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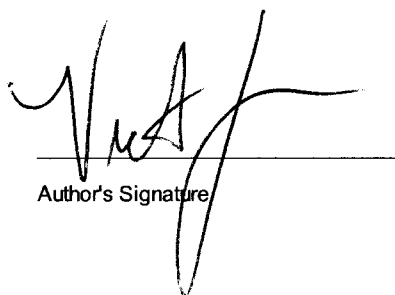
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Black Males' Perceptions of Parental Involvement, Influence,

and their Educational Outcomes

(TITLE)

BY

Victor Jones, Jr.

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

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ABSTRACT

Using qualitative inquiry and methods, this study explored the effect of parental involvement and influence on Black males' educational outcomes. The participants in this study were six Black males from a mid-sized, predominately White, four-year university in the Midwest. The findings from this study suggest that parents' involvement and influence shapes the way that Black males view education, which, in turn, affects their motivation and educational outcomes. In addition, this study provides suggestions for future research, as well as recommendations for educational professionals and administrators.

Keywords: Black males, parental involvement, parental influence, educational outcomes

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Sheila Eberhardt, Gwen Jones, and Victor Jones, Sr. Words cannot express how grateful and appreciative I am to have you all in my life. The love and adulation you all have given me over the years has helped mold me into the young man I am today. It's an honor and a privilege to keep your legacies alive and I will continue to strive for greatness and make you all proud. And while I may never be able to repay you for everything you've done for me, I hope that you all accept this as a token of my appreciation. I love you guys.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my favorite blessing, my "good thang," the apple of my eye, and my constant reminder of how much God loves me: my wife, Kortney. Kort, I know for a fact that I would not have been able to complete this work, let alone the entire program, had it not been for your support and encouragement. For the last two years you have motivated me and held me up when I was weak. I want to thank you for the sacrifices that you were willing to make in order to encourage my success and aid me in my pursuit of greatness. This accomplishment would not mean half as much if it were not being shared with you. I love you.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

It can be argued that education is the single most important factor in determining one's life trajectory. Education is the cornerstone for upward mobility and measurable success. According to hall of fame basketball player, author, and United States cultural ambassador, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, "If they took the idea that they [Black males] could escape poverty through education, I think it would make a more basic and long-lasting change in the way things happen. What we need are positive, realistic goals and the willingness to work. Hard work and practical goals," (n.d). In his quote, Abdul-Jabbar asserts that education can serve as a credible means for Black males to escape poverty and improve their socioeconomic status. Formal education creates an environment for students to network and establish healthy relationships; which allows them to gain social capital and utilize resources that may have otherwise been unavailable to them, such as access to higher education, socialization, and life skills.

Moynihan (1965) wrote that in order for Blacks to achieve equality in America, it was paramount for the Black family to be rebuilt. He argued that without this restructuring, many Black males would grow up to reject the ideas of work, marriage, fatherhood, and abiding by the law. Wilson (1978) argued that rejecting the idea of work, in other words unemployment, is the single most important cause of the problems that Black families face. These messages of self-defeat and ineptitude are passed from generation to generation and effect Black males self-efficacy and motivation to pursue education (Jenkins, 2006). Also, as public schools are funded by property taxes, unemployment limits Black males' access to quality education. Haskins (2009) asserted

that Blacks need to dismiss the sense of hopelessness that invades discussions about equalizing opportunities and recognize that they have made tremendous progress in America.

Researchers, teachers, policy makers, school administrators, parents, and even students themselves agree that parental involvement is critical for students' academic success (Adams & Singh, 1998; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; Epstein, 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Hara & Burke, 1998; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jeynes, 2005; McNeal, 1999). Moreover, parental involvement is strongly associated with academic success with Black students (Allen, 1992; Archer-Banks & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005; Harper & Davis, 2012). However, due to the residual effects of slavery and Jim Crow, Black males are subjugated in nearly every aspect of American society, including education. In *The New Jim Crow*, Alexander (2010) chronicled many of the ways Black men in America are wrongfully targeted and robbed of their civil liberties today just as they were during the first half of the 20th century. In addition, she discussed how this mass incarceration not only inhibits the inmates from getting a college education but how its enduring effects affect their children. This mass incarceration causes Black males to grow up fatherless, and often forces Black mothers to work multiple jobs to just to make ends meet.

Parental involvement is important to consider when studying educational outcomes because it affects students' educational self-efficacy. Witnessing members from groups similar to themselves, like parents, siblings, peers, and other extended family members, is significant for students because, as observers, they will see that they too

have the propensity to achieve. Booker T. Washington argued that due to a lack of ancestral influence, Black children have lost a sense of self-efficacy (Jenkins, 2006). Without parental influence, Black males are socialized by societal forces – i.e. the media. According to hooks (2001), mass media has become a primary tool that is used to subliminally convince viewers of Black inferiority. Palmer and Maramba (2010) supported this claim by stating that the media rarely exposes the accomplishments of Black men to public, instead they disproportionately present Black males in an overtly negative manner.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of parental involvement and influence on Black males' educational outcomes. To do so, the researcher studied the connection between parental involvement and influence, from grade school to college. The ultimate goal of this work was to gain rich data and propose possible suggestions for future Student Affairs professionals as they seek to address issues of educational inequality for Black males at the college level.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following question to reach the goals of this study:

- I. How do Black college males' perceptions of their parents' involvement affect their educational outcomes?
- II. Do Black college males feel that their parents' influence affects their educational outcomes?

Significance of Study

This study explored the relationship between parental involvement, parental influence, and educational outcomes of Black male students, an area that has not been studied in depth at the present time (Jeynes, 2005). In order to overcome the systemic forces that impair Black males' academic success and achievement, these factors must be examined and effectively addressed. Lack of educational equity for any student is unacceptable; accordingly, gaining a greater understanding of the problems that affect Black males educational outcomes is one step toward eliminating educational inequality in America.

Limitations of Study

There is a wealth of information about Black college males and a second body of literature on Black families, however studies on the relationship between Black college males and their family's role in contributing to their success in college are very limited (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). Next, while literature analyzing parent-student relationships appear to be studied quite frequently, there is little research on parent-student relationship during the students' college years (Smith, & Allen, 1984). Since this study is qualitative in nature, the participants in the study may not be representative of the entire population nor will the findings be transferable outside of the specific research site. In addition, the primary researcher has his own bias that may influence the analysis of the data. Lastly, because this study began over holiday break, the number and availability of participants may have been impacted by the site and the time in which the research was conducted.

Definition of Terms

Black Students. Black identity is complex and multidimensional. From an ethnic standpoint, Blackness is based on the presumption of a shared culture and of common biological descent (McPherson, & Shelby, 2004). For the purposes of this study, the term Black was used to define individuals that were born in America, solely identify as American, and may not be able to readily trace their lineage back to Africa.

Cultural Capital. This is defined as source of knowledge, skills, and socialization that one has to succeed academically (Bourdieu, 1986).

Educational Outcomes. For this study, educational outcomes were defined as persistence through higher education toward a four-year and/or professional degree.

First-Generation College Student. For this study, a student was considered first generation if neither of his parents have earned a four-year degree on or before the month the participant earned his degree.

Parental Involvement. For this study, parental involvement was defined as any direct action taken by parents that assists students with their educational experiences.

Parental Influence. For this study, parental influence was defined as any opinion, attitude, action, or state of being of parents that shape students' attitudes toward education.

Self-Efficacy. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as, "belief in one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3).

Social Capital. Connections that one has that grant them access to jobs, wealth, and other advantages (Portes, 1998).

Summary

The study focuses on the relationship between parental involvement, parental influence, and the educational outcomes of Black male students. Chapter one provides an explanation of the objective of the study, research questions, and limitations. Chapter two contains a review of the literature, which provides an abridgment of the theoretical frameworks, theories, and previous research used to focus and conduct this study. Chapter three outlines the methods used to conduct, analyze, and manage the research. A detailed explanation of the projected population, study design, and data collection is in chapter three. Chapter four shares the findings from six one-on-one interviews with Black male students. Chapter five expounds upon those finding and analyzes them to address the aforementioned research questions. In addition, chapter five provides recommendation for future professionals and future studies.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The review of literature on topics relating to the factors that impact Black males educational outcomes is discussed in this chapter. Five major areas were examined throughout the literature pertaining to the topic which consists of: (1) critical race theory, (2) self-efficacy, (3) parental involvement, (4) social capital, and (5) cultural capital, which were used in the structure of this study. These bodies of literature were all derived from other researcher's studies on similar topics relating to Black male educational outcomes, which will be incorporated into the analysis of the study.

Historical Implications

One of the factors that impacts Black males' education outcomes is the lingering effects of slavery and Jim Crow. In a phenomenological study, Jenkins (2006) found that historical ramifications have significantly marginalized Black males in the education system through oppression, prejudice, and disregard for their educational excellence. According to Jenkins (2006), "The mix of inferior education, persisting discriminatory practices, and an internalized sense of defeat has proved lethal to young Black male and thus to the Black family," (p.134). Similar ideologies were found in Irons (2002) book *Jim Crow's children: The broken promise of the Brown decision* on how the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision has not manifested its promised hope in today's society due to the educational inequity in the system. Factors like a student's home environment, social capital, and self-efficacy all influence their educational experience, thus shaping their outcomes. Black men are not being educated in the classroom effectively, which is evident in the literacy rates. According to the U.S. Census of 1900, 43% of Black males

were literate and in 2000 the literacy raised to 56%, which means that in 100 years the literacy rate has only increased by 13% based on the data reported in the U.S. Census from 1900 to 2000. Given the state of today's economy and the importance of having a quality education in order to compete for jobs, these marginal gains in literacy are critical and they illustrate the enduring effect that racial prejudice and marginalization has had on Black males in the educational arena.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework that examines the role race and racism plays in American society. Scholars using this framework recognize that racism is engrained into society and as a result it empowers the dominant culture while simultaneously oppressing minority cultures. According to Dixson and Rousseau (2005), CRT could be utilized to examine the role of race and racism in education. In particular, it is useful to investigate the intersection of race and property rights and how this paradigm could be used to understand inequality in schools and schooling. The impact race has on a student's educational experience has been observed over decades. The *Brown v. Board of Education* case of 1954 banned segregation in schools, which was viewed as "establish[ing] racial equality and bring[ing] about greater racial justice [however], critical race scholars have examined both the factors influencing the decision itself and the structures of racial inequity that *Brown* served to reconfigure rather than dismantle," (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 9). A CRT framework has been used "to re-define internalized racism as the conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial hierarchy in which whites are consistently ranked above People of Color," (Huber, 2006, p. 184).

In addition, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) asserted that racism was not an isolated act on a person; it is institutionalized into the makeup of the system; as some individuals argue that poor children perform poorly in schools due to bad schools. However, in a phenomenological study, *The negro family: The case for national action*, Moynihan (1965) asserted that the cause of poverty in relation to their schooling conditions is due to structural racism in society. He was looking to analyze the legal obstacles that cause inequality for Black Americans. In *The New Jim Crow*, Alexander (2010) took a phenomenological approach to discuss the school-to-prison pipeline and its effects on Black males and their families. Alexander stressed that Black males are not products of circumstances, but rather they are products of the oppression to which they have been subjected. Statistics from the U.S. Census support this assertion by illustrating, as a result of educational inequality; more and more Black men are dropping out of school and falling into prison system (NAACP LDF, 2005). This is phenomenon is important to this study because it speaks to the relevance of the achievement gap for Black males in our society and the importance of parental involvement in their child's schooling.

Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1994) defined perceived self-efficacy as one's belief about their capability to perform at a given task. This is an important concept when studying educational outcomes because self-efficacy plays a major role in the way students think, feel, motivate themselves, and perform. There are four primary sources of developing and influencing self-efficacy, which are: (1) Mastery Experiences, (2) Social Modeling, (3) Social Persuasion, and (4) Psychological Responses. Mastery experiences are the most

effective way for students to create a strong sense of efficacy; successes lead to a salient belief in oneself. Social modeling occurs when a student experiences success vicariously through the experiences of others. Witnessing members from groups similar to themselves, like parents, siblings, peers, and other extended family members, is significant for students because, as observers, they will see that they too have the propensity to achieve. Social persuasion, the third way of strengthening one's self-efficacy, occurs when students are encouraged, in words or actions, to believe that they have the capability to succeed. While social persuasion isn't the strongest factor in instilling high beliefs of self-efficacy in students, it is a strong factor for discouraging growth and development in a student's personal efficacy. Thus, it is important that mastery experiences and social modeling be coupled with positive words of encouragement to prevent deterring students' self-efficacy. This leads into the fourth way of influencing student's self-efficacy, reducing negative emotional stress reactions and managing emotions. Students' perceptions and interpretations to physical/emotional triggers play an important role in the way they view themselves. Parental involvement and influence play a major role in a student's perception of their self-efficacy which in turns determines their educational outcomes in school. Witherspoon, Speight, and Thomas (1997) found that when Black high school students receive support from their parents, their self-efficacy increases and so does their GPA.

Parental Involvement

A common view among educators and researchers is that parental involvement contributes to successful student outcomes and has led many educators to encourage parents to be involved in learning activities at home (Epstein, 1995). Families actively

influence students' educational outcomes and college-going process in various ways, including practices such as attending parent-teacher conferences, volunteering at the schools their students attend, helping with homework, accompanying students on college visits, or preparing for college essays by requiring writing at home (Knight, Norton, Bentley, & Dixon, 2004; Balli, Demo, & Wedman, 1998; McNeal, 1999; Fan & Chen, 2001; Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005). Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007) suggested that parental involvement was more than just a yes or no variable; instead how, whom, and why the parents were getting involved was equally as important. However, which forms of parental involvement are particularly effective and which areas of a student's development was distinctively impacted remains unclear (Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005). Epstein (1995) distinguished six types of parental involvement: (1) Parenting – parents, with help from schools, must create positive home conditions that promote students' development and preparation for school; (2) Communicating – there has to be effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication about school programs and as well as student progress; (3) Volunteering – recruiting and organizing parents to help and support during school functions and activities; (4) Learning at home – parents should be provided with information and ideas about activities that help student at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning; (5) Decision making – parents should be included in school decisions and developed as leaders and representatives; and (6) Collaborating with the community – parents should seek to identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Through critical ethnography, Knight, Norton, Bentley, and Dixon (2004) found that students internalize the stories they were told by their parents and families and these stories served as a major influence on students' college-going processes. In addition, their findings suggest that parental involvement does not require a physical presence in the school. As schools tend to have low expectations for its Black students, parental involvement was imperative (Archer-Banks, & Behar-Horenstein, 2008). College presents students with many new experiences and they need support and guidance from their parents, regardless of if they attended college or not. Although it is important for parents to be involved with their children's education, they must be sure not to exhibit any behavior that could distract the student from their studies. Jenkins (2006) shared that the presence of a parent's frustration can be destructive to a student's environment. Flouri and Buchanan (2004), in their quantitative study of 3,303 students, explored the long-term effects of early father's and mother's involvement on a student's educational outcome. Flouri and Buchanan (2004) asserted parental negativity and harsh parenting have strong connections with internalizing problems in children.

Fan and Chen (2001) claimed that while there seems to be a lot of research on parental involvement and educational outcomes, the results of these studies have been somewhat inconsistent, citing that some studies have shown evidence of parental involvement having strong positive effects on educational achievement and outcomes, while other studies have found little to no measureable effect. For example, in their quantitative study using a sample of 1,766 Black students, Adams and Singh (1998) examined the effects of direct and indirect variables on Black high schoolers' academic achievement. They found that parental involvement had no significant effect on Black

high school students' educational outcomes. Conversely, using the same sample, Strayhorn (2010) sought to estimate the influence of parental involvement, teacher perceptions, and school environment on Black students' achievement and he found that Black high school students performed better with parental involvement. Using multivariate analyses, Joe and Davis (2009) found that parents' academic beliefs and behaviors relate to the cognitive performance of Black males in kindergarten. Their findings also revealed that there was a causal relationship between parents' academics beliefs, their resulting behaviors, and Black males educational outcomes.

In a quantitative study that assessed the effects of parental involvement on the academic achievement of 2,260 Black 12th graders, Jeynes' (2005) found that parental involvement has a positive influence on their educational outcomes. In their study of the relationship between parent involvement and students achievement, Hara and Burke (1998) designed their study to create an "inner-city parent involvement program." Their belief was that increased parental involvement was the key to improving the academic achievement of students, and their results supported this assumption. Hara and Burke's (1998) results indicated that after four months the students' achievement increased in both reading and vocabulary. In his quantitative study, McNeal (1999) examined the degree to which parental involvement was a salient factor for a student's behavior which can impact their educational experience and schooling. Studying two samples, one of 11,401 cases and another of 15,663 cases, he found that when parents actively communicate and convey the importance of school and education to the child, the student was more likely to put forth effort academically and less likely to engage in unhealthy academic behavior, such as truancy.

Social Capital

Social capital is a sociological concept used to define non-tangible things that equal prestige. Three distinct elements conceptualize social capital: (1) form, (2) norms of obligation and reciprocity, and (3) resources (McNeal, 1999). Form was defined as the structural aspects of social ties and relations. Norms of obligation and reciprocity was defined as having a sense of investment whether or not a return will be obtained, a sense of trust or obligation. Lastly, resources referred to assets one has within their network as well as potential resources that can be used outside the network (McNeal, 1999). Each of these elements was a manner in which social capital can be exhibited and used in one's life. Blacks used their social capital for survival and success in a segregated world bounded by the omnipresent forces of racism and discrimination (Yosso, 2005). Each parent provides a child with a certain amount of social capital and when there is only one parent, the child receives less parental contact; and thus does not have access to the same amount of social capital (Yan, 1999). For example, forms would be the relationship between a parent and child, norms of obligation and reciprocity would be the relations between child and parent based on kinship, and resources would be the various forms of capital that a parent has to give to their child. These forms of capital can come through shared knowledge, taught skills, and economic support from a parent to their child.

Yan (1999) studied a sample of 6,459 students to explore the views of social capital held by successful Black students in comparison to those of successful White students and unsuccessful Black students. He found that human capital was related to parental education and social capital was connected to the network and relationship between parents and children which was the structure that provides a healthy

environment for the child. Solorzano (1992) conducted an exploratory study focusing on the cultural deficit model, which hypothesizes that Black students place less value on education and social mobility; the data he found challenged that notion. He found that Black students and parents did care about education and upward mobility and in some cases more than their White counterparts. Similarly, Harper and Davis (2012) challenged the notion that Black males “don’t care about education” (p. 103); as a matter of fact, they found that Black males do care about education. Using a systematic content analysis of 304 essays written by Black male undergraduate students and data from an in-person focus group interview with 10 Black male students, they sought to explore what compelled Black males to care so much about education despite the negativity that was routinely reported in literature about their disinterest in education. They found that Black males were very cognizant of the educational inequities that they faced, but they recognized education as “the great equalizer” and they plan to use it break the cycle of ineptitude and raise the college social status (Harper & Davis, 2012, p. 113). Moreover, Harper and Davis (2012) found that students’ beliefs about education were shaped by messages conveyed by their parents.

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital “refers to an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society” (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). Cultural capital was not just inherited but can be developed based on societal values through specific forms of knowledge, skills, and abilities. It embraces the rewards of profits from monetary growth as well as the gain of knowledge and skills. According to Bourdieu (1986), there are three forms of cultural capital: embodied state, objectified

state, and institutionalized state. The embodied state is when an individual mentally and/or physically possesses characteristics needed to succeed; the objectified state refers to the tangible goods that one possesses; and, lastly, the institutionalized state refers to the established structures that grant individual advantages that enable one to succeed (Bourdieu, 1986). In addition, he found that gains in cultural capital can be reached through one's schooling or family. Blacks share their cultural capital and build rapport with their community. These in-group interactions and behaviors also shape the way Blacks view the capital of other cultures, which could make it difficult to escape generational cycles of acquiescence to the conditions handed to them by the dominant culture. Gayles (2005) conducted an ethnographic study where he interviewed three high-achieving Black male students in one of Florida's least affluent communities. His study sought to examine the ways in which Black high school seniors situated academic achievement. His findings suggested that the three young men achieved in school because they believed in the power of their school achievement and how it would transform their future lives. He also found that the students presented their achievements in a way that ensured that they remained relevant to their peers as well as society at large, who places great emphasis on academic achievement.

Summary of the Literature Review

This chapter discussed the literature of other researchers on the factors that impact Black males educational outcomes. Studies found that critical race theory, self-efficacy, social capital, and cultural capital were all factors and predictors to these males' academic outcomes. These concepts helped structure this study and provided historical background that aided the researcher while he analyzed the data. Both primary and

secondary sources were discussed in the review of literature to give the researcher an in-depth understanding of the material on the topic.

CHAPTER III

Methods

A qualitative research approach was used to analyze the relationship between parental involvement and Black males educational outcomes. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to analyze and understand the underlying factors that affect any phenomenon where little is known about the subject matter (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Merriam (2002) stated that qualitative researchers are interested in exploring the perspective of others in a specific context and serve as the primary instrument used to collect and analyze data. This chapter discusses the procedures that were used to collect data and analyze the qualitative data gathered for this study.

Research Site

This study was conducted at a mid-sized, Midwestern University in a rural community. According to the University's Planning and Institutional Study Report for fall 2013, total student enrollment was 9,775, with approximately 16.2% of the total student population being Black students. However, Black males only comprise 6% of the total student population as there is nearly a 2:1 ratio of Black women to Black men at the institution.

Participants

The target group in this study was Black male students from the institution of interest. At the time of data collection, participants were six Black males ranging in age from 20-25 years-old, and had been enrolled at the institution for at least three semesters. Participant's permanent residence, college generation status, age, socioeconomic status, major, etc. are all parameters that varied among participants. Participants were selected

using purposeful sampling. This is a strategy in which particular persons are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices (Maxwell, 2013). I obtained a list with names and emails of all the Black male students at the institution of interest from the Director of the Office of Minority Affairs. Students were selected from that list and sent a recruitment email requesting their participation (Appendix A). Those who agreed to participate in the study were sent a follow up email confirming the date, time, and location of the interview. A description of participants is in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

Participant Demographics

| Participant | Pseudonym | Age | Classification | Years at EIU | First-Gen |
|---------------|-----------|-----|------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Participant 1 | Joseph | 22 | Sophomore | 1.5 | Yes |
| Participant 2 | Claude | 25 | Graduate Student | 6 | No |
| Participant 3 | Cyrus | 20 | Junior | 2.5 | Yes |
| Participant 4 | Joshua | 22 | Senior | 3 | Yes |
| Participant 5 | Elliott | 22 | Senior | 5 | Yes |
| Participant 6 | Ryan | 20 | Sophomore | 1.5 | No |

Instrumentation

To obtain the desired data, I conducted one-on-one interviews with six participants. I created a list of questions with the aim of obtaining the participants’ perceptions of the effect of parental involvement on their educational experience. The questions were categorized into five sections: demographics, household climate regarding education, perception of parental involvement and influence during grade school, perception of parental involvement and influence during high school, and perception of parental involvement and influence during college. A list of questions is included in

Appendix B. In efforts to address issues of trustworthiness, the interview questions were submitted to experts in qualitative research methods to examine the interview protocols and verify that the questions posed were likely to provoke appropriate data. In order to increase validity, I asked less-constrained, opened-ended questions. Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated that:

Qualitative questioning allows for more flexibility, and an interviewer is typically permitted to ask questions in a different way, to make sure the participant has understood it well . . . Questioning in qualitative inquiry is open-ended, so responses are provided in the participants' own vernacular. This is helpful if the goal of a research study is to develop some form of communication plan or messaging strategy; you can do so in a way that is salient for, and will resonate with, your target population (p. 22).

Data Collection

Data was collected through face-to-face, one-on-one interviews. Participants were interviewed in a quiet, distraction-free, office on the campus of the institution of interest. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes. Before I began the interviews, the participants signed the informed consent sheet, which I have included as Appendix C, and I reiterated that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could remove themselves from the study at any time. I began the interviews by asking the participants to share their background/demographic information, followed by questions about their perceptions of their parents' involvement during different periods of schooling. All interviews were recorded using a video camera, which allowed me to note

the participants' body language and add a measure of interpretation that would be missing from audio recordings alone.

Data Analysis

The researcher listened to each of the student interviews and transcribed their responses within 48 hours of the interview in order to maintain the initial meaning provided in the responses. The researcher then read over each transcript and, using the students' responses as units of analysis, made note of the main idea of each response. These responses were segmented into common themes. Then, the researcher organized the coded data into a spreadsheet; one according to question and another according to theme. Only major themes that are common among majority of the participants will be further examined and included in chapters 4 and 5.

Treatment of Data

The data collected in the interviews were handled appropriately in order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The video recordings were viewed solely by the primary researcher and kept in a private folder on a password-protected computer. I then assigned pseudonyms to each of the participants. Consent forms, data transcriptions, and subsequent data coding spreadsheets were protected by the researcher to maintain the participants' identity. The paper-based material was stored in a locked file cabinet, while the electronic data was stored on a password-protected computer (Merriam, 2002). All data will be shredded and deleted three years after the study is completed.

Trustworthiness, Assurance, and Ethical Considerations

After the interviews were transcribed, the data was sent to the participants for review and verification. My thesis advisor also reviewed the transcribed data to see if similar themes were extracted and compared them to my findings in order to reduce bias. In addition, I selected an independent coder to review the transcribed data and verify themes (Creswell, 2009). A triangular approach, that includes analyses of prior empirical research in conjunction with interviews, was used to analyze data for this project. Concurrent data collection and analysis allowed the researcher to shape the study as it proceeds (Glesne, 1999).

Role of the Researcher

How one approaches qualitative research, and research in general, depends on a variety of personal, professional, political, and contextual factors (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The primary researcher has his own bias that may influence the analysis of the data. As a first-generation, Black, male college student, I have my own views, beliefs, and perceptions about the relationship between parental involvement and educational outcome. As I was growing up, my parents made sure that I understood, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that education is of the utmost importance. They held me accountable to completing my homework assignments in a correct and timely fashion. During parent-teacher conferences in grade school, my parents made sure to let both me and my teachers know that anything other than A's and B's were unacceptable. In high school, after receiving a report card with straight A's, my father lectured me about how I had to make sure that I did not grow complacent and that I continued to avoid distractions. When I made it to college, they trusted that they had done their job making sure that I

understood the gravity of the opportunities that college afforded to me, and they took a more hands-off approach. At various times, I have thought that my educational persistence was independent of my parents' involvement. I have always been among the smartest students in my classes and I concluded that my educational outcomes were a result of my intellect; however, when I thought more critically about how my views of education were established during my formative years, I realized that my parents' influence served as a major contributing factor. The reason I wanted to conduct this research is because I would like to explore this phenomenon further.

Summary of Methods

A qualitative research method was used to collect and analyze data. The participants were purposefully selected Black males from a midsized, Midwestern University. The data were transcribed and coded to develop major themes and find commonalities on the respondents' perceptions of their educational outcomes. The major themes that emerged from the data are presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter IV

Findings

This chapter contains the results from the interviews of six Black male college students attending the college of interest, a predominantly White institution in the Midwest. Each of the participants comes from different backgrounds and brought very unique perspectives to the study. The study sought to explore the relationship between Black college males' perceptions of parental involvement and its perceived effect on their educational outcomes. The responses were organized according to common themes and perceived experiences (Table 4.1). Two research questions guided the study:

1. How do Black college males' perceptions of parental involvement affect their educational outcomes?
2. Do Black college males feel that their parents' influence affects their educational outcomes?

Positive View of Education

Using qualitative analysis, namely one-on-one interviews, participants were asked questions meant to solicit information about their views on education. The overwhelming response from each of the participants was that they viewed education positively. However, three subthemes were revealed: (1) education brings opportunities; (2) knowledge is power; and (3) education prepares students for success in life.

Opportunity. When asked what education meant to him, Joseph explained that, in his opinion, education represents opportunity. He explained that when he was growing up, education was important but it was not the priority. He said that his parents placed more emphasis on cleaning the house and things of that nature. Joseph stated that

“[Education] gives me a choice to change my lifestyle and my life chances for the future.” He credited his development of this view to his life experiences, “This perspective of how I look at education has changed as I matured . . . as I continued [and saw] how education could change my economic outcome I just pursued it more.” Elliott also mentioned that education was important to him because of the opportunities it would bring him later in life as a husband and father.

Knowledge is power. When asked what education meant to him, Joshua began by saying that knowledge is power; “Education is power because you’re being equipped to do what you want to do in life, and you’re being equipped to protect yourself from false doctrine and propaganda.” In the same vein, Ryan said “Education is key. Its power and it can get you anywhere.” He believes that education is the endless pursuit of knowledge and learning from textbooks, society, parents, etc. Similarly, Claude stated that while formal education is important, knowledge is more important. Because of his experiences working with students, he believes that learning shouldn’t be limited to formal education.

Honestly just through my experiences and working with students I’ve realized that school might not be for everybody. But I know that there are people that I’ve come across and while school might not be right for them they are very bright so that’s why I don’t think that formal education is necessary for everybody to be successful.

Preparation for success. Cyrus credited college with shaping his view of education. He stated that education, particularly the ebb and flow of college, and the adaptation that it requires, in particular prepares students for success in life.

Education is everything that school entails whether it be going to classes, trying to deal with time management while being in different student organizations, you're always getting educated in everything you do in school. It kind of prepares you for everything you will do for the rest of your life. . . One moment you can be in one student organization and the next moment you can be in another, or in a Greek student organization, so you have to adapt to the different flows that college has and you start to realize that a lot of things you learn on your own when you're in college are a lot of things that you'll need for the rest of your life.

Similarly, when asked his views of education, Elliott described education as “enhancing your mental ability to learn the information needed to succeed in America.” He credited his experiences in college and his career aspirations with helping him to come to this definition.

Educational Experiences

Table 4.1

Participants Educational Experiences and Perceptions of Parental Involvement by level

| Black Males Perceptions | # of Respondents (%) | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| | <i>Grade School</i> | <i>High School</i> | <i>College</i> |
| Educational Experience | | | |
| Positive | 3(50) | 4(67) | 3(50) |
| Challenging | | 1(17) | 2(33) |
| Not Challenging | 1(17) | 1(17) | |
| Difficult | 2(33) | | 1(17) |
| Parental Involvement | | | |
| Very Involved | 4(67) | 1(17) | 2(33) |
| Involved | 2(33) | 3(50) | 2(33) |
| Not Involved | | 2(33) | 2(33) |

Positive. The participants were asked about their educational experiences at each level from grade school through college. Positive responses illustrated that they enjoyed their educational experience and excelled academically as well as socially.

Grade school. Three of the six participants reported having positive educational experiences in grade school. Claude explained that he was a straight A student, always at the top student in my class, and that if he ever got anything less than 90 on an assignment or test he was upset. Similarly, Joseph excelled in grade school. He recalled consistently scoring in the 80-90 percentiles on standardized test and being in gifted classes. He said: “[In] grade school, I used to excel in Iowa test scores, 80-90 percentile. . . I was in gifted classes and stuff during grammar school.” Joshua also recalled that his educational experiences were positive in grade school. He stated that he took a “very proactive” approach to his education during grade school and as a result he grew an appreciation for knowledge.

High school. Four of the participants recalled having positive educational experiences in high school. Much like grade school, Claude was at the top of his class in high school for his two years and graduated in the top 10 when it was all said and done. After struggling immensely in grade school, Ryan had a “wonderful time” in high school. He said that he feels like he breezed through high school in comparison to grade school. He said that commuting from his home on Chicago’s Southside to school on the Northside was a bit rough but he got past that and his GPA stayed between 2.75 and 3.0 all throughout high school. Joshua mentioned that in the beginning his high school experience was awful because he went to a school where the faculty and staff did not have his best intentions in mind, but after transferring and spending his final two years at

a different school everything changed for the better. “I took advantage of my opportunities there. I enrolled in honors and AP courses. At that high school it was required that you get accepted into at least one college and you had to apply to at least five. So, I definitely became more proactive.” Similarly, Cyrus mentioned that his high school career started off a bit rough because he moved to a new area, but he eventually got acclimated and had a very positive experience. In addition, he admitted that the classes weren’t challenging, but his extracurricular involvement stretched him a bit.

Cyrus said:

I played baseball, I played football, and I was always involved and like helping out the guidance office and stuff like that and helping out with tours and stuff and I was in some other program. So I was always doing stuff and kind of drifting off sometimes. So the classes pushed me a little bit but they weren’t that hard.

College. Three of the participants recalled having positive educational experiences in college. When asked about his college experiences to this point, Cyrus said that they have been going quite well. He said that his grades are good; he is staying involved, and making the most of his experience. “I’ve been building my resume, getting involved in different organizations, and I joined a Greek organization, so I’ve been making the right connects and stuff like that. . .other than that I’ve just been trying to be a good role model on campus and stuff like that and try to help out when I can.” Similarly Claude said that his college experience has been a positive one. He has done well academically, earning bachelors in Business and a Masters in Business Administration. Claude is now in pursuit of a second Master’s degree and he has a 4.0 thus far. Joshua described his college experience as a rollercoaster because he had his share of ups and

downs but he said that he always came back up. He mentioned that he is in a good place now and that he has the necessary credentials to continue on and pursue graduate education. He said that his college experience has been good because he has learned a lot and he looks forward to sharing the things that he's learned.

Challenging. Some of the participants in the study struggled academically, but not necessarily socially and they described their educational experience as challenging.

High school. Joseph recalled his high school experience being challenging because he had no accountability. He mentioned that his father would work as many as 70 hours per week and that he just pretty much went with the flow. He said that there were plenty of times that he would bring home D's or F's and that no one would care. He summed it up to simply just not taking his coursework seriously.

College. Ryan explained that his college experience has been a bit rough. He stated that he performed well his first year but he got too comfortable his second year and that makes things a little difficult. He mentioned the fact that college coursework is very different, and in most cases more rigorous, than high school. He said that he doesn't plan on dropping out and failing out but he knows that he has to stay on top of his game in order to achieve the success that he would like to achieve. Elliott, when asked about his educational experiences in college to this point, expressed that they have been "challenging. . .very challenging."

This isn't for the weak in heart or mind; you gotta be devoted to it. I've never dropped a class in high school, never failed a class. Came here and had to drop and [I'm] failing classes; it's frustrating to give your all and know that you gave your all and to not be successful in frustrating.

Not Challenged. When participants said that they were not challenged it was because, retrospectively, they felt that their educational experience did not stretch them intellectually.

Grade school - high school. When asked about his educational experience in grade school, Elliott said that his experience was average and that he was not challenged very much. He believes that his grade school experience did not really teach him any significant skills that would benefit him in the long run. Instead, he believed it gave him just enough to get by. Elliott expressed that his high school experience was pretty much the same, except he was a little more independent when it came to interacting with instructors. He referred to high school as a “field of play” where they let you get by with anything. He said that he just “coasted” and as a result he didn’t really learn significant comprehension skills until college.

High school. Claude and Ryan recalled breezing through high school. Claude said that he was at the top of his class for the first two years of high school until he received his first B, but he still finished in the top 10. However, he says that his parents got a divorce when he was 14, which led to his father no longer being in the household. As a result, the parental involvement declined as his mother was working in order to maintain the household. Fortunately, the foundation was already set and Claude held true to the same academic success that had been imparted during his youth. Ryan said that high school was not difficult at all for him academically, and if he did have trouble in a class his parents were still there, although not to the same extent as grade school.

Difficult. When participants mentioned that their educational experiences were difficult, it was often because they were dealing with external factors that only intensified the rigors of their academics – i.e. financial strain or illness/disability.

Grade school. When discussing his educational experiences in grade school, Cyrus explained that while he was always intelligent, he had social difficulties as a result of his father's incarceration. He recalled being angry all the time, which caused him to make some less than desirable decisions. Ryan, also, recalled struggling in grade school:

Around third and fourth grade I had a speech problem and teachers thought that I wouldn't move on to the next grade because my reading wasn't up to par. But my parents were there every step of the way; every parent teacher conference, every day meeting with my teachers, even putting me in after school programs to help my reading and even weekend programs. And not only those programs but also at home. They actually sat down with me and helped me. . .them actually taking the time out to sit down with me and understand my problem, they understood it and they knew that there was a way that it could be helped.

College. Joseph expressed many of the difficulties that he faces in college. Again he mentioned the role that not having accountability has on his college experience, but he also mentioned external factors playing a major role:

Sometimes it's a fight to do well because it hasn't been what I want it to be due to [lack of] accountability and things of that nature, but my drive has not been centered on what it was centered on to get me here. So I haven't been centered and I lost my balance and footing being in college, in terms of my academic achievement. Yeah, like right now. I have to worry about rent, I have to worry

about insurance, I have to worry about how to live, how to eat, how to pay for school, every other factor then I have to worry about doing assignments. So, it's no excuse, I know a lot of students do it, but it is sometimes a driving factor for me.

Parental Involvement

The participants' responses illustrated that their parents' levels of involvement ranged from very involved to not involved at all. Also, parents' level of involvement varied from grade school, to high school, to college. Parental involvement looks different at each level. For example, in grade school this involvement varied from meeting with teachers/coaches and advocating for their students to helping with homework and attending Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings and in high school it could be anything from encouraging students to attend sports campus and taking them to get their driver's license to paying for ACT/SAT prep and accompanying them on college visits. In college, this involvement can look like regular visit and check-ins or financial assistance.

Very Involved. The participants in the study indicated that their parents were very involved when they believed that their parents' involvement was largely responsible for their success at a given level, or that their parents went above and beyond in order to ensure that their students were having positive educational experiences.

Grade school. Four of the six respondents said that their parents were very involved in their education when they were in grade school. Ryan made it very clear that the only reason he was able to garner any type of success in grade school was because his parents spent countless hours helping him with reading and speaking. He said that they

put him in any and every program that they could in order to help him improve. Also, he said that they chaperoned field trips and met with his teachers regularly. Elliott said that his parents were highly involved; he said that they knew all his grades, they stayed in touch with his teachers, they tutored him and provided him with tutors when needed, and they were involved in parent organizations. Cyrus recalled that his parents used to help him with homework when needed and they stayed in contact with his teachers. In addition, he mentioned moving several times to ensure that he stayed out of trouble. Joshua recalled his dad being active in the PTA and helping him with homework, especially spelling and grammar. Also, he mentioned that they would have foundational conversations about education as well.

High school. When asked about his parents' involvement during high school, Cyrus said that they were most involved when he was in high school than any other time. "Yeah, they were more invested when I was in high school than any other time. Like if I get a 3.8 today they wouldn't care, they'd be like, 'Oh ok. Good job son.'" He explained that, although they did not help him academically, they took him driving to get his driver's permit and they encouraged him to go to football camp. In addition, he mentioned that his parents paid for him to receive ACT/SAT test prep. Ryan discussed similar involvement from his parents, including paying for him to receive ACT/SAT prep from Sylvan Learning Centers, which was pretty expensive from what he remembered. When asked about his parents' involvement during high school, he said:

It was more social because they saw that I was doing ok academically but they weren't as involved as they were in grade school. But they [saw] my grades at the end of freshman year and [noticed] that I was getting adapted to it so they really

didn't have to be as involved but if they happened to get involved it was because of my grades but they were [involved] socially as well. They would go on field trips and they were a part of the organizations I was in. They would come and support me and support the school in a lot of stuff too. You know, joining the parent board and stuff, they did all that stuff.

Joshua said that his parents maintained a high level of involvement when he was in high school. When asked about their involvement he said, "They still came to report card pickups and my mom would ask did I do my homework and stuff like that and my dad did the same things. They were involved; they met with some teachers if I was having trouble in a class."

College. Cyrus explained his parents remain actively engaged and involved in his education now that he is in college. He said that his mother frequently checks in with him to inquire how classes are going and how his living arrangements are working out. Also, he said that his father discusses the future with him. He asks question about what he wants to do next and if he has started looking into graduate schools. He said that he values these interactions and the balance they provide because his mother is a realist and his father is an idealist/optimist. Similarly, Ryan said that his parents frequently initiate conversations with him about his college experience:

Oh yeah, they ask about how classes are. They ask, 'how are classes going, how are your professors, are the classes difficult, do you think you can pass this class, etc.' Also they ask about the work load. They'll say, 'Ok so it's five classes, can you handle that?' and I'll say yes I can handle that.

Involved. When participants stated that their parents were involved, it was because, while they may not have felt like they were not struggling enough to need their parents' assistance, their parents' still sought to take interest in their educational experiences and fill in when needed.

Grade school. While Joseph could not remember his father helping him with his homework, his father was involved with the PTA. In addition, he mentioned that his father's advocacy played a major role in him being put in gifted classes. Joseph said, "And he was the one that actually stressed for me to be in gifted classes and stuff due to my Iowa test scores, so yeah." Similarly, Claude cannot recall needing assistance with homework when he was in grade school, but he remembers his parents holding him accountable for his grades and keeping in touch with his instructors. Also, he mentioned that he is the youngest of four children so his parents had pre-existing relationships with many of the teachers because his siblings had the same ones.

High school. Elliott recalled that his parents were still involved while he was in high school; however, they encouraged him to be more independent. Elliott stated, "I had to vouch for my own academics, learning that my parents would always be there so I had to speak up for myself. I became more independent but they supported me in my independence."

College. Joshua said that he does not necessarily feel the need to discuss his educational experiences with his parents as much now that he is in college, but they still inquire periodically. He says that they ask general questions, but the biggest thing they discuss is what he will do with what he has learned and is learning in college. Elliott expressed that his parents placed a lot of value on autonomy and self-advocacy so he

does not really talk to them too much about his educational experiences now that he is in college; however, he said that they still check in on him from time to time to discuss his experiences and to offer encouragement.

Not Involved. When participants reported that their parents were not involved at all and illustrated that their parents made no effort to discuss their educational experiences or attempt to assist them in any way.

High school. Claude said that his parents' involvement became nonexistent after they were divorced when he was 14 years-old. He said, "well, my parents got divorced when I was 14, so I was entering high school. So, my father was no longer in the household and my mother was working to maintain the household. But I honestly don't remember them asking about my grades or how school was going, I guess it was just assumed that things were good." Joseph said that he had no accountability in high school. Joseph stated, "in high school, my father worked . . . sometimes 70 hours a week so pretty much I was just going with the flow. I had no accountability, not at all. Sometimes I would bring home B's or F's and it was like who cares."

College. When asked about his interactions/conversations about education with his parents now that he is in college, Joseph said that they do not have much insight or guidance to offer because neither of his parents attended college. At one point, he said, "Maybe because they didn't have education or they didn't have the accountability or the [scholastic achievements]." In addition, he mentioned that he receives no financial support from his parents. Claude also expressed little to no involvement from his parents in college:

The funny thing is, I don't think my parents have ever really asked me how school was going [since I been in college]. I talk with my mom, me and my father don't speak, but when I do talk to my mom I tell her about my classes. . .But, I don't remember them really acting like it was a big deal when I was in school. Maybe because they had 2 other kids that had been through or were going, so by the time you get to the last one it's just kinda like it is what it is. So, yeah, I don't really remember her being too concerned or following up and asking questions; whether it be just being supportive or financially trying to see if I needed help with anything, nope.

Parental Influence

Each of the participants shared different ways that their view of education and pursuit of academic success has been influenced by their parents. Some reflected on direct influence/motivation like specific conversations and messages that were conveyed while others discussed more indirect influences like innate and observed messages that affected them. The main theme that stuck out from the respondents' stories was that education/learning/knowledge is 100% necessary and, also, it does not have to be limited to formal schooling. When asked about how his parents has influenced his view of education, Claude, stated that his mother worked as a nurse for 22 years before she completed a four-year degree and that his father achieved much success as an award-winning personal trainer, which illustrated to him that, while formal education is important, knowledge is more important and vital for success. In the same vein, Joshua, stated that his parents were sure to let him and his siblings know that education is valuable and necessary, but college is not. He added that education was always very

valuable in my household and that his parents always pushed him and his siblings to make sure we learned as much as they could. Elliott said that his parents instilled in him that “[Education] is the key to success and. . .it’ll get you whatever you want as long as you have one.”

Direct Motivation. Direct motivation occurred when a student’s parents influence them through conversation and explicit interactions. Elliott stated that his parents have been very influential in his view of education and continue to serve as direct motivators in his journey to educational success today:

. . . they told me they wanted to go [to college] because they didn’t go, and they told me they wanted me to finish because they didn’t finish. They always tell me that they want me to do better and don’t make the same mistakes . . . so that’s why I’m still here and I won’t leave until I get my degree

Similarly, Ryan stated that his parents have been his greatest influence. When asked how his overall view of education has been influenced by his parents, he stated that in addition to watching their career trajectories, they encouraged education early and often:

. . . he still instilled education; he still talked about it and encouraged me to go, he’d still say, ‘Do it, just do it, you’re gonna love it, it’s gonna be hard but you’re gonna like it’. I feel like they told me the real stuff and they told me what was going to happen and what to look out for and I feel like they influenced me a lot because they helped me to know what to look for.

Indirect Motivation. Indirect motivation occurred when students were influenced by their parents’ actions and/or state of being, often without conversation. When asked if his views of education were influenced by his parents, Joseph said, “Yes! I

look at it as going to the next generation. I believe that me finishing my degree, no matter how the journey looks, me finishing is going to bring my family to another lifestyle.

When I look at my family, I don't want to be there, I want to take it to the next level.”

Cyrus expressed similar views:

My educational experience has had a lot to do with my parents because. . .it's kinda like, when you see what your parents have or something like that, you want more or you should want more for yourself. And the things they didn't do kind of motivated me, and the things they did do motivated me as well. So, my mother having to work X amount of hours just so she could provide for her family, you know, I don't wanna work that many hours so I gotta get my education. I don't even want her working that many hours, so I gotta get my education; things like that kind of really factored into it.

Summary of Findings

The research conducted in this study was designed to further examine the relationship between parental involvement and the educational outcomes of Black male college students. Chapter 4 is a summary of the results from six one-on-one interviews. After analyzing and coding the data, several themes occurred relating to the student's perceptions of their educational experiences and the parental influences that shaped their views of education. The participants' experiences varied. Participants' responses illustrated that their parents influence motivated them both directly and indirectly. While each of the participants viewed education positively, their views of education ranged from seeing it as power, access, and opportunity to viewing it as “second fiddle” to

knowledge. In addition, participants' responses revealed that their parents' involvement varied at each level of their educational development.

Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of parental involvement on Black males' educational outcomes. The study examined Black male college students' perceptions of their parents' involvement at each level from grade school up through college. In addition, it examined whether or not Black college males' believed that their parents' influence has affected their educational outcomes. Participants' responses suggest that parents' involvement and influence shapes the way that they view education, which, in turn, affects their motivation to pursue four-year and professional degrees. The participants also indicated that their parents influence motivated them both directly and indirectly. While each of the participants viewed education positively, their views of education ranged from seeing it as power, access, and opportunity to viewing it as "second fiddle" to knowledge. In addition, participants' responses revealed that their parents' involvement varied at each level of their educational development. This chapter discusses the findings, provides recommendations for future studies, and gives suggestions for practice.

Research Question #1: How do Black college males perceptions of their parents' involvement affect their educational outcomes?

There were differences between the participants' perceptions of their parents' involvement and how it has affected their educational outcomes. The participants' responses illustrated several things: (1) As they got older, their parents' involvement decreased; and (2) parental involvement was not the single contributor to students' academic success and educational outcomes. Some of the other contributors were limited

access to resources and self-accountability. Knight, Norton, Bentley, and Dixon (2004) asserted that parental involvement during high school is crucial to students educational outcomes, thus decrease in parental involvement during high school can be detrimental. However, students' educational outcomes as a whole cannot be directly linked to their parent's involvement. For example, both Joseph and Claude mentioned having no parental involvement in high school and college, yet Claude successfully finished his Bachelors, M.B.A., and is on to a second master's degree while Joseph, on the other hand, was academically dismissed from the university following our interview. Battle, Alderman-Swain, and Tyner (2005) found that Black male students from divorced households have better outcomes than do their counterparts in married/two-parent households. The fact that Claude and Joseph continue to pursue postsecondary education regardless of their parents' involvement, or the lack thereof, confirms that they view education as an acquisition of social capital (Harper & Davis, 2012; Solorzano, 1992). When Black parents raise their students to understand the value of education, they often adopt the same attitudes about education as capital (McNeal, 1999).

Research Question #2: Do Black college males feel that their parents' influence affects their educational outcomes?

The participants' responses indicated that, in many ways, their parents' influence may be more important than their actual involvement. Elliott explicitly stated that the main reason he has not given up on school is because of his parents' influence. Similarly, Ryan indicated that his parents have had the greatest influence on his educational outcome. Joseph's interview revealed that, while his parents have had minimal involvement after grade school and that their financial instability served as a great

influence on his pursuit of higher education. Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) study indicated that socioeconomic status has a strong influence on Black parents' involvement and participation in their children's educational experiences. Similarly, Yan (1999) found that human capital was related to parental education and social capital was connected to the network and relationship between parents and children which was the structure that provides a healthy environment for the child. Parents with lower SES were more focused on providing for their family financial through working multiple jobs or long whereas families with high SES typically have more time at home. Student from home with a high SES parent were more likely to be a college graduation and emphasized the importance of schooling with their students through being involved in their studies. Joseph stated that his parents' lack of involvement influenced him to seek a better quality education for himself and his children. Similarly, Ryan explained that his mother's influence is the reason he has chosen to follow a similar career path. He added that although his father never finished college he has been his greatest influence leading up to college.

Supplemental Findings

As mentioned in the opening of the chapter, this study sought to answer two research questions; however, the data found some other interesting phenomena. The majority of the findings discuss the participants' educational experiences during grade school, during high school, and during college and how they perceived their parents' involvement during those times. In many ways the participants' responses reaffirmed the literature, for instance students with less parental involvement seemed to struggle more academically whereas students with a high level of parental involvement were

matriculating better through college. Some of the literature stated that parental involvement contributes to students' educational outcomes (Strayhorn, 2010; Knight, Norton, Bentley, & Dixon, 2004), while other literature said that parental involvement has no measureable effect on students' educational outcomes (Adams, & Singh, 1998).

As table 4.1 illustrates, each of the participants stated that their parents were involved when they were in grade school. As a result of that involvement, four of the six participants (Joseph, Claude, Elliott, and Joshua) had positive educational experiences. However, the two respondents that cited having difficult experiences in grade school, mentioned that they overcame those difficulties because of their parents' involvement. Ryan said, "... around 3rd and 4th grade I had a speech problem and teachers thought that I wouldn't move on to the next grade because my reading wasn't up to par. But my parents were there every step of the way." Cyrus explained that his father was incarcerated when he was in grade school and he acted out as a result, but he stated that his mother was sure to get him involved in sports and other extracurricular activities. In high school, four of the six respondents (Claude, Cyrus, Ryan, and Joshua) said that they had positive educational experiences. However, Joshua stated that his high school career started off rocky because he felt that the environment was racially hostile and that the teachers did not have his best interest in mind. Examining his comments from a CRT vantage point, they illustrate that his experience at the predominately White, private catholic school almost led him to internalize feelings of inadequacy, which decreased his sense of self-efficacy for those years (Jenkins, 2006). However, his parents noticed a change in his countenance and transferred him to a selective public school in one of Chicago's more diverse areas, which increased his self-efficacy and his GPA

(Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997). Joseph said that his educational experience was challenging in high school, and Elliott said that he wasn't challenged at all in high school. Claude and Joseph mentioned that their parents were not involved at all, yet Claude excelled and Joseph struggled. The literature supports the notion that parental involvement is only one of the contributors that effect students' educational outcomes (Strayhorn, 2010). In the case of Joseph and Claude, their parents' lack of involvement continued in college so their educational experiences in college mirrored the same educational experiences as high school.

Limitations of Study

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the participants in the study may not be representative of the entire population nor will the findings be transferable outside of the specific research site (Creswell, 2009). Also, the data for this study was collected from one research site during the holiday break, which limited the number of participants that were able to participate in this study. Lastly, researcher bias could interfere with the results of the study and yield the researcher's desired outcomes.

Recommendations for Practice

Much of the literature discussing parental involvement and educational outcomes examine foundational and interventional techniques that can and have been implemented during student's development from kindergarten through high school (Joe, & Davis, 2009; Flouri, & Buchanan, 2004; Archer-Banks, & Behar-Horenstein, 2008; Driessen, Smit, & Sleeper, 2005; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, Van Voorhis, 1997; Adams, & Singh, 1998). While parental involvement in elementary and secondary school has been encouraged, not much is being done to insure that parental involvement

continues during students' college development. Participants' responses illustrated that in most cases, for one reason or another, parents' involvement tend to taper off as they go further in their academic careers. Below are some recommendations that practitioners should consider in order to better serve Black males:

1. **Create orientation programs specifically for parents of first-generation students and/or Black males.** In many cases, Black males that enter college and university settings are the first in their families to do so, thus, their parents have no real understanding of what that means for their students and what they will need in order to successfully matriculate to graduation. So, in order to equip parents to better assist their students during this time, colleges and universities should develop programs and workshops for parents of first-generation Black males when they accompany their students to campus for their summer orientation prior to their freshman year. These programs should introduce parents to the reality of college and its stresses, both in and out of the classroom, and how their students will be affected: they should be informed about the resources that are available to their students on campus; they should be made familiar with the financial aid processes and protocol; they should be introduced to various techniques they can use to engage and support their students during this time in their development.
2. **K-12 parent informational sessions.** Research shows that early parental intervention and involvement increases students' likelihood for academic success (Epstein, 1995; Flouri & Buchanan, 2004; Joe & Davis, 2009). In addition, research indicates that parental involvement during high school years is

paramount (Strayhorn, 2010; Witherspoon, Speight, & Thomas, 1997). In order for parents to get a holistic understanding of how to assist their students, K-12 educators and administrators should consider looking to establish relationships with parents as early as possible to make sure that parents are knowledgeable about ways they can support their students. These relationships should be established as early as possible because it will allow parents to begin using these tactics with their student earlier. They can be organized by the schools or by community-based organizations.

3. **Create a newsletter for parents.** As previously mentioned, parents are busy so they may not be able to attend formal meetings. Creating a monthly or quarterly newsletter would allow the parents to stay abreast of campus and community events that they can get involved with. In addition, the newsletter can have a calendar with deadlines so that parents can stay on top of things – i.e. FAFSA. With a newsletter parents will have a source of information they can refer to, at their leisure, and refresh themselves on the information shared with them at the orientation programs.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study, in conjunction with the findings of similar studies, has shed light on some suggestions that should be considered by researchers interested in continuing this study or conducting a study similar to this one:

1. **Mixed-methods study.** The literature suggests that there are several gaps between the findings of qualitative studies and those of quantitative studies. A study can be conducted that examines the effects of several variables, including

parental involvement, on Black college males educational outcomes to see if there is a statistically significant relationship between parental involvement and educational achievement.

2. **A larger study.** Due to the researcher's limited time, access, and resources, this study was carried out in one location with a limited number of participants. In the future, this study, or a similar study, can be carried out in numerous locations in a given region with more participants, which could produce richer data.
3. **Parents.** This study could introduce the participants' parents into the mix by finding out their perceptions of their techniques and motivations to be involved in their students' educational experiences. In addition, the study to be expanded and turned into a quantitative study that could seek to find which types of parental involvement have the greatest effect on Black college males' educational outcomes.
4. **Black female college students.** This study could be expanded to include Black female college students and the results can be compared to see if parental involvement and influence affects Black females differently than Black males.
5. **Siblings.** Many of the students in this study shared that they had siblings. Accordingly, this study could be expanded to include siblings and the researcher can look for the existence of any similarities and/or differences between the educational experiences and outcomes of multiple students in the same household.
6. **Mentors and other influences.** It can be theorized that mentors can fill the void that students may have from lack of parental involvement, so this study could be

expanded to include students' relationships with mentors and how that has influenced their educational outcomes.

Conclusion

This study was designed with the aim of exploring the relationship between Black college males' educational experiences and outcomes and their perceptions of their parents involvement. Findings indicated that each of the students viewed the acquisition of knowledge as something that is vital and that their parents played a role in their views of education. The study also found that parents' involvement in their students' educational experience tends to decrease as the student advances toward college. Lastly, the study found that parents' influence, albeit directly or indirectly, played a role in their student's decision to pursue higher education and persist until graduation. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that parental involvement and influence are just two of many elements that contribute to Black males educational outcomes, and while this data may not be transferable, it shows that the relationship between parental involvement and influence and Black males' educational outcomes are meaningful and should be explored further.

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Appendix A

Sample Recruitment Letter/ Email

Greetings EIU Student!

You have been selected to participate in a study about the relationship between parental involvement and Black male college students' educational outcomes. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the interview at any time. The information you provide will assist me in my graduate thesis research and add to the general discourse on the topic. This information will be used to complete thesis requirements and aid professionals, educators, and policy makers as they seek to address issues of educational inequality for Black males at the college level.

Your interview responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only as a part of a compilation. Your information will remain confidential.

Interviews will only last one hour. Please email vjones@eiu.edu to set-up for an interview date.

If you have any questions you may contact Victor Jones at 773-316-3184 or by email at vjones@eiu.edu

Thank you very much for your time.

Victor Jones, Jr.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. So, to begin, can you please state your name, age, and year in school?
 - a. How long have you attended EIU?
2. What does education mean to you?
 - a. Why do you think that you view education in this light?
3. What did your parents tell you about education when you were growing up?
4. What were your educational experiences like in grade school?
 - a. How involved were your parents?
 - b. How did they help with homework? (Tutored you? Paid for a tutor? Checked your homework?)
 - c. How did your parents interact with your teachers?
5. What were your educational experiences like in high school?
 - a. Were your parents invested in your education? If so, how? (help with hw, checking in with teachers, paying for ACT/SAT prep, etc)
 - b. How did you discuss education with your parents'?
6. When did you decide that you wanted to attend college?
 - a. How did you come to that decision?
 - b. Who or what was important to you in making that decision?
7. To this point, what have your educational experiences been like in college?
8. What conversations do you have with your parents' about your college experience?
9. Are your parents' college graduates?
10. How do you believe that your view of education has been influenced by your parents?

Appendix C

Consent to Participate in Research

Black Males' Perceptions of Parental Involvement, Influence, and their Educational Outcomes

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Victor Jones, Jr. and Dr. Dena Kniess, from the Counseling and Student Development Department at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a student of African American decent attends Eastern Illinois University.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of parental involvement and influence on Black males' educational outcomes. To do so, the researcher studied the connection between parental involvement and influence, from grade school to college. The ultimate goal of this work was to gain rich data and propose possible suggestions for future Student Affairs professionals as they seek to address issues of educational inequality for Black males at the college level.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview with the researcher
- Answer questions regarding your parental interactions, experiences in school at all levels, and how your parents have influenced your educational experience
- You will be videotaped

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Participants in this study will experience minimal risk or discomfort. Participants are not obligated to answer questions that are uncomfortable. Measures have been taken to remove and edit questions that would make a participant uncomfortable.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participants will not benefit directly from participation in the study. Results from this study will be used to add to the discourse regarding Blacks males' educational outcomes in order to increase awareness and progression on the topic.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of data, paper copies of

results, being concealed in a secure location and electronic records of data will be kept in a password protected computer in a private folder. All video recordings will only be viewed by the primary researcher and faculty mentor Dr. Kniess for data analysis purposes only. All data collected for purposes of this study will be destroyed 3 years after the study is completed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Victor Jones, Jr. (Principal Investigator) – vjones@eiu.edu 773-316-3184

Dr. Dena Kniess (Faculty Sponsor) – drkniess@eiu.edu 217-581-7240

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date