENDIX G: SECONDARY CATEGORIES AND CODES

Table 5

Secondary Categories and Codes

#	Categories	Codes
1.	father, fathers	Involved Father
2.	academic, academically, academics	Academics
3.	college, colleges	College
4.	educate, education, educator	Parents/teachers
5.	teacher	Teachers
6.	level, levels	Next Level
7.	success, successful	Academic success
8.	school, schools	School
9.	relationship, relationships	Father-Son relationships
10.	involve, involved, involvement	Father engagement/involvement
11.	parents	Parent engagement/involvement