2024

African American Parents and School-Based Parental Involvement at the Secondary Level

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An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
and School of Criminal Justice in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
2024

Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Mark Dykes under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Abstract

African American Parents and School-Based Parental Involvement at the Secondary Level. Mark A. Dykes, 2024: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: African American parents, parental involvement, home-based parental involvement, school-based parental involvement, academic socialization, barriers to parental involvement

Parental involvement is a multifaceted construct that includes school-based, home-based, and academic socialization. School-based parental involvement in education has been positively associated with academic achievement for all students. However, educational leaders are challenged to get parents involved in school-based activities, such as the School Site Council, Parent Council, and Open Houses.

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to examine the reasons why African American parents are not fully involved in the policymaking and organizational activities at the target secondary school. This study is guided by the combined conceptual frameworks of Critical Race Theory, the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework, and Epstein's Overlapping Sphere of Influence. This study has three central research questions: (1) What are African American parents' perceptions of organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level? (2) What barriers prevent African American parents from engaging in organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level? And (3) What are African American parents' perspectives of the family-school relationship?

Semi structured interviews and focus groups were used to collect data. An interview protocol was developed to guide the interviews and focus groups. Braun and Clark's data analysis framework was used to analyze interview and focus group transcripts. Findings from the study indicated that African American parents perceived organizational and policymaking activities as important; however, parents perceived supporting the child emotionally as most important at the secondary school level. The following barriers to school-based engagement were identified in this study: intergenerational trauma, communication, work schedule, mental health, and recurring illnesses. Several parents experienced racism, but it was not a barrier to school-based parental involvement for any of the parents in this study. Finally, most parents in the study felt a sense of belonging during their time at their child's high school and believed that the school could strengthen the family-school partnership by creating a more inclusive environment where all parents feel welcome.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Parental involvement in education is essential because parents are a significant part of their child's overall development (Epstein, 2001; Sonnenschein & Sun, 2017). Parent participation in education is correlated to increased academic achievement, graduation, positive mental health, and college enrollment (Degol et al., 2017; James et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019). Day and Dotterer (2018) posited that parent involvement comprises three areas: school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and academic socialization. School-based involvement involves participating in parent-teacher conferences, sporting events, and decision-making committees (Park et al., 2017). Home-based involvement includes helping the child with homework and creating a safe learning space (Duppong et al., 2017). Academic socialization involves the parents' beliefs and practices contributing to their child's growth (Simpkins et al., 2018). Joyce Epstein's six types of parental involvement model and the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model are two frameworks that have guided research on parental involvement in education (Epstein, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

Parental involvement scholar Epstein (2011) developed a framework for defining the types of parental involvement. The six types—childrearing, interactions between school and home, community service in school, home-based educational practices, policymaking, and collaborating with the community—were established to help schools develop strong family-school partnerships (Epstein, 2011, 2018). In Epstein's (2011) framework, the onus is on the school to adopt practices that support its goals around student achievement and family-school relationships. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler

(2005) framework established the influences that parents need in order to become involved in their child's education. The first stage of the framework looks at parents' beliefs, view of invitation for involvement, and life context. The second level looks at what influenced the parents' choice of involvement. This section includes the parents' skill and expertise, constraints on the parent's time, and requests from the child and the school for involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Additionally, Epstein (2011) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) also highlighted the role that schools play in parental involvement. In Epstein's (2011) model, schools are tasked with adopting practices that support parental involvement at home and in school. In Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (2005) framework, schools are tasked with creating an atmosphere where parents feel welcomed and invited. Based on these two frameworks, schools significantly determine how parents participate in their child's education (Bartz et al., 2017). As Day and Dotterer (2018) have shown, however, as students matriculate through school, school-based parental involvement declines.

Constantino (2021) theorized that families disengage from high school for two reasons: ideological differences and cultural biases related to low socioeconomic status. The author posited that some teachers have preconceived notions about parents from the lower echelons of society, and therefore they do not involve such parents in their children's education. This point was validated by a number of studies, which indicated that African American and Hispanic parents used more home-based parental involvement and academic socialization than school-based parent involvement because of their negative experiences with schools (Goss, 2019; Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Parsons et al., 2018). These experiences included parents feeling excluded

from the school parents feeling unwelcomed in the school, and parents experiencing a lack of culturally sustaining family engagement practices in schools (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Constantino, 2021; Goss, 2019; Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Parsons et al., 2018). Next, school and family-based barriers have also been found to limit school-based parental involvement in education (Alexander et al., 2017; Clifford & Goncu, 2019; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018).

Research indicated that family-based barriers such as socioeconomic status is a significant barrier to school-based parental involvement for all ethnic groups (Curtis et al., 2021; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Malone, 2017). Socioeconomic barriers included being the sole provider, lack of childcare, and lack of transportation (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). Alexander et al. (2017) found in their study on barriers to parental involvement and Latinos that lack of transportation, feeling unwelcome at school, and conflict with scheduling were all obstacles to the parents' ability to participate in school activities. Clifford and Goncu (2019) found in their study on low-income African American parents and parental involvement that schedule conflicts, tension with the school community, lack of information being distributed to parents about school events, and childcare were all barriers to school-based parental involvement for the parent in their study. Language barriers were found to be a significant barrier to school-based involvement for Latino and immigrant parents (Alexander et al., 2017). In his study on 21 Latino middle-class families, Inoa (2017) found that limited English skills impeded parents' ability to participate in school and home educational activities. Finally, a common barrier that has been often overlooked is the structure of interactions between parents and schools (Constantino, 2021). An example of this is the Open House. Most

schools have two Open Houses per year. At the Open House, teachers and parents converse about their child's academic progress and behavior. Constantino (2021) posited that these structured interactions create artificial relationships, which could be considered as barriers if the family and school do not have a solid partnership and see their roles as separate rather than shared (Epstein, 2001).

Epstein's (2001) seminal work on school and family partnerships posited three perspectives on family-school relationships: (1) distinct responsibilities of families and schools, which is premised on the inharmoniousness, opposition, and struggle between families and schools; (2) collective responsibility of families and schools, a belief that rests upon the notion of cooperation, coordination, and alliance between families and schools; and (3) successive responsibilities of families and schools, an assumption that is based on the notion that parents and schools contribute to the child's development at critical stages.

A plethora of research has indicated that African American parents and schools have incompatible and conflictual relationships (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Marcucci, 2020). African American parents have had to use navigational and cultural capital in response to school practices that they perceived as intended to exclude them and their children (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). These practices include zero-tolerance policies, the school-to-prison pipeline, and the lack of culturally sustaining family engagement practices in schools (Marcucci, 2020; Parsons et al., 2018; Schiff, 2018).

Phenomenon of Interest

The problem to be addressed in this study is that African American parents at the target secondary school in a northeastern state are not fully engaged in the school's policymaking and organizational activities as measured by participation in the Parent Council, School Site Council (SSC), and parent-teacher meetings. The current parent participation rate for the two Open Houses is 36%: Hispanic parents represented the highest participation rate at 63%; followed by White parents at 20%, African American parents at 10%, Asian parents at 6%, and 1% other. Secondly, the current parent participation rate in the SSC was 75% (three out of the four available seats for parents were taken, one was vacant). There were three Hispanic and one White voting member on the council, while African American, Asian, and parents who identify as other, did not participate. Participation rates varied monthly for the Parent Council meetings. However, a core group of 10 parents participated monthly. Of that core group, nine of the parents were Hispanic and one was White.

Background and Justification

Research has indicated a strong association between school-based parental involvement and students' increased grade point average (GPA) and graduation rates (Day & Dotterer, 2018; James et al., 2019). However, when students reach high school, school-based parental involvement tends to decrease (Constantino, 2021). According to the National Center for Education Statistic's parent and family survey, 92% of parents of kindergarten through second-grade students conveyed that they regularly met with a teacher. In comparison, only 58% of parents of high school students reported that they

attended parent-teacher meetings regularly (U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017).

The overall decline in parental engagement at the high school level may be due to students entering adolescence. Erikson (1968) posited in his research on the life cycle that as young people enter adolescence, they have an identity crisis because they are trying to discover who they are, how the group views them, and how they fit into the group. Thus, the young person seeks to become independent from his parents. Parents themselves have experienced this phenomenon and are inclined to give their child more responsibility regarding schooling (Erikson, 1968). The decline in school-based involvement has had a profound effect on African American students, and the drop in school-based parental involvement at the secondary school level was correlated with a decrease in GPA and graduation rates for African American students (James et al., 2019).

African American parents lag behind their peers in participating in policymaking school committees. According to the NCES's parent and family survey, 49% of White and Asian parents reported that they were part of a school committee; 36% of Hispanic parents reported that they served on a school committee; and 34% of African American parents reported that they served on a school committee (NCES, 2017). School-based activities such as participating in the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) and the SSC give parents a voice in the policymaking process (Medina et al., 2020). Participation in the decision-making process is important for African American parents because it would enable them to help shape policies and practices that overwhelmingly target African American children. For example, when special education and discipline practices are not designed to support African American students, the result can be a more pronounced

school-to-prison pipeline, biased practices and procedures, and the over enrollment of Black males in classes for students who have learning disabilities (Bell, 2020; Farkas et al., 2020; Marcucci, 2020; Morgan et al., 2017; Schiff, 2018).

Deficiencies in the Evidence

There are a plethora of studies that indicated that African American parents resort to more home-based parental involvement than school-based involvement, compared to their peers because of negative interactions with schools (Goss, 2019; Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Parsons et al., 2018). Barriers to school-based parental involvement included feeling unwelcome in school, being the sole provider, and lack of childcare and transportation (Alexander et al., 2017; Clifford & Goncu, 2019; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). Studies indicated that African American parents used more home-based involvement because of the incompatible relationship between families and schools (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Marcucci, 2020). A gap in the current research revolves around a lack of understanding why African American parents do not fully engage in school-based committees, such as the SSC, which create the policies and procedures that profoundly impact their children. School-based committees give parents a vote in the decision-making process concerning curriculum, discipline, budgeting, personnel, policies, and procedures. Every school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is mandated by law to have a functioning SSC.

Audience

This study provided the knowledge necessary to respond to parents' expressed objections to participation and encourages parents to become more invested in their child's secondary school governance. In this study, I also aimed to enable African

American parents to share their experiences with educators and school administrators, whose responsibility is to create an environment that values and welcomes parental involvement.

Researcher's Role

I am currently the Assistant Head of School at the research site. It is my second year in my current position. Before I became the assistant head of the school, I spent 17 years as the senior school counselor at the research site.

Definition of Terms

Academic Socialization

This is the practice of monitoring students' academic performance, engaging in meaningful conversations regarding school and career goals, encouraging the child to pursue their education and career interests, and helping the child prepare for their future endeavors by supporting their goals (Francis et al., 2020; Metzger et al., 2020). Academic socialization is essential in developing the child's self-concept and self-esteem in education (Cross et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2023).

Barriers to School-Based Parental Involvement in Education

These barriers prevent parents from becoming involved in organizational activities. Such barriers may include ethnic identity, racism, single-parenting language, work schedule, culture, and an unwelcoming school environment (Alexandra et al., 2017; Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Lechuga-Peña, 2018).

Home-Based Parental Involvement

These are activities that reinforce learning in school. These activities include providing a space for learning, monitoring, and checking homework, structuring the time

spent on schoolwork and leisure, and monitoring the student's progress through report cards, progress reports, and the Student Information System (Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019; Ogg & Anthony, 2020). Home-based parental involvement also includes helping the child with homework and fostering extra-curricular activities to stimulate learning, such as taking a child to a museum (Duppong et al., 2017; Huguley et al., 2020)

School-Based Parental Involvement

This involves parents actively participating in activities in the school setting. These activities include participating in the PTO, partaking in parent-teacher conferences, joining the school's governance body, volunteering, and reading to a class (Day & Dotterer, 2018; James et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to examine the reasons why African American parents at the target secondary school were not fully engaged in policymaking and organizational activities. When African American parents engage in school-based parental involvement, students' GPA and education attainment improve (Day & Dotterer, 2018; James et al., 2019; Otani, 2020). The lack of school-based parental involvement for African American parents has consequences for African American students, such as exacerbating their achievement gap and fortifying the school-to-prison pipeline (Marcucci, 2020; Schiff, 2018). Barriers to involvement and a family-school relationship premised on competition and conflict may be the causes for the lack of school-based involvement for African American parents. However, African American parents' involvement or lack thereof in school policymaking and organizational activities is under researched from the parents' perspective.

In 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA) returning states' control over standards, assessments, and policies previously controlled by the federal government under the No Child Left Behind Act (Adler-Green, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2018). A major part of ESSA is how states and school districts engage parents. Per ESSA's family and community requirements, any district receiving Title 1 funding must develop a written family engagement policy. Families are required by law to be involved in the development of the policy (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2022).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review aimed to acquire a deep understanding of African American parents' school-based involvement experiences at the secondary school level. The guiding theoretical frameworks used in this study are critical race theory (CRT) (Bridges, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013), the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005), and Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework (Epstein, 2011). These three frameworks provided insight and a lens through which to view the problem to be addressed in this study: African American parents at the target secondary school are not fully engaged in the policymaking and organizational activities as measured by participation in the Parent Council, SSC, and parent-teacher meetings.

African American parents' experiences with White supremacy practices have profoundly affected their self-concept and have also shaped their perception of their interactions with schools (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; James, 2017; Johnson & Wakefield, 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson). Critical race theory, which postulates that race is a central structure in society, coupled with the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework, provided this study's explanatory framework for understanding how unwelcoming school practices impact African American parents' decision to become involved in policymaking and organizational activities, and the barriers to their involvement (Bridges, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

African Americans parents used more home-based involvement because of their experiences with schools, due to barriers such as experiences of racism by staff and other parents, feeling unwelcomed in the school, being a single-parent, and transportation

issues (Alexander et al., 2017; Clifford & Goncu, 2019; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework coupled with CRT helped to understand parents' essential involvement decision and what they were influenced by (i.e., role construction, parent's sense efficacy, or general invitations from school or child), as well as parents' choice of involvement forms and what they were influenced by (i.e., expertise, constraints on time, and invitations from the school or child) (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Finally, the Epstein (2011) Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework was used for examining family-school partnerships.

A plethora of research indicated that parent involvement in school bettered student outcomes in the following areas: academic achievement, GPA, and graduation rate (Day & Dotterer, 2018; James et al., 2019). However, parental involvement lessens as students matriculate through school (Bhargava & Witherspoon, 2015; Day & Dotterer, 2018). Epstein's (2011) Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework posited that student learning increases when the community works together to provide the necessary support. By examining African American parents' perception of school-based involvement and school committees, I intended this research to add to the body of knowledge regarding parental involvement at school. In addition, it provided further insight into the impact of race or lack thereof on African American parents' perception of policymaking and organizational activities.

This chapter is organized as follows: (1) A description of CRT, the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of the parental involvement process, and Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework; (2) an overview of the types of parental involvement, the benefits of parental involvement, and the impact on student

achievement; (3) a discussion of barriers to parental involvement; and (4) a discussion of models of school-parent partnerships and culturally responsive, sustaining parental engagement.

The Nova Southeastern University library and Google Scholar were used to obtain literature for the current study. Search databases used for this study included: Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, ERIC, JSTOR, ProQuest, and Roadrunner. Literature searches were limited to peer-reviewed, scholarly articles published in or after 2017, but seminal articles published before 2017 were included as well. Electronic books from the Nova Southeastern Library and the Amazon Kindle store were also used for this study. The following key terms and phrases were used in the search engines: ‘types of parent involvement;’ ‘parental involvement at the secondary school level;’ ‘parental involvement and academic achievement;’ ‘CRT;’ ‘CRT in education;’ ‘barriers to parental involvement;’ ‘parental involvement frameworks;’ ‘White supremacy practices;’ ‘school-based parental involvement;’ ‘African Americans and parental involvement;’ ‘racism in schools;’ and ‘culturally responsive sustaining parental engagement.’

Conceptual Framework

Critical Race Theory

The first framework used to support this study is CRT. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) posited that “Critical race theory is a movement of interdisciplinary activists and scholars engaged in the studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (p. 3). Critical race theory is premised on five tenets, as further elaborated below: racism as usual, not unusual; interest convergence or material determinism; race

as a social construction; intersectionality and anti-essentialism; and voice or counter-narrative (Bridges, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Critical Race Theory Tenet 1

The first tenet of CRT is the belief that racism is normal and not aberrant. Critical race theory scholars do not agree that racism exists only in individual thoughts and behaviors but rather that it is ingrained in how society operates and impacts people of color daily (Bell, 1992; Bridges, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Bridges (2019) proposed that being "unconscious of race-or pretending that it does not exist" perpetuates race and racial inequality (p. 10). The dominant culture pretends that race does not exist by promoting color-blindness and meritocracy rhetoric (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013). The color-blindness theory suggests that everyone enjoys equal treatment regardless of their race while the meritocracy theory suggests that all individuals in a society have a level playing field and an equal chance to succeed (Bridges, 2019; Zamudio et al., 2011). Critical race theory scholars have challenged both theories and labeled them "the myth of color blindness" and "the myth of meritocracy" (Bridges, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Critical race theory scholars believe that covert racist policies, practices, and procedures interweave through access to equitable housing, education, employment, the healthcare system, and the public welfare system to keep African Americans at a disadvantage (Bell, 1992; Better, 2008; Bridges, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Critical Race Theory Tenet 2

The second tenet, interest convergence, is the belief that the dominant culture will only seek racial justice if this action benefits its interests (Bell, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Lewis & Shah, 2021). This tenet was derived from Bell's (1980) work, which posited that the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision could not be understood without considering how it benefited Whites. The *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, which effectively ended racial segregation in U.S. schools, had several outcomes: it gave America credibility in the world; African American veterans were reassured they would have opportunities and freedom at home; and it helped Whites in the U.S. South transition from a plantation society based on segregation to a more profitable Sunbelt society in which industries such as oil, military, and aerospace thrived (Bell, 1980). Racism had advanced the monetary interests of the elite Whites and the psychic interests of the working-class Whites. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) claimed that eliminating racism was thus deemed to be unnecessary. Additionally, Bell (1980) posited that Whites could not understand the sacrifice it takes for true equality because they would have to give up their class and racial privileges.

Critical Race Theory Tenet 3

The third tenet of CRT, race as a social construction, is the belief that race is not a scientific reality; rather, human beings created categories based on genetic differences as a mechanism to create a social hierarchy and maintain White supremacy (Bryant et al., 2022; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Three legal instances exemplify the use of race to maintain White supremacy in the United States: the Dred Scott decision, the 'one-drop rule,' and the creation of Jim Crow laws. Dred Scott and his

wife sued for their freedom on the premise that because they lived in a free territory for a period, they were entitled to their freedom. At the center of the Dred Scott case was whether a Black person whose ancestors were slaves could sue as a citizen (Breyer, 2010). The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that although Dred Scott was free, he could not sue because he was not a citizen of the United States. Justice Breyer (2010) posited that citizens were those who were citizens when the Constitution was adopted. Blacks at the time of the adoption of the Constitution were considered inferior and less human than Whites.

In 1911, the Arkansas legislature passed Act 320, the ‘one-drop rule.’ The law stated that anyone with a drop of African blood is considered African American (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The law made interracial marriage, interracial cohabitation, and interracial sex a crime and relegated African Americans to the status of second-class citizens. The one-drop rule was instrumental in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision, which affirmed states’ rights to mandate separate but equal spaces for White and African American train passengers (Hickman, 1997). Finally, the ‘one-drop rule’ was the cornerstone of Jim Crow laws.

Jim Crow laws were established after the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which outlawed slavery in the United States, and became the common law in U.S. southern states from 1877–1964. Jim Crow laws were rooted in the Black codes, which were designed to disenfranchise and relegate African Americans to the lowest levels of society (Woodward, 2002). They forbade African Americans from riding in the front of the bus, attending the same schools as Whites, eating at White establishments, drinking from the same water fountain as Whites, living in the same neighborhoods as Whites, or

use the same funeral homes and cemeteries as Whites (Woodward, 2002). All three examples highlight how race, a social construction, was used to maintain White supremacy and create a hierarchy where African Americans were artificially relegated to and treated as an inferior echelon of society.

Critical Race Theory Tenet 4

The fourth tenet of CRT, intersectionality and anti-essentialism is the examination of race, sex, class, and sexual orientation and how their combinations play out in different environments (Kolivoski, 2020). Critical race theory scholars believe that people have multiple identities that overlap (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

Critical Race Theory Tenet 5

The fifth and final tenet of CRT, voice or counter-narrative, is used to amplify the voices, experiences, and perspectives of people of color (Bridges, 2019; Marcias et al., 2021). Critical race theory scholars believe that those who have experienced oppression and racism are the only ones who have the knowledge and expertise to speak on it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The CRT tenets emerged from critical legal studies, radical feminism, and the works of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, W. E. B. Du Bois, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Thus, CRT is a collection of tenets that have a long history of addressing race and racial disparities across all disciplines (Chang, 2013; Gillborn, 2015; Kolivoski, 2020; Liu, 2022; Marcias et al., 2021; Siegel, 2020). The work of Derrick Bell in the 1970s and 1980s and the protest at Harvard law school helped to create the CRT movement.

Bell (1976, 1980, 1992, 1995) challenged many of the civil rights victories of the 1950s and 1960s by refuting the claim that granting of civil rights to African Americans solely benefitted African Americans. Bell (1980) explained this in his theory on interest convergence (a second tenet of CRT), which stated that African American interests only advance when they relate to White interests. In addition, the protest at Harvard Law School over the departure of a prominent professor advanced the CRT movement. Students at Harvard Law believed that only an African American could teach the course on race and the law. The Harvard administration disagreed with the students, and the students boycotted the course. The students organized an alternate course that invited law professors of color from other schools to give lectures that offered a critical analysis of the law and race and challenged the accepted liberal discourse around race (Bridges, 2019; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Critical race theory emerged from two failures: the critical legal studies movement's lack of interest in questions pertaining to race, racism, and racial justice; and the CRT founders' disappointment in the way political liberals had conceptualized race (Bridges, 2019; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Critical legal studies, a majority-White, male, and neo-Marxist movement, believed the law was instrumental in the maintenance of an unjust social order (Bridges, 2019). The objective of the critical legal studies movement was to destabilize the law by exposing its contradictions (Bridges, 2019). Critical legal studies members of color found these goals attractive, but they had issues with critical legal studies' rejection of the law being valuable to the subordinated, their insignificant social justice efforts, and their disdain towards including the concept of race in any theory, analysis, or political project (Bridges, 2019; Crenshaw

et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Bell (1976, 1980, 1992, 1995), Freeman (1977), Delgado (1993), and 21 other scholars of color met at the University of Wisconsin to create a race-centered project. Crenshaw, one of the student protesters at Harvard Law School and a CRT scholar, coined the term 'critical race theory' (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

Critical race theory emerged during an era when civil rights laws were being rolled back by conservative judges that narrowly interpreted the new laws and by individuals unsympathetic to race reforms in government agencies (Bridges, 2019). Critical race theory scholars did not believe conservative judges or individuals unsympathetic to race reforms were squarely to blame for ineffective civil rights laws. They also believed that ineffective civil rights laws were a result of liberal civil rights discourse (Bridges, 2019; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Traditional liberals championed a society that was egalitarian, color-blind, and meritocratic (Bridges, 2019; Zamudio et al., 2011). Critical race theory scholars saw the progressive integrationist vision as limited because it was designed to keep people of color subjugated (Bridges, 2019; Zamudio et al., 2011). Critical legal scholars refused to include race in any theory or analysis, the same way that educational scholars did not consider race when looking at the inequities in education.

The CRT movement in education began with Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate's presentation at the American Education Research Annual Meeting (Zamudio et al., 2011). There, Ladson-Billing and Tate (1995) postulated that race should be theorized and used as an analytical tool to understand the injustices in our public schools. Ladson-Billing and Tate's (1995) discussion at the conference was premised on three propositions: race determines inequities; property rights are important; and the

combinations of race and property can be used to understand social inequities (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995). At the time, race was presented as an ideological construct in educational literature and educational scholars developed a deep analysis of inequity based on gender and class (Zamudio et al., 2011). Ladson-Billing and Tate (1995) argued that class and gender explanations of gaps in achievement could not explain the discrepancies in data; thus, race should be employed as an analytical tool to understand social inequities (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995). Critical race theory scholars in education have therefore focused primarily on racial inequality.

Critical race theory scholars in education believe that racial inequity is a result of a society based on the false premise of meritocracy and competition (Dixon & Anderson, 2018; Ladson-Billing, 1998, 2013; Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995: Rankin-Wright et al., 2020; Zamudio et al., 2011); that educational structures create inequities (Grier & Poole, 2020; Ladson-Billing, 1998, 2013; Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995; Zamudio et al., 2011); that White supremacy practices in schools should be rejected (Daftary, 2018; Hurtado, 2019); that the linkage between racial inequity in education and historical patterns of racial oppression should be examined (Felix & Trinidad, 2020; Robert, 2022); that race intersects with gender, class, and sexuality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017); and that meaningful outcomes should be advocated to rectify racial inequities in schooling (Kolivoski, 2020; Rankin-Wright et al., 2020).

Studies Using Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory has been used to understand the experiences of people of color. Marrun et al. (2021) used CRT as a framework to examine the educational experiences and perspectives of families of color. Fifteen parents of color were

interviewed about their experience with teachers, and while these families viewed teaching and teachers positively, they struggled with their ability to inspire their child to follow their dream while fighting for what is right. Results of this study challenged the narrative that parents of color do not aspire to see their children succeed at the post-secondary school level (Yull et al., 2018).

Marchand et al. (2019) used CRT to understand how race affects African American parents' experiences in school. To counter to the dominant narrative that African American parents are not concerned with their child's schooling, the authors proposed a new approach: critical parent engagement. A parent who is critically engaged is cognizant of how race impacts their child in school and takes action to mediate the effect (Marchand et al., 2019). The authors used the framework to understand how African American parents examined problems in schools and acted. Bolgatz et al. (2020) used CRT to examine African American parents' perception of their children's academic experiences in a predominately White, K-5 private school. Fourteen African American parents were interviewed about their experiences in the predominately White school. Although the parents appreciated the school's rigor and opportunities, they were concerned about their children being asked to leave the school, about the form of communication or lack thereof with teachers, and the necessity for and access to academic tutors (Bolgatz et al., 2020).

Reynolds-Vasser et al. (2021) used CRT to examine African American males' experiences in suburban middle-class White schools. Five African American males were interviewed about their K-12 interactions with school officials and peers. The researchers examined race, gender, sexuality and participant's experiences in school. All five

participants recounted adverse interactions with White teachers and their peers. The themes that emerged in their study were negative mindset, and character, overly masculine, sexuality, limited outlook, and African American boy joy (Reynolds-Vasser et al., 2021). Critical race theory enabled the authors to interrogate the impact of racism on African American boys' school experiences and outcomes.

Allen and White-Smith (2018) used CRT to examine how African American mothers supported their sons in school. Ten African American mothers were interviewed about their perceptions of parental involvement in education, race, and adulthood. Findings indicated the structure of the school and racism made the mothers feel unwelcomed. The mothers were met with exclusionary practices and perceived that no one wanted to help them. The permanence of race, intersectionality, and counter-storytelling were all CRT tenets that were highlighted in this study.

Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

The second framework used in this study is the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model. This model investigated parents' impetus for involvement in education and its correlation with student outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007). The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model is premised on the following constructs: parents' belief system, the invitation from child and school, and parents' skill, time, and energy (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2005).

Parents' Motivational Beliefs

Parental role construction and self-efficacy are at the center of a parent's educational involvement belief system. Parental role construction involves parents' philosophy on their place in the educational hierarchy (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007;

Jarrett & Coba-Rodriguez, 2019; Sira & Holloway, 2018; Williams-Johnson & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2022). Parents' beliefs about child development and parents' peer groups related to schooling all have a significant influence on parents' role construction (Williams-Johnson & Fields-Smith, 2022; Sira & Holloway, 2018; Williams-Johnson & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2022). Self-efficacy has to do with a parent's belief in their ability to help with educational activities (Gibbs et al., 2021). Positive beliefs about efficacy are associated with increased engagement and positive student outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007; Liu & Leighton, 2021; Reininger & Santana, 2017).

Parents' Perception of Invitations for Involvement from others

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2007) posited that invitation from the school and child influenced parents' involvement in education. Invitations from the school are manifested in the school's parental engagement practices, such as event calendars and progress reports. The responsiveness of the school to parents' questions and concerns is also considered to be a general school invitation (Conrad & Blackman, 2018; Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 2007). Next, teacher invitations for involvement play two important roles in the engagement process: they establish a role for parents, and they highlight teachers' appreciation of parent contributions to the educational process (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007; Liu & Leighton, 2021). Finally, child invitation for involvement is important to the engagement process because parents will generally help their child in a situation where they are asking for or need help. The child explicitly asking the parent for help with school-related activities increases parental involvement (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007; Liu & Leighton, 2021).

Parent's Perceived Life Context

The parents' skills, constraints on time, and socioeconomic status all influence the parents' form of involvement. A parent's skill and expertise on a subject influence their perception of effectiveness regarding a specific school-related task. A parent knowledgeable in mathematics will feel more motivated to help their child with math work than a less knowledgeable parent (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007). Similarly, demands on their time and energy influence parents' involvement in the educational process (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007). The two significant demands that profoundly impact parents' decision to get involved are family dynamics and work. Single parents are the family's sole provider; thus, they are limited by family obligations and job schedules (Baker et al., 2016; Hornby & Blackwell, 2018; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). There are several variables that affect a parent's choice whether to become involved, or not, in the educational process. There are also countless ways for parents to be involved in their child's education, such as academic socialization, home-based involvement, school-based involvement, or a combination of the three.

Levels of Parental Involvement

Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2007) posited that when parents are engaged in the educational process through academic socialization, home-based involvement, school-based involvement, or a combination of all three (Level 2), the following parental behaviors influence school achievement: encouraging, modeling, reinforcing, and instructing (Level 3). Parental involvement behaviors such as encouraging the student to do well in school, modeling habits of mind, reinforcing school-related activities such as homework, and doing instructional activities with the student, all influence the student's

perception of parental engagement (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007; Liu & Leighton, 2021). These behaviors also help students develop the following qualities: self-confidence, internal drive, control, and emotional intelligence (Levels 4 and 5) (Degol et al., 2017; Lui & Leighton, 2021).

Studies Using the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

Several studies used the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework to understand what motivates parents to become involved in their children's schooling and this decision's impact on student outcomes. Reininger and Santa Lopez (2017) used the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model to examine the connection between parents' belief systems, perception of invitations to engagement, circumstances, and parent involvement. The authors controlled for the child, parent, and socioeconomic status variables. Results from this study indicated a strong association between invitations, parents' sense of usefulness, socioeconomic status, student's grade level, and respective parental involvement. Similarly, Abel (2022) found in her study on African American fathers' involvement in their children's education that invitation from others, communication, and life context all influenced the father's decision to become involved. Lui and Leighton (2021) used the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model to explore the distinctive characteristics of parent involvement in predicting students' achievement in mathematics. Results from their study indicated that there was a strong association between a parent's confidence in their ability to teach and students' math achievement.

Joyce Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence

The third and final framework used in this study is Joyce Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence. Epstein (2018) posited that learning occurs in the three spheres:

home, school, and in the community. Overlapping spheres equal a strong family, school, and community partnership, while nonoverlapping spheres equal a separate responsibilities relationship based on competition and conflict (Epstein, 2011, 2018). The framework's structure involves both external and internal spheres.

External and Internal Structures of the Model

Four external factors determine whether the external and internal spheres overlap: time, family experience, school experience, and community experience. Time (or 'Force A') refers to the development level of the child. Next, the philosophy of the home ('Force B'), school ('Force C'), and community ('Force D') determine the overlapping or nonoverlapping of the spheres (Epstein, 2011, 2018; Pacino et al., 2023; Reardon & Leonard, 2018; Werber & Fagnano, 2019).

The interior aspect of the framework focuses on internal interactions and communication of family-to-parent, family-to-school, parent-to-teacher, and school-to-teacher within the school (Epstein, 2018; Pacino et al., 2023; Reardon & Leonard 2018; Werber & Fagnano, 2019). Both the family and school spheres independently influence the child. Intrainstitutional interactions between the family and parent help to shape the child at home, and the intrainstitutional interactions between the school and teacher influence the child at school (Epstein, 2011, 2018). When the sphere of influence intersects, organizational communication occurs between families and schools. These intrainstitutional interactions are formal. Formal interactions include workshops for parents, PTO and SSC meetings, and Parent University. Formal parent and teacher interactions include conferencing regarding student progress or mental health concerns. Every family-school and parent-teacher interaction influences the child.

Studies Using the Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model

VanValkenburg et al. (2021) grounded their study on junior high school teachers' parents, the Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework, and surveys to collect qualitative data. Results from their study indicated that parent and teacher perceptions of activities such as volunteering, parenting, and communication were similar, but dissimilar when asked about home-based involvement and community outreach. In a similar study, Al-Fadley et al. (2018) used the Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework as a conceptual framework to look at teachers' views on parent involvement and students' language acquisition and used interviews to collect qualitative data. Three major themes emerged from their results: parents were seen as assets by teachers, teachers promoted home activities, such as reading, and teachers were aware of the reading deficiencies of students.

Benefits of Parental Involvement

Parental educational involvement might include reading with children, volunteering at a bake sale, visiting the zoo, and communicating parental high expectations (Day & Dotterer, 2018). Epstein (2018) has shown that the level of parental engagement in education is a determining factor in student outcomes. Benefits of parental involvement in education included better GPA, increased graduation rates among African Americans, positive mental health, and higher rates of college enrollment (Degol et al., 2017; James et al., 2019; Jeynes, 2016; Khanh & Rush, 2016; Ross, 2016; Wang et al., 2019).

Other studies have claimed that parental engagement in education is associated with student achievement regardless of race, socioeconomic status, and culture (Allen &

White-Smith, 2018; Day & Dotterer, 2018; Hamlin & Li, 2019). For example, Li and Hamlin (2019) examined the relationship between home-based engagement and academic outcomes by using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study- Kindergarten (ECLS-K). The sample size began at 21,260 in kindergarten and was reduced to 12,654 by third grade. Li and Hamlin's (2019) results indicated that low-income, disadvantaged, and underrepresented groups were linked to a parent's tendency to help with school assignments, which bettered academic achievement for their children.

Bodovski et al. (2022) also used data from the ECLS-K and growth models to examine the relationship between home-based engagement and academic success in grammar school. Results indicated an adverse relationship between home-based engagement and reading and math scores. However, when Bodovski et al. (2022) corrected for predispositions, the association was absent. A major limitation of their study was that it lacked information about the quality of home-based engagement; thus, the authors merely focused on the rate of occurrence.

These two studies highlighted the importance of looking at quality over quantity when examining parents' impact on their students. Parental self-efficacy may have something to do with the negative association between home-based involvement and student outcomes. Liu and Leighton's (2021) study on parental self-efficacy and math achievement posited the most significant direct effect on students' math achievement. The authors collected data from parents and used achievement scores from students in grammar school to predict students' math scores. Results from their study indicated that parental self-efficacy was influenced by school invitations for parents to become involved. These results aligned with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler et al. (2007) and

Epstein (2018), in that a parent's self-efficacy can be improved through school and student invitations to become involved, as well as through a solid school-family partnership.

Family-School Partnerships

Epstein (2018) and Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2007) suggested that schools must intentionally involve parents in the educational process because they are an asset to their children. Partnerships are one way that schools can operate intentionally about involving parents in the educational process. Forming partnerships with parents is not easy, especially when parents feel unwelcome and excluded from their child's education (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Marcucci, 2020). When barriers exist between parents and the school, creating a meaningful partnership is difficult (Alexander et al., 2017; Clifford & Goncu, 2019; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018).

Schools must be deliberate about partnering with parents, and the current literature supports what schools can do to engage parents. Epstein et al. (2018) posited the following parent engagement typology: child raising, collaborating, participating in a bake sale, reading to a child before bed, policymaking, and working together in the neighborhood. It is essential to note that in Epstein et al.'s (2018) comprehensive programs model, the onus is on the school to be intentional about providing the necessary support to families in the partnership. Schools help parents establish a supportive environment for their children (parenting), effectively communicate students' progress and programming via email, text message, or phone (communicating), organize parent support (volunteering), provide parents with information on how to provide school-related support (learning at home), afford parents the opportunity to vote on important

issues (decision-making), and find and integrate resources that support programming, families, and students' learning (Epstein et al., 2018).

Similarly, Constantino (2021) suggested five principles that schools could adopt to engage every family intentionally. The first is creating a culture that engages families; the second is communicating effectively and developing relationships; the third is building family efficacy; the fourth is making sure that parents have a say in school policies and procedures; and the fifth is engaging the neighborhood. Mapp et al. (2017) posited that schools must examine their beliefs about parents, harness the power of partnerships, create a welcoming environment for all parents, reinvent family conferences, maintain robust engagement strategies throughout the year, and use community resources to support the family-school partnership. Most of the research, however, has been centered around what schools can do to involve parents (Constantino, 2021; Epstein et al., 2018; Mapp et al., 2017). Thus, educational leaders may undervalue what parents bring to the educational ecosystem.

Parental Expectation and Academic Achievement

The relationship between parent engagement and student outcomes is substantial in the research literature. It has been established that parents' educational expectations influence their students' behavior and promote school success (Benner et al., 2021; Koshy et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2022; Lindberg & Guven, 2021; Tan, 2017; Tatlah et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2022; Zhao & Bodovski, 2020). Jeynes' (2022) conducted a study on the parental expectation element of parent engagement and student outcomes. The meta-analysis included 447,137 participants and 54 studies that associated the effect of parent engagement on student outcomes. The results suggested a meaningful connection

between parent expectations and student outcomes from elementary school through college.

Findings by Jeynes (2020) implied that parental expectations profoundly impacted student achievement. Interestingly, the impact of parent engagement for African American students was comparable to that for White students. Next, findings were coherent across all social demographic categories and subject matter. The size of the study makes the findings substantial, which strongly supported the impact of parental expectations on students' achievement for all groups. Notably, the study defined parental expectations as whether a child obtains a certain degree, their GPA attainment, and reaching a certain job status. While the study's findings highlighted the importance of parental expectations on student academic achievement, the study did not provide an overview of the support parents gave their children during the process.

In a similar study, Pinquart and Ebeling (2019) conducted a study on parent expectations and academic achievement in children and adolescents. In particular, the authors looked at educational expectations, such as grades and educational attainment. The meta-analysis included data on 538,548 parents from 169 studies. The authors looked at whether student outcomes would change if they controlled socioeconomic status (SES). Findings indicated a medium association between parent outlook and student outcomes. Notably, the association persisted over time after they controlled for parents' SES. The authors also found a limited association between parent outlook and future achievement. Finally, there was a strong association between parent outlook, student outcomes, and socioeconomic status. In comparison, results from Jeynes' (2020) meta-analysis on parental expectations and student outcomes posited that the effects of parental

expectations and student outcomes for African American were identical to Whites. A significant limitation of Pinquart and Ebeling's (2019) study was that they introduced parental SES as a third variable, based on the premise that wealthier parents provided their children with more encouragement and resources. However, the authors did not analyze specific reinforcement behaviors in their study.

Xu et al. (2022) examined the association between parent expectations and self-regulated learning. Survey data was collected from 691 Chinese college students, and the authors used partial correlation analysis to determine the relationship between parental expectations, self-regulated learning, mindset, and introspection. Results from their study indicated a strong association between students' view of their parents' expectations of them and their ability to learn on their own. These results aligned with Pinquart and Ebeling's (2019) findings in that they also found a positive correlation between parent expectations and success in the future. Next, Xu et al. (2022) posited that parental academic expectations are filled with emotions that influence the child to do better in school. This point is crucial because it highlights parental reinforcement behaviors, such as emotional labor (managing feelings and expressions) and maintaining a positive environment. A significant limitation of their study was that Xu et al. (2022) only focused on college students who are more independent and self-reflective than middle- and secondary school students.

Tulagan and Eccles (2021) found that African American mothers are positive socializers of their children. The authors used interview data from 619 African American participants. Results from their study indicated that the mothers wanted the best for their children and were cognizant of environmental factors that negatively impacted their

children. Accordingly, the mothers were proactive in providing the necessary support, but expressed negative feelings when their children were perceived to be underachieving.

Similarly, the parents in Xu et al.'s (2021) study also had expectations that were filled with emotions and impacted student behaviors. Similarly, the mothers in Tulagan and Eccles' (2021) study wanted the best for their children, but when their children underachieved, this sparked emotionally charged reactions and discussions. In both studies, the parents provided the necessary resources and emotional support. However, in Tulagan and Eccles' (2021) study, the resources and emotional support were insufficient for African American students.

Socioeconomic status may also be to blame. Vukojević (2017) found in his research that socioeconomic status strongly correlated with the overall well-being of the child. The author posited that poverty could affect a person well into adulthood. In their meta-analysis, Korous et al. (2022) examined the strength association between class, reasoning, and academic success. The authors identified 15,000 records and reviewed 262 meta-analyses, of which 14 were selected for review. The researchers used a statistical analysis to evaluate studies on socioeconomic status. The authors found that higher socioeconomic status was positively associated with cognitive and achievement outcomes. The authors also posited that the longer one is exposed to lower socioeconomic status, the more significant the negative impact on cognitive ability. Finally, Korous et al. (2022) found that high socioeconomic status did not translate into higher GPAs and achievement scores for students of color but did for White students.

Assari (2020) examined this socioeconomic status in relations to spatial cognition. Mental rotation is the ability to rotate dimensional objects within the mind (Rahe &

Jansen, 2023). Mental rotation is associated with reasoning and numerical proficiency (Moè, 2018; Rutherford et al., 2018). The sample size included over 11,000 school-aged children. Findings indicated a strong association between parents' level of education and spatial cognition. The authors also found mental rotation to be stronger in some groups and weaker in others. This study's results align with Hung et al. (2020), in that environmental factors have a profound effect on African American families regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Academic Socialization and Academic Achievement

Children are academically socialized when they see their parents or older siblings reading books, watching the news, and discussing current events (Bæck, 2017). Suizzo et al. (2023) found an association between parents' messaging about working hard in school and students' grades. The authors proposed that there would be a correlation between current success in school and prospective success; second, that parent messaging would motivate the child; and third, that future planning would be the intermediary between parent messaging and mastery of goals. The sample size for their study included 319 sixth-grade students classified as low-income. The Parental Academic Socialization, Goals and Values in Adulthood, and Parental Academic Socialization questionnaires were used to collect data. Results from Suizzo et al.'s (2023) study indicated a positive association between parent messaging and intrinsic future goals. Next, the authors found a positive correlation between adolescents' future planning and motivation and parent messaging. These results illustrated the positive effects of parental involvement in education.

In a similar study, Chun and Devall (2019) used a path model to examine Hispanic parental engagement strategies and the impact of 'Familismo.' Gonzalez (2019) posited that Familismo is described as feelings of attachment, loyalty, and responsibility towards family and extended family. The author proposed that Familismo would be positively correlated with student outcomes; second, that life barriers would be an impediment to parental engagement; and finally, that a welcoming school environment would be beneficial to Hispanic families. Chun and Devall (2019) used a survey to collect data from 116 Hispanic school-aged children. Findings indicated a good-of-fit for the hypothesized path model, which explained the difference in student outcomes, academic socialization, and parental involvement and adequately explained the interrelationships between the variables. Familismo and a welcoming climate directly affected parental involvement, while life-context barriers did not. The authors also found that academic socialization positively affected academic achievement, and a correlation between life barriers and student outcomes; they therefore posited that students who perceived the barriers were likelier to have lower grades. The mediating effects of parental involvement and academic socialization were therefore supported in this study.

Similar to Suizzo et al.'s (2023) findings, Chun and Devall (2019) found a correlation between a parent's ability to prepare the child for academia and educational success. The authors emphasized the child's perception of parental engagement in education and posited that Familismo profoundly affected parental involvement and the child's academic achievement to the effect that its cultural value, or the dedication and commitment to family, influenced Hispanic students to do well in school.

Francis et al. (2021) did a similar study on academic socialization and African American boys. The author compared parent messages and conducive learning environments from parents of boys who were excellent in school, to parents of boys who performed poorly in school. The authors used in-depth interviews to collect data from 12 families and found that all parents in their study engaged in the following academic socialization behaviors: monitoring student academic progress, daily talks about school, expectations about homework, and racial socialization, as further explained below. The difference between the groups was that the parents of students who performed well in school used all the practices simultaneously and at a higher level. Parents of accomplished African American boys also used racial socialization, which is not part of academic socialization, in order to prepare their children for life. Francis et al. (2021) posited that:

> All high-achieving dyads reported extensive and ongoing conversations with their sons about race in America and both historical and contemporary oppression of Blacks. They described unwavering efforts to instill racial pride, to alert sons as to how others will view them based on their appearance and behaviors, to train their son's regarding how to manage encounters with police, and to emphasize that success as a Black man requires harder work, greater effort, and better performance than for their White peers. (p. 8)

Racial Socialization and Academic Achievement

Racial socialization is the messages that African American parents transmit to their children about cultural values, behaviors, and beliefs to prepare them for systemic racism in school and in society – a practice that has been positively associated with academic outcomes (Banerjee et al., 2018; Blanchard et al., 2019; Huguley et al., 2021; Metzger et al., 2021; Neblett et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2022; Smith et al., 2022; Varner et al., 2018). Metzger et al. (2020) examined the relationship between educational involvement and adolescents' confidence. In particular, the authors looked at academic socialization and racial socialization. A sample of 140 adolescents was used for this study. To collect data, the authors used a student self-report measure adapted from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Parent Involvement Scale, the Student Report of Encouragement Scale, the Racial Socialization Questionnaire, the Student Engagement Scale, and Hare's Multi-dimensional Self-Esteem Inventory. The study indicated six distinctive academic and racialization profiles amongst African American parents: "academic socializers, preparation for bias socializers, low-race salient socializers, unengaged socializers, multifaceted socializers, and salient race socializers" (Metzger et al., 2020, para. 32).

Academic socializers are primarily focused on school engagement; bias-based socializers are primarily focused on biased messaging; low-race socializers are primarily focused on schooling; unengaged socializers are not focused on school or the socialization process; multifaceted socializers are concerned with providing their children with the right amount of messaging and pride; and race-salient socializers are more concerned with messaging than school (Metzger et al., 2020). Metzger et al.'s (2020)

findings indicated a strong association between parents who exhibited high levels of pride in tracial identity and their children's academic success. This study highlighted the variation in African American parental involvement practices. Most importantly, the results indicated that parents who instill a sense of pride in their children had better results than parents who focused on bias. Similarly, Varner et al. (2018) found that high levels of biased messaging from parents hampered student outcomes.

Wang et al. (2020) conducted a study on ethnic socialization and African American students' academic outcomes. The authors used 1997 studies to conduct their strength-based meta-analysis. The authors found a strong correlation between cultural pride messaging, intrinsic motivation, and achievement for African American students. In a similar study, Banerjee et al. (2017) examined racial-ethnic socialization and achievement and its relationships to academic engagement. The authors used the Racial Socialization Questionnaire and the National Survey of Student Engagement to garner data from college students. Results from their study indicated a strong relationship between pride-based messaging and persistence in college. However, the authors found a negative association between biased messaging and success in college. These findings aligned with Metzger et al. (2020) and Varner et al. (2018) and highlighted the importance of a balanced approach to racial socialization. Moreover, the results aligned with Banerjee et al. (2018) and Del Toro and Wang (2021) as well, in that cultural messaging instilled a sense of pride in African American students, leading to better outcomes in school.

Hughley's et al. (2020) research on African American parental involvement in education found that parents used different types of engagement strategies to counter

highly structured unwelcoming secondary schools. Allen and White-Smith's (2018) study proves it was not enough to prepare African American students for biased messaging. Their study examined African American parents' traditional practices through the counter stories of mothers of low socioeconomic status. The authors used qualitative interviews to collect data from 10 families and used Erikson's (1968) qualitative interpretive approach to transcribe, code, and analyze the interviews and observations. Findings from their study indicated that the mothers used traditional practices such as resistance, cultural pride, and advocacy to help their sons persist in school. In response to their experiences in schools, the mothers used motivation to inspire their sons to do well in school. Ultimately, the mothers used their ability to navigate through unwelcoming institutions and found their children new schools.

It is essential to note that Metzger et al. (2020), Varner et al. (2018), and Banerjee et al. (2018) all posited a negative correlation between biased messaging and academic outcomes. Osborne et al. (2021) found in their study on African American families' racism and preparation for bias that the caregiver's level of exposure was correlated with child internalizing behaviors. Children exposed to higher preparation levels for bias exhibited high anxiety and sadness levels. These studies highlight the importance of a balanced approach when racially socializing children. Parents who focused on school engagement and moderately focused on instilling a sense of pride in their children, as outlined in Metzger et al. (2020) study, had a positive effect on achievement.

School-Based Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

The PTO, SSC, and parent-teacher conferences are all examples of ways parents participate in school (Hughley et al., 2020). Parent involvement in school activities has

been positively correlated with student success (Degol et al., 2017; James et al., 2019). Day and Dotterer (2018) examined parent engagement across different ethnic groups. Data was utilized from the Educational Longitudinal Study 2002–2003, and the sample size was 4,429 Grade 10 students. The authors analyzed the data by dividing the dataset based on specific criteria to make it more homogeneous and found that parents' transmission of values related to academics and involvement in school activities were positively associated with students' GPA. They also found that African American and Hispanic students benefitted more from parents' transmission of values related to education and involvement in educational activities at home than their White counterparts. There was a minimal correlation between parent involvement in educational activities at home and achievement for White students.

These results regarding students of color were in line with Goss (2019), Leath et al. (2020), Lechuga-Peña and Brisson (2018), and Parsons et al. (2018), in that parents of color tended to use home-based involvement and socialization in response to their negative interactions with schools. In looking at socialization patterns for White students, Abaied et al. (2022) posited that White parents used color-conscious, color-blind, equal treatment, and messaging that emphasized White pride with their children. An essential aspect of Day and Dotterer's (2018) study was that parental involvement in bake sales, parent-teacher meetings, Open Houses, and governance committees were correlated with higher grades for all students.

Similarly, James et al. (2019) examined whether ethnicity, parents' involvement in school and home educational activities predicted GPA attainment. The study's sample size included 25,503 randomly selected grade nine students. The authors used a random

coefficient growth curve modeling to analyze the data. Results from their study indicated that Americans of both African and European descent were more involved in school and home educational activities than Asian and Hispanic Americans. Second, students' GPA declined over time for all ethnic groups. Third, parents' involvement in school activities was positively associated with every ethnic group except Asians. The impact of school-based involvement was insignificant for Asian Americans. Lastly, home-based involvement predicted GPA over time, and the impact of parental involvement in Grade 9 was similar in Grade 12.

In a similar study, Benner et al. (2016) examined the associations between parental involvement, grades, student outcomes, and socioeconomic status. The samples included 15,240 Grade 10 students. Parents in this study self-reported three types of involvement: home-based, school-based, and academic socialization via a survey. Students' GPA attainment determined achievement as well as their self-reporting on their level of education eight years after graduation. Benner et al. (2016) found a positive association between school-based parental involvement, educational expectations, GPA, and educational attainment. They also found a positive correlation between parent involvement in school activities and persistence in school for all groups. Lastly, the authors posited that parent involvement in school activities was more beneficial to low-socioeconomic students, while academic socialization was more valuable to high-socioeconomic students.

In contrast, Gubbins and Otero (2020) found in their study on Chilean parents' engagement, socioeconomic status, and academic outcomes that parental involvement in school activities was not significantly associated with academic achievement for students.

Similarly, Lindberg and Güven (2021) found in their study on Turkish parents' involvement, expectations, and academic outcomes a minimal association between school-based involvement and academic outcomes for their students. In both these studies, socioeconomic status predicted academic achievement. Furthermore, according to Gubbins and Otero (2020), Chilean parents were more involved in educational activities at home than in school.

Both studies are aligned with Tan et al. (2019), who found in their meta-analysis on academic benefits, parental involvement, and socioeconomic status that parental expectations, parent support for learning, parent discussions in school, parent participation in school governance and events, and academic socialization were positively associated with academic excellence. Parent education was used as an indicator of parents' socioeconomic status. The researchers used 98 studies and developed a coding scheme to examine important details about the studies. Results from their study indicated that parental expectations and involvement in educational activities in the home were more associated with student achievement than school-based involvement.

In their longitudinal study on the relationship between parents' participation in school activities and academic excellence, Park and Sira (2017) used the ECLS-K dataset, which tracked grammar students from 1998–1999. They used ECLS-K to examine the impact of three dimensions of school-based parental involvement: academic excellence, school-wide academic excellence, and socioeconomic status. The sample consisted of 21,409 students in 992 schools. Results from Park and Sira's (2017) study indicated a strong association between parents' participation in school activities and achievement in reading and math. Private-good parental involvement (concerned only

with the student) was correlated with individual academic achievement. At the other end of the spectrum, public-good parental involvement (concerned with the whole school) was not associated with achievement in reading but strongly correlated with achievement in mathematics. On the second question, the researchers found that public-good parental involvement positively affected the entire school community. School-wide academic achievement increased when parents participated in decision-making committees and volunteering activities.

Zhang et al. (2021) also examined the different types of parental involvement in education and academic excellence. The study had a sample size of 842 adolescents from five public schools in China. The authors used surveys to garner participant data and descriptive statistics to analyze the data. Results from their study indicated that all forms of parental involvement mediated the effects of SES on academic excellence, in particular mathematics. School-based parental involvement had the most substantial mediating effect, while parents' involvement in educational activities at home had the lowest on academic excellence in mathematics.

In contrast, Sebastian et al. (2017) found a negative correlation between parents' involvement in school activities and student academic excellence. The researchers assessed math, science, and reading skills of 500,000 children from 65 countries. The authors used exploratory factor analysis to explore the latent factor structure of items related to parents' involvement in school activities. Findings indicated a strong association between parents' proactively getting involved in educational activities and student success, and a negative correlation between school-structured parental involvement practices and students' success. It is important to note that parents'

involvement in school activities was not associated with students' success in any of the countries. Limitations of this study were that parent involvement in school activities was different in each country and the authors did not examine the customs around schooling in each country.

Erdem and Kaya (2020) and Thomas et al. (2018) found a positive but weak correlation between parent engagement and student success. The weak association may be attributed to the separate or sequential responsibilities of institutions' perspectives. Philosophies based on the separation of school and families have posited that schools and families are incompatible and in competition, while beliefs based on sequential responsibilities assume that the parent prepares the child for formal school. Schools are then tasked with providing the student with an education (Epstein, 2018). These beliefs may create barriers for parents who assume that educating their child is part of their role as a parent (a shared assumption).

Barriers to School-Based Involvement

Barriers to school-based parental involvement encompass two categories: barriers imposed by the school, and family barriers beyond the school's control (Totyodying & Wild, 2019). School-based barriers include: (1) feeling unwelcomed (Alexander et al., 2017; Cureton, 2020; Henderson et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018); (2) structural and cultural (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Li et al., 2023); and (3) lack of effective communication (Grace & Gerdes, 2018; Inoa, 2017; Antony-Newman, 2017). Family barriers that are beyond the school's control include: (1) socioeconomic status (Curtis et al., 2021; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Malone, 2017); (2) childcare, transportation, and work schedule (Hornsby, 2018; Inoa, 2017); (3) past negative

experiences with the school (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Henderson et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018;); and (4) language differences (Zhou & Zhong, 2018).

In Antony-Newman's (2017) meta-synthesis on parental involvement in immigrant families, the author posited that differences in expectations, language barriers, lack of information from the school, and lack of culturally competent teachers have created a different experience for immigrant parents compared to native-born parents. An important aspect this study was its examination of Latino, Chinese, Greek, Jewish, French, Swedish, Dutch, and Austrian immigrants. Similarly, Curenton (2020) found in her study on Syrian Muslim refugees that a lack of English proficiency, discrimination, and xenophobia caused parents to distrust the school's staff.

In Lechuga and Brisson's (2018) study on school-based parental involvement and mothers, the authors posited three main barriers to school-based parental involvement: communication, feeling unwelcome, and socioeconomic status. The authors used in-depth interviews to capture narratives from nine mothers assigned to the "Your Family, Your Neighborhood" program. All the participants were low-income mothers living in public housing. Four participants were Latina, three were African American, and two were from Africa. Findings from this study indicated that all mothers wanted to attend school events for their children. However, the mothers were embarrassed because they could not communicate effectively and because of their socioeconomic status. The mothers were also frustrated with their inability to participate in educational activities at home and the unwelcoming climate at the school and felt a sense of shame for not being able to participate in their child's schooling because they were the sole breadwinner. Notably,

the mothers in Lechuga and Brisson's (2018) study experienced school and family-based barriers to involvement.

The school-based barrier, mothers' feelings of unwelcomeness, aligned with those of parents in Henderson et al.'s (2020) study on the differing philosophies on parent involvement. The authors posited that home-school dissonance was the differing philosophy and expectations between home and school. Results from their study indicated that parents reported being engaged in school and feeling unwelcome in the school. The mothers in Allen and White-Smith's (2018) study on parental involvement and cultural wealth likewise felt unwelcome and excluded from their son's school. The authors examined the school engagement practices and experiences of 10 low-income African American mothers. They used CRT and Yasso's (2005) work on cultural capital as their guiding framework. The authors used field observations, documents, and semi- and unstructured interviews. Results indicated that the mothers used motivational and cultural strategies to help their sons persist in school; that the school's structure created a barrier for the mothers; that mothers were only invited into school to talk about their respective sons' infractions; and that the school limited the mothers' school involvement role. Notably, the mothers experienced life-context barriers, such as work schedule constraints, poverty, and the inability to hire a babysitter. What separates Allen and White-Smith's (2018) study from Lechuga and Brisson's (2018) and Curenton's (2020) studies, is that the mothers used their cultural strategies to mediate the effects of school barriers.

The mothers in Allen and White-Smith's (2018) study posited that they had more access to their children in elementary school than high school because of schedule

constraints. This is a universal school-based barrier for all families because most high school students are scheduled for six to seven classes in multiple classrooms. In contrast, most elementary students take multiple subjects in one classroom. The mothers also stated that they felt unwelcome at the school because the school only involved them in discussing their child's infractions. The emerging issue is therefore infraction and over disciplining of the child (Burch, 2022; Marcucci, 2020; Walker, 2020).

In this light, and per the U.S. Constitution's Fourteenth Amendment, students accused of an offense have the right to due process and are entitled to a hearing, where they can present their side of the story, and in which their parents are required to attend. High school structure, coupled with the contentious discipline meetings, may have created a feeling of powerlessness for these mothers. If the school and parents had different philosophies on educating students, this would create home-school dissonance among parents (Epstein, 2018; Henderson et al., 2020). Likewise, the inability to communicate effectively with the school makes some parents feel helpless.

A lack of English proficiency has also been shown to hinder school-based parental involvement (Alexander et al., 2017; Antony-Newman, 2019; Ceballo et al., 2017; Vera et al., 2017; Zhou & Zhong, 2018). Inoa (2017) examined middle-class Latino parent engagement and their perceived barriers to engagement. The author used in-depth interviews to garner data from 21 parents. The interviews were primarily in English, but Spanish was used as needed. The data analysis process included coding and theme development. Results from the study indicated that middle-class Latino parents used high levels of academic socialization and concerted cultivation. Next, Latino parents involved in the PTA often remained docile and avoided negative interactions. Finally,

work schedules, the inability to speak English effectively, and the parents' lack of self-efficacy limited their ability to become involved. Thus, Latino parents were more concerned with the well-being of their children and encouraged them to pursue their future careers.

In contrast, Anderson et al. (2020) found in their study on Latino parent-child English fluency that language consonance and dissonance predicted parental involvement. The sample size for their study was 637 Grade 7 Latino students, and data was collected via a student self-reported survey in both English and Spanish. Anderson et al.'s (2020) results indicated that having a common language (English or Spanish) was positively associated with family communication and student success. However, children in families where communication was not fluid often became translators, which may have undermined the parents' authority. The authors posited that in most cases, the children who broker were not fully fluent in Spanish, which created conflict between the parent and child. Ultimately, when the family reported using the same language, communication and parental involvement in education increased, while role reversal decreased.

Similarly, Alexander et al.'s (2017) study on Latino parents and barriers to involvement found that work schedules and language barriers were the most common reasons for Latino noninvolvement. The authors explored the association between parental noninvolvement and student outcomes by surveying 343 Latino adolescents to get their perceptions of parent engagement in education, or lack thereof. Alexander et al. (2017) found a negative association between students' perceived notion that their parents felt unwelcome and uncomfortable at school, and their GPA. Next, the authors found that transportation issues and the perception that school was not important were also

associated with a lower GPA. Finally, language barriers and lack of childcare were not associated with students' GPAs.

These three studies highlighted that language barriers exist but affect Latino parents differently. They also highlighted the role life context plays in determining school-based involvement. Jeynes (2017) posited a positive correlation between Latino parent engagement in education and student success for kindergarten through college students, but socioeconomic status limits parental involvement. In Jeynes' (2017) meta-analysis, Latino parents were either dual-income earners or had to work more than one job to provide for their family.

Socioeconomic status is a barrier to school-based parental involvement for almost every ethnic group (Curtis et al., 2021; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Malone, 2017). Being the primary caregiver or sole provider significantly restricts a parent's ability to be engaged in school events that coincide with a work schedule (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). Lechuga-Peña et al. (2019) found a negative association between living in public housing and mothers' school-based involvement. The authors examined government subsidy programs and parental involvement strategies of low-income mothers. The total sample was 1,351 African American, White, Latino, and other mothers. Mothers self-reported demographic and socioeconomic information. Ordinal logistic regression was used to examine the association between government subsidies and school-based involvement. Findings indicated that mothers who lived in public housing were more involved in school activities than those receiving housing vouchers. The study also found that African American and Latino mothers of low socioeconomic status were more involved in school than their White counterparts. Finally, the authors posited that low-

income mothers who participated in their study had frequently moved to new residences, worked longer hours to cover costs not associated with the subsidy, and had nontraditional work schedules.

The results from Alexander et al. (2017), Lechuga et al. (2019), and Inoa (2017) studies are all aligned with the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework (2007) in that parents' choice whether to become involved or not in their child's education was influenced by the demands on their time and energy. These studies also posited that language barriers only limited Latino school-based involvement but did not have any association with academic success (Alexander et al., 2017; Anderson et al., 2020). This may be due to school programming intentionally communicating with parents and creating a positive school environment (Park et al., 2017). Finally, socioeconomic status profoundly affected parents' involvement in school activities because parents who were the only income earners must work to make ends meet. Low-socioeconomic status parents often did not have traditional work schedules and must work multiple jobs (Peterson et al., 2018).

Home-Based Parental Involvement and Academic Achievement

Home-based parental involvement entails helping with and monitoring of the child's homework completion, providing a safe place to learn, providing resources such as books, Wi-Fi, and a computer, and providing enrichment activities such as visiting an art museum, library, and historical sites such as the Freedom Trail (Huguley et al., 2020). The research on parental involvement in educational activities at home and consequent student success is mixed. Several studies indicated that parent involvement in educational activities at home has been positively associated with student achievement (Day &

Dotterer, 2018; James et al., 2019; Ogg & Anthony, 2020; Puccioni, 2017; Wang et al., 2018). In contrast, some studies indicated that home-based parental involvement had little to no effect on student achievement (Duan et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020).

In a comparison study between school-based and home-based parental involvement and its' effects on GPA attainment, James et al. (2019) found a positive association between parent involvement in educational activities at home and student success for all ethnic groups and predicted variance in GPA over parent involvement in school activities. The authors assessed home-based parental involvement by asking parents whether they took their child to the theater, read to their child, or provided a safe place in the home. School-based parental involvement was assessed by asking parents whether they attended a parent-teacher meeting, volunteered, or participated in a fundraiser for the school. An important finding in their study was that distal home-based parental involvement predicted GPA attainment over time because parental involvement in education had shifted as students matriculated through school (Boonk et al., 2018).

In contrast, Garcia et al. (2017) found in their quantitative case study that home-based involvement was minimally associated with academic achievement. The authors used a questionnaire (of 12 items in total), which included items such as building literacy skills with my child, talking to my child about learning, bringing home resources, and reviewing my child's schoolwork daily. Notably, the authors found a positive correlation between Item 8 on their questionnaire (parents taking their child to an academically enriched place, such as a museum or library), and student achievement.

Similarly, Anthony and Ogg (2019) found that parent involvement in school-based activities and communication between the school and home predicted literacy achievement. In contrast, Wong et al. (2018) found a positive association between home-based parental involvement and students' language competence and psychosocial well-being. The authors examined the associations between parental involvement at home and in school, psychological health, and the academic performance of 507 elementary students in Hong Kong. The authors used a survey and mediation analysis to test the relationship among variables. Results from the mediation analysis indicated a significant correlation between parent involvement in literacy development and student performance.

These results aligned with Boonk et al. (2018) and Dong et al. (2020), in that home-based parental involvement was associated with literacy development in children. Consequently, children from poor families lagged behind their counterparts. Hemmerechts et al. (2017) examined parental literacy involvement, socioeconomic status, and reading literacy, by using survey data from the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. The sample size was 43,870 elementary-age students from Belgium, Austria, Denmark, France, German, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, and Sweden. A multi-level analysis of the survey data yielded a correlation between parental involvement and an increase in reading levels. They also found that low-income students had lower reading levels than their counterparts and that low-income students experienced delayed parental involvement in literacy activities.

In their study on family socioeconomic status and home-based parental involvement, Li et al. (2020) found that high-socioeconomic status families provided the necessary resources and support, while low-socioeconomic status families provided

discipline. In fact, the authors posited that parental attitudes and expectations significantly reduced home-based parental involvement in poor families. Baker and Brooks-Gunn (2020) examined whether there was an association between socioeconomic status, low levels of parental education, and children's executive functioning and behavioral problems. They found that family interactions facilitated the relationship between socioeconomic status and children's executive functioning. The authors also found that African American parents who used harsh discipline practices at home compounded their socioeconomic status and profoundly affected their children's executive functioning.

Some researchers have posited that such parents' disciplinary practices may have been in response to family stressors such as being the sole breadwinner, economic hardship, and psychological distress (Justice et al., 2019; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Masarik & Conger, 2017; Rudenstine et al., 2020). However, some low socioeconomic families have countered these narratives. Sawyer et al. (2016) examined the literacy practices of low-income mothers in their study. Data collected from the semistructured interviews posited that African American and Latino mothers provided their children with educational material, regularly engaged in books, and focused on building language skills, and thus focused on their children's literacy skills. The low-income African American parents in Jarrett and Coba-Rodriguez's (2019) study used several home-based practices to help their children transition to kindergarten. The mothers used literacy practices, books, technology, television programming, and the library to help their children. An important aspect of the study was that the mothers used other family members for assistance with the transition process.

Summary

Parental involvement in education is an integral part of the development of the child. There are several ways parents are involved. Some parents use home-based, school-based, or academic socialization educational strategies to support their children, while other parents use a mixture of all three. The parent's choice of what parental involvement strategy to use can be attributed to race, socioeconomic status, or their philosophy on education. This study's conceptual framework of CRT, the Hoover Dempsey and Sandler model, and Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework provided a lens to understand why the African American parents in this study were not fully involved in policymaking and organizational activities at the secondary school level.

There are several benefits of parental involvement in education, such as its positive association with higher GPA attainment, better student mental health, and higher rates of college enrollment (Day & Dotterer, 2018; Hamlin & Li, 2019; James et al., 2018). Schools and families that have a partnership based on the shared responsibility philosophy are intentional about working together to create school environments that are welcoming and supportive for everyone. Schools and families that have a separate responsibility relationship are in competition with each other, in which teachers teach, and parents parent.

Consequently, the addition of factors, such as school-based barriers (language, scheduling, and structure of high school), socioeconomic status, and family-based barriers (scheduling, transportation, and childcare) to parental involvement may have a significant influence on African American parents' decision to become involved in school-based activities. Activities such as volunteering, and school governance

committees is positively associated with achievement. The reluctance of African American parents to become involved in school-based activities has a profound impact on African American students. The school-to-prison pipeline and the differential achievement gap are prime examples of what happens to African American students when their parents are not involved in their schooling.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

What are African American parents' perceptions of organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level?

Research Question 2

What barriers prevent African American parents from engaging in organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level?

Research Question 3

What are African American parents' perspectives of the family-school relationship at the secondary level?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to examine the reasons why African American parents at the target secondary school are not fully engaged in policymaking and organizational activities. The study explored African American parents' engagement or lack thereof in policymaking and organizational activities in school governance committees such as the SSC, Parent Council, and parent-teacher meetings. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, research design, participants, data collection methods, and data analysis for this applied dissertation. Finally, the chapter includes a description of ethical considerations, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study.

Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative methodology has been used in this study. The focus of qualitative research is to explore and understand the meanings individuals ascribe to a phenomenon or a problem, whereas the focus of quantitative methodology is to test theories by examining the relationship between variables (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2006; Tracy, 2020). Using a qualitative research design provided an appropriate lens to explore African American parents' experiences with schools (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Baker et al., 2016; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). Open-ended research questions, typical of a qualitative methodology, allowed participants in the current study to share their experiences and views and not be limited to 'yes,' 'no,' or multiple-choice questions (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative methodology seeks to

generalize findings to the population from which it was drawn, while the qualitative methodology does not seek to generalize findings (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2006). The goal of the current study is to use purposeful rather than random sampling to recruit a small sample that meets an inclusion criterion. The small sample size in the qualitative methodology enabled the current study to obtain rich, thick explanations of the problem (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2006). Furthermore, Merriam (1998) posited that humans are the best data collection instruments in qualitative research because they are sensitive to underlying meanings when gathering and interpreting data.

This study used a descriptive design that focused on discovering and understanding participants' perceptions and worldviews of a problem (Kim et al., 2017; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2006). A descriptive design was deemed most appropriate for this study because it does not have a predefined method (Doyle et al., 2020; Kahlke, 2014; Kennedy, 2016; Sandelowski, 2000). The current study does not fit neatly into the more mainstream categories of qualitative research that have predefined methods, such as phenomenology, grounded theory, case study, narrative, or ethnography (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The five mainstream qualitative approaches to research are based on methodological frameworks that have emerged from disciplinary traditions (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The goal of the current study was to use a descriptive design to investigate the problem in its natural state. Therefore, the flexibility of descriptive design enabled me to borrow methods from other designs, which has been essential for the current study (Sandelowski, 2000).

The quantitative approach enables a researcher to investigate theories by examining the correlation between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell &

Poth, 2018). The quantitative approach has a larger dataset than the qualitative approach; thus, it is easier to generalize and replicate findings (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Consequently, a significant weakness of the quantitative approach is the inability to extract descriptive data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth; Tracy, 2019). Closed-ended questions and responses would therefore not elicit a thick description of the African American parents' experiences and perceptions of school-based involvement and school committees (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This was important for the research design because effective and inclusive parental engagement strategies can only be identified using descriptive, not statistical data (Tracy, 2019). Therefore, the quantitative methodology was not deemed appropriate for this study. The following sections discuss other designs considered for the current study.

A qualitative design considered for this study was phenomenology. A phenomenology study describes the common meaning of participants' lived experience of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenology, phenomena are understood through those who have experienced them; understanding is based on observation and interpretation, and the outcome is a socially constructed personal interpretation of the subjects researched (Ling & Ling, 2017; Moustakas, 1994). Although phenomenology is descriptive in nature and examines phenomena, the approach was not chosen because it seeks to discover a shared meaning of the phenomenon, while this qualitative descriptive study ought to discover the individual meaning of the phenomenon (Kahlke, 2014; Kennedy, 2016; Merriam, 1998; Sandelowski, 2000). Furthermore, phenomenology focuses on the interworking of a lived experience, which means that the phenomenologist is concerned with the inner

dimensions of the cognitive process, not the external content that may trigger the cognitive process, such as racism (Moustakas, 1994; Percy et al., 2015). The current study aimed to understand African American parents' experiences and perceptions of policymaking and organizational activities in schools.

A second qualitative design considered for this study was narrative research. Narrative research is premised on the belief that people learn and develop through their social interactions with the world (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2004; Moen, 2006). Narrative research rests on three underpinnings: human beings organize their worldly experiences into narratives; the stories being told are based on the individual's experiences, values, audience, and environment and the multiple voices present in an individual's story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2004; Moen, 2006). In narrative research, the participant's story captures their understanding of the experience (Merriam, 2009; Moen, 2006). Narrative research is focused on providing a narrative of the person's experience within a specific context (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2004; Moen, 2006). Moreover, in narrative research, the person's story of the experience contains multiple voices, and the researcher is tasked with restoring the account (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; 2004; Moen, 2006). Restorying involves using the researcher's lens and discretion to retell the participant's story (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moen, 2006). Narrative research was not chosen for this study because the current study sought to understand African American parents' perceptions of school-based parental involvement with little to no interpretation and provide a comprehensive, straightforward description of the problem.

A third qualitative design considered for this study was grounded-theory research. The grounded-theory design aims to build or discover a theory from data (Aldiabat & Navenec, 2011; Chun Tie et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The philosophical underpinning of grounded theory is that realities exist in the shared experience (ontology); the researcher and participants are connected in the natural world to examine behavior (epistemology); and human beings and their shared meaning can only be understood through the interactions between the researcher and participants (Aldiabat & Navenec, 2011). The researcher in grounded theory is tasked with simultaneously collecting and analyzing the data, coding, using the constant comparative method, theory development, memo writing, and sampling aimed at theory construction (Charmaz, 2006). Grounded-theory research design was rejected for this study because its objective was to provide a straightforward description of the phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants, while in grounded theory, the goal is to use data from participants to construct a theory (Aldiabat & Navenec, 2011; Chun Tie et al., 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Participants

This qualitative descriptive study's target population of African American parents resides in the northeast region of the United States, in a small urban area in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Each participant in the current study had a child enrolled at the target high school, which serves Grades 9–12. The high school has a current enrollment of 481 diverse students. The African American population at the site is 34.2%; the Asian population is 6.1%; the Hispanic population is 52.3%; the White population is 4.6%; and the multiracial non-Hispanic population is 2.3% (Massachusetts

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020). More than 75% of the students at the high school receive free or reduced lunch; thus, the high school is considered a Title 1 school.

The high school seeks to involve parents through parent-teacher conferences at the annual open houses and through leadership opportunities. Per the collective bargaining agreement between the school department and the union, the high school can only offer two Open Houses per year: one in the fall and one in the spring. Parents meet with their child's teachers during the Open House to discuss grades and progress.

Parents can also get involved in the high school through participation in the Parent Council and the SSC. Per Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Section 59C, every school in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must establish an SSC. The objective of the SSC is to assist the school principal with budgeting, school improvement, and policymaking (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2021). The legal responsibilities of the SSC include holding all meetings in public, allowing anyone to video or audio tape the meeting, keeping meeting minutes for five years, and adhering to a quorum (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2021).

Meeting minutes must include the date, time, place, members present and absent, and actions taken. The council must consist of the head of the school, an equal number of teachers and parents, and two students. All members except the head of the school are elected to the council. Parents on the SSC are elected by the Parent Council. Furthermore, the Parent Council is the official voice of all parents in the school and schools in the district are required to have a Parent Council meeting monthly. The Parent Council plans school-wide activities, fundraises, raises school leadership concerns, and works closely

with the SSC. Primary responsibilities of the council include electing an executive board, electing parents to the SSC, and keeping meeting minutes. Every parent with a child at the high school can participate in the Parent Council. The Parent Council's main goal is to serve parents and ensure all parents' voices are heard. Parents on the SSC ensure that the parent perspective is considered in school governance. The School district and the teachers' union jointly provide training sessions for parents on the SSC and Parent Council. It is the job of the school's family liaison and the head of school to make sure the parent council is functional, and that parents abide by district protocol and procedures around budgeting and spending.

The objective of the current study was to examine African American parents' interactions with school and perceptions of policymaking and organizational activities at the secondary school level; thus, the African American parent who had a child in secondary school constituted an appropriate population for the current study. The study's qualitative research questions elicited a low-inference description of the problem from the perspective of the African American parent who had a child at the high school level (Kahlke, 2014; Kennedy, 2016; Merriam, 1998; Sandelowski, 2000).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posited that to gain insight and an understanding of a problem, researchers "must select a sample from which much can be learned" (p. 96). Purposive sampling is a specific type of criterion sampling used in qualitative studies because it establishes a predetermined criterion (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Patton, 1990; Tracy, 2020). Purposive sampling was used in this study to recruit a sample of 10–12 African American parents who met the following inclusion criteria: (a) an African

American parent, and (b) had a student enrolled at the secondary school level. A sample of 10–12 African American parents who had a child at the secondary school level was recruited for the current study. The sample size enabled eliciting of enough data through qualitative interviews to answer the research questions and reach data saturation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data saturation, which is essential for study replication, occurs when no additional data are found (Fusch et al., 2015; Sandelowski, 2000; Saunders et al., 2018).

Data Collection and Instruments

The goal of this research study has been to use two common data collection methods in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative interviews and focus groups were conducted virtually on Zoom. Qualitative interviews provided insight into participants' experiences and the meaning they made of those experience (Seidman, 2019; Tracy, 2020). Focus groups are used to produce data and insight through group interaction or group think (Morgan, 1997; Powell & Single, 1996). An interview and focus group protocol has been used to guide the data collection.

Semi structured interviews are used to explore a topic using an interview protocol (see **Appendix** for Interview Protocol) (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2016). The interview protocol is a guide that researchers use to open and close an interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The protocol consists of the following sections: basic information, introduction, content and probing questions, and closing instructions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Jacob and Furgerson (2012) posited that successful protocols have research-guided questions, a script to guide

the interview from beginning to end, open-ended questions, basic questions about the interviewee's background, an organization of easy to hard questions, and the use of prompts. Research-based questions are at the core of every interview protocol (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Question 1

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What are African American parents' perspectives of the family-school relationship at the secondary level?

These three questions enabled me to break down the interview protocol into four areas: background information, perception of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement, and family and school partnerships. Each area has five to seven sub-questions that refined the central research questions.

The background information section of the interview protocol consist of questions about the interviewee's family, socioeconomic status, highest educational level obtained, and job status. These questions are important because several studies have found an association between socioeconomic status, educational level, job status, and parental involvement in education (Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018; Peterson et al., 2018; Sawyer et al., 2016). Sub questions 1–5 in the background section address this area.

The ‘Perception of Parental Involvement’ section consists of questions about the interviewees’ views of parental involvement. The central question in this section, RQ1, is based on research indicating that there is a positive association between school-based parental involvement and academic achievement (Degol et al., 2017; James et al., 2019). African American parents used more home-based parental involvement than school-based parental involvement because of their school interactions (Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña, 2018; Parsons et al., 2018). Questions 1–5 in the Perceptions section sought to understand parents’ perceptions of parental involvement in education as a whole and at the high school level. The questions also elicited parents’ perceptions of school-based activities such as Open House and committees.

The ‘Barriers to Parental Involvement’ section was steeped in research that indicated several barriers impeded parents’ involvement in their child’s education. Barriers to involvement included racism, White supremacy practices, as well as structural and cultural, communication, and family-based barriers, such as socioeconomic status, lack of childcare and transportation, and past negative experiences (Alexander et al., 2017; Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Grace & Gerdes, 2018; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). Questions1–4 in the barriers section sought to understand parents’ perception of how their experiences shaped their mode of interaction with the educational ecosystem (child, school, and teacher) and to see whether the experience influenced their choice to resort to one parental involvement strategy over another.

The ‘Family and School Partnership’ section was based on Epstein’s (2018) six types of parental involvement for a comprehensive partnership model. This section focused on understanding parents’ perception of the family-school partnership or lack

thereof. Questions 1–3 in the Partnership section sought to gauge the parent's perception of the family-school partnership and communication patterns between family and school to family. Questions 4–6 sought to elicit parents' perceptions of their role in the partnership.

These perceptions were deemed as important because researchers and practitioners have been guided by three perspectives in thinking about school and family partnerships: separate responsibilities, shared responsibilities, and sequential responsibilities. If the parent or school believes that schools teach and parents parent, the relationship is based on separate responsibilities assumptions, which are naturally governed by conflict, incompatibility, and competition (Epstein, 2018). At the other end of the spectrum, a family-school partnership based on the shared responsibilities assumptions is premised on coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. Lastly, the sequential responsibilities assumptions are based on the parent and teacher's contribution to child development. Parents assume a critical role in the child's early development, and the teachers assume most of the responsibilities when the child enters school (Epstein, 2018).

An expert panel review was used to examine the interview and focus group protocols prior to data collection. An expert panel review occurs when a group of experts in the field of education assesses the content validity of an instrument (Davis, 1992). Expert panel reviews are essential because they evaluate whether the instrument has enough items to represent the domain of content (Davis, 1992). Three experts in the field of educational leadership from the target school and district ensured the instruments were

aligned with the research questions. The expert panel also ensured that the questions were appropriate for the study and would elicit sufficient data to answer the research questions.

Procedures

Before engaging in this study, I sought permission from the Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon approval from the Nova Southeastern University IRB, I posted the recruitment letter on the target school's alumni Facebook page (the Facebook page had no affiliation with the school or district and is run by a retired secretary). Once I received confirmation that a potential participant was interested in partaking in the study, I sent them an email that described the study's purpose and procedures and provided information about the financial incentive of $25. I attached the informed consent form to the email. Participants read a statement outlining the study's problem, purpose, research questions, risks, and benefits of participation in the current study. Participants then indicated their willingness to participate in the study by signing the informed consent section form.

I then contacted participants by phone to schedule the Zoom interview. The interviews were scheduled for an hour. During the call, I answered participants' questions about the study and interview process. Once the interview time was set, I emailed participants instructions on how to set up and use Zoom on a cellphone or computer and the Zoom link with the scheduled date and time of the interview or focus group. Every interview was recorded on the Zoom platform and uploaded to the Cloud. After the interview, I downloaded the audio file to the Max Weber Qualitative Data Analysis software (MAXQDA) and transcribed the interviews. Once the recordings were transcribed, a copy was sent to each participant via email to perform a member check.

Participants were asked to read the transcript, look for errors, and make corrections within three days. Next, I used focus groups to expand on the topics (Morgan, 1997; Patton, 1990; Powell & Single, 1996).

Focus groups are used to supplement semi structured interviews. I emailed the 10 participants the date and time of the focus group and information regarding the incentive to participate. One focus group, which consisted of five participants, was held for this study. The focus group was recorded on Zoom and the session lasted 90 minutes. I used an interview protocol to open and close the focus group. After the focus group, I downloaded the audio file to MAXQDA for transcription. Once MAXQDA transcribed the focus group interview, I shared the transcripts with the participants via email. Participants had three days to look for errors and provide feedback for corrections to the focus group transcripts. Once the interview and focus group transcripts were updated, I used thematic analysis to analyze the data. The MAXQDA software, designed for qualitative data analysis, assisted me in this process, as well as to code, organize, and manage the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The representation of findings in qualitative descriptive research is expected to be straightforward, comprehensive, and descriptive (Kim et al., 2017). Thematic analysis aligns with qualitative descriptive research because it provides in-depth insight into the problem (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase data analysis framework. Strategies of the framework included becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing

themes, defining themes, and doing a write-up (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

The familiarization phase involved reading and rereading the entire dataset to become intimately familiar with it (Braun & Clark, 2006; Byrne, 2022; Campbell et al., 2021). I became familiar with the data through immersion and by being critically engaged in the data through reading, rereading, and active listening. Memoing, the act of recording reflective notes, aided me in the analysis by capturing what I learned from the data (Birk & Chapman, 2008).

The coding process involved working systematically through the dataset to create succinct vivid descriptions for each piece of information deemed relevant to addressing the research problem, purpose, or questions (Adu, 2019; Braun & Clark, 2006; Byrne, 2022). In the second phase of Braun and Clark's (2006) data analysis framework, I used the open coding method to start the coding process. Open coding, the initial step of coding, involves breaking down textual data (interview and focus group transcripts) into distinct parts, creating codes, and labeling the parts (Adu, 2019; Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2013; Williams & Moser, 2019). I then reviewed the entire dataset, giving full and equal attention to each datum. Next, I applied code labels to each line or segment of data. My focus was detailed, specific, and aimed at capturing concepts within the dataset. I coded at the latent level to capture conceptual and implicit meanings in the dataset. I created a codebook to keep track of the codes. I then used the MAXQDA software to collate codes with supporting data.

Themes are multi-faceted meanings patterned across a qualitative dataset, unified by the organization of codes (Braun & Clark, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles et

al., 2020). Theme development is an active process in which the researcher is tasked with using data and knowledge to construct themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). In phase three of the framework, I used axial coding to draw connections between the codes developed in the open coding process and group the codes into categories (Adu, 2019; Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2013; Williams & Moser, 2019). I clustered codes that shared a core idea and answered my research questions into initial themes. I then moved to phase four of the framework and developed and reviewed themes. I assessed whether the themes were coherent in relation to the coded excerpts and the entire dataset. Additionally, I evaluated the themes to see whether they emphasized crucial patterns across the dataset in relation to my research questions. Lastly, I ensured there was enough data to support the theme, broke down related themes, and rewrote and refined codes and themes.

In Phase 5 of Braun and Clark's (2006) framework, I refined, defined, and named themes. To help the researcher in this phase, Braun and Clark (2006) suggested that researchers should ask themselves, "What story does this theme tell?" and "How does this theme fit into my overall story about the data?" (p. 35). I refined my analysis by ensuring every theme had a strong core concept. I then identified the story of each theme in a synopsis. Finally, I rotated between the data and the themes to organize the story.

In the final phase of the framework, I wrote up the report. In this phase, I aimed to combine my informal writing (memoing notes and reflexive journal) into a formal write-up. I then answered the research questions by presenting an analytical narrative with vivid data extracts concisely and compellingly, which is presented in Chapter 4.

Assumptions

Assumptions are elements of the study that I deem true (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). An assumption of this study is that all African American parents have experienced some form of racism, and that racism permeates all facets of society, including schools. The next assumption was that all participants would engage in the entire interview process. This included the one-hour interview and the focus group interview. The final assumption of this study was that all participants will be truthful about their experiences.

Delimitations

Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) posited that delimitations are boundaries intentionally put in place to limit the scope of the study and to increase the feasibility of the study. A delimitation of this study is the choice only to study African American parents. Another delimitation of this study was the focus on school-based involvement and school-based committees. Existing literature indicated that there was a correlation between school-based involvement and an increase in students' GPA and graduation rates (Benner et al., 2015; James et al., 2019; Ross, 2016). Furthermore, school-based committees, such as the Parent Council, SSC, and the PTO are the school governing bodies. These committees and organizations profoundly impact policies and procedures and how schools are run. Another delimitation of this study was using CRT as its theoretical framework. Racism permeates every social institution in America, including schools. Thus, CRT should be the lens through which to view this study's source material. Finally, the study only used qualitative data; thus, no inferences or relationships

between variables were reported (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research outlined the following ethical principles in the Belmont Report: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). These three principles framed my treatment of participants. I was intentional about treating participants as independent agents and providing the participants who could not protect themselves with protection. Next, I was intentional about doing no harm to participants and maximizing benefits. Finally, I was fair to all participants, treating them as equals (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979).

Before engaging in this study's date collection, I obtained approval from the Nova Southeastern University's IRB. The IRB ensured that the welfare and rights of participants in this study were protected. I provided participants with informed consent documentation that outlined to participants the purpose of the study, procedures, risks, benefits, time/duration of participation, confidentiality/anonymity, compensation, researcher contact information, voluntary participation, and conditions of withdrawal. Obtaining informed consent was important because it enabled participants to have a say in what should and should not happen to them (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). Furthermore, I ensured the privacy of participants by keeping all collected information confidential

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The information collected from participants did not include names, addresses, phone numbers, or emails. I ensured that there was no link between participant responses and their identities (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tracy, 2018). Bloomberg & Volpe (2018) posited that confidentiality is an agreement between the researcher and the participant about information obtained about the participant. For the current study, I was the only one who could identify participants through a unique identification number. Files were protected with passwords, information sent via the Internet was encrypted, and codes were substituted for participant identifiers. Lastly, per IRB requirements, electronic documents were downloaded to a flash drive with password protection and will be saved for three years under lock and key before being deleted (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018).

Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in a research study, the researcher must maintain credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Marshall et al., 2022). I established credibility in this study through member checks, triangulation, providing thick descriptions, journaling, and reflexivity. I established dependability through triangulation and an audit trail. An audit trail and journaling were used to show confirmability. Lastly, I used purposeful sampling and thick description to establish transferability. In addition, I shared the findings with participants.

Potential Research Bias

My role in this study was to serve as the human instrument for data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2006). Unlike quantitative

studies where the researcher is hypothetically nonexistent, and data is collected through questionnaires and inventories in this study, I was tasked with collecting data using semistructured interviews and focus groups (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2016; Tracy, 2018). My goal was to keep the focus on participants; thus, I acknowledged the following biases:

1. I am of the same race as the participants
2. My job as a counselor required me to advocate for participants
3. I have held every leadership position at the research site
4. I am an insider, which means I work in the institution.

To embrace this role, I disclosed this information at the beginning of the study.

To counter these potential biases, I kept a reflective journal detailing actions, thoughts, and feelings during the data-collection and analysis processes. Reflective journaling facilitated reflexivity by allowing me to examine and reflect on my preconceptions, assumptions, goals, and belief systems (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Miles et al., 2020).

Limitations

Limitations of qualitative studies are related to the characteristics of the design and the methodology (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). A limitation of descriptive design is that it is not clearly defined. The lack of a description design rulebook may lead to atheoretical research, a lack of literature that would offer guidance to researchers, and the mixing of established methodologies may lead to contradictions (Kahlke, 2014). To minimize this limitation, I used descriptive design to describe the problem. Another

major limitation of this study were the constraints regarding transferability. In qualitative studies, it can be difficult to apply findings to different situations and populations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To mitigate this limitation, I provided a thick description of the participants, problem, and context (Roulston & Choi, 2018; Tracy, 2020). Furthermore, researcher bias may be a limitation of the current study. I am a 17-year educator who has worked as a school counselor and an assistant principal. These two positions hold a considerable amount of power and influence within schools. To mitigate this limitation, I performed member checks, journaled, sought an expert panel review of the protocols, and used reflexivity.

Summary

The goal of the current study was to investigate the problem that African American parents at the secondary school level are not fully engaged in policymaking and organizational activities at the target school. The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to examine the reasons why African American parents at the target high school were not fully engaged in policymaking and organizational activities. The qualitative methodology was deemed appropriate for this study because, at its core, was the assumption that reality is constructed by individuals' experiences with the world (Merriam, 1998). The qualitative descriptive design was deemed appropriate for this study because, unlike traditional designs such as grounded theory, phenomenology, and ethnography, it does not align with an established methodology and does not have a philosophical underpinning (Kennedy, 2006). The current study did not fit into the mainstream qualitative designs and the descriptive design allowed me the flexibility to incorporate strengths of traditional methodologies such as narrative and phenomenology.

The current study used a purposeful sampling method to recruit participants. The inclusion criteria for this study were that participants must be African American and have an alumnus of the secondary school. The sample size enabled me to elicit enough data to reach data saturation. The data sources for the current study were semistructured interviews and focus groups. Interviews and focus groups took place via the Zoom platform. Interviews and focus groups allowed me to better understand African Americans' experiences and perceptions of school-based involvement and school committees. Once data were collected through interviews and focus groups, I used thematic analysis to analyze the data. I used Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase data analysis framework. The MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software aided me in the data-analysis process.

Assumptions of the current study were that all African Americans participants have experienced some form of racism, would participate in the entire interview process, would be truthful about their experiences, and would benefit from this study. The limitations of this study were that the design was not theory-oriented and that the study involved researcher bias. Delimitations of the study included the choice only to study African American parents, school-based involvement and committees, and the use of CRT as the framework.

Lastly, I received approval for this study from the Nova Southeastern University IRB, which ensured that the welfare and rights of participants in this study were protected. Once I gained approval, informed consent documents were sent to all participants. The informed consent documents outlined essential aspects of the study to participants, such as the purpose, procedures, risks, confidentiality, and withdrawal

procedures. Lastly, I informed participants of my potential biases and plans to mitigate those biases.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study was to examine the reasons why African American parents at the target secondary school have not been fully engaged in policymaking and organizational activities. This study aimed to provide the knowledge necessary to respond to African American parents' objections to engaging in school-based activities and to enable them to share their experiences with educators and administrators. This study also sought to understand and look for ways to strengthen the family-school partnership. The study's findings may help educators, administrators, and district-level leaders create the structure and programming necessary to engage all parents at the secondary school level. Secondly, the findings from the study may help future teachers and administrators understand the importance of African American parental involvement in education and their reluctance to become involved. Lastly, the findings from the study should inform future research on African American parental involvement in education.

In this study I resorted to a qualitative methodology and a descriptive design. Data were collected from 10 African American parents using semistructured interviews and a focus group. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data from the semistructured interviews and focus group. Open and axial coding were used to create themes from the dataset. The themes were then used to create a narrative that answered the study's research questions. The MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software was used to analyze open and axial codes, and to organize the data. This chapter presents the research findings in two sections: Demographics, and Findings and Summary.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

What are African American parents' perceptions of organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level?

Research Question 2

What barriers prevent African American parents from engaging in organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level?

Research Question 3

What are African American parents' perspectives of the family-school relationship at the secondary level?

Demographics

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 10 participants who met the prescribed criteria for this study of being an African American parent of an alumnus of the target secondary school. The sample size elicited sufficient data to reach data saturation. Demographic information from participants in this study included interview order, socioeconomic status, educational level, marital status, and family's sole earner. All participants in the study were female. Eight participants described themselves as middle-class, while two described themselves as low-income. The educational level of participants varied. Three participants obtained master's degrees, four participants achieved bachelor's degrees, one participant enrolled in college but did not finish, one participant obtained a high school diploma, and one participant did not finish high school. As regards marital status, seven participants were single, and three participants were married. For the question of family sole earner, eight out of 10 participants asserted that

they were the family's breadwinner. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the categories listed above.

Table 1

Demographics

Participant	Gender	Socioeconomic Status	Education level	Marital Status	Breadwinner
1	Female	Medium	Bachelors	Single	Yes
2	Female	Medium	Masters	Married	Yes
3	Female	Medium	Masters	Married	No
4	Female	Medium	Bachelors	Single	Yes
5	Female	Medium	Bachelors	Married	Yes
6	Female	Low	High School	Single	No
7	Female	Medium	Some College	Single	Yes
8	Female	Low	High School	Single	Yes
9	Female	Medium	Bachelors	Single	Yes
10	Female	Medium	Masters	Single	Yes

Findings and Summary

In this section, findings are organized by research questions. The themes attached to each research question were defined and supported with participant data. Additionally, a summary of key findings is appended at the end of each section. Lastly, the outline of key findings was instrumental in creating the summary.

Data Analysis for Research Question 1

The "Perception of Parental Involvement" IQs 1–3 were used to collect data from participants for RQ1. The following themes emerged from the analysis of the data: "Parental Involvement in Secondary School: Shifting from Active Participation to Emotional Support," "Emotional Nurturance" (sub-theme), "Providing a Safe Space" (sub-theme), "Nurturing Self-Reliance" (sub-theme), and "Challenges of Parental Engagement in Commitment-Based Activities at the High School Level."

Theme: Parental Involvement in Secondary School: Shifting from Active Participation to Emotional Support

This theme emerged from analysis of the "Perception of Parental Involvement" Interview Question (IQ) 1 (What do you think about parental involvement in education?) and IQ2 (What do you think about parental involvement in education at the high school level?). Every participant believed that parental involvement in education was essential at all levels of education.

Participant 5 posited that "I think it's very important. I don't think a child, whether they're in kindergarten to senior, can be successful without parent support." Several participants talked about the stark differences in their involvement in elementary school and high school. Many believed that they were more involved in school-based activities in elementary school than in high school but believed that they played a significant role in supporting their children at the high school level. Most participants equated parental involvement at the high school level with emotional support. These emotional-based practices included participants showing the child that they cared about

their education and encouraging them to do the best they could. A major reason participants used emotional-based practices was because their children understood the importance of their engagement or lack thereof.

Participant 3 asserted that "At the elementary and middle school level, the students may not be conscious of the importance of parental involvement, but in high school, they grasp the understanding." It was noticeable during the interview and the focus groups that participants were cognizant of how their children felt about their involvement in their education. For many, it served as a validation for them. Participants who were involved in their child's education were excited to share their experiences. Consequently, participants who struggled with engagement were sad. They often used phrases such as "I wish", or "I did the best I could." The following quote exemplifies participants' awareness and validation:

> We had what I would call a very strong relationship. What happened in school, she would come home, and she tell me. Sometimes it could be after the fact, sometimes it could be current. My daughter even talked to me about if there is an incident that happened at school regarding another student, to find out how I would react to that. She would always encourage me to read the parents' newsletter, if you will, so we know the events that were happening, and sometimes she would ask, you know, like, am I aware of this and this happening. (Participant 3)

In this case, Participant 3 was keenly aware that her child was happy with her engagement and often used her as a resource to help her understand experiences at the secondary school level. Most importantly, the validation came when the child encouraged

the participant to get involved in school events. To know what was going on at school was everything to most participants. Several participants believed that knowing what was going on at the high school meant they were involved in their children's education. Consequently, participants felt like outsiders when they did not know what was happening in school. The following quote also displayed perceptual awareness:

> They say money is everything, but money is not everything, because once you lose that connection with your kids, it slowly adds up, right? So, when you're there for them, it's like, okay, is it money or no money, right? Right now, I get the disability, it's not like a great amount of money. It's something, right? But I'm still here for them. So, it's kind of like, I'm rich on that part. Rich for being there for them. I might be struggling a little bit, but I make it, but I'm there for them. (Participant 6)

In this case, when Participant 6 worked a full-time job, her schedule did not permit her to be involved in her children's education the way she wanted to be. When she became disabled and unable to work, she realized the loss of connection with her children. She realized that she had not been there for them. It was evident during interviews that participants who struggled with engagement were very emotional. Several participants still felt sad even though they were far removed from the high school.

Many participants were compassionately empathetic for their children. They sought to understand their children and alleviate anything causing them distress at the high school level. They did this by emotionally nurturing their children.

Sub-Theme: Emotional Nurturance

The first sub-theme, "Emotional Nurturance," emerged from analysis of data from IQ2 (What do you think about parental involvement in education at the high school level?). Most of the participants believed that their child needed a lot of support during their high school years. They mentioned the impact that COVID-19 and neighborhood violence had on their children as a major reason they strove to create an emotionally safe environment for their children. Participants believed that the safe environment allowed them to keep communication open, cultivate the relationship, provide the necessary resources, and foster independence in their children.

One way participants emotionally nurtured their children was the check-in strategy. Checking-in involved talking to their children about academics, peers, mental health, physical health, sex, and their overall school experience. Several participants posited that they were unable to be there all the time for their child, but they would check in from time to time. Participant 1 explained the reasons why she checked-in with her child:

> Either way, all the way around the board, I think it's important for parents to be there to support. They [students] experience a lot and, you know, they're around peers that may be experiencing a lot. So, I think it's very important to be involved in your child's education all throughout school. I try to be more understanding and listen and hear her when she does express that she's frustrated or she's not doing too well on her subject. So, I try to keep that communication base open with her, so she doesn't shut down and she don't just completely go off the rails. (Participant 1)

In this case, Participant 1 would have daily check-ins with her child because she recognized the impact of experiences such as puberty and peer pressure had on her child's mental health.

Similarly, Participant 4 also used the check-in strategy to support her child's development. She posited that "I think parent involvement is very important just so we can know what's going on with our children in their own learning, their economic, their social, their mental health, just their overall well-being" (Participant 4). Lastly, Participant 5 used the check-in strategy to let her child know she was there for him when he needed support. She stated that "Well, first of all, I have open communication and I let him know, let them know that they can come to me, even my college kid. I let them know that I'm here. Don't wait. If there's a problem that you're having" (Participant 5). A second area in which participants professed parental support was providing a safe space and support with homework.

Sub-Theme: Providing a Safe Space

The second sub-theme emerged from data analysis of IQ3 **(**What educational practices do you use to support your student at home?) Many participants mentioned that they provided help with homework, encouragement, and a supportive home environment. These are all home-based parental involvement strategies. Participant 2's response highlighted her perception of what home-based support was. As she asserted,

> I was going to make sure you're going to work on your homework. Okay. I was going to make sure that you got enough rest for school in the morning. I was going to make sure you got up on time and that you were out the door and that you attended school. (Participant 2)

Comparably, Participant 7 stated this about helping her child with homework:

> I want to make sure that they're doing it correctly. I want to make sure that they're not only doing the work, but I'm also checking to see if my child is doing the work that needs to be done to get the grades that they that pretty much best benefits them. (Participant 7)

Participants 1, 6, and 8 posited that they struggled with providing help with homework at the high school level. Participant 1 encapsulated this when she stated, "Like math and stuff definitely got a little bit more complex … I encouraged my child to get help when she struggled in classes I could not help her with" (Participant 1). Similarly, Participant 8 stated that she struggled in high school and was not able to help her child with her homework, but she encouraged her child to stay after school with the teacher for extra help. As she posited,

> I struggled in school and did not graduate on time, but I encouraged my child to get help from her teachers. I did the best I could during her high school years. I provided food and a roof over her head" (Participant 8)

The last phrase is a glimpse on how several participants perceived they provided a supportive home environment. Participants 1, 6, and 8 all equated providing food and a place to live as a supportive home environment. The rest of the participants associated providing a place to do homework, monitoring homework completion, and daily check-ins with a supportive home environment. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the home-based support that participants provided.

Table 2

Home-Based Support

Participants	Provided Necessities	Provided a Place to do Homework	Monitored Homework Completion	Daily Check-Ins
1	X			X
2	X	X	X	X
3	X	X	X	X
4	X	X	X	X
5	X	X	X	X
6	X		X	X
7	X	X	X	X
8	X			X
9	X	X	X	X
10	X	X	X	X

Sub-Theme: Nurturing Self-Reliance

The last area in which participants posited helped to emotionally nurture their children was "Nurturing Self-Reliance." Participants believed that it was their responsibility to be involved in their child's education, but it was also their responsibility to teach their children to advocate for themselves and to take responsibility for their education. Participant 5 explained how she took more of a hands-on and hand-off approach to fostering independence with her son. As she stated:

> I just wanted to see what he was doing in class. Not necessarily checking on him, but you really are checking on them. They have to know that you're there. They also have to know that it is their responsibility to maintain their grades. (Participant 5)

This statement highlighted how Participant 5 strived to help her son take more responsibility of his learning while continuing to support him from a distance. Similarly, Participant 10 sought to give her son independence by "letting him figure things out when he struggled in a class" She explained that when her son struggled in a class such as math, she would let him talk with the teacher before she intervened. She stated, "If he could not resolve the problem, I would email the teacher to set up an appointment" (Participant 10).

Participant 9 indicated that she did not check-in as much on her daughter because "she is smart, independent, and gets really good grades" (Participant 9). Participant 3 stated "My daughter is so smart and independent that she pushes my engagement in her schooling" (Participant 3). Some of the participants had to foster independence in their children out of necessity. Participant 6 explained that she has a recurring health issue that required her see a doctor often. Thus, her daughter would be on her own for long a period of time. Similarly, Participant 1 stated that she had mental health issues that sometimes prevented her from being involved in her daughter's education. Both participants were not happy that they could not be there for the children but believed that their children became more independent because of their situations.

Theme: Challenges of Parental Engagement in Commitment-Based Activities at the High School Level

Parent-teacher communication was the number one involvement strategy parents engaged in while at the high school level. The Open Houses were a way the schools were intentional about establishing parent-teacher communication. When asked Question 4 (What do you think about the school's Open House?) and Question 5 (What do you think about school-based activities such as volunteering, parent council, and School Site Council?), the following theme emerged from the data: "Challenges of Parental Engagement in Commitment-Based Activities at the High School Level." Many of the participants believed that open house was valuable and facilitated parent-teacher communication. The following excerpts highlights participants' perception of the benefits of Open Houses. As Participant 4 stated, "So, attending Open House, I mean, it was rewarding just to hear the good positive feedbacks and then whatever, you know, criticisms, it was more positive so then you'll learn how to help your child." (Participant 4). As Participant 10 stated:

> Open House, yeah, I think it's very informative. I think it's a great way to, you know, really get to know staff and teachers and the people who are involved at the school level. It was also a way to find out straight from the teacher how my son was doing in his classes. (Participant 10)

This excerpt from participant 10 shed a light on participants' expectations of the Open House: to build a relationship with teachers and other staff members and to get pertinent information about their child's progress.

Participant 8 went on to introduce the theme of the importance of parental voice being heard at school:

> It's really important. Oh, my God, absolutely. The Open Houses, it was like, what, maybe three a year each semester we came in and we sat, and we discussed the work of our kids. And I know if any of my kids was falling behind to a point where something needed to be changed in their curriculum, it was important. So, if I didn't show up, I'm not going to have a voice. And you might have a teacher that will overlook it, like, well, if the parents don't care, I'm not going to care. (Participant 8)

Like Participant 10, Participant 8 also believed that the Open Houses were a way to get important information about her child. This also highlighted participants' perception of how they would be viewed if they did not show up. In essence, many participants believed that they would be perceived as an uninvolved parent if they did not show up for the Open Houses. Participant 3 stated,

> Open House is an opportunity for families, parents to visit the school, to get, you know, especially for first, you know, for a new student at a school, it's an opportunity for them to see the school if they haven't had a chance to see the school, you know, physically visit the classroom and see the life at the school. (Participant 3)

This sentiment accentuated how the Open Houses created a sense of belonging for some parents. But for others, the open houses were incomplete. As Participant 6 stated,

> I think that's cool. I mean, it gives everybody a chance to meet their student's teacher. I mean, it gave me a chance because I think last year, I didn't really get to

> meet everybody. I spoke to certain people, but I didn't get to meet them on that level. So that was pretty good. So, they are helpful? I mean, it gives the child like, you know, okay, she is involved, you know, she's not just all talk, she's involved, you know. (Participant 6)

An essential aspect of Participant 6's excerpt is that she mentioned that she could not meet everybody during the open house. Many participants believed the open houses were not as helpful because they could not meet with all their children's teachers. The following extract highlight parents' frustration with not being able to meet with all the teachers. As Participant 7 stated,

> Okay, to be honest, I don't really, I don't completely find them helpful. Not all the time, I don't. If you're able to get to a teacher, then yes, it's helpful. But I feel like the way it's laid out; you don't get to talk to a lot of teachers. And then we're sitting in a Zoom room, you're constantly being rushed. I mean, God forbid this is a class that your kid's not doing well in. If your kid is doing well, I guess, you're fine. You might have additional questions that they can do to further themselves and what they're doing. So, you might have questions on that aspect just to push them a little bit more. For a child that she's just doing regular, or he or she is just doing standard and you want to do your best to benefit them, it's not always the easiest to talk to every teacher. And then because of the timeline, you have, we're only getting like two hours. So, like, and you have, I don't know, however many parents there. So, it's a little like, it's a little difficult because there's nothing offered. Like, even though we know we can do it, there's not too much offered like, hey, we did our open house last night. Thank you for coming. We appreciate

> your support. For those that didn't get to talk to certain teachers, here's the email addresses that you can maybe set up a time frame to maybe meet with them at a different time because we know it's a little difficult trying to meet with everyone for us. Because it's not easy for you guys, I see that. It's a small school, you have a lot of parents. I want to make sure that we all have the opportunity to talk to their teachers. (Participant 7)

Participants 2 and 5 also believed that the open house could have been more helpful during their time at the high school. Like Participant 7, they believed that the Open House was good in theory, but the timing and structure of the Open Houses could have been more inviting. Analysis of the data suggested that most participants (8 out of 10) believed that the Open Houses were helpful, but only 4 participants attended the Open Houses regularly. Only 2 participants found the Open Houses to be unhelpful and uninviting. Table 3 provides a breakdown of participants' perception of the Open House, and whether they attended them regularly.

Table 3

Perceptions of School-Based Activities

Participants	Attended the Open Houses Regularly	Did Not Attend the Open Houses Regularly	Thought the Open Houses were helpful	Thought the Open Houses were not helpful
1		*X*	*X*	
2		*X*		*X*
3	*X*		*X*	
4	*X*		*X*	
5	*X*		*X*	
6		*X*	*X*	
7		*X*		*X*
8	*X*		*X*	
9		*X*	*X*	
10		*X*	*X*	

External factors such as work schedule constraints made it hard for several participants to partake in school-based activities. Comparably, many participants believed that Parent Council, SSC, and volunteering were important but that participation in these school-based activities was very low. The following excerpts highlighted parents' perception of school-based activities such as parental council, SSC, and volunteering:

> I think they're important. I think the school needs them. I mean, it's part of the school community. Doing like bake sales, the PTO, the Student Council, the School Site Council, and all of those, because decisions are being made, and they're being made with or without you, parents. They're being done with or without you, so you can't really complain and say, oh, well, I didn't know this

> was happening. Why did they decide to put a playground? Well, because the parents that were there voted for it, and the parents that didn't want it weren't there. (Participant 5)

Participant 5 provided insight into parents' thinking around school-based activities, such as the SSC, Parent Council, and volunteering. They understood the importance of school-based activities and the consequences of not being involved in such activities. Participant 10 also voiced similar sentiments:

> So, I try my best to be present at School Site Council, especially when my son was in high school. Even before he transferred to his last school, I was a part of Parent Council at his previous school. So, I think attending meetings, whether I'm a member or not is really vital because parents need to have a say at the table. I think it's important to even communicate with your child before meetings to talk about, you know, hey, do you have any concerns? And really relay those messages during School Site Council. But it is important to connect with, you know, other parents as well to share common like themes or goals or practices just to connect as well would be good as a support. (Participant 10)

This excerpt highlighted participants' perception of why school-based activities such as SSC are important, which is to be a part in the school's decision-making process. But Participant 10 also claimed she had tried her best to attend the meetings. Participants 2 and 3 believed school-based activities such as SSC, Parent Council, and volunteering were important, but found it difficult to navigate the school's establishment. As Participant 3 stated,

> I mean, those are good activities that schools put in place for parents to get involved. But I think it's still a matter of how we do it, how we run the activities, how welcome the families will feel because some parents could easily feel intimidated. (Participant 3)

Participant 3 posited that many families felt intimidated by the way the meetings were run. Many families did not understand how the meetings were organized and how to voice their concerns. Several participants believed that the school made it hard for parents like her to stay involved because the activities were not conducive to parents' work schedule. Meetings normally started at 5:00 p.m., a timeframe when most parents had gotten off work. As Participant 3 stated, "This created a sense of uneasiness where I felt out of place." It is notable that Participant 3 was uneasy because she was unable to make it to all the meetings due to their inconvenient timing. She felt that the other members looked at her differently because she was unable to make it to all the meetings. Participant 2 had similar concerns of being an outsider looking in:

> I did try, and if I can, I'm going to show you how difficult they make it to navigate joining School Site Council. It's a lot of find this link, go here, but then the dates aren't there. Like it's not saying, hey, next meeting time, this time, or whatever. They kind of make you chase them to get that information so that you can be present. On the website, it might look all inviting, but they don't make it easy to navigate to get there. So, if I am having difficulty navigating to figure out how to get to their next meeting to be present, then imagine the next parent who may not have the literacy skills or the language skills to help them to try to find that information. (Participant 2)

Participant 2 highlighted that information regarding school-based events was not easily accessible to parents. Participant 1 similarly indicated that “They send out email all the time. It may have been in one of the many emails, but no one has ever personally invited me to Parent Council or School Site Council. Plus, I work during those times.” Like Participant 1, Participant 6 stated that she did not get invited to participate in school-based activities such as the parent council and SSC. Table 4 provides a breakdown of participant’s perceptions and involvement in school-based activities.

Table 4

Participation in School-Based Activities

Participant	Volunteered at the school.	Participated in Parent Council	Participated in School Site Council	School-Based activities were helpful	School-Based activities were not helpful
1				x	
2			x		x
3	x			x	
4				x	
5	x	x	x	x	
6				x	
7	x				x
8	x				
9	x				
10	x		x	x	

Analysis of the data suggested most participants volunteered but stated that they did not get to volunteer as much as they would have liked to. Furthermore, most of the participants perceived school-based activities to be helpful. Lastly, only three participants participated in the parent and School Site Councils while at the high school level. Several barriers to involvement plagued many of the participants in this study. This is discussed in the data analysis of RQ2.

Answer to Research Question 1

Based on analyzed data from interviews and focused groups, the following answers emerged for RQ1: What are African American parents' perceptions of organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary school level?

- Parents perceived parental involvement in education was essential at all educational levels.
- Supporting their child's emotional development at the high school level was most important to parents.
- Parents equated school-based parental involvement to parent-teacher communication at the high school level.
- Parents based their engagement on the level of communication with their child's teachers.
- Parents believed that school-based activities such as Open House, SSC, and Parent Council were important but were a significant commitment. Volunteering was perceived as a noncommitment activity by parents; thus, they engaged in it more.

Summary

Based on the analysis of data, African American parents who took part in this study perceived organizational and policymaking activities as important and understood the consequences of not being involved in those activities. School-based activities such as Open House, SSC, and Parent Council were second in importance to supporting the child holistically in high school. Participants deemed emotionally supporting their children as most important at the high school level. For most participants, checking-in with their child was the only thing they could do consistently throughout high school because of perceived barriers to engagement.

Data Analysis for Research Question 2

Barriers to parental involvement IQs 1–9 were used to collect data from participants for RQ2 (What barriers prevent African American parents from engaging in organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary school level?). The following themes emerged from the data analysis: An Intergenerational Struggle, Exploring the Struggle to Communicate, Racism's Uneven Impact, and Scheduling constraints.

Theme: An Intergenerational Struggle

This theme emerged from the analysis of IQ2 (What experiences have shaped the way you interact with the school?) and IQ3 (What experiences have shaped the way you interact with teachers?). Several participants posited that their own parents were not involved in their education. This created an internal struggle for many participants because they wanted to provide more educational support to their children than their parents had done but felt powerless because they struggled to be more involved in their children's education. For many, this also had a profound impact on how they perceived

and dealt with teachers and schools. The following excerpts shed light on their experiences growing up with parents who were unable to be involved in their education and what they learned from that experience. As Participant 2 recounted,

> My own experience [was] in the same system as a kid. So, my mom didn't know how to navigate this educational system here in this country. And so, I saw that I lost out on a lot of opportunities and teachers' kind of tossed me to the side, because I think the focus was more like on, like if you understood the system and you knew how to navigate it, you kind of get treated better, because then your parents are not taking any nonsense, they're not taking any shorts. So that taught me too, to always make sure whether the communication came my way or not to communicate with my child's teachers. (Participant 2)

As Participant 4 recounted,

> For me, I can say my parents weren't involved at all. You know, there wasn't no timing for them to go up to the school and see what was happening. So, I said that, you know, if I have children, I have to make sure I'm involved because I want to know what's going on, especially with their education. (Participant 4)

Participant 8 spoke to the internal struggle that many participants encountered with their won upbringing, and why several of them desperately wanted to be more involved in their child's education:

> Well, no, because the way I was brought up, I was brought up in a home where, you know, at that time and day and age, it was all right for you to drink off the beer bottles and, you know. So, I was brought up, my childhood was horrible and there was nobody there for me as far as for came to school or any of that. So

> honestly, I was always told I'd never be anything. So, I think that's why I was a parent that always wanted to be involved in my kids' school, in the decision-making, because no matter what, and still to today, even though they're on their own, you can always be somebody and you can always do it better. (Participant 8)

At the other end of the spectrum, two participants were very involved parents. Both participants gained a lot from their own involved parents, but wanted to provide their children with what their parents did not provide them. As Participant 7 stated,

> I'm thankful because my mom was pretty much always involved with the things that I did. I always try to make sure that my kids know that I appreciate everything that they do and everything that they bring to the table. So, to further my kids' education, I always put a positive light on the things that they love the most. (Participant 7)

Participant 10 also stated,

> So, my family and my mother being very involved in my education really made me more so very involved and I knew, you know, how to engage and connect and communicate with my son's teachers and support. So, you know, high school, my mother was a little bit more hands-off maybe after the 10th grade. And I think high school is even middle school years, you know, adolescents go through different things hormonally, developmentally. So, I really kind of wanted to be a little bit more emotionally connected. (Participant 10)

For Participant 7, it was essential to her that she provide her children with affirmation around things they love to do, not just academics. For Participant 10, it was providing her

son with more emotional support. She felt like her mom took a step back and provided less support at the high school level.

Based on the analysis of IQs 2 and 3, most participants (8 out 10) had uninvolved parents growing up. Every participant wanted to be more involved in their child's education because of their experiences with their own parents. When participants could not be involved in their child's education to the degree they wanted to, this created a sense of failure for them, as was evident in interviews by Participants 1, 6, and 8. These participants often used phrases like "I did my best," "I tried," and "it saddened me." These phrases represented an internal struggle and a sense of failure because they wanted to provide more support than their parents had done for them but could not because of external factors that weighed on their time and energy, such as work schedule, and recurring mental health and other health issues.

Theme: Exploring the Struggle to Communicate

The second theme, "Exploring the Struggle to Communicate," emerged from data analysis from IQ1 (What experiences have shaped your involvement in your child's education?). Data analysis suggested that all participants believed that parent-teacher communication was essential at the high school level. Communicating with a teacher was the number one school-based parental involvement strategy expressed by participants in the study. Most of the communication was through email and in response to an issue that their student was having in the classroom. Participant 7 stated, "My goal was to reach out to teachers. I would first look on ASPEN to see what was happening in school, then I would email the teachers" (Participant 7). This highlighted what several participants did

at the secondary school level; they would check their child's grades on ASPEN and send an email to teachers if the grades were not up to par.

Participant 6 was more straightforward about participants' anxiety regarding not being able to communicate with the teacher. As she stated: "I just like to keep in touch with teachers. That is about it. If my child had a problem, I touched base with the teacher" (Participant 6). In this case, Participant 6 had major health concerns and was not able to be involved in her child's education the way she wanted to. Thus, communicating with the teacher was of the utmost importance to her and many of the other participants who could not be involved as they wanted to. Lastly, the following excerpt illustrates participants' perception of why parent-teacher communication was important. Participant 1 stated,

> I think just being able to communicate with the teachers to let them know, like, especially on the, you know, things happen outside of school, things happen in school that the teacher may not be aware of. Because one, they're dealing with a bunch of students, a bunch of kids, day in, day out, and they're not going to catch everything. And that's completely understandable. The teachers are not octopuses. I say that about myself, too. So yeah, it's totally understandable. So, just more having a more understanding and being able to listen to what the teacher is saying regarding their kids and just being opened to hearing what they're saying and not be so quick to say, well, what did you do? Or, you know, you're not my child's parent. Yeah, stay with them for eight hours of the day. So, you know, you get that, but, you know, at the end of the day, it's still a respect factor that needs to be there. (Participant 1)

Many participants believed that it was their duty to communicate with the teacher and the school if something was happening with their child inside or outside the school. An important aspect of the quote from Participant 1 is that many participants were cognizant of the number of parents that teachers were expected to communicate with but still wanted a returned email or phone call. Analysis across the data suggested that several participants expressed frustration with the lack of communication from teachers. As Participant 2 stated,

> So that may mean I need to reach out to this teacher. If I've seen a few notifications given to me by ASPEN that there is, you know, maybe something not completed or a low score on this quiz or this test or whatever, I'm reaching out. You don't got [*sic*] to reach out to me. I'm going to call you or email you. Something's happening. We're going to connect. It's frustrating. We might get a copy of the syllabus from each individual teacher, and that's about the extent of communication. I feel like at the high school level, in thinking of my son, who's my most recent graduate, I have a daughter who's in high school now, teachers rarely reached out. (Participant 2)

Participant 2 thus shed light on the impersonal communication that many participants had experienced at the secondary school level, as well as teachers' reliance on technology to communicate important information to parents. Participant 7 shed light on participants' dissatisfaction with teachers using technology to communicate pertinent information: "Sometimes teachers expect us to keep checking ASPEN, and sometimes ASPEN tells us a different picture. And the picture may not be necessarily what it is" (Participant 7). Participant 7 took umbrage in this case with the lack of teacher outreach

regarding her child's current grade. When she had looked online to view her child's grade, it reflected a passing grade. However, when she received the report card, the child failed the class.

Many participants experienced some form of communication challenge. Most participants stated that teachers rarely called and only reached out to them when there was a major problem. They also stated that teachers relied on technology such as email and Talking Point (text message application) too much. Finally, many participants were frustrated with the timing of receiving pertinent information, such as a child failing a course. The following excerpt highlights what many participants went through during their time at the high school. Participant 9 stated,

> I feel like some teachers don't respond. I had an issue last year with one of her classes that she was struggling with. I emailed the teacher, and he didn't respond to me. I sent another email basically saying you know I know that she's having some issues, but I really need you to connect with me to resolve this matter. (Participant 9)

Table 5 provides a breakdown of communication challenges that participants had faced during their child's time at the high school.

Table 5

Breakdown of Communication Challenges

Participant	Limited Teacher Outreach	Teacher Over-Reliance on Technology to Communicate	Lack of Timely Information
1	x	x	x
2	x	x	x
3		x	
4	x		x
5	x	x	x
6	x	x	x
7	x	x	x
8	x		
9	x	x	x
10	x		x

Most participants (8 out of 10) experienced limited teacher outreach, teacher using technology to communicate (8 out of 10), and the lack of teachers communicating important information in a timely manner (8 out of 10). Several participants felt like outsiders because of the communication challenges they experienced at the high school. As Participant 2 stated,

> I don't know if they valued members in that community because I definitely didn't feel it. I don't think they invested in trying to make parents feel like part of the community. I feel like at the time that my son was there, they were going through so many shifts in their leadership that trying to build that sense of community wasn't at their forefront. They would let a kid silently fail, and I'm not okay with that. And that's the problem. (Participant 2)

This point of view served to explain how the school and teachers' lack of communication failed to create a sense of belonging with participants. Participant 7 asserted this about her relationship with the school during her tenure there, to the effect that "So, the relationship I would say in the last few years was rough. It really was. It was not a relationship I wanted to have" (Participant 7). Similarly, Participant 6 described how she did not feel like she was a part of the community. The lack of communication between teacher and parent was a major barrier to parental involvement for many of the participants because it was the only school-based strategy they could consistently use at the secondary school level.

Theme: Racism's Uneven Impact in Schools

The third theme, "Racism's Uneven Impact in Schools," emerged from data analysis of IQ8 (Has racism influenced how you interact with your child's school?). Data analysis suggested that, on the one hand, several participants acknowledged the existence of racism in the school environment but posited that it did not deter their involvement in their child's education. On the other hand, many participants expressed that they never experienced racism at the school. The following excerpts highlighted participants' perception of racism at the school. As Participant 10 stated,

> Race to me is always going to be a factor in education. It's really, you as a person of color, you really must be there. I don't know if it's in your brain to be trained to think this way, or because of experiences, it feels like I had to be a little bit more involved because of the population and the demographics of my son's school. (Participant 10)

This summed up other participants' sentiments about racism as well, given that several of them were cognizant of racism and believed that it was prevalent at the school. Participant 2 voiced that criticism when describing her perception of institutionalized racism in that setting:

> Somewhat, yes. And I'm going to share something with you. So, my son has always been into the arts, and he was taking a music class, and it was like band. So, he came home, and he had one of those little flute things, clarinets, that he was playing. And the band teacher was this cool black woman, but she was teaching all different levels in this one class. That's how they set her up. Right? And you know, I had, you know, the pleasure of talking to her a few times in regard to my son, you know, and how he was like adjusting to her classroom. And I really respected, you know, the way she was trying to manage things with all these different levels. So just imagine teaching [a subject] like math, right? And there's various skills of math that you have to teach at one time. It was like a recipe for failure. And it was a full class size, right? No assistants, no help, nothing. There was no other teacher or faculty member in the room. Even just knowing this, and I'm like, wow, like that's not only a disadvantage for her, but it's a disadvantage for every kid in that room. Right? How do you set up a system

> where you have this one person teaching all these various skill levels, and that's okay? That was racism on so many levels, I can't even begin to explain it. (Participant 2)

As seen in this excerpt, Participant 2 connected with the teacher on several levels (African American and woman) and believed that the teacher was set up for failure because of racism. Participant 2 also believed that such institutionalized racism put children in this teacher's classroom at a disadvantage.

Participant 3 also indicated that racism was prevalent in the school environment, but she chose to ignore it:

> I mean, I understand. Let me explain. So, I know that they may have their own bias. I'm aware of it. I pretend I don't see it because it's for the success of my child. and I have resources within the school that I can use to, you know, I don't want to say file a complaint, not to take it to that extent, but to make my voice be heard. (Participant 3)

This excerpt underscored participants' belief that racism exists within the school environment, and also highlighted how many participants chose to deal with it. Participant 5, for instance, was determined to take it head on:

> I mean, I found that on all levels. And I feel that sometimes when they're dealing with Black families, it's not the same urgency. It's not the same caring. And I know that for a fact, whether it's on elementary level, all the way up to the high school and college, it's the same thing. You know, they don't have the same caring. I'm not saying all White educators, but a good amount of them. They don't have the care for our students. On an elementary school level, if the kids

> know where they need to be and they're old, they need an IEP [individualized education program]. We don't have to have all our Black boys and our Black children on IEPs, but we have a lot of Black boys that are on IEPs, and our Black and Brown babies are on IEPs. It's just so in the rush to do it. But I feel that if they have an issue, sometimes, if you give them extra support, maybe they need a tutor. They don't feel they need to talk to us as parents. That has a lot to do with it. And that's what most of my experience has been with White teachers. That's all that's really there anyway. There's not a lot of representation. Most students will see maybe one Black teacher in their whole entire education. And that's the statistic. If they're lucky, I see it where I'm at now. Most of those kids will see they'll have one Black student, one Black teacher out of 8 years, out of 8 years, right? And I don't care what district, I've seen it in all districts, right? So, I think it's important. And they're not culturally competent. They don't know how to deal with us. They're afraid to deal with us. They think that we're all just poor and just Black, and we don't know any better. So, they talk down to us; they're condescending. So, a lot of times we have to come and that's why we have to come in and be strong and let them know that we are there for our children. We expect the best of them. We want the best for them. And we expect them to do the best that they can by our children, whether they're White, whether they're Black. And you can say that without being crazy, you know? (Participant 5)

This interview excerpt encompassed several participants' perceptions of racism within the school and the education system in general, as Participant 5 shared this experience of racism at all grade levels. It is noteworthy that she consistently participated

in all school-based activities during her time at the high school and advocated for families of color while on the SSC. Lastly, her experience of racism did not deter her from getting involved in her child's education.

In contrast, several participants had not experienced any racism at the school. As Participant 4 stated,

> No, I've never had an issue with anything with racism, but I just made sure that that wasn't going to deter me from anything. Because at the end of the day, I'm there for my children. I'm not there for any other nonsense in between. And I think I'm a firm parent, so I think they would have seen that in me. But I never came across it, and if I did, it wouldn't have happened. Like, I would have nipped that 100. (Participant 4)

This excerpt is important for highlighting the participant's willingness to overcome any adversity when it came to her children. Although she did not experience racism, Participant 4 would have taken it on for the sake of her children. Lastly, Participant 7 illustrated the school's response to what she perceived as racism, but she nevertheless believed that the school did not have issues with race. As Participant 7 stated,

> I'll say that a lot of my teachers are biracial, so no, no, I would say 80% of that no. I mean, you know, you know, something occurred. And that's why certain predicaments happened. But now this person is not, you know, no longer there. But, you know, I just, but to know that we voiced concerns about, you know, certain scenarios and it took years for this person no longer to be there. But I can't say that I don't feel comfortable sending my kids to that school. There's a lot of

> minority teachers that work there, and even the ones that are not minority, even those teachers and those faculty that are not minorities, I don't believe that they have any issues with color. And I don't think that we have a lot of issues. Not that I've noticed. I don't think we have a lot of issues with racism at our school. I think we do kind of nip stuff in the bud really quick. If we even think that anybody's even making anybody ever feel a certain way. I will say that the school does try when it comes to certain things like that. I personally haven't had anything. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 highlighted the school's response to an incident that she perceived to have racial undertones. She believed that a teacher intentionally failed her son because he was African American. The school did an investigation, and she was happy with the outcome. Overall, Participant 7 did not believe that the school had issues with racism and claimed that she would feel comfortable sending her other children to the school. Participants 1, 6, 8, and 9 similarly did not experience any racism at the school.

Theme: Scheduling Constraints

The fourth theme, scheduling constraints, emerged from IQ5 (In your current job, do you have the flexibility to attend school-based activities such as volunteering at an event or participating in a committee?). Data analysis suggested that work schedules and health issues were significant barriers to involvement for several participants. The following excerpts are evidence for this theme. The following passages shed light on participants' struggle with making things work with their job schedule. Participant 1 stated this about her involvement in school-based activities:

> I can't participate regularly. I wish, you know, at that time with my work schedule, and then sometimes I get caught up in the client. So sometimes it's like, oh shoot, I forgot about doing this or doing that, or having to get to a thing with the school. So, it gets a little questioning. When you're doing the home, I tend to think, like, she's the mom who's not there. But no, it's just sometimes when it's a busy, busy day, it's not always busy. But for the most part, when it's, you know, it has days. I'll say that because of the population of people that I deal with, with the mental health and substance abuse and then the homelessness, and you're filling up a lot of other factors. It'd be like, OK, I'm getting sidetracked a lot sometimes. (Participant 1)

Following excerpts from Participants 1, 4 and 6 highlighted how the timing of the event dictated their involvement. As Participant 2 stated,

> Unfortunately, sometimes they might do like a parent breakfast, right? I can't do it. Not unless I'm not present at my job. You know, just because of the hours I work are the same hours that he has to be in school. So, in order to do something like where I volunteer like on a field trip or something like that, I have to take a day off. (Participant 2)

> Yeah, it depends on the time of the open house. So, if it was during a day that it was like in between of a shift, that was tough. But if it was something a little later where I was able to make arrangements, then I can go. There were sometimes I had my sister actually attend for me, you know, so I try to make it however I can go to get some form of information to let them know that I'm present, you know. I might not be there for that day, but I'm still present, you know, so yeah. So they

> had to volunteer, but I do have to say that it was hard for me to do some of those volunteering just because of the scheduling with my job that I wasn't able to but They have some good ones. (Participant 4)
>
> Anything that happens in the early evening, on the weekends, I'm able to attend. And that's the majority of the activities, especially the weekends, because I don't work on the weekends. So, I'm able to attend, I'm able to volunteer, I'm able to participate. (Participant 6)

Several participants posited that they had significant health issues and other time conflicts that prevented them from participating in school-based activities. Participant 1 stated,

> She almost lost her dad recently. She lost two of her cousins. And, you know, mom been in and out of the hospital. I've been in and out of the hospital and stuff. And, you know, it has not been easy for her. And I recognize that. So that's why I kind of handle her a little bit more with a little bit more gentleness because, dissonance but firm, because I know some of the things, like, it's not easy. It's not easy. So, I'm just trying to stay on top of just trying to be there for her and just support her in anything she chooses to do, you know, she has my support ten toes down.

Participant 1 signified her struggle with being in and out of the hospital while still trying to be involved in her child's education and spoke in terms of how her daughter perceived the situation. Participant 6 also had her share of medical troubles that impeded her involvement at school:

> Sometimes I do have my doctor's appointments, you know, for the lupus and my kidneys and stuff because the lupus took my kidneys and stuff. So, I have that to deal with. So that's like every three months, but sometimes, sometimes they'll be like, okay, you have to go and take blood work or whatever, because they're always changing my medication. So that's, that kind of goes into that. (Participant 6)

This excerpt from Participant 6 shed light on her battle with an autoimmune disease and the reason she could not consistently be involved in her child's education and school-based activities. She claimed that she could not drive at night because the medication made her drowsy. Every participant experienced a schedule constraint at the secondary school level. Many participants could not attend school-based events unless they were deep into the evening or on the weekend because of their work schedule. Others could not attend them at all because of their recurring health conditions.

Answer to Research Question 2

Based on analyzed data from interviews and focused groups, following are the answers to RQ2: What barriers prevent African American parents from engaging in organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level?

- Participants' parents had an influence on how they dealt with teachers and the school.
- Participants wanted to be more involved in their child's education than their parents has been with them.
- Communicating with the teacher was the primary school-based strategy participants used.

- Lack of teacher outreach, reliance on technology, and timing of pertinent information were a unique barrier for participants.
- Most participants did not experience any racism at the school. Those who encountered racism either ignored it or took it head on. Overall, racism did not deter participants from being involved in their child's education.
- Work schedule constraints and recurring health conditions were impediments to participants' school involvement.

Summary

Based on the data analysis, several barriers prevented African American parents who participated in this study from engaging fully in organizational and policymaking activities at the secondary school level. The first was intergenerational trauma. Many participants struggled with the need to be better than their parents, who were uninvolved in their education. This added a significant amount of stress to participants who struggled to be involved. Next, communicating with the teacher was the number one school-based strategy participants had used at the secondary school level. Consequently, many of the participants believed that teachers rarely communicated and only communicated via email or text when there was a significant problem. This was a unique barrier because communicating with teachers was the only thing most participants could consistently do, due to schedule constraints. Furthermore, work schedules and recurring health conditions also posed barriers for several participants, as many participants were unable to miss work for school events. Thus, they could not be consistently involved in events that took place during the week unless it was late in the evening. Additionally, several participants experienced recurring health conditions that prevented them from being involved in any

educational activity. Lastly, most participants did not experience any racism at the school, but participants who did either chose to ignore it or face it head on. Overall, racism did not deter any participant from being involved in their child's education.

Data Analysis for Research Question 3

For RQ3: What are African American parents' perspectives of the family-school relationship at the secondary school level? Family and school partnerships IQs 1, 4, 5, and 6 were used to collect data from participants. The following themes emerged from the data analysis: Exploring a Sense of Belonging through Inclusive Practices and Connecting through Inclusivity: Open, Consistent, Timely Communication.

Theme: Exploring a Sense of Belonging Through Inclusive Practices

The theme, Exploring a Sense of Belonging, emerged from IQ1 (How would you describe your relationship with your child's school?), IQ4 (Do you think that you are a valued member of the school community?), and IQ5 (What can the school do to strengthen the relationship with parents?). Most participants believed that they had a good relationship with the school. Participants 1, 4, 5, 8, and 9 posited that their relationship with the school was positive.

Participant 8 spoke to the positive relationship between participants and the school:

> I can honestly say my relationship with any of the schools that my children have been in, in the Boston Public School, have been great. They've been great, 100%. And I think because I was that parent that kicked doors in, like, I honestly, even to the special education department over there when it was on Dorchester Ave., which it still is, when I was walking in there, whether it was because of IEP,

> whether it was because [of] transportation, whether it was because I knew my options, and this is what I'm saying, you have to get learning, get educated, and what you feel that you don't know, you go and you sit and you let them tell you, you know, if you're not understanding that pamphlet. And I'm not one that reads and absorbs, so I may need to sit so you can speak to me so I can really get an understanding of what's my rights and how far can I go, where can I go, and how do I go. (Participant 8)

Participant 8 and others felt a sense of belonging because the school provided them with the necessary support. In the case of Participant 8, her daughter had an IEP in place enabled her to get specialized support due to her learning disability. Furthermore, Participants 3, 7, and 9 were uncertain about their relationship with the school. They perceived certain teachers, school counselors, and administrators to be helpful but had issues with other staff members during their time at the high school. The following excerpt from Participant 3 exemplified this:

> That I don't know if I can answer that, honestly. But whenever we visit, whenever we're there, the principal is always in the hallway welcoming everybody. They have an overall, at least overall appreciation for parents. But I'm sure like, you know, they may have their own little parents with whom that they communicate more often. But even if you don't have that level of relationship with them, but as soon as you say you're so and so's parent, you get their attention. (Participant 3)

In the case of Participant 3, the good interactions outweighed the bad interactions during her children's time at the high school. She remarked that there were minimal negative interactions with teachers and that staff members were pleasant. She was uncertain about

a sense of belonging because she perceived that there were parents who received more attention from the school than she did. Lastly, Participants 2 and 6 did not feel a sense of belonging at the high school and perceived their experiences to have been overly negative during the time there. As Participant 2 stated,

> I don't know if they valued members in that community because I definitely didn't feel it. I don't think they invested in trying to make parents feel like part of the community. I feel like at the time that my son was there, they were going through so many shifts in their leadership that trying to build that sense of community wasn't at their forefront. It was more so, I think, and I think it still is, trying to create stabilization at that school. (Participant 2)

An important aspect of Participant 2's interview was her perception that the school was not concerned with creating a sense of belonging for the community. Data analysis of Interview Question 5 (What can the school do to strengthen the relationship with parents?) revealed that most participants wanted the school to foster more collaboration and community engagement. Several participants wanted parent-only events where parents could really get to know their child's teachers and where teachers could get to know parents.

Participant 3 accentuated this sentiment. With regards to fostering collaboration, she claimed, "I think building relationships with teachers and staff is another was to foster as sense of belonging." Like if we can come up with ways, like have parent events just for the parents, not including the kids" (Participant 3). Similarly, Participant 5's highlighted the need for events that were more social than academic. As she stated, "Just keep doing more social gatherings, which they do try to do. I think doing like potlucks,

like getting to know you, meet and greets" (Participant 5). Lastly, several participants believed that the school should have done more to understand parents. Participant 8 claimed:

> Invite the parents in and see what their struggles are and, you know, find out what resources there can help them. Because not every parent is a parent that like, I didn't successfully go from first grade to graduation. I had to go back to school and get my high school diploma and adult education here in Boston. (Participant 8)

Although Participant 8 felt a sense of belonging when her daughters attended the high school, she believed that other parents could have benefitted from the extra support that she received at the school.

Theme: Connecting through Inclusivity: Open, Consistent, Timely Communication

The second theme, "Connecting through Inclusivity: Open, Consistent, Timely Communication," emerged from data analysis of family and school partnerships IQ 3 (How does the school communicate with you?) and IQ 3A (How do you feel about the way the school communicates with you?). Participants perceived the lack of communication to be a major barrier at the secondary school level. Participants highlighted that teachers rarely responded to their emails, tended to use impersonal communication, such as emails and text messages to communicate important information, and that overall there was a lack in receiving pertinent information in a timely fashion. Many participants believed that the school was responsible for fostering open communication with parents to strengthen the relationship. Participant 2 posited that

"Schools must seek parents out, not the other way around. It is the responsibility of the school staff to establish communication with parents" (Participant 2).

Many participants believed that an open dialogue would enable them to share important information about their child with their teachers. Participant 1 explained that "just kind of have an open dialogue about the parent-student-teacher relationship and what it is that we can do to kind of help them with our kids" (Participant 1). Most participants equated open communication to a dialogue. They perceived the communication patterns at the high school to be consistent but impersonal or not a dialogue. Participant 2 perceived that the school let "kids silently fail" due to the way they communicated (Participant 2). To counter this narrative, several participants believed that the school should communicate information in a timely fashion, such as when a child was failing a course, in order to strengthen the relationship. Many participants believed that a phone call would suffice but were cognizant of teacher responsibilities at the high school level. Participant 6 highlighted why participants wanted a phone call, saying, "Not everybody gets their email, so that's not, I don't know if that's good either. Some people be like, I didn't even look at my email. But that's something you would have to communicate with the parents" (Participant 6). Ultimately, participants wanted teachers to call them more.

Answer to Research Question 3

Based on analyzed data from interviews and focus groups, following are answers to RQ3: What are African American parents' perspectives of the family-school relationship at the secondary school level?

- Most participants believed that they had a positive relationship with the school during their tenure there.
- Participants who felt a strong sense of belonging perceived that the school met their child's needs.
- Participants who were uncertain about the family-school relationship believed that certain staff members were helpful and accommodating but others were not.
- Participants who did not feel a sense of belonging perceived their negative experiences outweighed their positive experiences.
- Several participants believed that events that only catered to parents' meeting with teachers would strengthen the relationship.
- Participants believed that the school was responsible for communicating with parents, not the other way around.
- Participants preferred open communication or a dialog to impersonal communication.

Summary

Based on the data analysis, most participants believed that they had a positive relationship with the school during their tenure there. Many participants felt the school was welcoming and that it provided the necessary support and services for their children. However, not all participants felt that way. Several participants were uncertain about their relationship with the school because they experienced conflict, while others did not have a good relationship with the school due to negative experiences. Participants believed that the school could improve its relationship with parents by focusing on events that were

more social than academic, such as parent-teacher-only events, and by improving interpersonal communication.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Parental involvement is essential at all levels of education. It has been shown that a strong association exists between school-based parental involvement and student academic achievement, mental health, and college enrollment (Benner et al., 2021; Degol et al., 2017; Jeynes, 2020; Tatlah et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019). However, as students matriculate through school, school-based parental involvement wanes (Constantino, 2021). This tendency has far-reaching consequences for many African American students. Firstly, African American students have lower achievement scores, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates than their peers (Henry et al., 2020; James et al., 2019). Secondly, African American students are disciplined and referred for special education services at twice the rate of their peers (Farkas et al., 2020; Morgan et al., 2020). Lastly, the overdiscipline of African American students leads to a more pronounced school-to-prison pipeline (Aronowitz et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2020).

This study sought to understand why African American parents at the target secondary school were not fully engaged in the policymaking and organizational activities as measured by participation in the Parent Council, SSC, and parent-teacher meetings. School-based committees give parents a vote in the decision-making process concerning curriculum, discipline, budgeting, personnel, policies, and procedures. In essence, such parental participation could change the trajectory of African American students, who are overly disciplined and referred for special education services at a high rate. Most importantly, it could disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. Chapter 5 discusses the study's research findings in the context of the conceptual framework, and examines

the implications, relevance, limitations, and future recommendations for the study. Table 6 provides a breakdown of the research questions and themes.

Table 6

Findings and the Conceptual Framework

RQ	Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme	Theme
What are African American parents' perceptions of organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level?	Parental Involvement in Secondary School: Shifting from Active Participation to Emotional Support	Emotional Nurturance (Sub-theme)	Providing a Safe Space (Sub-theme)	Nurturing Self-Reliance (Sub-theme)	Challenges of Parental Engagement in Commitment-Based Activities at the High School Level.
What barriers prevent African American parents from engaging in organizational activities and policymaking at the secondary level?	An Intergenerational Struggle	Exploring the Struggle to Communicate	Racism's Uneven Impact	Scheduling Constraints	
What are African American parents' perspectives of the family-school relationship at the secondary level?	Exploring a Sense of Belonging through Inclusive Practices	Connecting through Inclusivity: Open, Consistent, Timely Communication.			

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model, Joyce Epstein's Spheres of Overlapping Influence, and CRT were the conceptual frameworks used to support the current study. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model investigates parents' reasons for getting involved in their child's education. At the heart of the model are the parents'

belief systems, the child and school invitation, and the parent's skill, time, and energy (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007; Walker et al., 2005).

Parents' Belief System

The overarching theme for RQ1 was Parental Involvement in Secondary School: Shifting from Active Participation to Emotional Support. Results indicated that parents understood the importance of school-based activities such as the open house, SSC, and Parent Council. Every parent in the study asserted that parental involvement in education was essential. But as their children matriculated to high school, their belief systems shifted, and school-based activities came second in importance next to supporting their children holistically in high school.

Bhargava and Witherspoon (2015) indicated this trend in their study on parental involvement across middle and high school. Results from their study found that over time, both home-based and school-based parental involvement declined, but academic socialization increased. Similarly, Dotterer (2022) also found that parental involvement shifted over time. Results from her work on parental involvement during adolescence and emerging adulthood found that parental involvement shifted based on developmental periods in middle and high school. An important aspect of her study was parental role construction. This is when parents decide what level of involvement they will have in their child's education. At the crux of role construction are parents' agency and resources (Hill, 2022; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2007).

The Child and School's Invitation

There is a strong association between child and school invitation and parental involvement (Abel, 2022; Reininger & Santa Lopez, 2017). Findings from this study

indicated that parents used more emotional support at the secondary school level because their children were cognizant of their involvement, or lack thereof. In essence, parents who participated in the study perceived that their children wanted them to be involved in their education. It is important to note that the Hoover-Dempsey model does not explicitly say that the child's invitation for involvement has to be verbal. The parents in this study understood their children enough to know when they needed help with something, even when they did not explicitly say it. Many of them used the ASPEN school information system to monitor grades and prided themselves on communicating with the teacher. According to the findings, invitations from the school were not easily accessible to parents. Parents who had the time to commit to activities such as the SSC felt like outsiders because they were not part of the group they perceived as being favored by the school. They expressed the feeling that communication by school authorities was purposefully complicated, difficult, and impenetrable, causing them to feel that their participation was actually discouraged. Most parents in this study could not commit to school-based activities because of external factors that affected their time and energy.

Parent's Skill, Time, and Energy

Findings from the study indicated parents perceived school-based activities such as Open Houses, volunteering, SSC, and Parent Council as important, but did not attend them consistently because they could not commit to attending on a regular, consistent, and ongoing basis. Factors such as work schedule, recurring illnesses, and mental health issues prevented parents from commitment-based activities. These are family-based barriers to involvement, which are beyond the family and school's control (Curtis et al., 2021; Lechuga-Peña & Brisson, 2018). In response to these barriers, many parents sought

to nurture their children emotionally by exercising check-in. Checking-in involved conversing with their child about academics, peers, mental health, physical health, sex, and school. The findings also indicated that parents provided a safe space to do homework, provided necessary resources, and fostered independence in their children. These are all home-based parental involvement strategies. Research indicated that African American parents used more home-based parental involvement because of negative interactions with schools and feeling that their presence was unwelcome at the school (Goss, 2019; Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña, 2018; Parsons et al., 2018). Findings from the current study indicated, however, that most parents felt a sense of belonging but used home-based strategies because their belief system shifted and because of constraints on their time and energy. Most importantly, at the root of the check-in strategy that parents in this study resorted to was an interpersonal connection with their children. Participants prided themselves on being emotionally connected with their children at the high school level.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is premised on five tenets: racism normalized as usual, not aberrational; interest convergence or material determinism; race as a social construction; intersectionality and anti-essentialism; and voice or counter-narrative (Bridges, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The findings from this study indicated that most participants did not experience any racism at the school, and those who experienced racism either ignored it or took it head-on. Thus, racism had an uneven impact on participants but did not deter any of them from school-based involvement activities. The parents who experienced racism believed that racism is an everyday experience for African

Americans. They recounted their experiences with White staff, their experiences with systemic racism inside and outside the school, and their experiences with dealing with institutions that they perceive do not value the African American family. Lastly, there were parents who ignored racism because they perceived bringing attention to it would do more harm than good to their children. It is important to note that the parents who experienced racism in the school were also the parents who were involved in school-based activities such as the Parent Council and SSC during their time at the high school. This factor aligned with Brooks and Watson's (2018) study on school leadership and racism, who posited that school leadership was influenced by the racial dynamics within the school. In essence, leaders within schools that are plagued by racism are more likely to exacerbate White supremacy practices.

Most parents in this study would not have felt racism within the school because they could not commit to school-based activities. Their involvement was limited to noncommitment activities, such as the Open Houses and volunteering at a bake sale; thus, they did not experience the totality of the school's culture. The parents who experienced racism at the school were more inclined to experience its culture first-hand due to their participation in school-based activities, which were dominated by people who did not look like them. This pattern aligned with Alexander et al. (2017) and Lechuga-Peña and Brisson's (2018) studies, in that participants in those studies also experienced the racist culture of the schools first-hand. The mothers in Lechuga-Peña and Brisson (2018) did not feel a sense of belonging because the staff at the school treated them as less than others. The parents in the current study who experienced racism also felt like outsiders because they were not welcomed in the group they perceived to be supported by the

school, and saw this group enjoying privileged relationships with administrators and teachers on the committees. Equally, participants who chose to ignore racism were similar to the mothers in the previous two studies, having experienced a sense of powerlessness. They perceived that they could not voice their experience of racism with the school for fear of retribution.

Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Learning occurs in three spheres in this model: the home, school, and community. Overlapping spheres are equated to a strong partnership among the family, school, and community. However, nonoverlapping spheres equal a relationship based on conflict and competition (Epstein, 2018). The themes that emerged from RQ3 were ‘Exploring a Sense of Belonging Through Inclusive Practices’ and ‘Connecting Through Inclusivity: Open, Consistent, Timely Communication.’

The findings were mixed on how parents perceived their relationship with the school. Most participants felt the school was welcoming and provided support and the necessary resources for their children. However, some participants perceived that they did not have a good relationship with the school because of their negative experiences. The parents who felt that they had a good relationship with the school had a relationship based on shared responsibility. In contrast, the participating parents whose relationship with the school was not perceived as good, had a relationship based on separate responsibilities (Epstein, 2019).

At the crux of the shared responsibility perspective were families and schools that collaborated to support the student. Participant 8 was an example of this, when she and the school worked collaboratively to ensure that her daughters had the necessary services

to succeed at the school; her experience was pleasant because she felt she was part of a team. However, Participant 2's negative interactions with the school aligned with the separate responsibility perspective, for being in conflict with the school, and believing that the school was not concerned with or invested in creating a sense of belonging in the community. Participant 2's major concern was the school's inability to communicate with parents.

To strengthen the family-school partnership, participants believed that the school should have intentionally created a sense of belonging through more inclusive practices, such as catering parent-teacher-only events that are more social than academic-oriented ones and improving interpersonal communication by calling parents on the phone rather than using online technology to connect with them.

Implication of the Study

This study was intended to provide insight into why African American parents were not fully involved in policymaking and organizational activities at the secondary school level. The findings from this study have implications for educators, administrators, district-level leaders, and researchers who work with African American parents. The findings that African American parents shift from active participation to emotional support at the secondary school level dispel the myth that African American parents are not involved in their child's education (Day & Dotterer, 2018; Huguley et al., 2020).

Parents used a strategy, which this research termed as 'checking-in,' to nurture their children emotionally. Checking-in involved conversing with the child about school, mental health, sex, and physical health. Parents asking the child about their school experience was an important aspect of checking-in. Phrases such as "How was school" or

"How are you doing in school" helped parents cultivate the parent-child relationship and set expectations around school. This aligned with studies that indicated that parental educational expectation was associated with student outcomes (Benner et al., 2021; Lindberg & Guven, 2021).

Similarly, barriers to parental involvement for participants in this study, such as work schedule constraints and communication, were also aligned with previous research (Bordalba & Bochaca, 2019; Conus & Fahrni, 2019; Hornsby, 2018; Inoa, 2017). Work schedule constraints are a family-based barrier beyond the school's control. Communication barriers are school-based barriers and can be alleviated by the school. Epstein (2018) posited that effective communication in school occurred when teachers, administrators, and families established home-to-school and school-to-home communication practices. Findings from this study indicated that teachers' overreliance on technology to communicate important information was not an effective communication practice as parents preferred a simple phone call. Other barriers to parental involvement, such as mental health and recurring health issues, were not found in the research. This may be a cultural factor, because many African American families do not seek mental health counseling and do not like to disclose their private information due to the stigma surrounding it (Hendricks & Smith, 2024). Schools could help African American parents who suffer from mental health issues by hiring a wrap-around coordinator. Wrap-around coordinators connect students and their families with community services such as mental health providers, housing, and community healthcare centers. A plethora of research indicates that wrap-around service providers increased the

school's efficacy in supporting students (Mills et al., 2021; Moeck & Branford, 2023; White et al., 2022).

Furthermore, this study's findings shed light on parents' uneven experiences of racism in schools, where some parents experienced racism, and some did not; some parents felt a sense of belonging, and some did not. This study's findings gave credibility to the importance of an inclusive culture in schools. At the center of a shared responsibilities perspective is the student. Pacino et al. (2023) posited the following tenets of a robust, culturally-responsive family, school, and community partnership: relationships must be built on trust, all stakeholders must have increased capacity, student success should be at the center of the partnership, and families and the community must be looked at as an asset in the partnership. Schools, educational leaders, district leaders, and researchers must consider every parent an asset regardless of ethnicity, educational background, socioeconomic status, or marital status. Schools must understand their parents' identities before creating a sense of belonging for all parents.

This study's findings indicated that parents recommended school events that catered to only parents and teachers, where parents and teachers could get to know each other. Furthermore, schools must schedule events with the working parent in mind, and activities such as Open Houses should occur at the parents' convenience, not the school. Lastly, school governance committees such as the SSC and Parent Council should meet on Saturdays to accommodate as many parents as possible. The school's website and other communication modalities should be clear and provide the times, directions, and expectations for participation.

Relevance of Study

The present study is relevant because the findings from the three research questions may be used to address African American parents' engagement or lack thereof in school-based activities. Findings may be used to help district and school leaders create inclusive school environments where all parents feel welcome. The findings can help teachers understand the benefits of open dialog rather than impersonal communication such as email or text messages. Finally, the findings can help researchers understand the importance of getting perspectives from African Americans, immigrants, and other marginalized groups (Moree, 2018).

This study is relevant because research on parental involvement at the secondary school level and African American parental involvement at all levels is sparse. Moreover, research on African American involvement in organizational and policymaking activities at the secondary school level is nonexistent. Thus, the current study addressed a void in the literature (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Goss, 2019; Leath et al., 2020; Lechuga-Peña et al., 2019; Parsons et al., 2018). Lastly, the study is relevant because it is my plan to meet with district and school leaders about the findings and provide guidance and training on creating inclusive school environments where every parent feels welcome.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. A major limitation occurred in the sample obtained for this study, where no fathers participated in the study. Two fathers were slated to participate but could partake in the interviews or focus groups. Having fathers in the sample would have made the findings much more extensive because their perspectives on parental involvement in education are different than those of mothers.

For example, Possey-Maddox's (2017) study on African American fathers and the intersection of race, class, gender, and engagement in school found that African American fathers used parental involvement strategies, such as goal setting and advice-giving, and prided themselves on making their presence known in the school.

A second limitation on this study was the inability to generalize the findings to a larger population of African American parents beyond the 10 parents in the current study. The purpose of qualitative descriptive design is to provide a straightforward description of the problem through the lens of those who have experienced it (Doyle et al., 2020; Kahlke, 2014; Kennedy, 2016; Sandelowski, 2000). Thus, the findings may differ for African American parents in suburban or private schools. Lastly, researcher bias may have been another limitation in this study. Yarborough (2021) posited that one cannot rid research of all bias, but nevertheless strive towards less bias. To counter researcher bias, I used member checks and a reflective journal. I also provided detailed descriptions of participants' responses in the data analysis section. However, the connection with participants was strong because I could empathize with them from the standpoint of an African American and an educator. Thus, it was a struggle to separate myself from the participants.

Recommendation for Future Research

The following study sought to understand why African American parents at the target secondary school were not fully engaged in the policymaking and organizational activities as measured by participation in the Parent Council, SSC, and parent-teacher meetings. Thus, the first recommendation for future research is to study the perspective of the African American father as it pertains to parental involvement at the secondary

school level. Too often, researchers use parent involvement and motherinterchangeability, whereas the father is also a parent with a role and a voice.

The second recommendation for future research is to study the rest of the educational ecosystem that consist of parent, child, teacher, and school (Epstein, 2018). Parental involvement encompasses all the above-mentioned stakeholders; thus, researchers should seek a fuller picture of the engagement problem through every lens.

Third, many parents in the study believed that school-based activities (Open House, Parent Council, and SSC) were important; however, very few participated in school-based activities during their time at the high school. Parents posited that external activities such as job schedules, recurring illnesses, and mental health issues significantly impacted their ability to participate in school-based activities. The third recommendation for future research is therefore to investigate this further using a mixed-methods design where one could use a survey to garner straightforward quantitative information on the subject. Lastly, researchers should explore parental involvement and other ethnicities to gauge whether they had shifted as well to more emotional support than active support at the high school level. This would provide schools with the knowledge to modify their current practices around school-based activities at the secondary school level, to the benefit of all stakeholders.

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Appendix

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Interviewer's Current Position: _____

Consent Agreement:

The interviewee has signed the consent form and has given the interviewer permission to record the interview. Please circle YES or NO.

Confidentiality Statement:

Any information you provide in this interview will be kept confidential. Your name and identity will be anonymous and replaced by a six-digit code. The information you provide today will be stored in an encrypted file and secured by multifactor authentication.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study will be to examine the reasons why African American parents at the target secondary school are not fully engaged in policymaking and organizational activities.

Length of the Interview

The interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes. The interview will be divided into four sections: background information, perception of parental involvement, barriers to parental involvement, and family-school partnerships.

Interviewer: Do you have any questions about confidentiality, the purpose of the study, or the topics being discussed?

Background Information

Can you tell me a little about yourself and your family?

How would you describe your socioeconomic status?

A. Low

B. Medium

C. High

What is the highest level of education you have obtained?

How many children do you have, and how many are in school?

Are you the sole breadwinner of the family?

A. If yes, what is your daily work schedule?

B. If not, who is most likely to attend a school event?

Perception of Parental Involvement

1. What do you think about parental involvement in education?
2. What do you think about parental involvement in education at the high school level?
3. How would you describe your current involvement in your child's education?
    a. What educational practices do you use to support your student at home?
    b. What educational practices do you use to support your student at school?
4. What do you think about the school's Open House?
5. Do you attend?
6. What would encourage you to attend?
    a. Are they helpful?
    b. Are they inviting?
7. What do you think about school-based activities such as volunteering, parent council, and School Site Council?
    a. Have you ever volunteered at a school event? How did you feel about that experience?

   b. Have you ever been part of a parent council? How did you feel about that experience?
   c. How would you describe the School Site Council?
   d. Are you currently a parent council, school's governance committee, or School Site Council member?

Barriers to Parental Involvement

1. What experiences have shaped your involvement in your child's education?
2. What experiences have shaped the way you interact with the school?
3. What experiences have shaped the way you interact with teachers?
4. Have the experiences influenced your use of one parental involvement strategy over the other? (An example would be using more home-based parental involvement over school-based involvement.)
5. In your current job, do you have the flexibility to attend school-based activities such as volunteering at an event or participating in a committee?
6. In your opinion, do you feel that you are encouraged by the school to participate in school-based activities?
   a. If yes, how did the school encourage you?
   b. If not, why do you think the school did not encourage you?
   c. What would you need to feel welcome or encouraged to participate?
7. Do you feel that your work and family responsibilities have influenced your level of involvement in your child's education at home and in school?
8. Has racism influenced how you interact with your child's school? If so, how?

9. Have white supremacy practices influenced how you interact with your child's school?

Family and School Partnerships

1. How would you describe your relationship with your child's school?
2. How do you communicate with the school? How do you communicate with guidance counselors and teachers?
3. How does the school communicate with you? How do you feel about the way the school communicates with you?
4. Do you think that you are a valued member of the school community?
5. What can the school do to strengthen the relationship with parents?
6. What can you do as a parent to strengthen your relationship with the school?