OUTSIDE LOOKING IN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF NON-RESIDENTIAL AFRICAN AMERICAN FATHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLES IN THE ACADEMIC PROCESS OF THEIR MALE CHILDREN

by

Chaundra Reniece Creekmur

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2016
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions of non-residential African American fathers’ roles in the academic process of their male children in a suburban city in the Eastern region of Georgia. The following questions guided the study: (a) What roles do non-residential African American fathers play in the academic process of their male children? (b) What factors shape non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children? (c) What do non-residential African American fathers perceive as the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children? The participants were non-residential African American fathers of sons in grades 3-12. Self-efficacy and the critical race theory were the theories that guided this study. Data was collected through interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Data was analyzed using Moustakas’ (1994) guidelines for transcendental phenomenology. After interview transcription, emerging themes were notated and followed up by two focus group sessions. Results of the study revealed that fathers, in the face of mother gatekeeping, persisted to rely on their sons’ mothers for information pertaining to their sons’ academic process. It was noted that participants, in some form, were involved in progress monitoring. The study also prevailed that, father educational attainment was not a determining factor for their involvement. In summary, these fathers, despite numerous difficulties, have been diligent in their efforts to maintain active roles in the lives of their sons.

Keywords: African American, fathers, academic process, non-residential, perception, self-efficacy theory, critical race theory
Dedication

I dedicate this manuscript to Gladys Irene Priester Murdaugh, my beloved grandmother, the person whom I’ve loved the deepest my entire life. I’ve always feared losing you and that time came in the midst of my doctoral studies. Even though I had not begun the dissertation process, you called me Dr. Creekmur as soon as I began my doctoral coursework. You always believed in me. You were always there. You always ensured that I had what I needed, what I wanted, and much more. Thank you, Grandma, for showing me what it is to be a “class act.” I didn’t realize until this point that you set such an example for me. I always wanted many years of marital bliss; just as you had with Pop Pop. After getting it right the second time, I married a soldier too. Because of your love, prayers, and unwavering support, I have made it this far. Although my trips to 2329 feel empty because you are not there, I cherish tender memories of you and keep remnants of your love and correction in my heart. I wish you were here to help me see this thing through.

I love you Grandma, Pooh.
Acknowledgments

To my husband: I truly appreciate every ounce of support that you have given in this process; whether it was taking on the boys, cooking, cleaning, or anything else in the house that would provide time for me to focus on creating this masterpiece. I especially appreciate the sacrifices you made when I wanted to work outside the house (Sbux). I appreciate your encouragement, although it sometimes came with a price. You always encouraged me through the questions that you would ask that caused me to deal with myself in this process. Your questioning reaffirmed in me what I was purposed to do, why I was purposed to do it, and who purposed me for it. I thank you for the resources and input you provided on the wonders of fatherhood. Lastly, I appreciate the threats. I’m laughing right now as I recall your “telling” me that I’d better not even think about quitting; that if I decided to give it all up that so many others would be affected. This was easier to do because I am married to you; someone who aspires, as much as I, to achieve higher. Just think, in the next year I will have the privilege of returning the favor. Thank you.

To my family: Mom and Dad, I don't have the words to express how grateful I am to have parents like you. The two of you have had my back since day one. From my first day in the army, to Georgia Military College, to Valdosta State University, to Capella University, to Augusta State University, to Liberty University, and now, once again, here I am at Liberty University. Grandma Ollie Mae and Pop, you have always just been so proud of me in everything I’ve done. You've helped us with the boys like no one else has. To the world’s best grandparents and great-grandparents, I say thank you. You love and care for our boys as if you
were raising your own sons all over again, with the exception that they are extremely rotten!
However, I thank you. To my son Jaxson: who offered to help mom by typing, writing, or doing
whatever he could. Thanks for holding my book so that I could type that long quote. What an
amazing seven-year-old mind. One day, I will help you do the same. Thank you, Angel for
reminding me that I must set the standard for you to follow. Joshua, I thank you for tugging on
mommy’s arm while I attempted to type. Thank you for reminding mommy that it was alright to
take a break. Pop pop, you showed me what excellence looked like, how it lives, and what it
means. I thank you. To Aunt Al, Uncle Lonnie, Robert, Rosemary, Jill, Candice, and Deacon
Motley, I thank you for your continued encouragement, words of inspiration, and for simply
believing in me. To my extended family, Ronald B., Jill W., Sherell G., and Markeitha D. for
working so diligently to aid in my search for participants; I thank you. To Dr. Davis, Dr. Burns,
and Rev. Callaway, for preparing and providing me with the opportunity to use the facility; thank
you.

To my co-workers: Team 7A, thank you for your steadfast support, encouragement, need
for self-reflection/evaluation, and keeping me humble. Each of you, in your own way,
contributed to making this whole thing possible (Marie Speering, Iantha Ussin, Jackie Parker,
Kerry Flores, Debbie Fredenberg, Larissa Brittingham (student teacher), and Toya Eastman.

To my Liberty family: Without you, Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, I wouldn’t have ever gained
my footing. Your expertise placed me on the right path to completing what has become the
conclusion of my studies at Liberty and the beginning of a new found love for phenomenological
research, thank you. I am in deepest appreciation to my committee. Thank you to my committee
chair, Dr. Tamika Hibbert, and my committee members, Dr. Michael Patrick and Dr. Stacey Mabray. To Dr. Vanessa Watkins, your unwavering guidance and support has helped so much during this process. Our talks always gave me drive to keep going. You are my example to follow. Thank you. Thank you to Karen Berkenkemper for your patience and care in editing/perfecting this masterpiece. You are the best at what you do. To my peer group (EDUC 980): Mary Danberry and Jennifer Ryan, I enjoyed working with you as we helped one another “hammer” the details of our ideas, progress, and assignments. Kim Rienffannact (my secret competition), I always compared my progress to yours as you are one of the few people that I have met, in this process, that are as driven as I. Thanks for the push.
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List of Abbreviations

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)

Education Resource Information Center (ERIC)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD)

Parental Role Construction of Parental Involvement (PRPCI)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Self-Efficacy Theory (SET)

Critical Race Theory (CRT)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Non-residential fathers’ roles should not be limited when it comes to the overall development of their children. The title of non-residential has been used to refer to fathers who do not reside within the same residence as their child(ren) and do not hold custodial rights to their child or children and have less than daily contact with their child(ren) (Brown, 2014). Traditionally, fathers were known for and expected to serve as breadwinners, leaving the mother to care directly for the home and children (Huang, 2009; Troilo & Coleman, 2012). However, “In 2000, 27% of all United States children were living in single-parent families; among African American children, 53% were living with only one parent” (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004, p. 112). With the majority of the single-parent homes in America being headed by women, (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004), 7% of single-parent homes were headed by men (DeBell, 2008).

African American fathers have often been classified as non-residential (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998) and have had tendencies of being less involved. As non-residential African American fathers have sought to play an all-encompassing role in the lives of their male children (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013), they must seek to cultivate a father-son relationship that leads to positive attachment (Bacro, 2012). The quality of a child’s attachment relationships has been related to the child’s school performance during middle childhood and adolescence (Troilo & Coleman, 2012). As educational attainment, beyond high school, has become less of a reality to African American
male students (Davis, 2012), non-residential African American fathers must sustain function in their essential roles needed for the academic process of their male children (Lowe & Dotterer, 2013).

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study is to describe non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children as well as their personal experiences with it. This chapter provides an overview of the issues that surround the academic processes of African American boys as well as the circumstances that involve growing up in a society where their academic potential is often diminished. Information is also provided concerning the prevalence of African American boys living in single parent homes who are being raised by their mothers.

**Background**

According to Riddick (2010), the African American boys of today’s society have remained in a calamitous state. African American boys have been subjected to academic disadvantage at the onset of their academic process based on their placement in low quality preschool programs (Rashid, 2009). The fact that African American males have been more likely to be behind prison walls (40%) than behind the walls of a four-year university (5.5%) is made manifest through the notion of the preschool to prison pipeline based on the lack of emphasis placed on African American males’ academic process by home and school (Hucks, 2011; Rashid, 2009; Riddick, 2010; Toldson, 2012). Many African American boys have shown a decrease in their desire to learn, especially in the area of reading, which has been largely due to the fact that in many learning environments, they are not presented with content through methods
that are conducive to their learning styles to include highly stimulating, arousing, and active
instruction (Husband, 2012). African American boys have not read materials and textbooks
provided in the academic setting as a response to a lack of cultural and contextual connection
which has also resulted in development of a negative attitude towards reading outside of school
(Husband, 2012; Tatum, 2006). In addition to the nature of academic reading materials, teachers
who teach large populations of African American boys have spent a greater amount of time
trying to teach the technical components of reading as opposed to making the reading relative to
the lived experiences of their African American male students (Gerstl-Pepin & Woodside-Jiron,
2005) as a study conducted by Hall and Piazza (2008) showed that African American students
who were taught to read in a more traditional format presented less engagement with their
assigned text. Reports for standardized testing (both norm and criterion referenced) have shown
that African American male students tend to achieve considerably lower than their peers in all
subjects (Hucks, 2011). African American male student achievement is also lacking in formal
and informal assessments (Hucks, 2011) as substantiated by Steele’s (1992) ideal that African
American male students have experienced struggles in the learning environment due to
inadequate academic preparation.

Schools can improve the learning environment for African American boys by
exterminating their beliefs and practices that align with low expectations held regarding the
academic abilities of African American boys (Hucks, 2011). Schools and teachers have
possessed the ability to increase students’ prospects of overcoming personal and academic
challenges and experiencing achievement (Martin & Marsch, 2006). In addition to a positive
learning environment, parental involvement, although an intricate and multidimensional concept (Epstein, 1995), has been one of the most commonly recognized factors for impacting a child’s academic process and development (Abel, 2012). Schools have had the ability to help promote and enhance father involvement by encouraging students to invite their fathers to engage in their academic process by checking homework and participating with literacy activities (Abel, 2012). With the understanding that more involvement is observed from mothers than fathers and that father involvement has been positively related to a variety of academic outcomes for children (Abel, 2012), it is pertinent that understanding is achieved as to why African American fathers, often classified as non-residential (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1998), tend to be less involved.

One factor that has been suggested to influence involvement of non-residential African American fathers is a lack of education attainment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) as it is associated to lowered employment opportunities. The rate of jobless fathers (34.8%) and single mothers (31% overall and 66% low income) has increased the rate of role conflict among parents in the African American community, causing prolonged poverty and low student achievement (Rowley & Bowman, 2009). Sigle-Rushton and McLanahan (2004) explained that 53% of African-American children were reported as living within a single-parent home in comparison to the 27% of all children in the United States living in single-parent homes. Compared to the majority of the single-parent homes in America being headed by women, (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004), 31% of African American women head single-parent homes (Mather, 2010). Perry (2009) presented that the prevalence in the population of non-residential African American
fathers leave mothers and their children born of non-marital relationships to rely heavily on extended family networks. Currence and Johnson (2003) revealed that 80% of all African American children will experience childhood with their fathers living outside the home. With less than one third of African American children being born to parents who are married (Perry, 2009), several issues have led to the overrepresentation of African American men as unwed parents such as: (a) decreased marital fulfillment, (b) negative attitudes towards marriage, and (c) financial issues resulting from unemployment (Broman, 2005). It is important to note that the absence of the father from the home does not indicate a lack of concern for his son or that the father serves a diminished role in his son’s life (Earl & Lohmann, 1978) as many fathers have been prosperous in aiding their sons in obtaining success in their academics as they live outside of the home (Schober, 2012). Guzzo (2009) stated that:

Matters are more complicated for non-residential fathers: not only are they less directly involved in their child’s lives and reliant upon mothers to facilitate contact, but also the intensive nature of parenting young children requires familiarity and skill that are best developed with the high levels of contact. (p. 633)

**Situation to Self**

My motivation for conducting this research resulted from repetitious observations of African American boys who did poorly in school and were raised by their mothers. After each parent conference, call home, or school activity, I realized that there was a large population of African American boys who were born out of wedlock and had little to no contact with their fathers. With further communication, I came to understand that the boys who experienced some
form of contact with their fathers did not receive encouragement or assistance from their fathers with respect to their academic process. As a researcher and education practitioner, beginning this research, I held the assumption that non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children lacked positive belief in their ability to pose as a positive influence. Bowman (2014) presented that fathers’ lack of belief in their ability to positively influence their children academically, provides unfulfilling experiences of fatherhood. These experiences were noted as a result of barriers presented by child support clauses, visitation parameters, and mothers acting as gatekeepers. In addition, other possible factors such as observations of other fathers and fathers’ personal experiences with their fathers may have also contributed to these experiences. I assumed that many of the non-residential African American fathers will share that they do not have a clear understanding of their roles in the academic process of their male children. I assumed that the fathers will not present strong experiences with the academic process of their male children due to a possible lack of educational attainment and goals.

I assumed the role of advocate for the participants of the study (non-residential African American fathers). From the perspective of the participatory worldview, I sought to provide a voice for non-residential African American fathers as I addressed the issues presented through each method of data collection (survey/questionnaire, interviews, and focus groups) and the literature. Various researchers have developed action agendas to assist fathers in rising above the suppression of the “negative African American male/father image.” I examined, synthesized, and selected those agendas suitable for exploring the problem stated in this study.
Problem Statement

African American male students have historically and presently occupied the lowest percentile of academic achievement (Donnor & Shockley, 2010; Rowley & Bowman, 2009) and have become the focus of the prison to pipeline initiative that indicates that they are more likely to serve time within the prison system as opposed to completing a four-year degree (College Board, 2010; Riddick, 2010). Schools have a major impact in shaping the academic process of students (Hucks, 2011) as does the home environment (Jackson & Hilliard, 2013). The traditional two-parent, male- female family structure has become less prevalent in African American homes (Perry, 2009) due to one out of three African Americans being involved in marital relationships, leaving more African American fathers to function as non-residential parents (Jackson & Hilliard, 2013). Studies have shown that growing up in a father-absent home has affected boys in a more devastating manner than girls (Mandara & Murry, 2006; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). As non-residential parents, perceptions of the significance of their roles may lead African American fathers to underestimate their involvement in their child’s life (Morgan, Nutbrown, & Hannon, 2009). Joe and Davis (2009) wrote:

With such an increased emphasis on children’s academic performance, in addition to the disproportionate number of African American males entering elementary schools at an academic disadvantage, the collaboration among those actors (i.e., teachers, parents), factors (i.e., socioeconomic status), and institutions (i.e., early childhood centers, schools) is critical. (p. 261)
The lack of academic preparedness of African American male students is evident throughout their educational process. With consideration of academic features, researchers reported that adolescent African American males lag in skill achievement (Jackson & Hilliard, 2013). While studies have been conducted to explain father involvement in the academic achievement (De Luccie, 1995; Jeynes, 2005, 2014; McBride, 1990; McBride, Sullivan, & Ho, 2005; Rimm-Kaufman & Zhang, 2005), previous research has failed to study the lived experiences of non-residential African American fathers in the academic process of their male children.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe non-residential African American fathers’ perceived roles and experiences in the academic process of their male children in a suburban city located in the East-Central region of Georgia. Non-residential refers to living outside/apart from the child (Brown, 2014). The study was limited to male children and fathers who do not currently nor have ever lived in the home with their male child/children at any time. Fathers’ perceptions of their roles were generally defined as what the fathers felt they should do and the manner in which they should fulfill actions related to the academic process of their male children (grades 3-12). Academic process referred to all undertakings that pertain to school-related academic education. Self-efficacy theory and critical race theory were the two theories that guided the study. Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1976) refers to one’s belief in his or her ability to accomplish a specific task. Although self-efficacy theory is not specific to non-residential African American fathers, it frames an exploration of
non-residential African American fathers’ belief in their ability to function as fathers and
determines their perceptions of their roles in the academic processes of their male children.
Critical race theory (Bell, 2002) helps in describing the lived experiences of African American
boys and men. Critical race theory focuses on the societal effects of white supremacy on the
African American male experience.

Significance of the Study

This study sought to understand and explain non-residential African American fathers’
roles in the academic process of their male children. The site chosen for the study was a
suburban city in East-Central Georgia that displayed a high representation of African Americans
who could benefit from the study by gaining an understanding of how fathers’ roles matter when
considering the academic success of their males children (Perry, 2009). In consideration of the
site’s high population of non-residential African American fathers, this information is also useful
to teachers and administrators in schools as they plan and implement parental involvement
initiatives. Findings from this study can also be used in other areas of the United States and used
to understand non-residential fathers’ perceptions of their roles in their children’s academic
process for other races and ethnicities as well for female children. Society’s understanding of
non-residential African American fathers’ personal role perceptions will help to make clear any
assumptions held about non-residential father involvement in the school lives of their children. It
is important to hear directly from non-residential African American fathers, as much of the
literature that speaks on father involvement with student academics hones in on the mother’s
perceptions and neglects the perceptions of fathers (Guzzo, 2009).
America is losing many (94.1 deaths per 100,000 population) of its young African American males to death (primary cause of death is homicide at 50.4%) (Miniño, 2010; Riddick, 2010) and comes as a result of the, previously noted, pipeline to prison epidemic (College Board, 2010). Pipeline to prison is the mentality that shuns high academic achievement and leads to a display of masculinity through activities that are unlawful, leading to the perpetuation of high incarceration rates among African American males (Perry & Bright, 2012). Invasive issues of academic underachievement among African Americans exist despite awareness of the importance of education as exemplified by poor academic achievement, school failure, over-representation in special education classes, low standardized test scores, high dropout rates, and low college enrollment (Riddick, 2010). Specifically, when compared to their Caucasian counterparts, African American males (college students and children) are considered to be at an academic disadvantage as they are faced with the matter of proving themselves against social misconceptions (Riddick, 2010). Dye (2006) conducted a study to show the impact of father involvement and student academic success in school and college ages students, and a direct correlation was found between father involvement, though complex (Graves, 2010), and the academic development/success of students in the African American community, specifically males.

The theoretical implications of the study derived from the self-efficacy theory developed by Albert Bandura (1971, 1976, 1993) that originated out of his social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual’s belief in their ability to achieve success in a given situation or on completing a specific task. Bandura (2006) presented that an individual’s attitude,
abilities, and cognitive skills make up what is known as the self-system. This self-system is responsible for how one perceives situations and differentiates and how one behaves as a response to various situations. Bandura (1995) stated that all people possess the ability to identify goals, things they would like to modify, and things they would like to achieve. The critical race theory (Bell, 2002) adds that African American males are faced with obstacles that have had the ability to obstruct their understanding and value of self. These obstacles have contributed to misconceptions of societal position and affected perceptions of their position in the home.

Non-residential African American fathers must first know their roles, understand their roles, and have a belief in their ability to fulfill their roles in the academic process of their male children. “Behavior can be self-regulated, not only by anticipated social and other external consequences, but also by self-evaluative responses to one’s own behavior” (Bandura, 1971, p. 229). Non-residential African American fathers must seek to remain self-reflective in their roles and intentions for involvement in the academic process of their male children. Non-residential African American fathers must believe in their abilities to play an important role in the academic process of their male children. According to Bandura (1993), “beliefs of personal efficacy can shape the course lives take by influencing choice of activities and environments” (p. 135). It is essential to understand what factors motivate non-residential African American fathers to participate in roles that contribute to the academic process of their male children. Motivation, along with accomplishments and states of effectiveness, are controlled by one’s perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001).
Before non-residential African American fathers are able to at high levels of self-efficacy, they must have an understanding of their identity as an African American male then as a father. According to Stets and Burke (2000), the identity theory explains that the self be reflexive as it holds the ability to name, categorize, or classify itself in congruence with other social categories or classifications. Non-residential African American fathers must resolve to develop their identity in seeking to understand and perform in their roles. Through the process of identification, one is able to form their identity (McCall & Simmons, 1978) in efforts to understand their roles (Stets & Burke, 2000). Stets and Burke (2000) stated that “In identity theory, the core of an identity is the categorization of self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance” (p. 225).

Research Questions

The central question was designed to describe non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children:

- What are non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children?

Morgan et al. (2009) conducted a study which found that fathers underestimate their level of involvement in their children’s lives. A criterion for participation in this study was that the non-residential African American fathers must have at least one male child in grades three through twelve. Researchers found that father involvement was associated with a child’s age, with more involvement occurring during early childhood (Phares, Fields, & Kamboukos,
2009). Non-residential African American fathers were reported as showing a decrease of involvement for African American male students as they enter adolescents (Lowe & Dotterer, 2013).

The guiding questions to support the central questions are as follows:

- What roles do non-residential African American fathers play in the academic process of their male children?

According to role theory, non-residential fathers were found to participate in the role of breadwinner as opposed to roles connected to the cognitive, social, and emotional development of their children (Huang, 2009). Research is needed to explore the roles that fathers do play in the academic lives of their children and how their perceptions of those roles contribute to their involvement.

- What factors shape non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children?

How non-residential African American fathers involve themselves in their male child or children’s academic process determines the roles they play. Many factors may shape their views of their roles such as mother gatekeeping, finances, mother relationship status, and extended family (Guzzo, 2009; Huang, 2009; Perry, 2009; Perry & Bright, 2012; Schober, 2012). This research explored how fathers’ experiences have shaped their perceptions of these roles as their perceptions are the determining factors for their actions.

- What do non-residential African American fathers perceive as the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children?
As the contributions and responsibilities of non-residential fathers becomes an uncertainty, non-residential fathers become insecure of their father identity (Guzzo, 2009). “Academically successful African American men have been significantly aided by their father’s involvement when they assist in monitoring school work and social relations” (Grief, Jones, Worthy, Whilte, Davis, & Pitchford, et al., 2011, p. 249). This research informed the final question of the study as it provided information that presented that there are issues that affect how non-residential fathers view themselves and their place as fathers. There is also information here that suggests that male children can be successful with the academic support of their fathers. However, the information further explained that those fathers that provided the academic support of their male children understood their roles beyond the traditional breadwinner, protector, and disciplinarian.

Research Plan

A qualitative method was chosen in order to explore the meaning of fathers’ experiences that have shaped perceived roles with their male children’s academic process (Creswell, 2013). A phenomenological design was chosen to allow the researcher to describe the lived experiences of non-residential African American fathers and understand their experiences through language expression (Moustakas, 1994). A transcendental phenomenological design was chosen as it focuses on a descriptive analysis of one’s experiences. As related to this study, transcendental phenomenology focuses on descriptions of non-residential African American fathers’ experiences. Transcendental phenomenology also requires that researchers bracket their viewpoints and experiences toward the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing is an
important feature as it allows the researcher to operate outside of personal bias and provide a mechanism for minimizing the influence of assumptions from the analysis and findings.

The setting of the study was a suburban city in the East-Central region of Georgia. Interviews were conducted in meeting rooms on the third floor of a local university. The interviews convened at the university due to its central location in the city.

Purposeful sampling was chosen and conducted through maximum variation and snowball sampling. The sample size consisted of eight participants. The sample was collected non-traditionally, through observing fathers in public, local churches, businesses, social media, referrals (participants) and the word-of-mouth (community). The participants were non-residential African American fathers who have never been married to their male child or children’s mother, who have never lived in the home with the child, and have at least one male child in grades 3-12. The involvement of African American fathers is deemed a significant factor of positive cognitive outcomes for children starting with toddlerhood through late adolescents (Davis, 2012).

Data was collected through surveys/questionnaires (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler’s (2005) Parental Role Construction for Parental Involvement Scale), interviews, and focus groups. Data was analyzed through Moustakas’ (1994) model of data analysis guidelines for transcendental phenomenology. Bracketing was used to acknowledge and set aside the researcher’s personal experiences related to the topic of study. Significant statements were drawn from interviews and focus groups. The significant statements were consolidated for the development of common themes. The common themes were placed in one of two categories: textural and structural
descriptors. A composition of the descriptors was used to capture the essence of the phenomenon.

**Delimitations**

Participants were delimited to African American fathers of male children. In order to ensure maximum variation (Polkinghorne, 1989) within this population, the sample only included fathers of male children across grades 3 – 12. The rationale behind this decision was that fathers who have a male child or children who have at least reached the third grade will have had opportunities or experiences with involvement in their male child or children’s academic process. The study was delimited to self-identifying African American males who were non-residential, defined as not living in the home with their male child/children or having never lived in the home with their male child/children.

**Definitions**

1. *Non-residential*: fathers who do not reside in the home of their children and are not married to the child/children’s mother (Perry, 2009). For the sake of this study, the non-residential will not include divorced fathers.

2. *Academic process*: also considered as school performance; how students perform and progress academically in school, excluding extracurricular activities (Bacro, 2012).

3. *Perception*: an individual’s view, belief, or ideology of a given phenomenon or action (Troilo & Coleman, 2012).

4. *Parental Role Construction of Parental Involvement (PRCPI)*: survey used to assess parental perceptions of their involvement (Vanderbilt University, 2005).
5. *Father absence/absenteeism:* is a term used by researchers to indicate that a child has lived for part or all of their childhood in a house without their biological father due the parents’ separation of never living together (Boothroyd & Perrett, 2008; Brown, 2014).

**Summary**

Chapter one provided a discussion of the background concepts underlying the issues that surround non-residential African American fathers and their male children. The purpose of the study was to understand and describe non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children. This study was significant to the selected site (a suburban city in the East-Central region of Georgia). As the human instrument, the researcher’s role was to ensure that the voices of non-residential African American fathers are heard as they are minimally presented in the research. Although the sample was delimited to African American fathers, the assurance of maximum variation within the sample was ensured through sampling fathers with male children across grades 3-12. This chapter included further explanations and definitions of the terms that were used throughout the study. Transcendental phenomenology was chosen as the research design in order to capture the true essence of the lived experiences for each participant through thick-rich description; bracketing all personal experiences to provide the best representation of information provided by each participant (Moustakas, 1994).
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The presence of the African American fathers in the lives of their children has been found to enhance development in early childhood (Greif et al., 2011; Kelley, Smith, Green, Berndt, & Rogers, 1998) with their involvement being associated with positive results in their children’s behavior and stronger cognitive skills (Black, Dubowitz, & Starr, 1999). Unfortunately, there has been a steady increase in the number of non-residential fathers in the African American community since the 1960s as many mothers have reported that biological fathers are neither present in the home nor participatory in their children’s lives (Barajas, 2013; Perry, 2009). Further, African American boys have continued to lag behind other students across all grade levels and carry a school completion rate of 1.26 fewer years when compared to other students (Barajas, 2013; Hucks, 2011). Lower student achievement has been observed (reading achievement and SAT scores) in boys who experience father absence when compared to boys with father presence (Barajas, 2013; Chapman, 1977). Research is needed to describe the experiences of non-residential African American fathers that have shaped their views of fathering and how their views determine their perceptions of the roles they should play guiding their sons through in achieving academic success.

The theories framing this study are outlined in this chapter. In this chapter, multiple features and perspectives relate to the involvement of non-residential African American fathers in the academics of their male children. Previous literature is synthesized that relate to the barriers that prevent non-residential African American father involvement, non-residential
African-American fathers’ perceptions of their roles, non-residential African American fathers’ personal experiences with education. Themes that emerged from the research found in previous literature will also be discussed. The conclusion of this chapter consists of noted gaps in the literature that relate explicitly to non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children.

**Theoretical Framework**

In light of what has been written of the South, Americans in general do not have a clear mental apparition of all that encompasses the southern region of the United States as various facets of media, folk tales, and historic markings along roadsides continue to paint unrealistic portraits that do not expose its true experiences and intensities of life (Ayers, 2005). Ayers (1996) stated that:

Geographers have noted that Americans, with remarkable uniformity and consistency, picture their country's regions in ways that blur their diverse human characteristics into stereotypes. One of the chief features of that imagined map is the "Southern Trough" that cuts across Mississippi and Alabama, embracing parts of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Georgia at its edges. This trough appears to most Americans as the least desirable place in the United States in which to live. Other Southern states cannot take too much grim comfort from such disparagement of their Deep South neighbors, for the sides of the trough rise only gradually until they reach the usual boundaries of what Americans take to be the North, the Midwest, and the West. The whole South appears to be a vast saucer of unpleasant associations. (p. 62)
Polls have indicated that White Southerners are the most satisfied with their home states as they deem their region of the United States as a shelter from the cruelties of the North, believing that they live in the best part of the United States (Ayers, 2005; Reed, 1972, 1982, 1983) void of their ancestral history’s contributions to Blacks. The South has not lent itself as the most favorable living environment for those persons of color as evidenced in the cyclical oppression demonstrated through slavery, segregation, racism, and the subsequent actions that have ensued throughout its history. “Things are especially complicated for Black Southerners” (Ayers, 2005, p. 38). The way of life for Blacks in the southern region has been heavily impacted by the generational practices of Whites but has been further degenerated as they’ve experienced criticism, rejection, and ridicule from those whom they would consider as their own, Blacks in the North. Harris (1993) stated that:

It seems very often that Blacks in the North feel themselves superior to Blacks in the South, because they think Blacks in the South were simple-minded enough to stay and suffer the worst of the horrors and indignities. Southern Blacks too often are called 'Bamas' and country niggers, and are seen as backward and uneducated. (p. 232)

One congruent idea of White and Black Southerners has been that non-Southerners simply do not understand the ways of the South (Ayers, 2005; Harris, 1993). Exclusively, for southern Blacks, the South has created the emotive attraction of a homeland; not so much that Blacks have loved the South, but that they have made it their own through hard work and sacrifice (Appadurai, 1998; Handler, 1998; Wallerstein, 1988).
Theory serves as an explanation of how some facet of the way humans behave or perform is organized. The mechanisms of theory are principles and preferably well-defined concepts about a phenomenon. As concepts and principles are two significant components of theory, they assist researchers in understanding or providing explanation of the events that occur around us and in the prediction of future events, which can be causal or correlational (Moore, 1991).

“Theory is the summary and synthesis of what is known about a field and is the reduction of our knowledge to the basic ideas, presented in a way that show their underlying patterns and relationships” (Moore, 1991, p. 2). Theory is essential to qualitative inquiry as it provides concepts for naming the events that we observe and an explanation of the relationship between concepts. Theory has allowed qualitative researchers to explain how to bring about change based on what they have observed by identifying an issue and developing a plan for modifying the issue. “Theory also helps us understand what we don’t know and, therefore, is the only guide to research and increases its ability to solve other problems in different times and different places” (Moore, 1991, p. 2).

Self-efficacy theory (SET) deals with a person’s belief in their ability to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1993, 2006). The concept of self-efficacy originated in the field of psychology and is central to the psychologist, Albert Bandura’s, social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of observational learning, social experience, and reciprocal determinism in the development of personality. According to Bandura (1971), a person’s attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills comprise what is known as the self-system. This system has played a major role in how individuals perceive situations and how individuals behave in response to different
situations. Self-efficacy plays an essential part in this self-system. Self-efficacy is a person’s belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation (Bandura et al., 2001). Bandura described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave, and feel (Bandura, 1995). While the self-efficacy theory relates to the ability of all persons to calculate, within their consciousness, their own ideology of self, Okech and Harrington (2002) promote that Blacks must hold an understanding of Black consciousness to undergird the development of their philosophy of self. Okech and Harrington, (2002) wrote:

Black consciousness refers to an individual’s beliefs and attitudes about his or herself, own race, and the White majority vis-à-vis the Black experience. Several have documented the stages or levels that a Black individual undergoes towards achieving a sound Black consciousness or racial identity. (p. 214)

In identifying the role of the self-efficacy theory, Bandura (1995) stated that virtually all people can identify goals they want to accomplish, things they would like to change, and things they would like to achieve. However, most people realized that putting these plans into action is not quite so simple. Bandura (2006) and others (Bandura et al, 2001) have found that an individual’s self-efficacy plays a major role in how goals, tasks, and challenges are approached. Wentzel and Wigfield (2009) state that:

People can gauge their self-efficacy by the emotional state they experience as they contemplate an action. Strong emotional reactions to a task provide cues about an anticipated success or failure. When they experience negative thoughts and fears about their capabilities (e.g., feeling nervous thinking about speaking in front of a large group),
those affective reactions can lower self-efficacy and trigger additional stress and agitation that help ensure the inadequate performance they fear. One way to raise self-efficacy is to improve physical and emotional well-being and reduce negative emotional states. Individuals have the capability to alter their thoughts and feelings, so enhanced self-efficacy can influence their physiological states. (p. 37)

Bush and Bush (2013) noted that researchers have continued to use the critical race theory to elucidate and capture the lives of Black boys and men. Critical race theory (CRT) deals with society and culture as they intersect at the juncture of race (Yosso, 2005) giving concentration to the pursuit of equality in association to race and ethnicity (Gordon, 1999). Khalifa, Dunbar, and Douglas (2013) stated:

Critical race theory (CRT) aims to understand how a regime of White supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America; it seeks to examine the relationship between that social structure and professed ideas such as the rule of law and equal protection. (p. 491)

Bell (2002) reported that Whites typify White supremacy as they perpetuate the existence of dishonest accounts in their negligence of acknowledging that legislation set forth to help Blacks ultimately serves to help Whites. In a study conducted on the collective works of Derrick Bell, the quintessential Critical Legal Studies scholar, Khalifa, et al. (2013) state:

In the end, Bell argues convincingly that decisions involving race are only made when the interests of the White majority is benefited or, to some extent, when a decision does
not adversely impact them. The will of the majority often tend to the maintenance of the status quo. (p. 493)

Historically, the image of the Black body has been used as the source of minstrelsy in film, theatre, and other forms of entertainment (Yancy & Ryser, 2008). Yancy and Ryser (2008) employ critical race theory to analyze the use of reverse minstrelsy that frameworks the film *White Chicks* (Alvarez, Mayes, Wayans, Wayans, Wayans, & Wayans, 2004). The writers, Marlon and Shawn Wayans, and director Keenan Wayans, of the movie *White Chicks*, utilized a creative comedic opportunity to make known to society the existence and actions involved with the mindset of White supremacy and/or White privilege. The Wayans brothers use the characters of two White wealthy women to portray and critique whiteness but White men slipped through the cinematic counter-gaze which has reaffirmed the notion of White male dominance as White males have continued to hold the mainstream of economic and social power in the United States (Yancy & Ryser, 2008). Yancy and Ryser (2008) wrote:

Indeed, within the historical context of the power of the white gaze, blacks were deemed devoid of critical subjectivity, that is, it was claimed that they were devoid of a perspective on the world, including a perspective on their own lives. (p. 733)

As a result, privilege, entitlement, and a sense of ownership remain foreign to Blacks in the United States as McIntosh (1997) wrote that:

White privilege is an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, a knapsack of special provisions, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports,
visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks" utilized on a daily basis in the White's lived experience. (p. 291)

My research focus related to self-efficacy, as non-residential African American (Black) fathers must possess a healthy level of self-efficacy in order to function in the roles of an active father in the academic process of their male children. My research focus may potentially advance or extend the theory as it focuses specifically on the self-efficacy of fathers in the African American community. The SET places major emphasis on student and teacher self-efficacy. CRT accompanies SET in the development of this research focus as it provides insight to the foundational existence of African American men (fathers) and how their positioning or status in society may contribute to their belief in self. Hence, affecting how they function in their roles as fathers. This research focus will transition the scope of study to a personal versus educational realm of psychology.

Related Literature

In efforts to distinguish and select the articles necessary for the preparation of this literature review, a computer search was initiated via the Liberty University online library. The initial search began with ProQuest and the Educational Research Information Center (ERIC), using a variety of specific terms such as non-residential fathers, non-residential African American fathers, father involvement, African American fathers, parental involvement, father roles, and African American boys. To substantiate the relevance of the study, limitations were placed on the selection of the main articles by ensuring that they were published within the last five years. However, after reviewing the articles concerning non-residential African American
fathers and father involvement, it was realized that there were many articles that needed to be included that had publication dates outside of five years.

After the collection of the initial research set, it was realized that another search was needed with more attention placed on the academics and rearing of the non-residential African American fathers’ male children. The additional computer searches focused on key terms such as African American male student achievement, father absenteeism, father-absent versus father-present, boys in single-parent homes, and African American boys in single-parent homes.

**African Americans in the United States**

African Americans have an extensive history in the United States. For the purpose of this study, emphasis was placed on the history of African Americans in the South. The history of African Americans began as a result of the forced migration of native Africans from the continent of Africa to subsequent the industrial efforts of slavery, towards an ensuing melee to become free of the shackles that bound, to the newly desired appreciation of freedom and a hunger for learning. As a result of courageous efforts by the well-educated leader, Frederick Douglas, whose influence turned relationship with President Abraham Lincoln, aided in bridging the great divide between Caucasians and African Americans (Fleming, 2015; Jackson, 1999). This endeavor set a new course for America.

The three great forces that became the cornerstone of the African American experience and history in the United States that led to their spiritual, academic, and social development were the African American church, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and African
American media. The three forces made a significant difference and continue to contribute to the growth of African-American people in the United States today (Fleming, 2015).

**The African American church.** The founding of the first African American church was fulfilled out of a necessity to maintain faith while seeking to endure the process of social reform (Billingsley, 1999) and the most severe encounters that often led to compulsory destitution and premature death (Fleming, 2015). The African American church also laid the foundation for the development of the first academic institutions of higher learning purposed for educating African Americans. Due to their affiliation with many of the denominations within the African American church experience, varying Baptist conventions, United Church of Christ, the United Methodists, and the African Methodist Episcopal church provided support for the African-American community and historically Black colleges and universities which were highly recognized within the community (Fleming, 2015; Pinn & Pinn, 2002).

Examples of HBCU’s that have led to the advancement of the African American experience in the United States are Xavier University in Louisiana, the nation’s leading university for educating African American physicians and pharmacists that is associated with a Catholic organization, and Oakwood University in Alabama that is associated with a Seventh-day Adventist Church organization. In the absence of faith, the people of the African American community in the United States would have perished, and the African American churches continue to fulfill an important role in the evolution of the African American community (Chambers, 1978; Fleming, 2015).
Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The establishment of HCU's provided an opportunity for African Americans to be embraced in the realm of higher education where other institutions would not (Fleming, 2015; Roebuck & Murty, 1993). HBCUs have made significant contributions to the journey of African Americans as they have and still provide cultural and educational opportunities. HBCUs make up only 3% of America’s 3,700 higher learning institutions as they are responsible for the matriculation of roughly 23% of all bachelor’s level degrees, 13% of all master’s level degrees, and 20% of all first professional level degrees earned by African Americans on an annual basis (Fleming, 2015).

African American media. African American media was responsible for telling the story of African Americans and did so when no other media would (Fleming, 2015; Jackson, 1999). African American media has served to keep African American communities informed as they struggled through for survival. The start of African-American media began with the launch of the Freedom’s Journal, which was published by a group of free African American men in New York in 1827 (Fleming, 2015). African American media served as a voice against slavery and a substantial role of conveying activist and community informant for the African America communities. The greatest impact of the Freedom’s Journal was primarily for those communities on the Eastern coast and in the South.

Today, African American media has expanded into many forms such as print, television, internet, and focused blogs (Fleming, 2015). Regardless of the form of media, African American media persists to remain as the essential voice, source of information, and academic resource serving as support of African American offerings to the United States. African American media
has been more important than ever (Fleming, 2015). Although African Americans have advanced to the position of having more extensive coverage in traditional media, coverage is not focused on the positive contributions that are made by a noteworthy sector of the American population but is often slanted toward the negative or controversial aspects.

**Father Absenteeism/Non-Residential Fathers**

The fact that non-residential fathers have had less direct contact in the lives of their children makes matters surrounding their roles and involvement more complicated as they are forced to rely on the mother of their child or children to facilitate contact. More contact with their children provides fathers with more opportunities to become familiar with their children and to develop skills needed to meet their needs (Guzzo, 2009; Lundberg, McLanahan, & Rose, 2007; Mikelson, 2008). Fathers who do not reside in the home with their children have found themselves having little to no input on the important decisions made on the behalf of their children (Huang, 2009). Reports from many authors on the differences between children raised in the home with their father and children raised in the home without their father have been documented over the years (Balcom 1998; Barajas, 2013 Daniels, 1986; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell, & Durfur, 1998; Milne, Myers, Rosenthal & Ginsburg, 1986). Children who have grown up in the home without their fathers have shown to graduate from high school and go on to attend college at a lower rate, show lower performance on standardized tests, and are considered to be more likely to have experiences with drug usage than children raised in the home with their father (Mandara & Murry, 2006; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004). Research has also shown
that growing up without a father in the home is more devastating for boys than for girls (Mandara & Murry, 2006; Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2004).

Barajas (2013) explained, “The majority of research concerning single parenthood has focused on the disadvantages faced by children raised in the absence of their father” (p. 15). This will aid in furthering the development of this chapter as father roles, African-American father roles, and non-residential African American father’s experiences are sought to be understood.

Canfield (1992) stated:

There is another measure of the damage of fatherlessness, one with which you may identify immediately. You see, it’s actually impossible for a father to be truly absent; part of him is always there. But in the fatherless home, he has given up his right to represent himself, and he often gets translated into a ghost, or a haunting spirit, or some would say a demon. No statistic can adequately measure the amount of pain caused by an absent father. (p. 225)

Brown (2014) explained that there is a continual endemic of father absenteeism, exemplified in non-residential fathers, that is plaguing the culture of African Americans in the twenty-first century. The endemic has shown of their neglect for responsibility as parents which have in turn, contributed to the spiraling statistic of African American boys raised in single parent homes by their mothers, littering the nation with confused sons (Jakes, 1995). The issues that surround the circumstances of non-residential African American fathers and fathers consider as absentee are a direct result of the infectious encounters of slavery (Brown, 2014; Morehouse College, 1999). Brown (2014) wrote:
This historical reality may seem unimaginable given all the dramatic, spiraling statistical data of today that overwhelmingly thwarts our positive images of African American fatherhood, but the alarm of absenteeism have not always been studied. Faith, family, and fidelity rested at the core of the Afrocentric characteristics, morals and values that determined a healthy, functioning, balanced home in the African community. Men loved and cherished their wives, groomed and raised their children, and made necessary provisions to secure their households. Absenteeism was not genetically woven into the fabric of the Afrocentric existence and to practice such behavior as absenteeism was shunned and caused an outpouring of shame by the entire community. A male figure that assumed the role of husband and father during this era was considered prosperous, mature, responsible, and prominent. (p. 81)

The persistence of “forced abandonment” of African American families by African American fathers by the harshness of slavery served as the platform for which father absenteeism exists and continues to thrive in the among African American families of today’s society (Brown, 2014). As a result, African American fathers have been subjected to questioning their places as the patriarch of their families due to being stripped of their opportunities to develop their rightful identity as fathers and husbands. The illegal occurrence of slavery (Wood, 1970) placed African American fathers in positions of being unworthy, ever since the decades following slavery up until now, as they find themselves at social and economic disadvantages (Brown, 2014). Brown (2014) wrote:
The core of fatherly absenteeism in the African American culture rests within men understanding their purpose and their power. When the influence of the male is used according to the will of God, then family structure and dynamics can be restored and secured faithfully. When this influence is either misunderstood or abused, then we will continue to face the challenges of a structure that is failing increasingly among each generation. (p. 21)

**Parental Involvement**

There have been many forms in which parents may be involved in the academic process of their children. The four types of parental involvement of schooling are described by Epstein (1987) as: (a) parent involvement in at home learning, (b) parent involvement at school, (c) home and school communications, and (d) basic obligations. Epstein’s (2008) four types of parental involvement were further developed into six levels of opportunities for parents to achieve involvement such as: (a) school-community collaboration, (b) school decision-making involvement, (c) home-based learning, (d) parent volunteer opportunities, (e) school-parent communication, and (f) child-rearing skills assistance.

**Parental involvement in at home learning.** To encourage student learning in the home, parents can complete simple tasks such as asking their children how their day was at school, ensuring to ask on a daily basis. This sends the child or children the message that their work and learning at school is important and to make clear that they have clear expectations. Parents have the ability to make critical contributions to their child or children’s education from pre-kindergarten through graduation from high school if there is a tone set within the home of the
importance of learning (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Reports from the 1994 College Board showed that reading achievement was more reliant on learning in the home than that of math or science (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Henderson and Berla’s (1994) report of the 1994 College Board still holds true for at-home learning for students, as parents’ reading aloud to their children is the most important activity to enhance their learning experience (Riddick, 2010).

**Parent involvement at school.** Parental involvement in schools has increased significantly between the years of 1999 and 2007 (Jeynes, 2007) but fell in most instances when measured in 2012 (Noel, Stark, Redford, & Zukerberg, 2013). It is necessary that parents understand that their presence in their child or children’s school encourages their child or children’s academic success. Parental involvement in schools is defined and measured by parents’ attendance at general meetings, parent conferences, school events, or by serving on committees (Jeynes, 2005). When compared to the 78% of parents that attended a general meeting, 89% of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade had parents that attended a general meeting (Jeynes, 2007; Stewart, 2008). The statistics for 2007 revealed that 78% of students had a parent that attended a parent conference with their teacher with 74% of parents having attended a school event, and 46% serving on a committee in comparison with a 1999 report of 73% of parents attending parent teacher conference, 65% of parents attending a school event, and 37% serving on a committee (Jeynes, 2007; Stewart, 2008). Noel et al. (2013) stated that the number of parents who attended a scheduled meeting had dropped to 76% and that proportion of parents who had served on a committee had dropped to 42%.
**Home and school communications.** It is imperative that the three actors in a student’s education are successful in the development of effective communication for the sake of promoting student achievement. The actors are the teachers that care for about their students and welcome the diversity of families, parents of students who want to be active participants in their child or children’s education, and administrators of schools or in districts with increased levels of diversity who understand that there is not an easy nor convenient solution to building lasting partnerships among families, schools, and communities (Allen, 2007).

**Basic obligations.** Hoover-Demsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJongy & Jones (2001) described basic family obligations to parental involvement in students’ education as establishing psychological and physical structure for completing homework and having continuous interaction with their children’s teachers and schools in reference to assigned homework as Epstein (1988) defined the basic obligations of parents to children and schools as providing food, supplying clothing, building positive home settings for learning, suitable shelter, maintaining and ensuring health and safety, provide home training and child rearing, and ensure that children have the proper school supplies.

**School-community collaboration.** Communities have the ability to provide schools with environments that encourage the reinforcement of values. The contributions of the community should serve as a supplement to the school’s established curriculum. The community’s contributions should enhance the culture of the school and the overall experiences of each student (Nieto, 1992). The community should also serve as a financial support system for the school; offering social and vocational opportunities for students and families that are deemed
necessary for endurance in modern society (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987; Mattessich & Monsey, 1993). Schools have offered to provide the community with a central point for educational services for the children as schools are symbolically viewed by the public as institution that has endured above all others (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). Schools have served as a source of employment for the citizens of the communities for which they are found in as well as forms of community service. Schools have been the environment that served for developing well-educated students that have the potential to become well-educated citizens who are prepared to be responsible in contributing to their community (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

**School decision-making involvement.** Schools must understand the importance of hearing parents’ as part of decision making as it enables families to participate in making decisions about the school’s programs and activities that effect the academic experience of the student body as a whole (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Voorhis, 2002). When it comes to school improvement, parents need to be included by allowing them the opportunities to provide suggestions and ideas (Epstein et al., 2002; National Network of Partnership Schools, n.d.). A benefit of having parents as real stakeholders brings forth a sense of ownership for programs and activities in the school (National Network of Partnership School, n.d.) and creates sources of input that echo opinions and ideas that span across various racial, socioeconomic, and ethnic groups that make up the school’s population (Epstein et al., 2002).

**Home-based learning.** Parents’ sense of self-efficacy in their ability to be successful in helping their children learn has been the determining factor for the manner in which home-based learning looks for each student, or whether home-based learning exists (Eccles & Harold, 1993;
Jeynes, 2007) as Hoover-Dempsey and Sanderl (1995) explained that parents’ self-efficacy stems from four areas: (a) their secondhand experience of others’ success of involvement, (b) emotional arousal, (c) their experiences with having success in other involvement or involvement related activities, and (d) verbal persuasion by others of the benefits of involvement.

**Parent volunteer opportunities.** Parental involvement has been achieved as parents have served as volunteers within the school (Mattessich & Monsey, 1993). Parents have served as volunteers in various roles or committees such as: (a) parent greeters at school events, (b) hosts to international students in their homes (high school), (c) ones who create networking opportunities for alumni students (high school), (d) alumni progress committee members (high school), (e) fundraising agents, and (f) event hosts. In 2007, the United States saw an increase in parents as volunteers rise to 46% (Allen, 2007; Jeynes, 2007) but declined to 42% in 2012 (Noel et al., 2013).

**School-parent communication.** Some schools have initiated a safe environment for effective communication with parents with the presentation of welcome signs for parents that enter the school (Chambers, 1998; Schechter & Willheim, 2009), making sure that the signs represent the range of ethnicities within the school population (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004), as teachers, administrators, and office staff serve them with a smile and welcome greeting. Parents became positively influenced as they saw the school being “customer friendly” (Chambers, 1998). Communication has also been effective through one-way and two-way methods. One-way communication takes place as the school seeks to inform the parent in any form concerning things such as activities and student progress, and two-way communication takes place with any
form of dialogue between parents and the school (Berger, 1991). Schools have used both forms of communication to ensure that opportunities are maximized for providing parents with information (Berger, 1991; Lai & Ishiyama, 2004).

Child-rearing skills assistance. Promoting and supporting the emotional, physical, social, financial, intellectual development of their children has been noted as the responsibility of parents (Schechter & Willheim, 2009). There are different types of child rearing such as authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved that have been applied to shape a child’s development (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, & Holt, 2009) that have been impacted by social class, culture, income, and wealth (Stewart, 2008). Parenting has been an ever-evolving practice that moves with the changes of cultural, social norms, and traditions (Noel et al., 2013). Programs and initiatives developed by schools and communities to aid parents who struggle with child rearing can serve as a great benefit to all stakeholders; most importantly, the children (Jeynes, 2005).

Father Involvement

There have been numerous accounts of research that covered the essence of parental involvement. However, these studies placed major emphasis on the parental involvement contributed by mothers (Bacro, 2012; Lowe & Dotterer, 2013). Another issue found in previous research is that if the father is mentioned, his participation is explained and revealed solely from the account of the mother (Schober, 2012). Fathers have been, and are currently seen in society, regardless of residential status, as being the subordinate parent, as father participation in their children’s lives has often been measured by quantity as opposed to quality (Cowan, Cowan,
Pruett, Pruett & Wong, 2009). To counteract this societal stigma, in a recent study by Troilo and Coleman (2012) reveals that father involvement has increased in the areas of engagement and accessibility: only in regards to fathers who are in marital relationships with their children’s mother (residential). A key factor for father involvement, especially in non-residential father involvement, is the manner in which mothers show their support for fathers in their roles (Perry, 2009).

In understanding the levels and quality of involvement concerning non-residential African American fathers, it is imperative to understand that the wantedness of the child from the father has played a major factor in how they are involved with their child, or if the father is involved. Unwed (non-residential) fathers who did not want their children tend to show little to no involvement in the lives of their children. “The wantedness of the child can impact whether men felt ready to be a father, which would affect paternal contact; this is proxied by whether the father suggested abortion during pregnancy” (Guzzo, 2009, p. 635).

Fathers have played an indispensably important role in the lives of their children (Holmes, Galovan, Yoshida, & Hawkins, 2010; Lamb, 1975) with their type of involvement changing based on the age of their children (Palkavitz, Copes, & Woolfolk, 2001; Phares, et al., 2009). There have been greater outcomes of positive success in children’s academics when fathers play a more active role (Graves, 2010; Riddick, 2010). Father involvement has been linked to positive child development. African American father involvement in boys, especially during the ages of adolescence, has decreased student disciplinary issues in school, and increased students achievement (Dye, 2006; Riddick, 2010). This, though, is contrary to Hofferth’s (2003)
finding, which revealed that African American fathers reported the least amount of involvement with their children. Fathers have gained a stronger sense of purpose when they remain involved in the lives of their children based on their sense of commitment to the expected roles of fatherhood which leads to further satisfaction in job performance, less family-work interference, and an overall increased satisfaction of life (Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007; Holmes et al., 2010).

Researchers have reported that the time and energy, knowledge, and skill of African American fathers were factors that collectively formed parental involvement activities in which they participated in. African American fathers participated in activities such as home-based, school-based and other forms of communication. In addition, non-residential African American fathers showed participation in numerous shared literacy activities with their children when measured between home visits (Abel, 2012; Morgan, et al., 2009).

**Benefits of Fathers’ Involvement**

Children, both male and female, have shown a greater enjoyment of school, are excited about participation in extracurricular activities, and make higher grades (A’s) when their non-residential fathers are involved in their academic process (Cheadle, Amato, & King, 2010; Furstenberg, Nord, & Peterson, 1983). When compared to children whose non-residential fathers are not involved, children whose non-residential fathers are highly involved show an increased pleasure in and were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities (Cheadle, et al., 2010; Downer & Mendez, 2005). In a study comparing the experiences and levels of enjoyment for students based on non-residential father involvement in academics, 45% (n = 356)
of children whose fathers’ were highly involved expressed a greater inclination for school participation than 34% \((n=229)\) of student whose fathers are not involved or recorded as having other than high involvement (Cheadle et al., 2010; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Riddick, 2010). When comparing student participation with regards to non-residential African American father involvement (Kelly, 1993; Zill, 1996), students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade (87%) and students in grades sixth through twelfth (92%) reported more participation in extracurricular activities whose fathers were actively and consistently involved than students who did not have any or consistent and active involvement from their fathers (Triolo & Coleman, 2012). Students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade (72%) and students in grades sixth through twelfth (73%) reported less participation in extracurricular activities whose non-residential African American fathers (Kelly, 1993; Zill, 1996) were not or less involved (Triolo & Coleman, 2012).

**Fathers’ Roles**

Studies have found that non-residential African American fathers, when compared to their Caucasian counterparts, present many characteristics that define their roles as fathers such as: (a) being less likely to live in the home with their children at the time of the child’s birth, (b) being more likely to maintain involvement with their children after the conclusion of the romantic relationship with the mother (Edin, Tach, & Mincy, 2009), (c) having a higher frequency in participating in religious activities (King, Harris, & Heard, 2004), (d) visiting their children more often and living in closer proximity to their children (Bryant & Zimmerman, 2003), (e) being more likely to help their adolescent children with their school projects (King et
al., 2004), and (f) being more likely to become more involved with their adolescent children when they do not partake in non-violent delinquent behaviors (Coley & Medeiros, 2007).

The father, in general and regardless of race, has been understood as having a more playful role in the lives of their male children, with mothers having been reported as being more consistent with roles that necessitate dressing, feeding, grooming, and contributing to activities outside of the home such as organized sports and time spent with peers (Lewis & Lamb, 2003; Phares et al., 2009). Fathers have long been expected to assume the role of disciplinarians. In some cases where they are not seen as the harsh disciplinarian, they are seen as “Disneyland dads” (Greif et al., 2011), moral teachers, and guides from as far back in history as the Colonial period to when the 1930s and 1940s introduced the role of the father as a “sex-role model” (Shears & Shuler, 2011).

However, the roles of fathers has seen a major shift when compared to the last 50 years as more research emerges concerning the fathering practices of those outside of the middle-class Anglo samples. As more research has emerged concerning low income African American fathers, researchers have reported that fathers have begun to take on a more authoritative role and have become greater contributors to caregiving activities that were once seen as the sole responsibility of mothers (Shears & Shuler, 2011). It is important that, over the years, African American fathers have sought to believe in and maintain their role as an educational manager of their children (Nazem, Jazayeri Naseri, Memapour, & Ali Mohammadi, 2009; Riddick, 2010). African American fathers have long believed in fulfilling the role as breadwinner (Huang, 2009; Shears & Shuler, 2011). Many fathers have reported that they do not feel that they should see
their children if they do not have any money to bring for their support (Grief et al., 2011).

“Although the significance of providing for one’s child should not be minimized, if we minimize or limit good fathering to only that of a provider, we would miss the positive effects that a father’s presence has on children” (Shears & Shuler, 2011, p. 36). When comparing African American fathers to fathers in other ethnic groups based on economic status, researchers found that fewer African American fathers lived in the home with their children (McAdoo & McAdoo, 1997).

**Fathers’ Experiences with Their Fathers**

Fathers play a significant role as role models (Palkovitz, 2002; Pleck, 1997; Shears & Shuler, 2011). Many fathers have been limited to learning what it means to be a father, solely by what they observed and experienced from their fathers, as children tend to model the behaviors that they observe (Palkovitz, 2002; Pleck, 1997; Shears & Shuler, 2011). “What roles men serve as dads is not always understood, even by most men. Due to human nature, we are often confined to our experiences with our fathers or the representations of fathers we see on TV or in our communities” (Shears & Shuler, 2011, p.35). Research conducted in differing areas of the practices of fatherhood explain that first-time fathers developed their fathering identities, modeled their behaviors, and developed their thoughts on fatherhood based upon their own parents (Bowman, 2014; Guzzo, 2009; Yarwood, 2011).

As fathers have learned fathering from their fathers, there are two outcomes to be expected. Fathers will either mimic the fathering practices of their fathers, or, due to negative childhood experiences, will portray fathering characteristics that are the complete opposite of
what they experienced. Fathers who were fathered with positive involvement follow the same pattern of involvement for their children. “ Academically successful African American men have been significantly aided by their fathers’ involvement when they assist in monitoring school work and social relations” (Hrabowski, Maton, & Greif, 1998, p.211).

**Barriers to Fatherhood**

Non-residential African American fathers have faced many challenges in taking on and fulfilling the roles of fatherhood. In efforts to act in the roles of a father, non-residential African American fathers have found intertwined the issues of gender, race, violence, exposure to crime, and poverty, along with personal, professional, and social roadblocks (Grief et al., 2011; Riddick, 2010). In order to face and progress through each of the previously mentioned barriers affecting fatherhood for non-residential African American fathers, they must first be willing to address the crisis of the African American male to bring forth actualization for both males and females, as men have a crucial stimulus for the direction and tone of society (Brown, 2014; Munroe, 2001).

**Father beliefs.** Studies have been conducted that have found a connection between parental involvement and parent self-efficacy (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997). This research was later expounded upon with the focus of examining father self-efficacy and their abilities to move beyond barriers towards their involvement as factor for determining their overall involvement (Freeman, Newland, & Coyl, 2008). As a result of this research, it was found that barriers to father involvement were insignificant when taking into account the fathers’ level of self-efficacy and that fathers who presented high self-efficacy showed an increased level
of involvement, especially in their child’s education. Bowman (2014) explained that the barriers observed in this study may not be the same as those experienced by fathers with children in higher grade levels, as the study was only conducted with fathers of children in an Early Head Start program.

**Age.** Robbers (2008) defined younger fathers as those ranging in ages between 16 and 30 and older fathers as aged 31 and above. Younger, non-residential African American fathers have faced a greater plight than older non-residential African American fathers due to their lack of: (a) economic opportunities and resources, (b) training and education to provide skills that secure employment, (c) social support from their community and families, (d) emotional immaturity, and (e) services and supports that include affordable health care and childcare and housing assistance (Childs, 2012; National Fatherhood Leaders Group [NFLG], 2009c; Parke, 1996; Waller, 2002). Barber and Evans (2006) explained that a great number of younger, non-residential African American males become fathers as a result of unplanned pregnancies. Honig (2008) found that the time spent by older fathers negated the popular claims that later paternity produced greater outcomes for children and that older fathers were more contemplative concerning the time they spend with their children. Findings, for younger fathers in the study, delivered that younger fathers spent more time with their children but decreased in the amount of assistance they provided for their children as they grew older (Childs, 2012).

**Age and children with disabilities.** As father involvement is represented with great variation across generations (Bowman, 2014; Robbers, 2008), researchers presented that older fathers’ parental influence is more likely to be reflected in their child’s education than younger
fathers (Bowman, 2014; Saey, 2008). The presence of a disability within the child has been found to have negative and positive affects for older fathers as they have been observed to increase involvement in assistance with the care of the child or decreased involvement to avoid stress related to the child’s disability (Carpenter & Towers, 2008; Flippin & Crais, 2011) when younger fathers have been observed to resort to physically abuse toward their children having one or more disabilities, which could impact said children’s academic process (Freeman et al., 2008; Honig, 2008).

**Socioeconomic status.** Studies have shown that fathers’ attitudes greatly influence the manner in which they view fatherhood as well as the roles they decide to fulfill as fathers. Fathers of lower socioeconomic status (SES) tend to take on more caregiving roles and have a more authoritative attitude towards parenting than fathers of higher SES (Shears & Shuler, 2011). However, Shears and Shuler (2011) pointed out that most research on fathers has been conducted with African-American fathers of low SES and with Anglo fathers of higher SES. This excluded the fathering attitudes and actions of African American fathers of higher SES as well as the fathering attitudes and actions of Anglo fathers of low SES. SES was observed as being a strong predictor for parental involvement in the academic process of their children (McCoach, Goldstein, Behuniak, Reis, Black, Sullivan, & Rambo, 2010; Mitchell & Hauser-Cram, 2010). Nevertheless, researchers have found that social status and income had no implication as to why attitudes should be considered as barriers to involvement and becoming involved with respect to those who are of lower status (Freeman et al., 2008).
**Father incarceration.** The rate of incarceration among African American fathers has played a major role in their inability to be involved in the lives of their children with one third of all African-American males aged 20 to 29 being incarcerated as of 2003 (Perry & Bright, 2012). African-American father incarceration has served as a major barrier to their ability to fulfill any role as a father; both in and outside of prison (Arditti, Smock, & Parkman, 2005; Perry & Bright, 2012). Even after having been released, many fathers have experienced difficulty in fulfilling roles due to a lack of restoration of social and emotional ties between themselves and their children, encouraged by extended separation or the possible termination of parental rights (Bush, 1990; Currence & Johnson, 2003; Perry & Bright, 2012). African American fathers who have been incarcerated are at a greater risk of experiencing the phenomenon of mother gatekeeping both during and after incarceration as mothers tend to express the need to protect their children from their fathers (Perry & Bright, 2012) as male children have the tendency of developing the idea that they too will become incarcerated based on their understanding of what their fathers have experienced (Lewis, Garfinkel, & Fao, 2007).

**Mother gatekeeping.** Argys and Peters (2001) reported the continuous decline of non-residential African American father visitations in which, according to Guzzo (2009), is a direct effect of a mothers’ decision to interfere with the father’s ability to participate in fatherly roles (Huang, 2009). Characteristics portrayed by mothers are a direct designation for the characteristics observed in non-residential fathers (Miller, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 1997). Mother or maternal gatekeeping is defined as: (a) the separation of family role images, (b) the urge to confirm material identity, and (c) the setting of rigid standards in reluctance to release
family responsibility (Bowman, 2014; McBride, Brown, Bost, Shin, Vaughn, & Korth, 2005). Mothers have directly or indirectly prevent fathers from being involved in the children’s academics as they place constraints on fathers (Palm & Fagan, 2008) in accordance with the traditional views of mothers as the homemaker and caregiver with the father serving as the breadwinner and sense of security (Bowman, 2014). Mothers have also tainted the image of the role of the father in the mind of the child if they did not speak and act in such a way that showed the child that she supported the father in his fathering roles (Perry, 2009).

Mothers have played a major role in how non-residential African American fathers participate in their children’s lives. Non-residential African American fathers have experienced difficulty in attempting to spend the necessary time needed with their sons because of the mother’s inability to maintain simplicity in their understanding of the relationship between child support and time spent (Huang, 2009). Mothers’ attitudes towards the fathers have also affected how she allows access of the children to non-residential African American fathers. The mother’s and non-residential father’s relationship status or ability to communicate effectively have played a major role in the non-residential father’s opportunities to rear and nurture his children (Guzzo, 2009; Lowe & Dotterer, 2013).

**Maternal relationships.** Non-residential African American fathers are at a disadvantage to full involvement with their son’s, due to their residential status, and are less inclined to visit with their sons on a more frequent basis when their child’s mother is involved in or has started a new relationship, especially if her partner resides in the home with the child. Guzzo (2009) suggested that non-residential fathers’ visitations will be affected by the romantic relationship
status of their child or children’s mother as they view a relationship with their children and their children’s mother as a package deal, which is attributed to men’s father identity and their views of fatherhood (Townsend, 2002). While there has been limited research on maternal relationships and father visitation specific to non-residential African American fathers, Guzzo (2009) and Townsend (2002) presented information that provides understanding regarding the effects of and link between maternal relationships and father. There has been evidence of a possibility that paternal (non-residential father) visitation may decrease with any type of co-residential partner of their child or children’s mother as non-residential fathers remain unaware as to whether or not the mother’s co-residential partner is interacting with their children, but that they know that the co-residential partner has a greater opportunity to be involved with the child or children (Guzzo, 2009; Mikelson, 2008).

**Maternal extended family.** High levels of non-marital childbearing in the African American community and increased risks of paternal disentanglement have left many African American mothers and their children to profoundly rely upon the support and assistance of the mother’s extended family (Perry, 2009). The number of non-residential African American fathers has seen a steady increase since the 1960s (Mincey & Dupree, 2001; Perry, 2009). The roles and responsibilities of biological fathers have been replaced by the maternal extended family as the non-traditional family formation in the African American community show brokenness and disorganization (Perry, 2009).

Previous literature described the maternal extended family as the strength in the African American community that counterbalances the lack of biological father involvement (Martin &
Martin, 1978). As maternal extended families have continued to “stand in the gap” for the absence of non-residential African American fathers, members of the maternal extended family may contribute to the fathers’ decisions to be absent in the lives of their male children. The traditional and current practice of maternal extended networks of sharing emotional and economic resources have provided an alternative to marriage (Cherlin, 1998). This makes it easier and more comfortable for women to have children out of wedlock and easier for men to neglect their responsibilities of fatherhood (Martin & Martin, 1978).

There have been reports made by non-residential African American fathers of the hostile engagement they have experienced when dealing with their child’s mother’s family (maternal extended family), thus creating a significant barrier to father involvement (Laakso & Adams, 2006). Perry (2009) wrote:

What is clear is that the tension between many African American nonresident fathers and their children’s maternal extended family supports the notion that, although extended family networks are not necessarily inherently inferior relative to more “traditional” family formations, they often lead to more ambiguity for fathers regarding the definition and fulfillment of their paternal roles. (p. 221)

**Non-residential father distress.** An ample portion of a father’s identity has been intertwined with the roles he plays as a father and husband but for those fathers who have not had a marital relationship with their child’s mother, it is less likely that he will not have the opportunity to develop a well-established relationship with his child or children. This may cause him to struggle with how to institute adjusted and separate identities for maintaining contact with
his former mate and his child or children (Harper & Fine, 2006). Lacking the necessary support to cope with the understanding of how to maintain proper communication with their former mate, in regards to their child or children without regard to issues that existed while in a relationship, has caused non-residential fathers to experience feelings of stress and frustration that lead to low levels of poor psychological health and lower levels of life satisfaction (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Harper & Fine, 2006; Umberson & Williams, 1993). As a result of this experience, non-residential fathers have attempted to relieve stress or fill their void by engaging in health compromising behaviors (alcohol and drug use) which ultimately creates more grief and the possibility of suffering from a lifestyle that transpires in a downward spiral (Harper & Fine, 2006; Umberson, Crosnoe, Reczek, 2010). 

Distress experienced by non-residential fathers has been connected to numerous facets of the father-child relationship and has been found to affect children differently during childhood and adolescence as fathers’ distress impedes the development of a close relationship between non-residential fathers and their children. This, in turn, indicates that an increased level of non-residential father distress is related to a decreased value of father-child relationships (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Harper & Fine, 2006; Papp, Cummings, & Goeke-Morey, 2005; Retting & Leichtentritt, 2001). Harper and Fine (2006) hypothesized that increased levels of non-residential fathers distress is connected to decreased levels of a child’s well-being. This is supported by studies conducted by West and Newman (2003), which showed the slightest levels of parental distress having a positive relation to reports of difficult behaviors in school age children as well
as a study by Papp et al. (2005), which showed a connection amid parental distress and adjustment issues in school age children of early adolescence.

After testing whether the sex of a child diluted the connection between non-residential father distress and child well-being, Harper and Fine (2006) found that the sex of a child may not dilute the connection between father distress and child well-being amongst younger children but that the sex of a child has an important influence on the relationship between parental distress and child outcomes as (Cummings, Keller, & Davies, 2005), in a related study, found that there was no difference between boys and girls in the effects of non-residential father distress on suppressed or expressed behaviors and peer rejection. However, pro-social behavior was affected by negative parental distress more significantly in boys than in girls (Phares, 1997).

**Inter-parent conflict.** Non-resident fathers have been influenced by how they determine their parenting roles when there is a disconnect in the establishment of their relationship with their child’s mother, to whom they have never been married, as the non-resident father will find himself confused and disenchanted due to his lack of guidelines as his situation positions him as the “outsider” (Harper & Fine, 2006). The existence of inter-parental conflict has created an environment for strained relationships between parents and will also present difficulty in relationships between parents and children as the uncertainty or discouragement of the non-resident fathers’ roles creates conflict between the father and mother (Cowan, Cowan, & Schultz, 1996; Harper & Fine, 2006; Hetherington, 1993).

Studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between inter-parent conflicts and father-child relationship values due to conflict between non-resident fathers and mothers of
school-age children being found as positively associated with increased levels of conflict between the non-resident father and his child (Dunn, Cheung, O’Connor, & Bridges, 2004; Harper & Fine, 2006). In a study focused on non-residential fathers, researchers found that reactive fathering and father-child relationship values were positively connected to cooperative co-parenting and is beneficial to child development as conflict between mothers and non-resident fathers shows a steady correlation to profuse social and cognitive adjustment difficulties for children of all ages (Amato & Rezac, 1994; Davies & Cummings, 1994; Harper & Fine, 2006; Hetherington, 1993; Sobolewski & King, 2005).

Since children have commonly establish role identification and derive meaning from both mothers and fathers, it is essential that parents understand that as they allow conflict to persist, they create misunderstanding or distress within their children, pulling them into a triangulation of dispute, leaving them with problematic symptoms, and the need to help their parents reestablish equilibrium within their parenting relationship (Bowen, 1976; Harper & Fine, 2006; Jackson, 1968).

**Father-Child Relationship**

Dependent upon the relationship developed between a father and son, it is possible that both a father and son may stimulate or constrain one another’s development when considering a relational process (Holmes, Galovan, Yoshida, & Hawkins, 2010). Father-child relationships have been reported as a factor that influences a student’s cognitive, social, and emotional development (Zhang & Chen, 2010). Many African American father-son relationships have been severed due to the incarceration of the father, which creates a decline in the possibility that the
son will ever have the opportunity to develop and maintain a constant relationship with his fathers (Bush, 1990; Currence & Johnson, 2003; Johnson & Waldfogel, 2002; Perry & Bright, 2012). It is necessary that sons and fathers have formed bonds of attachment that allow the son opportunities to understand and develop who he is by the examples set by his father as fathers are essential in aiding sons in the development of their identity and self-image (Bacro, 2012; Schober, 2012). “Particular attention should be paid to the image developed by the child that is conveyed by the father in their relationship with their child” (Bacro, 2012, p. 999).

It is important that African American fathers make efforts to create opportunities that foster attachment between themselves and their sons. A child’s representation of self in relationship with his father and the self-efficacy in school performance have both been factors that affect a child’s attachment relationship (Bacro, 2013).

**Child-Student Perceptions of Non-residential Fathers**

In search of the child or student’s perspective of the non-custodial (non-residential) father’s involvement in their lives, much of the research was based upon the feelings, thoughts, and opinions of those whose fathers are non-custodial due to the occurrence of divorce (Amato & Rezac, 1994; Arditti, 1992b; Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Umberson & Williams, 1993; Zaslow, 1989, 1998; Zill, 1988). Fabricius (2003) found in a study he conducted, based on the previous findings of Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakslee (2000), that children/students who grew up with their father living outside the home shared that they would have liked more involvement from their fathers and felt as if their fathers would have liked to had more time (opportunities for involvement) with them as well.
African-American Boys

There has been a consistent pattern of academic underachievement for African American boys, spanning throughout their academic process (starting from as early as kindergarten to post-secondary school), suggesting that there are differences among children’s school readiness that take place prior to their beginning school (Fan & Chen, 2001; Joe & Davis, 2009; Lewit & Schuermann-Baker, 1995). When compared to their Caucasian peers and African-American girls, African American boys are considered at an academic disadvantage (Riddick, 2010; United States Census Bureau, 2010). Where in some cities the rate has been as high as 70%, African American boys in the United States have a 52% chance of dropping out of high school, only making up 17% of the total school population (Riddick, 2010; United States Census Bureau, 2010).

African American boys have been disproportionately referred to special education classes as they are more likely to be placed in these than African American girls (Kunjufu & Prescott, 1992; Lanier & Wittmer, 1977; Terry, 2007) Similarly, Caucasian boys are placed into special education programs at two times the rate of Caucasian girls (Kunjufu & Prescott, 1992; Lanier & Wittmer, 1977; Terry, 2007). African American boys have often been classified as having symptoms that are associated with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) based on behaviors observed in the classroom and reported by teachers who do not have an understanding of the African-American culture (Lanier & Wittmer, 1977; Terry, 2007). Culturally, African American boys have been more assertive and energetic, entering kindergarten with the same eagerness to
learn as any other child (Kunjufu & Prescott, 1992). Many of these African American boys who have been suspected of having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) have actually been prime candidates for gifted and talented programs (Kunjufu, 2005; Terry, 2007). Brown (2014) wrote:

A major module in the foundation of securing a positive future for the African American male is the passion for education. Most statistics prove that a lack of education leads to favorable conditions for life, to include, minimum wage jobs, lack of health benefits, and low income housing to name a few. The typical stimulus of the American dream for the average African American male is only a fantasy in their minds that produce no tangible evidence that will motivate them to invest their desires and aspirations to become educated. (p.142)

**Summary**

There are numerous articles that have explained and discuss how students benefit from the presence or involvement of their father in their academic process. Much research has been done to illuminate what fathers’ roles should be based on mothers’ perceptions and what fathers’ roles should be according to societal norms and expectations. However, there is a need for research that seeks to hear and understand how the fathers experience and feel about their roles in the academic process of their children; specific to this study, non-residential African American fathers and their male children. There has been lagging research on non-residential African American fathers’ positions in the lives of their children, especially in academics. The research
that has been conducted was generally taken from the perspective of the mother. Research is needed that will allow the perspectives of fathers to be used as opposed to the traditional use of mother perceptions.

Studies have been conducted that explain that there is no correlation between African American father involvement and the academic achievement of their children (Kelly, 1993), while many studies show findings of the contrary (Downer & Mendez, 2005). The non-residential African-American fathers found in the studies that show no correlation of father involvement and student success were 30 years of age and above and of the middle class socioeconomic status. The realities of statistics have shown that the gross population of non-residential African American fathers does not fall within the realms of those demographics. Statistics also show that non-residential African American fathers were also reported as having lower educational attainment.

The fathers of this study each conceived their sons out of wedlock with some expressing that they never had a meaningful relationship with their son’s mother and others having had meaningful relationships but separating shortly after the announcement of pregnancy. In each of these instances, there have been reasons for mothers to be ill-willed and negatively biased towards fathers. Research developed to hear directly from non-residential African American fathers will aid in buffering negative views held towards them by society. Society’s negative views of African American fathers exist despite their status as residential or non-residential (Brown, 2014).
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions of non-residential African American fathers’ roles in the academic process of their male children in a suburban city in the East-Central region of Georgia. Fathers’ perception of their roles were defined as what the fathers felt they should do and the manner in which they should fulfill actions related to the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12. The theories guiding this study are self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1976) and critical race theory (Bell, 2002).

African American male students have historically and do presently occupy the lowest percentile of academic achievement (Donnor & Shockley, 2010; Rowley & Bowman, 2009). Schools have had a major impact in shaping the academic process of students (Hucks, 2011) as does the home environment (Jackson & Hilliard, 2013). The traditional two-parent, male- female family structure has become less prevalent in African American homes (Perry, 2009) due to one out of three African Americans not being in marital relationships, leaving more African American fathers to function as non-residential parents (Jackson & Hilliard, 2013). As non-residential parents, perceptions of the significance of their roles may lead African American fathers to underestimate their involvement in their children’s lives (Morgan et al., 2009). While studies have been conducted to explain father involvement in the academic achievement, previous research has failed to study the lived experiences of non-residential African American fathers in the academic process of their male children.
This chapter explains how the chosen research method was applied in order to conduct the study. The central and sub questions were provided with a rationale explaining how each contributes to the significance of the study. The setting, participants, and procedures were also presented to provide an understanding of where the study would be conducted, those involved in the study, and the steps that were taken to initiate the study and achieve data collection. The role of the researcher was provided in order to explain how the researcher has impacted or was validated for conducting the study. Data collection and analysis methods were named and described. This chapter concluded with methods for ensuring trustworthiness.

**Design**

A qualitative method was chosen in order to explore the meaning of fathers’ experiences with their male children’s academic process (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative inquiry was chosen in order to interpret and make sense of the experiences, behaviors, and perceptions of the non-residential African-American fathers of this study. Holloway (1997) stated that:

Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live. A number of different approaches exist within the wider framework of this type of research, but most of these have the same aim: to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures. Researchers use qualitative approaches to explore the behavior, perspectives and experiences of the people they study. The basis of qualitative research lies in the interpretive approach to social reality. (p. 2)

A phenomenological approach was selected to allow the researcher to describe the lived
experiences of non-residential African American fathers of male children and understand their experiences through language expression (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental was chosen for the research design as it focused on the description of the African American fathers’ experiences. Phenomenology provided the opportunity to understand non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions and experiences as fathers to their male children. Transcendental phenomenology also required that the researcher bracket her viewpoints and experiences toward the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This phenomenological approach was chosen, as it required the researcher to set aside all personal bias. Although personal experience played a factor, understanding of this phenomenon was gained based on data collected and guidance from the literature. Husserl (1964) stated:

That through transcendental subjectivity requires a further reduction, transcendental reduction. In this we not only hold in abeyance the things and features of things we posit through the “natural attitude” but also “bracket out” the phenomenal selves, including our own self. The idea is to reduce the whole of reality to transcendentally reduced data. (p. 19)

The shaping of students’ academic process was noted as the responsibility of two entities; home and school (Hucks, 2011; Jackson & Hilliard, 2013). As the family structure in the African American community has continued to move toward the single-parent home, non-residential fathers must realize the significance of their roles in the academic lives of their male children (Morgan et al., 2009; Perry, 2009). This research was conducted to describe the lived
experiences of non-residential African American fathers in the academic process of their male children.

**Research Questions**

The central question for the study asked: What are non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children? There were three subquestions that support the study:

**RQ1:** What roles do non-residential African American fathers play in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12?

**RQ2:** What factors shape non-residential African American father’s perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12?

**RQ3:** What do non-residential African American fathers perceive as the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12?

**Setting**

The setting of the study was a suburban city in the East-Central region of the Georgia. The population of 195,844 is 93% urban and 7% rural. African Americans were the majority and represent 107,182 (54%) of the population. There were 94,782 (48.4%) males and 101,062 (51.6%) females (Cities & Counties, 2014). The estimated median household income was $36,919 with an 11.1% unemployment rate (Cities and Counties, 2014). The recorded unemployment rate for the setting was higher than the national average. This setting was chosen due to its high African American population and the low academic success for African American
male students (Cities and Countries, 2014). Convenience was also a factor in selecting the setting of the study. Table 1 provides a summary of the demographics of the setting.
Table 1

*Suburban City Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Suburban City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>195,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>$36,919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews were convened on the third floor of a local university library. The site served as a central location within the city. However, video conferencing was implemented when necessary. No interviews were conducted in the homes of participants or private sites.

**Participants**

The sampling was purposeful/criterion based on the ideal that each participant would have experience of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). The criteria for purposeful sampling required that the qualitative researcher consider the participants in the sample (for phenomenology all participants must have experience of the phenomenon), types of sampling (to give an understanding of the central phenomenon and research problem with intent), and the
sample size (understand the necessary number needed to ensure the success of the study) (Creswell, 2013). Purposeful sampling was conducted through maximum variation and snowball sampling (word of mouth, referrals, social media, and public observations). Variation was sought through the range of grade levels of male children (3-12), fathers’ socioeconomic status, fathers’ age, and fathers’ level of education. Maximum variation sampling is a form of purposeful sampling that is used to represent a wide range of experiences of participants, which relate to a given phenomenon. Maximum variation is not associated with generalized or random samples but is used under circumstances where a random sample is not available or the sample size of a given study is not large enough (Maykut, & Morehouse, 2000). The most extensively employed method of sampling for qualitative research is snowball sampling as it allows researchers to gain information for potential participants via the recommendation of other participants (Noy, 2008). There was expected variation in the grade levels of the African American boys and fathers’ ages. There was low variation in the father’s socioeconomic levels and levels of academic attainment.

The participants were non-residential African American fathers (Table 2) who had never been married to their male child or children’s mother, who have never lived in the home with the child, and have at least one male child in grades 3-12. The sample size was eight participants, based on an early suggestion of eight-10, as it was anticipated that the nature of the study would lead to a vast amount of information. Morse (1994) recommends that a phenomenological study have at least six participants as Creswell (1998) suggests five to 25 participants. There are a number of factors, beyond sample size, that affect when saturation is reached (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Mason, 2010; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). Mason (2010) attributes the
instance of achieving saturation to the interaction between the interviewer and the participant.
The interactions between the interviewer and the participants of this study were very open and engaging which yielded in depth sharing on the part of each participant. Codes were examined from each interview to determine the point at which no new codes were returned (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Since no new codes were returned upon the eighth interview, data collection was terminated and it was concluded that saturation was reached.
Table 2

Summary of Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Socioeconomic Status</th>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Age at Becoming a Father</th>
<th>Age at Time of Interview</th>
<th>Son’s Academic Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1B</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2T</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3M</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4T</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Vocational/Technical</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5S</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Vocational/Technical</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6B</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7C</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8B</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedures**

The first requirement for this study was to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University. To obtain a sample of eight participants, a non-traditional method of sampling was used by approaching fathers observed in public, churches, businesses, by word of mouth (community), referrals (participants), and social media, having at least one male child in grades 3-12 with the following, “Excuse me, I am in search of fathers to participate in a study for the completion of my doctoral studies.” If the intended participant answers “yes,”
they were provided with an informational flyer (Appendix H). Once the intended participant was in acceptance of the criteria within the informational flyer, they were asked the following questions: (a) Is this your son? (b) What grade is he in? (c) Were you ever married to his mother? and (d) Have you ever lived in the home with your son? If the father answers each question in favor of the phenomenon of the study (if his son was in at least the third grade and he had never lived in the home with the male child or been married to his mother), the intended participants contact information was acquired and asked that he think of any fathers that he could recommend that would fit the criteria of the study (accompanied by the use of the participant recruitment script (Appendix G). He was also provided with a letter of recruitment (Appendix B) which included an informed consent. Participants that were not acquired in this manner were located through referrals from participants and members of the community.

Once the sample was collected, interviews were scheduled for each participant. Four field experts were chosen to review the interview questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), and the study was piloted with a father outside the study setting after IRB approval for the confirmation of limpidity. Each participant completed a survey/questionnaire (Jansen, 2010) titled, Parental Role Construction for Parental Involvement Scale (PRCPI) (Vanderbilt, 2005). The interviews were held in a meeting room of central location within the target city. An audio device was used to record each interview. Following the PRCPI and interviews, interviews were transcribed within one week. Participants were then invited to participate in focus groups (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1996, 1997). There were two focus groups. The first was held in the meeting room of a local university and was video-recorded. The second was conducted online via videoconference. At
the conclusion of the data collection process, interview and focus group transcriptions were analyzed along with PRCPI responses using Moustakas’ (1994) guidelines for transcendental phenomenology in search of significant statements, themes, and textural and structural descriptors.

**The Researcher's Role**

The researcher, as the human instrument (Patton, 1990), served as an advocate for the participants of the study. I am an educator in a school district that is heavily populated with African American boys who have experienced father absenteeism and difficulty in their academic process. The researcher is an African American woman with professional and personal concerns of the academic progress of African American boys in my community.

Epoche and bracketing started the process for conducting this study. The concept of epoche and bracketing was promoted by Edmund Husserl (1964), as he elaborated that phenomenological researchers possessed the ability to use reduction to suspend judgment regarding a phenomenon or belief and study the phenomenon in its original state (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010). Husserl (1964) explained epoche as a process used in qualitative research to minimize biases and assumptions so that a given phenomenon is explanation solely based on its exact meaning. Epoche is achieved by the use of a technique called bracketing (Husserl, 1964; Moustakas, 1994), where the researcher takes intentional steps to remove or “set aside” their beliefs, personal experiences and assumptions about a phenomenon in order to analyze the phenomenon based on how takes place in the lives of the study’s participants (Christensen & Brumfield, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). At the start of the study, I began using a notebook where I
listed and detailed each personal or professional experience with non-residential fathers that would affect how I conducted this study. Throughout the study, I revisited the notebook in order to ensure that remained bias. I also made sure to add experiences that came to mind that I have not discovered at the beginning of the study. Bracketing was implemented to describe the researcher’s beliefs, experiences, and assumptions of the phenomenon prior to the beginning of research (Campbell, n.d.; Creswell, 2007). The researcher also participated in a discussion of her interpretation of the phenomenon prior to the study.

**Data Collection**

The selected methods of data collection used for this study were surveys/questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Interviews were chosen as a method of data collection in order to conceptualize the common essence in a given experience with disregard of diversity amongst participants (Jansen, 2010). Surveys/questionnaire was used due to their simplicity and because they allow the understanding of diversity among participants within the population of non-residential African-American fathers (Baker Wuest, & Stern, 1992). There were five demographic questions at the conclusion of the survey that served as the questionnaire. The use of questionnaires allowed the researcher to gain more in depth information concerning aspects of the study and revealed common responses of the participant group (Mason, 2002). Focus groups were used in order to gain a multitude of information in one setting by “interviewing” several participants at once; allowing the participants to speak at will as opposed to an ordered fashion to create dialogue concerning the given phenomenon (Kitzinger, 1995). (Sub)cultural values or group norms may be highlighted as focus groups have the ability to delve into interpersonal
communication among participants (Kitzinger, 1995). Each participant completed an Informed Consent (Appendix I) where they were given an in depth description of the study.

**Surveys**

A published survey (Appendix F) developed by Vanderbilt (2005) was selected, titled Parental Role Construction of Parental Involvement (PRCPI). The survey was developed on the basis of a three-year study, which focused on the theoretical model of the process of parental involvement conducted by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997). The PRCPI has a three part scale: (a) parent–focused, (b) school-focused, and (c) partnership-focused, each with a 6-point Likert-type response scale. The survey focused on parental role construction, parental efficacy, general school invitation, specific invitations, specific child invitations, knowledge and skills, and time and energy. Validity and reliability of the Parental Role Construction of Parental Involvement Scale was established through usage in a more recent three-year study conducted by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) as the scale showed parents’ beliefs about what they should do in relation to their children’s academic process (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Hoover-Dempsey, Wilkins, O’Conner, & Sandler, 2004). A letter was submitted to Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey requesting permission to modify and use the survey (Appendix E).

Reliability coefficients are used within the practice of classical test theory (Webb, Shavelson, & Haertel, 2006) and are purposed for providing an index of measurement that has a stable range from 0 to 1 (Shavelson, 2004). Reliability coefficients are reasonably straightforward and are the proportions of the variance of an observed score in relation to an actual score (Webb et al., 2006). Coefficients that measure at or above 0.80 are considered to be
suitably reliable for the purpose of making decisions about study participants based on observed scores as a higher value, such as 0.90, is preferred if the decision to be made has significant penalties (Cronbach, 2004). The coefficient of alpha, known as Cronbach’s alpha, has been noted as the most commonly used coefficient for reliability (Shavelson, 2004) as it approximates test-score reliability of relationships between test items from a single test (Webb et al., 2006).

The participants were administered the survey before their interview with a single link via email. This would allow the information desired from the PRCPI and questions concerning the demographics of participant to be completed in one sitting; allowing the responses to both to be explored during the interview process.

The chosen survey (PRCPI) concludes with five demographic questions, which served as a questionnaire for the study. Researchers reported that questionnaires are not the most prominent among qualitative data collection methods, but are acceptable for the use of collecting information across a wider sample that will be reached by interview in the future (Atkinson, Delamont, & Hammersley, 1988). The use of questionnaires offer general exploration for how particular facts or opinions are defined by more qualitative methods when considered as a matter of interest (Walford, 1991) which provides a qualitative check on a sample of reoccurring responses to determine if participants’ were properly interpreting each item (Mason, 2002). The alpha reliabilities, for parent constructs and beliefs, established in the first two years of the study by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (2005) are listed below in Table 3.
Table 3

*Construct Alpha Reliabilities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale-Year</th>
<th>alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parental role construction for involvement: parent-focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental role construction for involvement: school-focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental role construction for involvement: partnership-focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parental role construction for involvement: parent-focused role beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental role construction for involvement: school-focused role beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parental role construction for involvement: partnership-focused role beliefs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interviews**

The next method of data collection was interviewing. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately 45 minutes. Each participant was asked 23 questions. Interviews were conducted face-to-face to gain rich descriptions of each participant’s experience. However, video conferencing was implemented to conduct two of the eight interviews as requested by the participants. Phenomenological studies are about the descriptions of participants’ experiences
through the use of long interviews to provide deep description (Moustakas, 1994). Interview questions are found in Appendix L and below in Table 4.

**Pilot Interview**

The pilot interview was conducted via video conference one evening in September 2015. The non-residential African American father had a son in elementary school (third grade) and resided outside of the setting where the study was conducted. The pilot interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. Based on the input from the pilot participant, it was decided that the vernacular of the 23 interview questions were ideal and simplistic. As the pilot interview was conducted, the pilot participant did not require any interpretation of the interview questions and expressed that none of the questions were indiscreet. As the interviews were conducted for the study using the original guiding questions (Appendix L), some explanations were given for certain questions; based on the needs of each participant.

**Interviews**

Interviews were conducted in the location described in chapter three (local university) at times that were convenient to each participant for six of the eight participants. Two of the eight participants selected to conduct their interviews via video conference at times that were convenient according to their availability. Each interview was conducted using the standardized interview guide (Appendix L). At the conclusion of each interview, theoretical memos (see Appendix Q) were recorded to notate the perceived emotional state, posture, and researcher’s overall assumption of each participant. Each interview was then replayed and transcribed within one week. Each participant met the goal of conducting the interview within a week of completing
the survey. Participants were anxious to contribute as they each scheduled interviews within four
days of completing the survey. A summary of participant survey completion and interviews,
along with interview medium, is included in Appendix R and Table 5. Participants were
identified using pseudonyms in order to ensure their anonymity.
Table 4

*Standardized Interview Guiding Questions*

*A Non-residential Father’s Personal Experience with Education*

1. Please describe your experiences in school at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

2. Please describe the person(s) that provided you with the most support while you were in school (elementary, middle, and high).

3. Please describe your mother and fathers’ education attainment.

4. Please describe your mother and father’s involvement in your education during your childhood.

5. What challenges did you face in education as a child (elementary, middle, and high school)? How did you cope when you had setbacks?

6. Please describe your experiences with teachers/school officials while you were in school (elementary, middle, and high).

7. Please describe your views of education now.

8. Please describe your post-secondary (after high school) experiences with education. (If applicable)

9. Please describe your experiences with teachers/instructors/professors at the technical, college, or university level (post-secondary). (If applicable)

10. What challenges did you face in gaining a post-secondary (technical, collegiate, graduate) education? How did you cope when you had setbacks? (If applicable)

*Non-residential Father-Son Relationship*

11. If you don’t think it’s too personal, please tell about when your son was born.

12. Tell me about your involvement in your son’s life since his birth.

13. Tell me about your involvement with your son’s homework.
14. Tell me about your PTA meeting attendance at your son’s school.

15. Tell me about your participation in parent conferences.

16. Tell me about your participation in extracurricular activities (clubs and sports).

17. Tell me about your participation for helping your son plan his future.

18. Tell me about your son. What kinds of activities does he enjoy?

19. What do you and your son do when you are together?

20. What kind of student is your son?

21. Does your son enjoy school—Why or why not?

22. What are your hopes for your son?

Non-residential Father-Mother Relationship

23. Please describe the current relationship between yourself and your son’s mother.

The purpose of the questions pertaining to personal experiences with education was to gather information about the participants’ encounters with education (elementary, middle, high, and technical, undergraduate, graduate, and/or post graduate). Questions 1 through 6 accounted for the participants’ personal educational experiences during childhood and adolescence (elementary, middle, and high school). Based on Epstein’s (1992) framework of six types of involvement ensure that parents should be able to establish a home environment conducive to supporting their children as students questions two to four were developed in efforts to gain understanding of how the involvement of the participants’ affected or influenced their
experiences with educational development as African American boys. Question one helped to understand the participants’ overall experience with education during childhood and adolescence while questions five to six were specific in understanding the participants’ process of academic achievement and those responsible for guiding them in their academic achievement. Questions seven through ten helped in gaining insight into the collegiate experience of African American males as African Americans have, historically, measured in the lower percentile of having aspirations of college attendance (Garrison, 1982).

Questions 11-12 aided in understanding the relationship between the participants and their male child/children. Fathers may be particularly important to the gender development of boys (Leavell Tamis-Lemonda, Ruble, Zosuls, & Cabrera, 2011) with boys being more sensitive to and adhering more strongly to their father’s gender attitudes (Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002).

The purpose of the question pertaining to father-mother relationships (question 23) was to gather information concerning the quality of the relationship (communication and interactions) of the participants and the mother of their male child/children. The quality of the relationship between a child’s mother and father determine the perception of the father’s role (Schober, 2012). Question 23 provided insight into understanding the non-residential African American fathers’ values and ideals concerning relationship; to include marriage. It was necessary that an understanding was achieved concerning what experiences the father has had that determined or influenced his reasons for not marrying his son’s mother or whether or not marriage was ever a factor. Koball (1998) explained a growing increase of marital age for African American men based on employment, school enrollment (Cooney & Hogan, 1991; Mare & Winship, 1991), and
military service (Cooney & Hogan, 1991; Modell, 1989). In addition, Koball (1998) presented that the number of single mother homes has significantly increased over the past several years.

Interviews were chosen as a method of data collection in efforts to empower the participant by providing them with the understanding that the researcher would serve as the human instrument of the study, that the researcher’s sole purpose was to make sure that their voices were heard and that others understood their perspective of the given phenomenon. In addition, interviews were chosen so that the participants were comfortable communicating/sharing their experiences prior to their participation in the focus groups.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups allow researchers to hear multiple significant statements in one setting. Focus groups are a form of data collection, which allows the researcher to lead a group of participants in a semi-structured interview process over a specific topic (Cohen, 1996). Focus groups were used for the purpose of collecting multiple significant statements in one setting and to compare the collected responses to the information received from individual interviews. Focus groups are beneficial for the researcher in that they allow for communication of more than one participant at a time (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups were used as the third method of data collection based on the assumption that the participants would be more open to share their experiences, as they would have previously done so in their one-on-one interview. Focus Group Questions (Appendix N) were used to guide each focus group session. Each participant was asked to sign a confidentiality statement (Appendix C).

While it was recommended that there are six to ten participants per focus group (Morgan,
The two focus groups conducted in this study consisted of few participants. The focus groups were randomly selected to ensure no bias against participants (Morgan, 1997) or based on participant convenience and scheduling. It was suggested that focus groups be constructed based on the participants’ age (heterogeneous or homogenous). However, the participants’ age was not a factor in participant assignment. The number of participants in each focus group was solely based on the number of participants (Morgan, 1996). Although it was anticipated that every participant would participate in a focus group, one of the eight fathers was unable to attend. The two focus groups met in the same location with each conducted during video recording (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The video recording was reviewed followed by transcription. The notes were used to understand all non-verbal gestures, which were useful in the development of participant description (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Each member was provided with a Focus Group Agenda (Appendix M).

**Data Analysis**

As a basis for starting the data analysis process, Husserl’s (1964) procedures for analysis were followed by describing data while minimizing bias with the intention of making accurate description and analysis of data collected by the human mind and senses. The role of the researcher served in the function of the human instrument; using bracketing to minimize bias. Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) stated that bracketing is most effectively achieved when the researcher practices reflexivity during the process of data collection and analysis as well as during research for the development of the literature review. At the beginning of the study, I began using a notebook to describe professional and personal experiences with non-residential
fathers that would affect how I conduct this study. As I progressed through the study, I revisited the notebook to ensure that I held the same stance and also included additional experiences.

Bolton (2005) wrote:

Reflexivity is finding strategies to question our own attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices and habitual actions, to strive to understand our complex roles in relation to others. To be reflexive is to examine, for example, how we – seemingly unwittingly – are involved in creating social or professional structures counter to our own values (destructive of diversity, and institutionalizing power imbalance for example).

(p. 14)

Survey

The analysis of the surveys (frequencies of each scale) was seen from a qualitative versus quantitative perspective. Moustakas’ (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analyzing phenomenological data was used. An item analysis of survey responses was conducted and compared with qualitative data.

The survey was guided by three themes (parent-focused roles, school-focused roles, and partnership focused roles) and was premised on their association with the current understanding of non-residential African American father involvement. The survey selected was the Parental Role Construction for Parental Involvement (Appendix F). Under parent-focused role construction theme, 66% of participants agreed very strongly that they were responsible for their son’s education. Other responses pertaining to parent (father) responsibility for their son’s
education varied in response with very few participants very strongly disagreeing that they were responsible for their son’s education.

The responses related to the school-focused role construction were very close with 75% of the participants agreeing very strongly that the responsibility of their son’s education rest with the school, particularly with the teacher. Although the remaining responses were varied, participants continued to show a trend of entrusting the school with occupying a major role in their sons’ education. There were only two participants whose responses rested on the “border” between agreeing and disagreeing. One participant responded that he disagreed a little, with the other responding that he agreed just a little. While the fathers realized that they are responsible for their son’s education, it is evident that they rely heavily on the efforts of the school.

The partnership-focused role construction resulted in 66% of participants agreeing very strongly that they understood the importance of maintaining communication with their sons’ teachers. These fathers were comfortable with contacting their sons’ teachers for advice on how they could help their sons in their academic process. There were 25% who expressed that they disagreed. These fathers damage their opportunities to have maximum involvement in their sons’ educations by hindering the connection between “home” and school; despite the fact that the fathers’ homes are not that of the sons.

Interviews

Interviews were transcribed within one week of each interview. Interview transcriptions (see Appendix S) were transcribed verbatim with the researcher making sure to listen to the recording repetitiously to clarify any unclear responses and check for errors. During each
interview, the researcher documented the physical responses (i.e., shifting in their seats, facial expressions) of each participant. These notes were infused with each interview transcription in order to capture the full experience of each participant. After transcription was completed, each interview was printed in preparation for participant review and analysis.

Based on information recorded and obtained from interviews and focus groups, significant statements were identified as they were observed from interaction with each participant. Each interview and focus group session was transcribed verbatim. There was also a review of the recordings from the interviews and focus groups (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). At the conclusion of the data collection process, the significant statements were combined into smaller groups of common themes. Further, two categories of descriptors were developed for the categorization of the common themes. The two categories are textural (explaining what happened in the participants’ experience) and structural (explaining how they experienced the phenomenon) (Moustakas, 1994).

Data was analyzed using Moustakas’ (1994) guidelines to complete synthesis of all information. Moustakas (1994) explained that horizontalization takes place after epoche and bracketing in order to identify themes and shared understandings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Horizontalization requires that the researcher list and create preliminary groupings of each significant statement given that is relevant to the participants’ experience (Moustakas, 1994). Related invariant constituents were clustered and themed then used to provide a structural and textural description of each participant (Moustakas, 1994).
In order to analyze the connectedness of the participants’ responses to the data collection methods, triangulation was used to support or contest the established themes. Participants’ survey responses were used as a guide to develop the analysis of the interview questions as they served as the recommended themes for developing codes for participants’ responses to interview questions. The data collected from interviews and surveys/questionnaires were used to design segments of dialogue for the focus groups. Triangulation was chosen as it reveals the regularity of findings generated via differing methods of data collection, as quantitative and qualitative data will be included in the study (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999).

**Member Checking**

The final process of data analysis was concluded through the use of member checking. Member checking allowed participants to review and, if errors are found, make suggestions for changes, to their interview transcripts. Member checking was also conducted during two focus groups. Member checking provides the researcher with an accurate method of establishing meaning for the data collected (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Participants were provided with a print out of their individual transcripts and asked to inform the researcher of any discrepancies. Each participant reported that their responses were accurately recorded and that their experience in the phenomenon was truthfully represented.

Participants were invited to participate in at least one of the focus groups scheduled (Appendix D) and provided with a focus group agenda (Appendix M). The two focus group sessions, guided by focus group questions (Appendix N), allowed participants to discover if the interview findings, as transcribed, were exact accounts of their experience of the phenomenon.
The focus group session were held at a local university (a central location to the city) and scheduled according to the availability of each participant to discuss the themes that evolved from the guiding research questions. All participants agreed to participate in a focus group. However, one participate had to decline his attendance to the first focus group due to a serious family illness. There were three participants for the first focus group and four participants in the second focus group. Participants were given a form, Request for verification of study findings and themes (Appendix T) in order that they may submit suggestions for changes or imprecisions. Out of the eight participants, seven verified the findings of the study; making no suggestions for changes.

**Trustworthiness**

Measures were established to increase trustworthiness; what quantitative researchers consider as validity and reliability for research conducted for naturalistic work. “This is necessary as many critics are reluctant to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative research” (Shenton, 2004, p. 63). The four criteria that were chosen to establish trustworthiness were transferability (in relation to external validity/generalizability), credibility (in relation to internal validity), dependability (in relation to reliability), and confirmability (in relation to objectivity) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Transferability**

Transferability ensured that the study was applicable across various contexts (Shenton, 2004). Due to the nature of this transcendental phenomenological study, thick-rich descriptions were provided that helped describe the true essence of non-residential African American fathers’
perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children. The use of transferability also provided implications for future research based on the fact that the sample sizes of qualitative studies are small in number, making it difficult to demonstrate that findings and conclusions apply to other populations, positivist researchers’ emphasize major concern in the area of ensuring that their work is able to be applied across a wide range of populations through their descriptive methods (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shenton, 2004). With respect to maximum variation, this study was applied across varying grade levels and social economic statuses as the final sample represented various socioeconomic statuses and grade levels (sons).

**Credibility**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that one of the most significant factors for the establishment of trustworthiness is credibility as it involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation, the use of three data sources (Creswell, 2013), of each method of data collection helps in the establishment of truthfulness for the findings of the study. Member checking was used to allow participants to review, analyze, and provide feedback on the data (Creswell, 2013). Participants were asked to complete at Verification of Study Findings and Themes (Appendix T).

**Dependability**

Accounting for and describing every change that occurred within the setting of the research and how it affected the way the research was approached, allowed the researcher to audit the research process (Shenton, 2004). This was done by maintaining a detailed audit trail...
and reflective notes. Member checking was used to ensure that the statements recorded and transcribed from interviews with each participant reflected exactly what they were trying to communicate. Member checking took place at various timeframes for each participant. After the data was analyzed and findings had been generated for their review, members checked the data again to ensure that it was representative of their lived experiences (Shenton, 2004). Participant feedback for member checking can be found in Appendix V.

**Confirmability**

Confirmability considers the idea that researchers must acknowledge their predispositions which led to the selection of their research methodology; ensuring to provide deep descriptions of why certain decisions were made as they relate to their personal beliefs (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). An audit trail was conducted to analyze and explain each step of the research process. Perspective and feedback from the external auditor were used to confirm the research. The external auditor chosen for this study has worked many years in the field of education and is currently a middle grades administrator (principal). She has received a doctor of education in educational leadership.

**Ethical Considerations**

For the purpose of confidentiality, the research setting was referred to as a suburban city in the East-Central region of Georgia throughout the duration of the study. Participants were assigned a pseudonym, which consisted of their first initial, a number (based on the order of receiving their informed consent), and the first initial of their last name. The information collected electronically was password protected. All hard copies of documents were locked in a
file cabinet. The researcher did not have any supervisory role or authority over the participants. In addition, the researcher did not have any prior interactions with the participants before the study. The participants were briefed at the beginning of the study concerning the purpose and amount of time (a maximum of two months) that would be spent during data collection (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2000). However, the data collection process persisted for five months.

**Summary**

A transcendental phenomenological design was chosen as it allowed the researcher to provide thick-rich descriptions of the participants’ perceptions of their roles as non-residential African American fathers of male children in grades 3-12. In analyzing significant statements, themes, and descriptors, the researcher was afforded the opportunity to capture and reveal the true essence of the participants’ lived experiences. The non-residential African American fathers involved in the study were involved in surveys/questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Ethical considerations were taken into account in efforts to protect the identity of the participants and the anonymity of the research site. The researcher served as an advocate for non-residential African American fathers in helping to make their voices heard with respect to their perceived roles in the academic process of their male children. Each step of the transcendental phenomenology was thoroughly explained and outlined for duplication of the study among other contexts.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS/DATA ANALYSIS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions of non-residential African American fathers’ roles in the academic process of their male children in a suburban city in the East-Central region of Georgia. The questions that guided the study are:

RQ1: What roles do non-residential African American fathers’ play in the academic process of their male children?

RQ2: What factors shape non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children?

RQ3: What do non-residential African American fathers perceive as the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children?

This chapter is composed of discussions pertaining to the interview method, participant characteristics, the data analysis process, results, and the procedure followed for member checking. A summary of the study results is contained within the conclusion of the chapter.
Table 5

*Summary of Interview Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Survey Completed</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Interview Medium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1B</td>
<td>10/17/2015</td>
<td>10/18/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2T</td>
<td>10/20/2015</td>
<td>10/22/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3M</td>
<td>11/04/2015</td>
<td>11/05/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4T</td>
<td>11/14/2015</td>
<td>11/16/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5S</td>
<td>11/15/2015</td>
<td>11/19/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6B</td>
<td>12/05/2015</td>
<td>12/07/2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>M7C</td>
<td>12/26/2015</td>
<td>12/27/2015</td>
<td>Video conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8B</td>
<td>02/26/2016</td>
<td>02/27/2016</td>
<td>Video conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participants**

The overall sample included non-residential African American fathers of male children (grades 3-12) and was not opened to fathers of other ethnicities or fathers of female children. Initially, there was little difficulty experienced in obtaining participants as many of the participants were referred to the study by other participants or interested community figures. However, there was a two-month time period where no interviews were conducted. Four potential participants were discovered within that timeframe, with two verbally consenting to participate but without follow through and two who stated “I don’t want people all in my business like that.” This gap in data collection is reflected in the Summary of Interview Data.
Six of the eight fathers were employed full time with the two remaining retired.
None of the participants matriculated beyond vocational/technical school.

Textural and structural descriptions were developed for each participant using data collected via interviews and surveys. According to Moustakas (1994), what the participant experienced is defined within the textural description and how (context and setting) the participant experienced the phenomenon is detailed in the structural description. Below, are narratives describing each participant using precise examples, per interview transcriptions, along with emerging themes. The use of textural and structural descriptions provides insight as to how the participant experienced the phenomenon.

**R1B**

R1B has been involved with his son since his birth. His son is now 19. He expressed that he loves his son very much and wants him to succeed in life. He wants his son to do better than he did. However, he has never been involved with helping his son to complete his homework. He stated that, although he’s never helped his son with his homework, he always makes sure to ask his son about his school work and whether or not he is experiencing any problems in school. He states that he takes his son at his word and doesn’t bother to check behind him since he has always been a “good student.” R1B stated that his son enjoys school but does not participate in any extracurricular activities.

R1B has not taken any initiative; from the time his son was in elementary school to his son’s high school education, to institute communication between himself and his son’s teachers. He explained that he has never attended any parent conferences or PTA meetings.
that he has been speaking with his son concerning his plans for the future and that he is working with his son to give him “insight on what he may want to think about.”

R1B was 35 when his son was born. He was well established in his career as a truck driver. However, the distance that he has had to travel along with the amount of hours he’s worked has prevented him from being as involved as he would have liked to with rearing his son. He also attributes the fact that he has never attended parent conferences or PTA meetings to the fact that he was a truck driver. R1B was not in a relationship with his son’s mother at any time. He and his son’s mother “rarely see each other,” but when they do communicate it is always cordial. R1B described their relationship as being “friends.” This provided him with opportunity to remain involved with his son, when possible, in the absence of chaos and disagreement. “We don’t have any animosity towards each other no kind of way.”

L2T

L2T explained that he has been involved in his son’s life since his birth. His son is now 12. However, L2T has restricted involvement with his son solely based on the fact that they live in two different cities; 120 miles apart. Despite their geographic disposition, L2T does “what he needs to do” to ensure that he is able to be involved with his son. L2T is involved in his son’s extracurricular activities “when he is given a schedule and depending on his work schedule.”

While he has made great efforts to visit his son, he has never helped his son with homework, attended PTA meetings or attended parent conferences. When asked in reference to his attendance at parent conferences, his response was that he was “never invited.” This suggests the participant’s lack of initiative in making sure to create a line of communication between
himself and his son’s teacher. This also shows his willingness to rely on his son’s mother for understanding of his son’s academic process. When asked about how he maintains awareness of his son’s progress he stated, “That comes naturally via text or email. I get frequent updates of his overall wellbeing. There are no issues with that.”

L2T was 22 when his son was born and stated that having his son was the “best experience in the world,” but that the circumstances surrounding his son’s birth made it complicated for he and his son’s mother to maintain their relationship as a couple. Although he sought to be involved in his son’s life from birth, he faced difficulties based on the continued interference from his son’s grandmother and step-grandfather. As time progressed, he and his son’s mother were able to develop an “agreeable relationship.” His son’s mother keeps him aware of any issues or needs that his son may have. They are able to “work together” which allows L2T the opportunity to remain involved with his son.

S3M

S3M was a teenager (18) when his son was born. His son is now 19. He aimed to do better for his son that what his father had done. While there were times that he and his son lived a great distance apart, he always remained “a constant presence in his life.” When he and his son were not in the same area, he would remain involved through phone calls. S3M expressed that he’s experienced guilt for not being in the home with his son during those times when things were going on his home where he felt like “I wish we would have done this or why couldn’t we have done that.” He then stated that he recalled, however, that there was a reason that he had left his son’s mother. He mentioned great experiences with helping his son with his homework,
whether in person or over the phone, despite the fact that he was not living in the home or at
times lived in another country. S3M always took initiative to remain aware of his son’s academic
gress.

S3M encourages his son by continuously explaining to him the importance of education
and what his life could be like without it. S3M shows his son support by “calling to check on
him, show up at his events” and attending parent-teacher conferences. Now that his son is older,
he plays a major part in helping his son to plan his future.

S3M was not prepared to be a father as he had just graduated from high school at the time
of his son’s conception. He had to face fatherhood within the realm of “doing what he had to do”
to ensure that his son was taken care of. This meant that he would have to forfeit the amount of
face-to-face interaction he would have with his son as he had to drop out of college to join the
military. S3M was unable to be as involved with raising his son as he would have liked based on
the fact that he was active duty military for a major portion of his son’s life. Communication
between S3M and his son’s mother was good, for the most part. However, there were times
during which he was not allowed to see him based on the premise of money.

K4T

K4T has been involved in his son’s life since his birth. His son is now 17. He has
attended every event that his son has had and has taken him to doctor’s appointments when his
mother could not. He stated that his involvement was not limited and that he handled all of his
son’s discipline. K4T expressed that he “took pride in correcting” his son and that his son
responded “pretty good” to being disciplined. He recalled several times where he assisted with
homework or school assignments. “That’s several times. Good experiences; science projects and
math projects.” He stated that his son’s mother helped him with his homework for the most part
but that he would step in when she wasn’t able to.

K4T visited his son’s school during times when his mother could not. K4T attended PTA
meetings when his son was in elementary and middle school and attended every parent
conference. He stated that he did not rely upon his mother to relay information pertaining to his
son’s overall wellbeing. He ensured that all of his son’s teachers had his phone number to call
him “at will.” “My son’s overall well-being was straight. I bypassed all that. I went straight to
the school and I would inform her if it was something she needed to know.”

K4T was 27 when his son was born and was well established in his career as a Master
barber. He attributed his opportunities of involvement to the fact that, although he was employed
fulltime, his schedule was very flexible. K4T stated that he was very nervous, and at the same
time, proud when his son was born as he was not prepared for fatherhood. It made him “grow
up.” The relationship between K4T and his son’s mother was “alright.” However, there were
times where he was forbidden to see his son due to the temperament of his son’s mother. There
were instances surrounding money, disagreements, or the presence of another woman that led to
K4T being prevented from spending time with his son.

A5S

A5S took pride in the fact that he was present when his son was born. His son is now
nine. He stated that he “cut the umbilical cord” and that it was the “second best experience” of
his life besides his daughter. A5S is a very proud father as he continuously mentioned his
daughter throughout the study, despite the fact that the study focused on male children. A5S explained that he enjoys having fun with his son. When they are together they do things like play sports and video games. A5S has started having conversations with his son pertaining to planning his future, despite the fact that he is in elementary school. He wants to open his son’s mind up to things “other than sports.”

A5S shows his son support by showing up at his games and “popping up” in his classes. Whenever he is town, he sits down with his son and helps him with his homework, despite the fact that he (his son) never wants to do it. A5S hardly attends PTA meetings based on the fact that he lives two hours away but makes sure to attend the first parent conference at the beginning of each school year. Due to the fact that A5S works on Saturdays, he is unable to attend the majority of his son’s extracurricular activities and games. He explained that he takes “two Saturdays off per season to get to see him.” He also tries to make some of his Monday practices since he does not have to work on Mondays.

A5S was 29 when his son was born and was established in his career as a master barber. He experienced some difficulty in being involved with his son due to his living in a different city. However, he makes arrangements to ensure that he is present as often as possible. The fact that the relationship between he and his son’s mother has improved is a major contributor to his opportunities of involvement. They were in a committed relationship when their son was conceived. However, once their son was born, they were no longer together. Due to relationship issues, A5S experienced difficulty with spending time with his son. There were times where A5S
was prevented from seeing his son, which he attributes to periods where he was involved with another woman (“jealousy basically”).

R6B

R6B, 18 at the time, was there for his son from the beginning. His son is now 19. He recalled being at the hospital holding his son as soon as he was born. He stated that he has “been as much involved” as he could be through the cooperation of his son’s mother. He is very aware of his son’s interests. He stated that this son enjoys playing the saxophone and tennis and that he “just figured out that he likes electronic music.” R6B hopes for his son to “continue his education and be successful-independent.” R6B speaks with his son everyday about his and other’s expectations of him upon his completion of high school and a “basis of direction” for his life.

R6B states that his son is a good student (A/B student) who enjoys schools. R6B would pick his son up from school when he was in elementary and middle school and take him back to work with him at the barbershop. During this time, he would ensure that his son completed his homework. He states that he “was not good at attending” PTA meetings but that he ensured that each of his son’s teachers knew him. He would make sure to meet his son’s teachers regardless of whether or not there was a parent conference. He and his son’s mother both attended parent conferences but never at the same time. He would attend most parent conferences due to the flexibility of his work schedule. In his son’s younger years, R6B was only informed by his son’s mother of his events when things were going well between them. “When we wasn’t having
problems. “If we were having problems, she would sneak a game by me and I’d have to get the schedule in advance to make sure I was there.” Overall, R6B was involved.

R6B, a teenager at the time of his son’s birth, was not prepared for fatherhood and had been tried and convicted as a felon. The time surrounding his son’s birth was very stressful (interference from his son’s maternal grandmother) and has remained that way until the present. After making changes in his life shortly after his son was born and deciding on a vocational career path to become a master barber, he was able to begin taking legal action against his son’s mother to ensure that he was able to exercise his rights as a father. He describes his relationship with his son’s mother as “up and down; never consistent.” R6B explains that there has always been a lot of tension between him and his son’s mother.

M7C

M7C explains the birth of his first son as “the happiest day” of his life. He explained that the birth of his son marked his becoming a man, that he had to change his mentality, and that he now had someone who depended on him. M7C has been very active in his son’s life since his birth. He made sure to provide everything his son needed. He noted that he is strict with his son because he wants him to do better than he did. M7C states that he is a disciplinarian but that he rarely has to discipline his son. M7C explained:

They listen. They know. I very rarely have to spank them. The rule is: I pay the cost to be the boss. Long as they act like they were brought up and do as they're told, I very rarely have a problem with mine. They're kids; I don't expect a twelve year old to act like a 22 year old.
M7C shows support to his son by calling and checking on him to see if he needs anything and to make sure that he’s not being bothered or bullied. “I just stay supportive. I keep him pumped up and I tell him that this is his future that he's working on.” M7C stated that, when he and his son lived in the same city, he would help him with homework but that it is difficult to do so now since they no longer live in the same city. Now, he just makes sure his son has what he needs if he calls about something that requires materials (“projects”). Prior to moving to a different city, M7C would attend all parent conferences. He stated that parent conferences for his son were rare as his has always been an “excellent” student (A/B honor roll student that enjoys school and “strives for perfect attendance every year.”) He stated that he has only had to attend one negative conference for his son. “When he was with me in the same city, I would go to the PTA meeting. I would send emails and have parent teacher conferences. I would allow him to come into the conferences so that he has an opportunity to say what he needs to say.”

M7C was 30 when his son was born and well established in his career as a law enforcement officer. M7C has retired since his son has entered high school. M7C and his son’s mother were in a relationship prior to his birth but were separated by the time he was born. However, he explains that they have maintained a healthy relationship ever since. When his son was younger, he communicated with his mother to obtain information about him but he now communicates directly with his son since he is old enough to discuss his own issues and needs. M7C has never been denied the opportunity to spend time with his oldest son. Though, he did make sure to express frustration with having to deal with this issue concerning his youngest son from a different mother.
S8B

S8B is the most unique case of them all and by far presented the most challenging experience. This father struggled to move through the entire interview as he was unable to either answer many of the questions or provide a great deal of detail for the questions. He did, however, mention that his son was a good student based on what he has been told and that his son was an excellent football player. His son’s mother ceased all communication between father and son as soon as the verification of paternity and child support order was completed. S8B only had contact with his son for less than a year. S8B was stripped of all opportunities to assist his son with homework, attend parent conference and PTA meetings, and participate in his son’s extracurricular activities. Moreover, S8B hasn’t been given the opportunity or taken the proper legal actions to be involved with his son.

S8B was very honest with his feelings and thoughts in stating what he wished he could have done more and been a vital part in the life of his son. He focused on the many things that he was “told” about his son, as he has not been allowed to remain active in his life after meeting him at age eight. He hopes that he and his son can begin to communicate now that he has gotten older, without the interference of his mother. He expressed the idea that he has tried to find various ways to contact his son but was intercepted by the mother each time. He voiced the idea that his mother is more interested in money versus making sure that their son knows and has a healthy relationship with his father. He acknowledged that he feels the only reason she decided to contact him, or have the courts contact him, was due to her lack of financial support. The participant, however, wanted it to be known that he was, in fact, a good father as he made sure to
add to the discussion, the roles he plays in the lives of his others sons as well as his level of involvement.

Although S8B agreed to participate in the second focus group, it appeared that he may have experienced feelings of inadequacy when it came to answering the questions in the company of the other participants. S8B was 22 when his son was born and 30 when he found out about him. S8B has lived with the void of not being able to be involved in his son’s life. The circumstances surrounding his knowledge of his son were very manipulative as he was denied the opportunity to bond with his son during the mother’s pregnancy and become acquainted with him upon his birth. He was not aware that his son existed until his son was eight years old. His first notification of his son was when he received notification in the mail to report to a child support/paternity hearing in the state of Florida.

**Results**

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study is to describe non-residential African American fathers’ perceived roles and experiences in the academic process of their male children. The central focus of the study was: How do non-residential African American fathers describe their roles, factors that shape their roles, and the value of their involvement in their son’s academic process? Each guiding question and their related themes were used to organize this section. The essence of non-residential African American father’s experiences of the phenomenon was described using survey data, interview transcriptions, focus groups, and a synthesis of the textural and structural descriptions of each participant.
What Roles Do Non-residential African American Fathers Play In The Academic Process Of Their Male Children?

The survey data resulted with 66% of participants very strongly agreeing that they were responsible for their sons’ educations. Analysis of the interview data presented that the participant’s role in their son’s education ranged from minimal to full involvement. The fathers with partial involvement were those who simply “checked in” on their son’s academics with a phone call or by viewing their report card. These fathers were not active participants in helping their sons with assignments or communicating with their sons’ teachers. In reference to how the fathers interacted with their sons, responses ranged from “only a handful of times” to “as much as possible.” When asked about how they support their sons, A5S and M7C both stated that they “were always there.” The following themes emerged regarding non-residential African American fathers’ roles: engagement, progress monitoring, and guidance.

Engagement. Each participant explained that their son had a great enjoyment of school, which increased their understanding of the importance of providing academic support. “Oh yes!” A5S explained that his son as “always wanting to go to school.” S3M and K4T explained that they encouraged their sons to do well in school by explaining to them the importance of education and “letting him know how it will be without it” as K4T continued that he would present his son with consequences for what would happen in the event that he did not do his best. He explained that he would “take him off the team.” By this, K4T aimed to aid his son in understanding the value of education over extracurricular activities. Very similar, A5S stated that he would take away “his toys and games.” A5S and M7C each agreed that discipline was
necessary when aiming to encourage their son’s to do well in school. A5S provided that simply supporting his son was a great way to encourage him to do well in school. L2T and M7C were big in making sure that their son’s felt secure. L2T expressed, in conjunction with M7C:

I always tell him that I’m proud of him and remind him that there is a reward at the end for doing good. I tell him that his grades speak for him and will do a lot for him as he grows up. I call and check on him to see if he needs anything and make sure that he’s not being bothered or bullied. I just stay supportive. I keep him pumped up.

According to survey results, half of the fathers expressed that they took various measures to show their sons that they supported their academics and extracurricular activities. One father, S8B, was unable to participate in this question as he has had limited interaction with his son with the other fathers giving answers such as “calling to check on him.” S3M and A5S prided themselves on the idea that they always made great efforts to “show up” to their son’s events as S3M added that there was nothing like a “good old parent teacher conference” with respect to showing support of his son’s academics. A5S added that he, to show support of his son’s academics, would make sure to “pop up” in his son’s class. M7C and L2T showed the same sentiment as they expressed the importance of “being there.” They also admitted that they were willing to do anything they could to show their son that they had an “interest in engaging” in their academics and extracurricular activities.

There were three fathers whom have not shown interest in their sons in the form of participating in their extracurricular activities. There were five fathers, however, that sought to participate in their son’s extracurricular activities as much as possible; with one father
participating in each of his son’s events. K4T stated “I took him to all his practices, made all of his games. Provided him with whatever he needed to participate in sports.” L2T, A5S, R6B, and M7C each stated that they attended their son’s extracurricular activities based on their work schedules and being informed by their son’s mother. Although the interview data reveals that only five of the eight fathers showed interest in their son by engaging in their extracurricular activities, each of them could describe the activities in which their son either participated in or enjoyed doing. The following are a collection of responses provided from participants concerning the interests/extracurricular activities of each of their sons: (a) “basketball and going to the gym,” (b) “playing games, reading and sports like baseball and football,” (c) “he’s an entertainment guy that loves music and the public eye,” (d) “he plays sports and a few video games,” (e) “he loves video games and all sports,” (f) “he plays the saxophone, likes electronic music and he plays tennis,” (g) “he likes to look after others, video games, and baseball,” and (h) “football.” As far as spending quality time, each of the fathers, with the exception of one, expressed that they do enjoyable activities when they are with their sons. A5S summed it up for the group by stating: “We play games, shoot basketball; whatever they want to do; we have fun.” S8B has only been able to see his son a few times (less than 12 times); leaving him with very few instances of interaction.

**Progress monitoring.** Survey results revealed that, out of the eight fathers interviewed, three did not make any efforts to establish communication with their son’s teachers to show their care of his academic process. One father, L2T stated “I really haven't had a chance to communicate with his teachers. I communicate with his mom.” This shows his willingness to
rely on his son’s mother for information concerning his son’s academic process. This father, along with the other two fathers who did not give explanation, has taken a relaxed role in the academic process of their sons. S3M, A5S, K4T, and R6B explained, in reference to their son’s teachers, “They all had my phone number to call me at will.” M7C describes that he has always sought to maintain communication with his son’s teachers as he stated:

When he was with me in the same city, I would go to the PTA meeting. I would send emails and have parent teacher conferences. I would allow him to come into the conferences so that he has an opportunity to say what he needs to say.

Seven of the eight fathers admitted that they had not attended any PTA meetings at their son’s school. One father attributed his inability to attend to the fact that he “lives two hours away” with another father stating that the reason he was unable to attend was based on the fact that he “worked night shift.” The other fathers (five) did not give reason as to why they had not attended. K4T was the only father that attended every PTA meeting as he explained that he attended when his son was in, both, “elementary and middle school.” Half of the participants admitted to not ever attending parent conferences with one father, L2T, claiming that he was “never invited.” R6B explained that he was able to attend many of his son’s conference based on the “flexibility” of his schedule. He stated that his son’s mother also attended conferences but that they never attended at the same time as she would attend if he could not make it. A5S explained that he always makes sure to attend the conferences held at the beginning of the year.

Although every participant had not made an effort to establish communication with their son’s teachers, each father was able to give a report of their son’s academic achievement with the
exception of one father; S8B. K4T reported that his son was “average and that he could be above average but he doesn’t push himself.” There were six fathers that reported their sons as being “good students.” A5S became very excited when he submitted this about his son:

I’m glad you asked that. He is the, every one of his teachers has told me that he is the most attentive child they have ever worked with. He actually is the teacher’s aide in all of his classes. He helps other students. He’s very helpful. I’m glad he’s like that because I wasn’t.

**Guidance.** The participants were asked questions in reference to their beliefs and experiences with disciplining their sons. Six fathers expressed the need for discipline in order to provide necessary guidance for their sons. S3M, K4T, L2T, and A5S all agreed that it was their responsibility to ensure that their sons knew and understood discipline and that their sons responded well to their correction. S3M stated, “I feel it’s not only my job; but my duty.” A5S chimed in with the idea that “It’s the way it’s supposed to be.” K4T added that he “took pride” in correcting his son. M7C stated that he has not had many instances where he has had to discipline his children beyond speaking to them. In reference to how he feels about discipline and how his children respond, this is what he had to say:

I have no issues with it. I have no problems. They listen. They know. I very rarely have to spank them. The rule is, I pay the cost to be the boss. Long as they act like they were brought up and do as they’re told, I very rarely have a problem with mine. They’re kids. I don't expect a twelve year old to act like a 22 year old.
L2T stated that his experience with disciplining his son is very similar to that of M7C as he stated:

I guess because how often I see him, when he does get out of line, I tell him to stop without having to explain why. I don't even have to change my tone of voice or be very stern. Normally, he's a good kid. I'd rather correct him than someone else. You don't want, as a man, someone else to correct your kids especially when you have control of your kids. Otherwise, the police will jack him up. If I correct him, he will know how to conduct himself in the world.

Although S8B has not had to opportunity to be involved with his son, he had this to say about discipline in reference to the sons with which he has had the opportunity to be involved:

I have four boys. If I say something, they listen. They get mad and pout but I don't have any problems in the listening department. The son that I haven't lived with, I haven't had the opportunity to correct or discipline him.

As the fathers reflected on times they have given their son’s guidance by helping them with homework and other assignments, the interview data, along with survey data, shows that five of the eight fathers provided help to their sons. There were three fathers who had not helped their sons as one, S8B, noted that he had “limited contact” with his son. R1B stated:

Well, I don’t, I don’t be involved in his homework. I ask him about it. I ask him about do he have any problems at school and what not but he always telling me “he don’t” so, you know, I leave it just like that.
S3M, K4T, A5S, R6B, and M7C each provided instances where they have helped their sons with homework or school projects. R6B provided the most help to his son in his explanation that:

I used to help him every day. I used to pick him up from school all the way up until his middle school years. I made sure they knew everything they needed to know for homework. All my customers didn’t mind me doing it.

M7C described how he helped his son by asserting that, “If he need help, I help him. I don’t give him the answer. I show him how to work it out. I make sure that he answers completely and that he understands.” S3M and K4T have experienced involvement with their sons while living in different geographic regions. However, they have both made efforts to assist their sons with homework whether it be “over the phone” or on “weekend visits.” Each of the fathers expressed enjoyment with helping their sons with their homework and other projects or assignments. S3M stated, “I’d have to say that was a good experience. There are times where he comes to me for help and he’ll have to explain it to me. Once he explains everything to me then I can help him.” K4T recalled “good experiences with science fair and math projects. “

When asked whether they had given guidance to their sons by way of helping them to plan their future, six of the eight fathers stated that they had, and provided discussion on how they had done so. There were two participants who had not participated in future planning with their son. Survey results revealed fathers motivation for making plans for their own futures beyond high school. S8B stated that he had not because he “only had contact with him a few times.” The other participant, L2T stated that he and his son had not taken that step because, “He’s only eleven. So, I don’t know if he’s thinking that far yet. But he’s a pretty bright kid. Any
child that can tell you what divergence is about; He’s smarter than me.” R1B, S3M, K4T, A5S, R6B, and M7C each agreed that helping their son to plan his future was essential to becoming successful in the future. S3M gave a great representation of what the majority of the fathers explained as he detailed:

Now, that was, I’ve had a big part in that because I’ve always told him that I wanted him to go to college. I always wanted him to pick out something that he really wanted to do for himself and be happy with it. I told him that I was going to support him in whatever it is that he is going to do. I’ll make sure he gets to where he needs to be. I’d like to think I have had a big part in making sure that he understood that college is going to prepare him for his future.

Although his son is in elementary school, A5S explained that “I’m very involved. I’m always asking him what he wants to be. I’m always trying to give him options; keep him open-minded to things other than sports.”

What Factors Shape Non-residential African American Fathers’ Role In The Academic Process Of Their Male Children?

Standards. When each participant was asked from where they received their greatest influence-home or school, five participants (S3M, K4T, A5S, R1B, and L2T) admitted that their greatest influences of education came from school. Survey results indicated the fathers’ emotional experiences with school officials. L2T explained, “The greatest influence was from school. Being around other people being almost in competition with grades and seeing who was
the smartest.” All participants, with the exception of one, R6B, admitted to having positive experiences with teachers/school officials while in elementary, middle and high school.

L2T reflected that:

Throughout my childhood education, elementary through high school, my experience with my teachers was actually great except for the exception of a few teachers I had no issues with my teachers. Administrators knew who I was but I never got in any trouble. If I ever needed help they was willing to help, me out whenever I needed it.

S3M revealed that:

I didn’t get in trouble. I had no choice; no trouble. I was a good child. My mom would leave work and beat you with an extension cord. I wasn’t a problem child. I had good experiences with teachers and principals all the way through school.

Of the eight participants interviewed, two have not had education beyond high school. When asked to describe their experiences with teachers/instructors/professors at the technical, college, or university level (post-secondary), each of the remaining fathers explicated that they have had positive or remote experiences. S3M presented that:

They were pretty much hands off. You had to figure out a lot of stuff on your own. Unless you asked, they didn’t offer. You became self-sufficient real quick about your education. You became your own advocate.

L2T agreed with S3M in expounding that:

Overall, I had good experiences. I had maybe a couple of teachers or professors that were relentless in helping people. They felt that you should already know it yourself and for
whatever reason they was trying to be hardcore. So, I just got out that class and got into something else.

M7C and S8B agreed that they were pushed from home to do their best and to exceed. S8B explained that he was always told that he would be “the first one to make it to college.” M7C, S8B, and L2T were the only participants who were raised with both parents in home. R1B was the only participant out of eight that was raised and impacted by his father in reference to his mindset towards school. R1B revealed that:

I remember coming through school, I was raised by my father. He was a hardworking man. He was hardly ever home and I hardly got to see him but when he was home he would ask how I was doing in school and was I doing the right thing. He had an impact because he was caring. That made it a little easier to be there.

S8B explained his lack of impact by his parent on his education by stating that “I had sports. I didn't have a big influence from my dad even though we were in the same city. I did stuff on my own pretty much.”

L2T stated that:

Like Sean said, my parents were there but that's pretty much it. They said as long as I passed my classes. They really didn't push me. I had to rely on myself. I really went to my grandfather if I needed anything. If they would have pushed me, I could have been an honor student, I could have add straight As, I could have had that almost 4.0 in high school and a full ride to college but I didn't get that.
S3M, K4T, and A5S stated that the impact of their parent(s) led to their understanding that education was “mandatory” and they had “no choice.”

When asked concerning persons that have been of greatest negative influence, six of the eight fathers explained that there was no one whom has influenced them negatively. Two fathers had opposing experiences with one, R1B explicating:

I can remember being in school. I got in trouble one time and got suspended. Before I could go back, my father and I had to talk to the vice superintendent of schools who asked why are you in school; are you here to get a check?

Participants provided varied answers when asked concerning those persons who have had the greatest positive influence on their views of education. There were two participants who were influenced by their fathers (R1B and M7C). Although, M7C added that it was the collective efforts of both of his parents; with his father being the most impactful. “My father; my parents. They placed emphasis on education and that you need it to get where you need to be.” Of the eight participants, four admitted that their mothers were their greatest source of influence. S3M, R6B, K4T, and A5S agreed that their mothers were “always” there. S3M elucidated:

My momma. She was definitely there when I was wrong. I don’t know about you guys but my mom only had an eleventh grade education but when she talked you would think that you were talking to a college educated woman. I didn’t find out that she didn’t graduate from high school until I was out of school and grown myself. She didn’t graduate but look how far she got. But she made sure that we knew what we needed to be
successful in every area so that we would know what to do when we went out into the world.

L2T mentioned his “high school guidance counselor” as she “sat down and helped me figure out some goals and plans to execute it.” S8B gave credit to his “grandma.”

**Academics.** In order to gauge a perspective on the participants’ mentality towards education as boys, each participant was asked concerning their experiences with education while in elementary middle and high school. Many participants shared that their experiences in elementary through middle school were “pretty good.” R1B summed up the experiences for most of the group as he stated, “It was ok. Elementary school- it was good. Middle school was fine and so was high school.” L2T explained his experience with slight similarity but with some difficulties:

Elementary, I had some really really good teachers. I did fairly well. Actually, really good in elementary school. Middle, I did really good too except for math. Math was a struggle for me; mainly with fractions. In high school, high school was easy but I don't feel like we weren’t actually prepared for college in such a way. We all skated by in high school.

R6B was the only participant who stated that he didn’t care for school:

I didn't really like school a lot. I always understood the importance of it. That was my reason for graduating. For the most part, I wasn't the person that liked to go to school a lot. In elementary, I would fake being sick. In middle school, I had more freedom so I started being late. When I got to high school, it was pretty much the same; especially
when I started driving. But I didn't let it stop me from graduating. I did just enough to get by. I regret it now. That pretty much sums it up.

Each participant shared that they knew that they “had no choice” when it came to attending school.

When asked their views of education now, each participant explained that they felt education was “important” and that it was “the key to success.” L2T was very detailed in his views of the public education system and its inconsistencies:

The views of education now. I think it varies from school to school, city to city, state to state. It’s not, It’s not very cohesive. It’s not on the same plane right now so you get different education levels based on the school that you go to and the county. The two counties that sit next to it have a different education system. So, I think there should be some balance in there somewhere with our school system or with the standards.

As S3M agrees with the rest of the group, he presented the changes he has seen in education in comparing when he was in school (elementary, middle, and high) to the present:

Wow. How should I put this? Where I live at now in this city, in this county, education is now moving compared to let’s say...when I grew up. All that was expected of you back then was to pay attention and pass the test. Now, they have expectations upon you to be college ready. Back when I grew up, it wasn’t about you going to college; it was about wanting you to get out of high school. Now, we expect, the school system expects kids to be ready to go to college and that’s a big difference from when I went to school.

R6B agrees with the group by adding:
I think highly of education. I would say education with purpose. I don't want my kids to go school and think they can just get any kind of degree. They need to get something that's a demand. Something they can make money off of later on. It's not just about the money. It's a balance between what you like to do and what's gone make you some money. Also, making sure that what they are going to school for is relevant.

A5S sums up the beliefs of the group as he says “Education is the key to success. You actually need college now a days to make it. Parents should push education more than sports. The more education you have, the better chance you have for success in life.”

**Objection.** Participants were asked to describe their post-secondary experiences to illuminate their reactions to objection as it is presented as a factor that has influenced the perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children. The disposition of fathers in pursuing higher education was the key focus. According to survey, many fathers did not seek to pursue higher education. Of the eight fathers interviewed, two fathers had no experience with education beyond high school (R1B and R6B). R6B learned his “trade” through “apprenticeship.” A5S expressed that his post-secondary experience presented no difficulty as he admits “Vocational. Barber school. Trade or whatever you want to call it. It was easy; too easy.” The remaining fathers each expressed that their post-secondary experiences fostered, within them, a greater sense of “accountability” and “responsibility” for their education. L2T added that:

My experience for post-secondary life was; it was on your own. You had to do what you had to do on your own. Your professors and teachers were there to assist you; was there
to help you but as to hold your hand, you were accountable for yourself. Couldn’t nobody hold you accountable for that so that gives you a more, more sense of responsibility. Cause you want to do great. Can’t nobody help you do that. You got to do that on your own.

S3M explains how he had to change the plans he had set for his future shortly after beginning his post-secondary education:

After high school, I had a child on the way. I enrolled in Savannah State for about 3 months and it was hectic for me because I was trying to work and take care of a child. Once I came back home and got out of the military and enrolled in Augusta Tech, it was an eye opener to see how far things had changed from the time I was in high school coming back and reentered college again. It was quite different. It was a good experience though for me to be abreast on how things had changed and that pretty much help me start to look at how I raised my children as far as education because things started moving so fast.

K4T expressed his sense of responsibility for his education in the form of regret as he admits “Did a little technical school after high school. Actually, wish I would have went a little further with technical school. I started working after technical school and been working ever since.” S6B expressed his sentiment towards not completing his undergraduate degree as he contributed “I went three years at Tuskegee University. I majored in business and marketing. Financial aid set me back as far as trying to finish. I think it helped me out a lot with my career now; even though I didn't get that paper.”
Participants were asked to describe the challenges they faced in trying to pursue their post-secondary education as method of how they adjusted when faced with objection. There are two participants who have not had any experience with education beyond high school (R1B and R6B). However, R6B did provide explanation to challenges he faced when trying to complete his apprenticeship for barbering once he completed high school:

Getting my son’s mother and her mother to let me put him in a daycare. They wanted me to watch him! So, it was either stay at home with him or pursue my career even though I couldn't do anything else due to my legal status? My legal status and getting them to let me find somebody to watch him during the daytime. Well, a lot of arguing. After I brought him to work with me, the supervisor was like, “do something with that baby” because I use to have to take him to work with me. I made sure to find someone to keep him and also made sure to stay out of trouble.

For the fathers whom have had post-secondary experience, they collectively admitted that their number one challenge in making adjustments was related to time management and understanding of material/assignments. L2T explained that:

The only challenges were holding myself accountable; being to class on time, doing the work, studying, and time management. Because doing that, you also working at the same time too so you got to balance your whole life. I dealt with them. I reevaluated what I had to do. I had to go back and look at where I was failing at and see exactly what I had to do to pass. Whether I got help, whether I read extra material or got extra material from the library or off the internet; which was available at that time.
S3M added:

Just trying to adapt to the different way that they had started teaching from the time I left high school because it was six years later before I went back to technical school. I was kind of lost trying to figure that stuff out. I really started to see that I needed some help with this. I had a female friend that helped me with this. It got on my nerves real bad. I had a messed up attitude about the whole education process then. You couldn’t go to them and say “hey, I need you to help me with this.”

As a master barber, A5S offered that he experienced his greatest challenge when “Learning how to cut white people hair. You have to adjust and overcome. You had to listen and just you know; overcome. You can’t let it hold you back. Take it with a grain of salt and move past it.”

During each interview, fathers were asked to describe challenges they faced in education as a child (elementary, middle, and high school) in order to determine their experiences of objection with routine school activities. Half of the fathers reported challenges that were directly related to academic content, with one father communicating issues with sustaining focus, and another with an indirect challenge, which resulted from issues in the home which ultimately affected his school performance. L2T contributed his difficulty with science:

Honestly, I think science projects. I think having a lack of information and a lack of creativity. I didn't do that well on science projects. Everything else I did well with. I'm going to say that early, at that time I had a nonchalant attitude. I really didn't care.

S3M added his experiences with reading in elementary and middle school:
Well, I had a reading problem so it prohibited me early on from understanding what I was reading until I got to middle school. When I got to middle school, they put me in a reading class and from there everything else became a whole lot easier. I started to like reading. I started to like science and social studies; things that required a whole lot of reading. Before then, I shied away from reading; being quiet and reserved to myself. I always waited till mom got home to tell mom about it.

M7C, in agreement with S3M, revealed, “I would have to say reading. I did not. It took me a long time to grasp the idea of reading. I was always a hands on and visual learning so when it came to reading, I did not really like to read. I tried harder.” K4T did not express disdain for any particular subject but that he didn’t care to forth any additional effort toward any of them: Hated doing homework, enjoyed recess, PE, and lunch the most; hated studying. Anytime I had a setback, I would basically back track myself, take a deep breath. Sometimes, I would have to do something else. That’s how I would cope with setbacks. R6B recalls the time during which his parents divorced as he shared:

My parents splitting up. Middle school was-it happened in elementary school. Middle school was me trying to gather myself from it. High school I just did what I could because it was me and my mom. I was trying to appease her. I did what I could to get over. They gave me twelve days that I could be off I was right at 11. Failing of something like that? Anytime I was close to failing or any setback, I just buckled down and did what I had to do to graduate. I never got kept back except for in high school because of the freedom I had.
What Do Non-residential African American Fathers Perceive As The Value Of Their Involvement In The Academic Process Of Their Male Children?

Accountability. When participants were asked concerning the hopes they had for their son’s future, it was the consensus of the entire group that they each expected that their son “finish high school” and go on to be “successful.” As high school graduation is concrete and general across the board, each father’s definition of success for his son varied based on his own experiences and achievements; with some sharing their hopes that their son go on to “graduate from college” and others that their son obtain “jobs they enjoy.” Survey results outline each fathers’ achievement of academic and financial attainment. Of the eight fathers interviewed, three fathers (A5S, S8B, and M7C) mentioned their hopes for their sons as fathers. A5S shared, “To be the best man he could possibly be and the best father he could possibly be. When it’s the time to be a father; not early” as M7C added, “That he uses what he learns for when he becomes a father.” There were two fathers, K4T and M7C, who presented their hopes for their son’s academic success as well as becoming successful in “society.” M7C shared his hopes that his son be “productive” as K4T hoped that his son would, “Use some of my advice and be a law abiding citizen.” L2T provided a great summary for the group as he shared:

My hope for him is to graduate with; I’m not gone say with honors, that’d be good, that’d be great. But to do the best that he can to graduate and not graduate at the bottom of his class. To do great, to go to college and to find himself; to find out exactly what it is he want and do what drives him and gives him passion.
Each participant, with the exception of one, (S8B) was very strong in his position as a non-residential African American father. S8B, due to his limited contact with son, was not confident in his position, as he had not been afforded the same opportunities to bond with his son to establish a healthy father-son relationship. The remaining participants described their position as non-residential fathers to show the level to which they held themselves accountable for their son. Each participant was asked concerning any times during which their sons made them feel guilty about living in the home. There were two fathers who did not give responses to the question. There were three fathers (K4T, S8B, and M7C) who shared that they had “never” had that experience. M7C summed it up for this particular group as he shared, “I've never had that issue. I told them that just because their mother and I are not together, that doesn't mean I'm not their father.” The three fathers that remained (S3M, A5S, and L2T) each gave instances where their sons did make them feel guilty about not living in the home. A5S shared “He would say why wasn't I at one of his games.” L2T shared that his son, “wanted me and his mom to one day get married; so that's probably the only time.” S3M provided that his son made him feel guilty, “When there is a situation that goes on in his home, it makes you feel like “I wish we would have done this or why couldn’t we have done that.” But I mean, it's a reason we left.” There was only one father that expressed feelings of internal guilt. M7C stated that he felt guilty for not living in the home with his children, “after they visit and I have to take them back. My kids are my all; knowing that I can't see them every day. Especially now since I live out of town and can't see them every day.”
When each participant was asked, when requested by his son, how he gave assistance towards his son’s academic process to describe their accountability, one father (S8B) added that he had not been asked by his son to assist him with any academics and had been given the opportunity to give assistance to his son due his “limited contact on behalf of his son’s mother.” L2T stated that his son would always ask “his mother” and attributed his lack of assistance to the fact that he and his son live in “two different cities.” M7C understood the experience of L2T as he has recently moved to a different city than that of his son. M7C added, “When he lived in the city with me he did. Now that I've moved, I help him get the stuff for the project.” R1B shared that his son has never asked him for assistance nor had he offered assistance. He mentioned, “I don’t get into all of that.” There were four fathers that shared that their sons had asked for their assistance with their academics and that those were “good experiences” that they “enjoyed.” S3M shared, “I’d have to say that was a good experience. There are times where he comes to me for help and he’ll have to explain it to me. Once he explains everything to me then I can help him.” K4T added, “That’s several times. Good experience; science projects and math projects.” A5S provided that, “Yeah, those have been good times” with R6B in agreement as his son has asked him for help on a daily basis.

**Coping.** Mother gatekeeping is described as being one of many factors that influence father involvement and the roles fathers play in the life of their child or children. According to McBride et al. (2005a), mothers, in the act of maternal gatekeeping, aim to establish rigid standards to control the father’s interactions with their child or children, while sanctioning maternal identity; creating a separation of domestic role images. This study led the researcher to
the understanding that mother gatekeeping also plays an effect on how non-residential African American fathers perceive the value of their involvement in their son’s academic process. Survey results showed that five of eight participants took on academic responsibility for their son’s education as others gave in to mother gatekeeping; allowing the mother to be the parent responsible for their son’s academic process. Each father was asked to describe experiences in which they were not allowed, by their son’s mother, to have contact with their son to show how they coped in their experience as a non-residential father. Of the eight fathers, two provided no response. There were two fathers (L2T and M7C) who shared that they had not had this experience. However, M7C did share his experience with this matter in reference to another son who was not the focus of the study. He shared, “With my baby boy, she says she wants me to spend time with him but when I call to get him, she won't let me. It's like I can't spend time with him unless I spend time with her.” There were three fathers (S3M and K4T) who recalled the experience on the account of money. S3M mentioned. “Because of money. Or it ain't enough money. She was conniving and manipulative. She would send back things I've purchased saying she needed the money.” There were three fathers (R6B, K4T, and A5S) who included that their experiences were based on the presence of another woman where their son’s mother was “jealous.” R6B recalled his son’s mother refusing contact upon his getting married. Fathers were also asked of any challenges they faced with trying maintain awareness of their son’s overall wellbeing; especially his academics. There were two fathers that gave no response. S3M and R6B agreed that, as long as “everything was alright” between the two of them, their son’s mother provided them with information concerning their son’s overall wellbeing. With A5S, his son’s
mother would withhold information to prevent her son from being disciplined by his father. He indicated, “Women tend to not want you to discipline your boys.” L2T, never having experiences where his son’s mother would not allow him to have contact with him, stated, “That comes naturally via text or email. I get frequent updates of his overall wellbeing. There are no issues with that.” On the other hand, K4T would not rely on his son’s mother for knowledge of his son’s overall wellbeing. He explained, “My son’s overall well-being was straight. I bypassed all that. I went straight to the school and I would inform her if it was something she needed to know.” M7C provided that he no longer speaks to his son’s mother concerning his overall wellbeing due to his son’s level of maturity. However, he shared his difficulty in obtaining information about his younger son; who is not a part of the study. He shared, “My older ones, I talk directly to them. The baby, that's hard getting information from her.”

A father's level of cohesiveness with his son’s mother is important in describing how he copes with living outside the home. To describe this experience, participants were asked about the nature of their relationship between themselves and their son’s mother prior to their son’s birth. There were two fathers (R1B and K4T) who expressed that they were not in a relationship with their son’s mother prior to his son’s birth. R1B summed it up for the two as he stated, “we was just fooling around.” The six remaining fathers each explained that they were “in a relationship” with their son’s mother prior to their son’s birth. S3M and R6B were high school sweet hearts with their son’s mothers. R6B shared that “everything changed” once his son’s mother became pregnant. S6B agreed that once his son was “conceived” everything “feel apart.” A5S, with a tone of excitement, explained, “We was in love!” Participants were later asked of
the current nature of their relationship with their son’s mother in order to describe the variance of cohesion between the parents throughout the life of their son. There were three fathers who reported that they have very minimal contact with their son’s mother. R1B shared:

   My relationship with my son’s mother is we rarely see each other, we rarely talk but you know when we do see each other we always; we’re friends so we, you know, we don’t have any animosity towards each other no kind of way.

K4T added, “Well, we ok. He’s older now so we don’t have to communicate as much. M7C explained, “Me and his mother rarely talk. When she got married I now have to go through her husband to talk about my child. It is aggravating. It's not the relationship we had when we separated.” There were three fathers who explained having good relationships with their son’s mothers. L2T expounded:

   For the most part, we have an agreeable relationship. There is really no issues. If she tell me he needs something or he got something going on or what not, I’m there for him and that’s about it. We both work together.

S3M shared:

   We kept the relationship strictly about him. The provided an avenue to always have an open door conversation. Through his elementary school years and middle school years we’ve had great conversation about what we expected. He always knew that me and mom was on the same sheet of music. He couldn’t tell me one thing and mom wasn’t gone let me know the truth.
A5S admitted that, “It’s kosher now. It wasn’t at first. We work it out for the kids. We make it strictly about the kids.” There were two fathers who currently have difficult relationships with their son’s mothers. R6B provided that his relationship with his son’s mother is, “Up and down. It was never consistent. Me, pursuing court matters, helped me to be in his life as much as I had been. There’s a lot of tension.” S8B, like R6B have had to spent time in court concerning his son. However, his situation is quite different as his going to court was initiated by the mother. S6B had this to say concerning his current relationship with his son’s mother:

It was okay until the entire child support; going to court type thing. Some lies were told and some things were done to boost the amount of child support. So, I was blindsided with it. I felt like we should be able to talk about some things. Once I found out he was mine, we should have been able to sit down and say “hey, what should we now.”

Awareness. Participants were asked their age at the time their son was conceived in order to describe their level of preparedness to be a father. Survey data describes the socioeconomic and academic adjustments fathers made after their sons’ birth in order to provide for their sons. There were six fathers who ranged from 22-35 with two fathers at age eighteen during the time of their son’s conception. To further describe the participants’ level of preparedness for fatherhood, they were asked what their life was like during time that their son was conceived. The two fathers, who were age eighteen during the time of their son’s conception, explained that they each had to make changes in their lives in order to take care of their son’s. S3M stated that he had to, “turn down and college scholarship” and had to enlist in the Army. R1B shared that he had to take on an “apprenticeship” so that he could have a career and “take care” of his son. Of
the remaining six fathers, five explained that they were “well into their careers” as one explained that he was “working and in school while trying to start a business.” One father, K4T, expressed that he was “having a lot of fun” during that time.” All fathers were in agreement that, their “focus changed” from themselves to their sons.

Fathers were asked to give an account of their experience of their son’s birth and their involvement in their son’s life since his birth in order to describe their presence throughout the life of their sons. There were four fathers who expressed that the birth of their son was one that brought them excitement. K2T admitted that he was:

Nervous; one of the proudest days of my life; actually made me grow up. Take on a responsibility in trying to turn him from a baby to a boy and a boy into a man. I learned that you really never stop raising them.

L2T and A5S, both, shared that they were present for the actual birth of their sons. A5S presented, “I was there. I was the first one to hold him. I cut the umbilical cord. It was the second best experience of my life besides my daughter” as L2T added, “That was the best experience in the world. First son, first child, being in the delivery room, watching them clean him, holding him, smelling him. Just all the great joys of being a father.” M7C contributed:

That was the happiest day of my life. I don’t think anything could change that. I had really became a man. I had someone that depended on me. It changed my mentality; not acting stupid. Making sure that he never wanted for anything in his life.

S3M shared a mirrored sentiment of M7C at the time of his son’s birth as he explained:
I felt like I had to grow up real quick to be a man. I had him at eighteen and my whole thought was I’m going to be better than what my dad was. I wondered am I going to be able to give him everything that he needed.

R6B, excited during the time of his son’s birth, did not have the fortunate experiences a described by M7C, L2T, A5S, and K4T. He explained that:

I can remember. I couldn't really enjoy it to the fullest because his grandmother was very condescending. While I'm sitting there holding my son for the first time saying, “you will have eighteen years of this.” We had words at the hospital. It was joyous other than that. I was excited to be able to contribute to somebody else's life since I hadn't done too well with my own. I figured this was my second chance; so to speak.

R1B and S8B were not present for the birth of their sons. R1B did not provide details surround his son’s birth while S8B was unaware of his son’s existence until he was “eight years old.”

When asked concerning their presence in the lives of their son’s since birth, six of the eight fathers said they were “involved” or “active” in their son’s lives. R6B shared that he has been involved in his son’s life but not without interference from his son’s mother:

I've been as much involved as I could be through his mother’s cooperation. Whenever she would cooperate, my involvement was high but when she didn't, she would use him and my daughter to hurt me. Because she knew I wanted to be involved so that my son would be a more productive child than I was.

M7C followed with:
Very active. If he needed anything, I was there. If he participates in anything, I’m there.
When he has struggles, I help and if I can’t help him, I find somebody who can. I’m strict
on him because I want him to do better than me. I’m there when he needs me. I support
him 100%.

R1B contributed that:

Well, I’ve been very much involved in my son’s life. You know, I love my son very
much and I want him to succeed in life. I also want him to do better than I did; of course.
You know, that’s always the case whenever you are involved in your child’s life, you
always want your child to do better than what you’ve done.

S3M reported, that since his son’s birth:

I’ve been a constant presence in his life. Even though he didn’t live with me, I was still in
his life. Even when he was in Hawaii and I was in Germany, I was always there. Phone
calls and when I could visit. When he moved back to the states I was there with him. So, I
was a constant presence. It wasn’t an afterthought about him.

K4T offered this concerning his involvement since his son’s birth:

I’m very involved in his life. I was at every event that he was at. I visited the school when
his mama couldn’t make it, took him to doctor’s appointments when his mom was at
work. Had unlimited time to spend with him. When it came down to it, handled all the
discipline.
A5S explained that his involvement with his son since his birth occurred, “As much as possible, As much as needed. Not as much as I want because me and his mom didn’t make it as a couple.” L2T explained that he has been involved in his son’s life but with limitations:

My involvement was very limited due to the fact that we lived in different areas. There were people that got involved in it that should have never got involved in it so it was a lot of back and forth with that. For the most part, regardless, I did the things what I had to do to go see him and when they come down from Atlanta, whenever, I just made available time. I made time. I made myself available to go see him, whether it was for a couple hours or if it was for a weekend. I dedicated my time to just being there with him.

Summary

Freeman, Newman, and Coyl (2008) present, along with Riddick (2010), that the literature is riddled with the importance of father involvement; to include ways in which fathers can become involved. There is little focus given towards the involvement of African American fathers (Hofferth, 2003) in the academic process of their male children and nonexistent in literature on non-residential African American fathers. The intention of this study was to ensure that non-residential African American fathers were given the opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions concerning their roles, the factors that influence the perceptions of their roles, and how they valued their roles in the academic process of their sons.

The participants involved in the study were eight non-residential African American fathers who understood the importance and valued their roles in the lives of their sons; especially their education. The participants displayed willingness to provide answers to both focus group
and interview questions. There were few instances, during focus group sessions, where participants did not provide responses. The participants were honest about their experiences. The participants did not focus solely on the issues presented by their son’s mothers as they made sure to include their own person faults.

The survey responses revealed that just over half of the participants took ownership and were active in the academic process of their male children. The interview data also revealed that most of the participants placed the responsibility of their son’s education on the practices of the school; especially the teacher. Survey data also revealed fathers’ lack of willingness to seek advice from their son’s teachers on how they could assist them at home. Establishing this form of communication would lead to greater academic opportunities for their sons. Interview data revealed mother gatekeeping as a determining factor of how fathers valued their involvement in their son’s lives. Others challenges were, lack of father initiative, dependence on their son’s mother for information pertaining to their son’s overall wellbeing, and their personal experiences with education.

Cowan et al. (2009) presented that fathers have historically, and are currently viewed by society, as the lesser parent as father involvement in the lives of their children has frequently been measured by quantity versus quality; regardless of residential status. Providing these participants with the opportunity to share a portion of their experiences as non-residential African American fathers, affords them the opportunity to have their voices heard as much of the literature explaining father involvement is given from the account of the mother (Schober, 2012).
Chapter four discussed the methods used for interview analysis. To present the process of analysis, a sample interview transcription (Appendix S), sample of clustered codes and themes (Appendix, O), and a sample textural and structural description (Appendix P) was used to illustrate the essence of the phenomenon. This chapter also discussed the combined results of the participant group collected from the Parental Role Construction for Parental Involvement (PRCPI) (Appendix F). This chapter also includes findings for each research question. The findings pertaining to each research question were discussed according to their corresponding themes. Chapter Five contains the discussion, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe non-residential African American fathers’ perceived roles and experiences in the academic process of their male children. The father’s perception of their roles was generally defined as what the fathers feel they should do and the manner in which they should fulfill actions related to the academic process of their male children (grades 3-12). Academic process referred to all undertakings that pertain to school-related academic education. As research has been conducted, using the mother as the primary reporter concerning their children’s academics (Schober, 2012), mothers have also been noted as being the active parent in the education of their children (Freeman et al., 2008; Holloway, Yamamoto, Suzuki, Mindnich, 2008; Mikelson, 2008). This study was designed to provide non-residential African American fathers the opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions of their roles in the academic progress of their male children. The study also aimed to give them the opportunity to describe what they perceive as the value of their involvement in their son’s academic process.

Design

Eight non-residential African American fathers with sons in grades 3-12 were purposely selected to participate in the study. The phenomenological data was analyzed using Moustakas (1994)’ modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi method and van Kaam method. The data was collected through qualitative (interview and focus groups) and quantitative (survey) methods.
The qualitative data (interviews) was comprised of verbatim responses of each participant that were transcribed by the researcher and later printed for participant review and discussion during two focus group sessions. The discussions held in each focus group, were also centered on the themes that emerged from each interview session. These interview sessions also led to the development of textural and structural descriptions for each participant as well as a composite textural and structural description for the group to show the connection of each participant’s experience to the three guiding research questions and the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). To detail various thoughts and insights, theoretical memos were recorded concerning each participant’s interview in order to serve as a point of reflection during interview transcription.

The quantitative data (survey) was taken from participant’s responses to the Parental Role Construction for Parental Involvement (PRCPI). The PRCPI led to the development of trends that described the fathers’ educational attainment, employment status, sons’ level of education, parental-role assumptions, school-focused expectations, and will to partner with their sons’ teachers. Quantitative data, theoretical memos, and descriptions (textural and structural) were used to gain a greater and more detailed understanding of emerging themes.

**Summary of Findings and Discussion**

The results of this study were able to extend current research, concerning the importance and impact of parental involvement in their child’s education, as it examines the perceptions of roles, factors that shape the perception of their roles, and applied value of involvement for non-residential African American fathers of sons in grades 3-12. Current research in education has
revealed many techniques parents can employ to ensure involvement in the academic progress of their children (McCoach et al, 2010).

What Roles Do Non-residential African American Fathers Play In Academic Process Of Their Male Children?

There were three themes that emerged as a result of this study, engagement (support and interests), progress monitoring, (communication and achievement) and guidance (discipline, help, and future planning), that described the roles played by non-residential African American fathers in the academic process of their male children.

The goal of this study was to directly acquire non-residential African American fathers’ perspectives concerning their roles, the factors that shaped their roles, and their applied value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children. Shears and Schuler (2011) stated that the act of being the provider and disciplinarian are historical roles associated with the primary responsibilities of fatherhood. The fathers in this study each identified with their roles in their son’s education. While each father did not “sit down” with their sons to complete homework or other school assignments, one emerging theme of this study was their participation in progress monitoring with respect to their son’s academic process. Previous literature explained that, “Academically successful African American men have been significantly aided by their fathers’ involvement when they assist in monitoring school work and social relations” (Hrabowski et al., 1998, p. 211). However, the fathers placed more emphasis on their perception of their role as the disciplinarian and provider. According to Guzzo (2011), study results revealed that while fathers realized and expressed the importance of their involvement, focus was placed
on their roles as the disciplinarian and provider. The participants of this study, although they had not lived in the home with their sons at any time, felt that their responsibilities and roles should not differ from that of a father who lives in the home with his son.

What Factors Shape Non-residential African American Fathers’ Role In The Academic Process Of Their Male Children?

Standards (home, school, interactions, examples, and encouragers), academics (experiences and importance), and objection (disposition, adjustments, and subject) were the three themes that emerged to describe the factors that shape non-residential African American fathers’ roles in the academic process of their male children.

This study was not based on the fathers’ level of educational attainment. However, the study, during interview sessions and survey completion, did inquire concerning each fathers’ current level of educational attainment and academic experiences (elementary, middle, high, and post-secondary; if applicable) in order to gain an understanding of how the father’s educational experiences shaped their role as an educational manager for their male children. Hucks (2011) stated that, “Parent’s beliefs regarding past experiences of their own education are often passed on, directly or indirectly, to their children” (p. 340). The level of education for the participants in this study ranged from some high school to some college, with the majority of the fathers expressing similar perceptions of their roles in their son’s academic process. Several themes emerged throughout the previous literature surrounding barriers and factors that shape fathers’ perceptions of their roles for involvement. One theme, described in the literature, was the level of parental educational attainment. Freeman et al. (2008) explain that there has been some
correlation between parental involvement and the educational attainment level of parents. Some studies showed variations in their results as some showed higher levels of involvement for fathers with higher educational attainment as others showed that higher educational attainment did not mean higher involvement (Rienks, Wadsworth, Markman, Einhorn, & Etter, 2011; Secord, 2009).

Another theme, which emerged from the study, deals with the presence of positive male models, encouragers, and supporters for the purpose of setting standards for the effective development of male children. The participants of this study, with the exception of two, expressed that they were deprived of a male model in the form of their father as their fathers were not an active participant in their lives or were non-residential. One father stated that he had no knowledge of his father and therefore was not afforded the opportunity to develop a father-son relationship. With the exception of the two participants whose fathers were actively involved in their lives, the remaining participants did, in fact, model the behavior of their fathers, as they became non-residential fathers to male sons. The majority of participants admitted that their greatest male influences did not stem from the home, but from school in the forms of physical education teachers and principals. One participant mentioned an uncle. Research explained that fathers have been limited to learning what it means to be a father as many have been influenced solely by what they observed and experienced from their fathers as children tend to model the behaviors that they observe (Palkovitz, 2002; Pleck, 1997; Shears & Shuler, 2011).

The participants in this study described experiences of distress that affected their academic achievement, goals set for their future as boys, and social status. They explained that
much of their distress was experienced as a result of objection; finding themselves making adjustments, failing, and having to go without. Collectively, the fathers expressed that distress, brought on by their experiences of objection, led them to self-evaluate, making necessary changes in their lives for the benefit of themselves and their male children. An additional theme that emerged from previous literature was the presence of non-residential distress. Distress, in all persons, can take on many forms. For non-residential fathers in the African American community, distress is magnified beyond the challenges of taking on and fulfilling roles of fatherhood. In the midst of acting in the roles of a non-residential African American fathers, they find themselves faced with issues of gender, race, violence, exposure to crime, and poverty, along with personal, professional, and social roadblocks (Grief et al., 2011; Riddick, 2010).

**What Do Non-residential African American Fathers Perceive As The Value Of Their Involvement In The Academic Process Of Their Male Children?**

Three themes emerged as this study sought to describe the value non-residential African American fathers perceive as the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children: accountability (finish well, position, assistance), coping (mother gate-keeping, and cohesion), and awareness (preparedness and presence).

The values perceived by the participants of the study of their involvement in the academic process of their male children varied with consideration to the fathers’ age. The fathers in this study, at the time of their son’s conception/birth, ranged from 18-35. Each father, with the exception of one, expressed that they were “active” in their son’s lives from birth. The father, who was not active in his son’s life, did not become aware of his son’s existence until he was
When asked about their current involvement, seven of the eight fathers explained that they still played an active role in their son’s lives; with six making note of academic progress monitoring. Each father stated that they placed high value on their roles as fathers, with six of the eight placing emphasis on their roles in their son’s academics. Younger fathers were explained in the literature to range from 16-30 years of age with fathers over 31 considered as “older fathers” (Robbers, 2008). It is suggested that, later paternity indicates deeper involvement (Honig, 2008). There were no major differences with participant involvement for this study; despite the presence of “younger” and “older” fathers. The understanding of the participants’ awareness of fatherhood was described on the bases of their level of preparedness to be a father and their reported levels of presence since their son’s birth.

When asked to describe instances where their son’s mother would not allow them to have contact with their sons or provide information concerning their son’s overall wellbeing, only one father expressed not ever having this experience, as most fathers described situations that regarded “money,” “jealousy,” and “another woman.” Fathers of this study, with the exception of one, relied heavily on their son’s mother to provide them with information concerning their son’s overall wellbeing, to include education. Although some did participate in progress monitoring of their sons’ academics, just under half of the participants reported that they retrieved information directly from their son’s teachers. Schools have often generated communication or invitations for school involvement that are directed toward the family unit or the mother (Palm & Fagan, 2008). One participant’s response, when asked concerning his attendance to parent conferences, was that he was “never invited.” This father’s response demonstrates a perception of low value
towards his involvement in his son’s academic process as he did not display initiative in gaining this information. This perception supports the research which found that fathers desired to feel needed in their child’s education and that all they wanted was a personal invitation (Abel, 2012).

One father in the study, a convicted felon, continued to experience a lack of cohesion with his son’s mother at the time of the study. His experience supports research which stated that, “Maternal gatekeeping, based on the mother’s perception of the father’s suitability as a parent and role model, can lead mothers to limit contact with fathers with undesirable characteristics” (Guzzo, 2009, p. 635).

Although represented as a barrier of father involvement or factor that influenced father roles in previous literature, this study found that mother gatekeeping contributed to how fathers perceived the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children. Comparable to that of father involvement, research examining father-child relationships or interactions, was gained from the perspective of the mother (Holmes & Huston, 2010; Stolz, Olsen, Barber, & Clifford, 2010). Also contributing to how fathers perceive the value of their involvement is the cohesion between the non-residential African American father and his son’s mother. This study found that mother gatekeeping and cohesion describe the participants’ ability to cope while experiencing the phenomenon. In support of Walker, Reid, & Logan (2010), this study also found that, during times of poor relationships or cohesion between the non-residential African American fathers and their son’s mother, they were given fewer opportunities to have contact with their son’s (monthly), where their opportunities for contact was more frequent (weekly) during times that their relationship or cohesion was stronger.
Much of this study’s findings support the literature with regard to non-residential African American father roles, the factors that shape the perception of roles played by non-residential African American fathers, and non-residential African American father’s perceptions of the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children. From a theoretical perspective, the participants in the study were afforded the opportunity to describe their current roles and value of involvement in the academic process of their male children. This study could aid fathers, in and outside of the study, in assessing their roles and forms of involvement in their son’s lives; specifically academics. In doing so, the fathers could make efforts towards changing the roles they play along with enhancing their current roles; increasing the value they place on their involvement. This study can also serve as reinforcement, to society of the significance of the father in the life of a child. “My motivation for writing this book was to empower men and educate society as to how essential we are in our fathering role” (Shears & Shuler, 2011, p. 162.)

Implications

The findings of this study yield a variety of implications for fathers, mothers, and the field of education. Research, as earlier stated, places a focus on the importance of a father’s role in the early developmental and academic stages of a child’s life. However, it is important that fathers understand that, although their children are growing and maturing, they still require an intense level of interaction and support. Shears and Shuler (2011) wrote:

We’ve all heard of how dreadful the teen years can be for parents. It seems that the home training you thought you’ve instilled in your child suddenly disappears when he or she becomes a teenager. Even worse than that, your previously delightful child seems to have
been replaced by a person you are not sure you even know! This is a natural progression as your influence begins to be replaced by your child’s peers. Suddenly, their 15-year-old peer group has much more understanding of life than you. Even through this sometimes rocky time, you role is to continue to be the consistent presence in your teenager’s life. Believe it or not, they still long for consistency and need your consistent presence and voice. According to both secular and religious youth workers, no one has a greater influence on children than their fathers. (p. 58)

In this study, the educational level of the participants’ sons ranged from grades 3-12. At each level (elementary, middle, and high school), fathers expressed the roles they played in their sons’ lives, placing special attention to the nature of their involvement in their sons’ academics.

It is clear that a father’s upbringing, influence and presence from his own father is a factor that shapes role perception. Shears and Shuler (2011) explained:

A good friend of mine had a son out of wedlock when we were in college. He and his brothers were raised by their mother because their father was an alcoholic. He remembers the pain of his father abandoning him and the struggles his family endured because of that abandonment. This experience had such an effect on his outlook on life. Because his father was an alcoholic, he never drank while we were in college. Soon after graduation, he got a job about four hours away from his son, and he maintained a relationship with him despite numerous obstacles. He would call him every day. When his son got older and began playing little league sports, my friend would make the eight-hour round trip
drive to see him play every Saturday morning! He would attend all the parent/teacher conferences and other events in which his son was participating. (p. 90)

Many of the fathers in this study were raised with the absence of their father, while some fathers were raised with theirs in the home, having minimal interaction. Each father was able to describe the roles they played and factors that shaped their perception of those roles; with their own bouts of father absence or lack of interaction at the top of their lists. One participant stated that he wanted to do “better for his son than his father had done for him.” This displayed a positive response to negative influence.

It is also clear that employment demands and proximity raise issues when it comes to father roles and perceived values of involvement. The fathers in this study have each worked full time throughout their son’s lives. All fathers expressed the importance of providing for their sons’ needs. Two participants have been able to retire, with the remaining continuing to work full time. Fathers have historically been pointed out as the “breadwinner” of the family (Shears & Shuler, 2011). Fathers, even those that are non-residential, are presently expected to persist in that role today under the modern term of “provider” (Shears & Shuler, 2011). Fathers must maintain employment in order to maintain financial obligations to their children, especially non-residential fathers who may be under court-ordered child support. Some fathers of the study have experienced role limitations based on the proximity of residence between themselves and their sons. One father expressed that, at one point, he was in “Germany” and his son was in “Hawaii.” In this participant’s case, proximity and full-time employment were simultaneous in function as he was an active duty member of the United States Army. Other fathers in this study also
expressed strains in their roles, along with reduced value of their involvement due to living in
different states or cities than their sons.

Similar to the push for nationwide curriculum standards, a nationwide father initiative
needs development in support of the literature that emphasizes the importance of father-child
interaction for enhancing child development. Although there have been implementations of
involvement programs for fathers of children in preschool, initiatives need to be set in place to
provide specified father involvement training and programs for fathers of students at the
elementary, middle, and high school levels. Districts, which have funding for parent facilitators,
must capitalize on the opportunity to host special events and activities that encourage fathers to
attend school functions, communicate with school, and be actively involved in their child’s
learning. Districts should also seek to tailor student registration forms in order to determine and
identify those male children who are living in the absence of their father. These students can also
be targeted for participation in school/district monitored mentorship programs. School districts
and community stakeholders should also seek to establish mentorship programs that aide non-
residential fathers with growing in their understanding of the roles as a man and father. To assist
mothers in contributing to this effort, classes and programs need to be establish to help single
mothers cope with rearing children in the absence of the father as well methods of healthy
communication with their son’s father. The community should sponsor events that celebrate non-
residential fathers’ involvement and presence in the lives of their sons. Fathers must be made
aware of the importance of their involvement through communications from multiple entities:
mothers, school, and the community. Studies can be developed to describe or present the impact of these initiatives on the impact of communities across the nation.

**Limitations**

Participation in the study was voluntary. Limitations were expected to be found in the difficulty of finding participants. Transferability was also expected to be a limitation to the study based on the possibility of many of the participants being part of the same socioeconomic status or similar levels of education. Eight non-residential African American men with sons in grades 3-12 were selected to participate in this study through purposeful sampling. Recruitment of participants became problematic as recruitment heavily relied on recommendations from the community after participant, business, church, and social media referrals were exhausted. The pool of fathers contacted towards the end of data collection were very reluctant to participate as they felt participation in the study would be an intrusion. This idea led to the assumption that the fathers who were willing to participate in the study were those where doing the right as a father. The fathers that participated in the study were more than willing to answer all questions from the surveys/questionnaires, interview sessions, and focus groups. Despite the emergence of common themes, the study was limited in the number of participants based on the size of the setting area. Participants were selected for convenience to the researcher. Therefore, findings cannot be generalized to the non-residential father culture across the country. Further, interviews were taken across gender lines (female researcher interviewing male participants) which may have had an effect on the responses given by each participant. Most of the participants’ responses were based on their past experiences and feelings associated with their son’s mothers.
The participants in this study were delimited to include non-residential African American fathers of sons in grades 3-12 whom have never lived in the home with their son who was discussed during data collection.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

**Fathers of Female Children**

While seeking participants for this study, there were many African American men who were non-residential fathers to female children. In fact, there were a large number of these fathers who were interested and willing to participate in the study. However, they did not meet the study criteria. This study would be beneficial, as it would reinforce the notion that fathers are just as important in the lives of male children as they are in the lives of female children.

**Fathers with Children after Marriage**

During this study, it was found that there were participants who expressed how they interacted with their children that they have had during their marriage. I began to see that the fathers would compare the roles they played in the lives of those children to the roles they played in the lives of their non-residential sons. A study should be conducted with a focus of non-residential fathers’ experiences with rearing children in the home in comparison to their involvement with their non-residential children.

**Other Ethnicities**

To make a more generalized conclusion about the phenomenon, one suggestion would be to conduct a study that takes a more purposeful sampling approach to reach additional communities. Table 6 shows the percentage of non-residential father by ethnicity.
Table 6

*Percentage of Non-residential Fathers by Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage of Non-residential Fathers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Non-residential Mother Involvement**

In other efforts to find participants for this study, I found that there were many fathers who were the parents with which their sons resided. Many of these fathers had custody of their sons, with other fathers having a verbal agreement with their sons’ mothers. These fathers did not meet the criterion for the study as they lived in the home with their sons. This led to an interest in exploring the experiences of non-residential African American mothers in this phenomenon.

**Teacher Viewpoints**

A study conducted on teacher viewpoints of non-residential fathers would serve to aid in validating father’s perspectives. According to the literature, school communications generally address the two-parent home or solely the mother in reference to child progress and school activities. Fathers in this study, generally, made efforts to remain up-to-date of their sons’
academic process, with less than half making sure to establish or participate in communication with their sons’ teachers. A study should be conducted to address how or whether teachers initiate communication with non-residential fathers. The study could also examine teachers’ levels of comfort in contacting non-residential fathers.

Summary

This study examined the roles, factors that shape role perception, and perceived value of involvement for non-residential African American fathers of sons in grades 3-12. The findings of this study revealed that although these fathers do not reside in the home, they persist to play major roles in the lives of their sons. Each father in the study conveyed that he had great expectations of their sons, making statements such as “I want my son to do better than I did.” Some fathers, although determined to be active in their son’s lives, found themselves with reduced participation due to themes such objection and awareness. Many of these fathers have not initiated or utilized lines of communication with their son’s teachers, but would possibly benefit from a direct invitation from the teacher or school concerning their son’s academic process.

This study also revealed that issues surrounding father employment and proximity place a strain on father involvement and role participation. The demands placed on the father to provide for his children has led many African American fathers to work beyond full time hours due to their lack of post-secondary education, as educational attainment beyond high school has become less of a reality to African American male students (Davis, 2012). Proximity led some fathers to believe that because they were not able to see their sons as often as they desired, their
involvement was inadequate. However, some fathers still made efforts to remain active in their sons’ lives through frequent phone calls.

Finally, fathers expressed sentiment concerning their experiences with their own fathers, which employed a major influence concerning how they chose to father their children, specifically their sons. Fathers who were raised in single mother homes displayed the trend of being a non-residential father. However, some fathers expressed living in the home with their fathers with still experiencing a void of positive father influence and interaction. There were fathers in the study that expressed having no contact at any time with their fathers, who vowed that although they did not marry or maintain an intimate relationship with their son’s mother, they would do all they could to ensure that their sons’ needs were met at all times.

From this study, I’ve gained a greater respect for the position and nature of the father in the life of the child. Fathers are essential in development from child birth to adulthood. Mothers must seek to aid in the maintenance of the father-child relationship, despite their sentiment towards the father. Children tend to model behaviors and relationships that they observe, placing great responsibility on parents to sustain amiable interactions during their communication. “For the child’s best interest, in most instances, a child is more emotionally stable if the parents are perceived to be united” (Shears & Shuler, 2011, p. 57). Children who present challenges with instability demonstrate poor academic outcomes and lower educational attainment (Sandstrom & Huerta, 2010).
REFERENCES


Huang, C. (2009). Mother’s reports of nonresident fathers’ involvement with their children: Revisiting the relationship between child support payment and visitation. Family Relations, 58, 54-64.


Dear Research Coordinator,

My name is Chaundra Creekmur. I am conducting a study for a doctoral dissertation project at Liberty University entitled A Phenomenological Study of Non-residential African American Fathers’ Perceptions of Their Roles in the Academic Process of Their Male Children. The purpose of the study is to understand the perceived behaviors and responsibilities that non-residential African-American fathers assume in their male child or children’s education. I am writing to request your help in identifying potential participants for the study. I would like to provide you with a letter to forward to your clients explaining my study in order to identify potential co-researchers. This letter will only be used to inform your clients, potential participants about my study and request their participation if they, or someone they know meets the requirements for participation.

In order to be included in the study, fathers must have a male child or children in grades three through 12. They cannot have ever been married to their child or children’s mother and cannot have lived in the home with their child or children at any time.

Thank you for your help in this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me at, crreddick@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Chaundra Creekmur

Doctoral Candidate

Liberty University
APPENDIX B: Letter of Recruitment for Potential Participant

Chaundra R. Creekmur

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Chaundra Creekmur. I am a student pursuing a doctoral degree at Liberty University. As partial completion for this degree, I must conduct an original study. I have always been interested in the area of understanding the factors that determine how parents’ perceptions of their roles direct their decision to be involved in their child’s or children’s education. After much research, I realized that most studies have been conducted from the point of view of mothers and give little attention to fathers, especially those of male students.

I am writing this letter asking for your help in my study. I am seeking to speak with non-residential African-American fathers about their role in their male child or children’s education. This study is completely voluntary and those participating may withdraw at any time. Your participation will take very little of your time and poses minimal risks to you. In order to be a potential participant in this study the following must be true:

1. The participant has a male child or children in grades three through 12.
2. The participant was never married to the child or children’s mother.
3. The participant has never, at any time, lived in the home with the child or children.

If you, or someone you know satisfies the above requirements and would like more information about this study or to participate in this study please contact me at crreddick@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Chaundra Creekmur
APPENDIX C: Confidentiality Statement

This form is intended to ensure confidentiality of the information obtained during the course of the study Outside Looking In. All participants involved in the focus groups sessions will be asked to read and sign their names expressing their intentions of abiding by this agreement.

I certify that I will not communicate in any manner or reveal information discussed during the focus group sessions. I acknowledge that I will not talk to anyone, including other participants outside of the current focus group session about the content of these sessions.

Name: _______________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Researcher’s Signature: _____________________
APPENDIX D: Focus Group Invitation

Dear Participant,

Would you be willing to meet for one hour with your fellow participants in the Outside Looking In study to discuss the current findings of the study? This time will be used to discuss the common themes that emerged from the study and allow you the chance to review the findings for accuracy and make any suggestions for revisions to the data collected. Although this session will be video-recorded, the data will be transcribed immediately and erased from the recording device. The group will be conducted via the Google Hangouts through Google.com. On all android phones, the Hangout application is already installed. On all other devices, the Google Hangouts application is available in your application store. Whether accessing via application or compute all that is required is that you have a gmail account and internet access.

Although I will make every effort to keep your participation in the study and focus group confidential, I cannot ensure that the focus group members will maintain the privacy and confidentiality of what is discussed in the session. However, each participant will be asked to sign a statement of confidentiality.

If you are willing to participate in this focus group, please check the appropriate statement below and return to the researcher in the self-addressed stamped envelope enclosed. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chaundra Creekmur
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

_____ I would like to participate in the focus group.
_____ I do not wish to participate in the focus group.

Enclosure: Return Envelope
APPENDIX E: Letter/Email Requesting Permission to Use/Modify Instrument

Parental Role Construct for Parental Involvement

CC

Creekmur, Chaundra R

Reply all

To:
Kathleen.v.hoover-dempsey@vanderbilt.edu;

Sat 9/5/2015 3:33 PM

Hello,

My name is Chaundra Creekmur and I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. I would like permission to modify the Parental Role Construction scale in order that it may be submitted to and completed by participants via email. I gained encouragement to utilize your scale as it served to undergird the development and success of another doctoral student's dissertation at Liberty University. If you have any concerns, please feel free to email me or contact me by phone at 706.691.8161.

Chaundra Creekmur, Ed.S
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
APPENDIX F: Survey Instrument

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Removed Due to Copyright
Hello, my name is Chaundra Creekmur. I am a doctoral student at Liberty University in the Department of Education. I am currently conducting research that will be used in my dissertation.

I am studying the non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children in grades three-12. I am very interested in your thoughts on this matter.

The information that you share with me will be used to further current literature on non-residential African American fathers and male children, aiding schools in helping non-residential fathers remain involved in their male child’s education at all levels as well as encourage mothers to allow non-residential father involvement.

The overall time of your participation in the study will take approximately two months from start to finish, and will require a survey/questionnaire, 45 minute to one-hour face-to-face or video conference audio recorded interview, and two focus group sessions.

There is minimal risk for a breach of confidentiality, but I will make every effort to keep all your experiences confidential. I will not connect your name to anything you say throughout the course of the study. The topics in the interviews and focus groups may upset some non-residential fathers.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary as you may decline to answer any questions and/or withdraw from the study at any time without affecting you or your child’s affiliation with Liberty University.

If you choose to withdraw at any time during the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed immediately. It should be understood, however, that I am a mandatory reporter for the state of Georgia and will be required to report any information related to child neglect or abuse that may arise during the study.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to ask them now or you may contact my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Tamika Hibbert, at tshibbert@liberty.edu.

If you think you would be interested in participating in this study, I can provide you with a more detailed letter to fully outline the study and gain your informed consent for participation.
APPENDIX H: Community Organization Flyer

Outside Looking In

Examining non-residential African American Fathers Perceptions of Their Roles in The
Academic Process of Their Male Children

- Do you have at least one son in grades 3-12?
- Were you never married to your son’s mother?
- Have you not ever lived in the home with your son?

You may be eligible to participate in a study of non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children. This study is completely voluntary as you may withdraw your participation at any time.

If you, or someone you know, satisfies the above requirements and would like more information about this study or to participate in this study please contact:

Chaundra Creekmur
Primary Researcher

crreddick@liberty.edu

706.691.8161
APPENDIX I: Informed Consent

CONSENT FORM


A Doctoral Dissertation Project

Chaundra Creekmur

Liberty University

School of Education

You are being invited to participate in a research study of non-residential African-American fathers’ perceptions of their role in the academic process of their male children (involvement in their male child or children’s education). You were identified as a possible participant by yourself, an acquaintance or current participant in the study as a non-residential African-American father with at least one male child in grades three through 12. Before you consent to participate in this study, it is important for you to understand what your commitment will involve. Please read the following information carefully. If any information is unclear, please contact the researcher for clarification.

This study is being conducted by: Chaundra Creekmur, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to understand how non-residential African-American fathers perceive their roles in the academic process of their male children. The study will focus on your experiences as a non-residential African-American father of a male child and your roles in your male child’s academic process (grades three through 12). The following questions guiding the research are (a) What are non-residential African-American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children? (b) What roles do non-residential African-American fathers play in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12? (c) What factors shape non-residential African-American father’s perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12? and (d) What do non-
residential African-American fathers perceive as the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12?

**Study Procedures**

If you agree to be a participant or co-researcher in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

**Survey/Questionnaire:** You will be asked to complete a 10 minute survey related to your involvement in your male child or children’s academic process. The survey can be completed via the internet or through mailed hard copy provided by me. The survey will include five demographic questions to aid in the sampling of participants. There will be five demographic questions at the end of the survey that relate to your level of education, expected level of education for your son, employment, and your son’s academic grade level.

**Interview:** Approximately one week after the completion of the survey, you will be asked to participate in a 45 minute to 1 hour face-to-face or video conference audio recorded interview. There is a possibility that you will be contacted by telephone to clarify any questions I may have about your interview responses. Any follow-up questioning will be conducted within a week of the initial interview.

**Focus Group:** You may be asked to participate in a focus group. Each focus group will meet twice within a 30 day period or collaborate online via Google Hangouts. This data collection tool will allow all willing participants to gather in an interactive environment to freely discuss the findings of the study and to allow the other non-residential African-American fathers in the study to further comment on the study and make suggestions for revisions to the current findings. In either case, the focus group will be video recorded. All focus group participants will be asked to sign an additional statement of confidentiality and no participant will be identified by name during this session. Would you be willing to participate in a focus group? ___Yes ___No.

**Risks and Benefits of the Study:**

**Risks:** There are certain minimal risks that come with this study—but are similar to those you would encounter disclosing personal information in a work-related environment to others. The topics in the interviews and focus groups may upset some participants. You may decline to answer any question or discontinue your involvement completely at any time during the study. If a participant withdraws early from the study, any data collected up to that point will be destroyed immediately. It should be understood, however, that the primary researcher is a mandatory
reporter for the state of Georgia and will be required to report any information related to child neglect or abuse that may arise during the study.

**Benefits:** There is no expectation of direct benefit to the participants participating in this study. This information will benefit mothers of single parent homes as well as school districts in understanding how to understand and encourage involvement for non-residential African-American fathers.

**Compensation:** There will be no monetary compensation for participation in this study. Light snacks or a meal may be provided during face-to-face interviews and focus group meetings.

**Confidentiality:** The findings of the study will be published as a doctoral dissertation, will be available to the public to read, and may be used in future research related to non-residential African-American fathers and parent involvement. In any report published, no information included will make it possible to identify you as a participant. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants.

Each participant will be identified in research records by their pseudonym that will be stored in a code book. This code book will be used to link the participant’s audio and video recordings and transcripts to the actual name of the participant. This code book will be stored in a separate secured file. Any electronic data, including survey data, questionnaire data, and audio or video recording transcriptions- will be stored on an external hard-drive, which will be password protected. Audio and video recordings will be erased immediately after transcription from the recording device. The researcher will be the only individual with access to these records.

Upon completion of data analysis, all data collected will be archived and then destroyed after three years. The original data will not be used for further research. All hard copies of data will be first shredded and then burned. Electronic data will be erased from the external hard drive.

Because focus groups may be used as a form of data collection, the researcher cannot ensure that the focus group members will maintain the privacy and confidentiality of what is discussed in the session. However, each participant will be asked to sign a statement of confidentiality.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your or your child’s current or future relations with Liberty University or your local school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting these relationships.
How to Withdraw From the Study:

You may withdraw from the study simply by emailing the researcher at the email provided in the next section. Upon receipt of this email, all information you provide will be destroyed to include: video recording, audio recording and transcription developed from interviews and focus groups.

Contacts and Questions:

The primary researcher of this study is Chaundra Creekmur. If you have any questions about this letter or the study please ask them now. If you have any questions later, you are encouraged to contact the primary researcher at crreddick@liberty.edu. You may also contact my research chair, Dr. Tamika Hibbert at tshibbert@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

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

_______ I consent to have my interview with the researcher audio recorded.

_______ I consent to have my participation in possible focus groups video recorded.

Signature: _______________________________________ Date: __________________

Signature of Investigator: ___________________________ Date: ________________
APPENDIX J: IRB Approval Request Letter

Liberty University Institutional Review Board

1971 University Blvd.

Carter 134

Lynchburg, VA 24515

To Whom it May Concern:

Enclosed please find the protocol and consent form for the study, “Outside Looking In: A Phenomenological Study of Non-Residential African American Fathers’ Perceptions of Their Roles in the Academic Process of Their Male Children.” The university Application to Use Human Subjects for Research is also enclosed.

The study is proposed to be conducted on eight to 10 non-residential African American fathers in one suburban city in the Eastern region of Georgia. The purpose of this study is to understand non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children as well as their experiences. Data will be collected through a survey/questionnaire, semi-formal interviews (face-to-face) or video conference audio recorded interview, and focus groups. Each potential participant will be notified of the potential risks associated with the study through informed consent.

There will be direct benefit to the participants participating in this study as the findings of this study can create a sense of self-reflection that allows the participants to evaluate their perceptions of their roles as well as their implementation of necessary roles in the academic process of their male child or children. This information will also benefit mothers of single parent homes as well as school districts in understanding how to understand and encourage involvement for non-residential African American fathers.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at crreddick@liberty.edu. I look forward to your comments and approval.

Sincerely,

Chaundra R. Creekmur
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
APPENDIX K: IRB Approval Letter

APPENDIX L: Standardized Interview Guiding Questions

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 7, 2015

Chaundra Reniece Creekmur

Dear Chaundra,

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

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

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Administrator, Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

A Non-residential Father’s Personal Experience with Education

1. Please describe your experiences in school at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

2. Please describe the person(s) that provided you with the most support while you were in school (elementary, middle, and high).

3. Please describe your mother and fathers’ education attainment.

4. Please describe your mother and father’s involvement in your education during your childhood.

5. What challenges did you face in education as a child (elementary, middle, and high school)? How did you cope when you had setbacks?

6. Please describe your experiences with teachers/school officials while you were in school (elementary, middle, and high).

7. Please describe your views of education now.

8. Please describe your post-secondary (after high school) experiences with education. (If applicable)

9. Please describe your experiences with teachers/instructors/professors at the technical, college, or university level (post-secondary). (If applicable)

10. What challenges did you face in gaining a post-secondary (technical, collegiate, graduate) education? How did you cope when you had setbacks? (If applicable)
Non-residential Father-Son Relationship

11. If you don’t think it’s too personal, please tell about when your son was born.

12. Tell me about your involvement in your son’s life since his birth.

13. Tell me about your involvement with your son’s homework.

14. Tell me about your PTA meeting attendance at your son’s school.

15. Tell me about your participation in parent conferences.

16. Tell me about your participation in extracurricular activities (clubs and sports).

17. Tell me about your participation for helping your son plan his future.

18. Tell me about your son. What kinds of activities does he enjoy?

19. What do you and your son do when you are together?

20. What kind of student is your son?

21. Does your son enjoy school—Why or why not?

22. What are your hopes for your son?

Non-residential Father-Mother Relationship

23. Please describe the current relationship between yourself and your son’s mother.
APPENDIX M: Focus Group Agenda

I. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to our session. Thank you for taking time to join us in discussing the findings of the Outside Looking In study. You have been invited to participate in the Outside Looking In focus group session because of your involvement in the Outside Looking In study. We will first go over the ground rules for the discussion. I will briefly discuss the analysis of the survey and interview data. We will then discuss the ideas and thoughts that have emerged from the study. Finally, we will progress into other questions that may arise out of our discussion.

II. Ground Rules

Please keep in mind, there are no accurate answers when discussing the themes. There are only differences in points of view. Understand that both positive and negative comments are useful additions to the discussion and that sometimes the negative comments are the most helpful. Each session will be video recorded so that all comments receive full attention. Your real names will not be used during the session or in the report. Instead, you will be identified by the pseudonyms assigned to you at the beginning of the study. This will help to ensure confidentiality. Each of you has been asked to sign and adhere to a confidentiality statement. Please allow others to speak without interruption so that all comments may be heard. You do not have to agree with others, but please listen respectfully as others share their views. If possible, please turn off all cellular devices or at least place them on airplane mode. Food and drinks are available for you, but please
avoid excessive movement around the room during the discussion. My role as the moderator will be to facilitate the discussion. I ask that you please talk to each other and share your thoughts on the themes of the study as well as other participants’ opinions.

III. Explanation of Data Analysis Process

IV. Discussion of Themes and Further Questioning

· What roles do non-residential African American fathers play in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12?
  - Engagement
  - Progress monitoring
  - Guidance

· What factors shape non-residential African American father’s perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12?
  - Standard
  - Education
  - Objection

· What do non-residential African American fathers perceive as the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children in grades 3-12?
V. Closing Statements

I greatly appreciate your participation and thank you for attending this focus group session for the study titled, Outside Looking In. Your input from today’s session will be added to previously collected data and will be published. To obtain a final copy of this report, contact me at crreddick@liberty.edu.
APPENDIX N: Focus Group Questions

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions

*Participants’ Personal Experience with Education*

1. Please describe your mentality towards school as an elementary, middle, and high school student.

2. Please describe the impact your parents had on your mindset towards school.

3. Please describe your experiences with the person who has had the greatest negative influence on your views of education.

4. Please describe your experiences with the person who has had the greatest positive influence on your views of education.

5. Was your greatest influence of education from home or school?—Please describe your experiences.

*Father-Son Relationship*

6. Please describe how your son responds to your correcting him.

7. Please explain how you feel about correcting your son.
8. Please describe any instances where your son has made you feel guilty for not residing in the home with him.

9. Please describe any instances where you have felt guilty about not living in the home with your son.

10. Please describe instances where your son has asked you to help with homework or a project.

11. If your son has never asked you for help on homework or a project, please tell me why you feel he has not come to you for help.

12. Describe how you encourage your son to do well in school.

13. Describe the measures you take in showing your son that you support his academic and extracurricular activities.

14. Describe how you have communicated with your son’s teachers to show him that you care about his academic process.

*Father-Mother Relationship*

15. Describe experiences that you’ve had in which your son’s mother would not allow you have contact with him.

16. What have been some of the different challenges that you’ve faced in trying to remain informed about your son’s overall well-being; especially his academics?
17. If you don’t think it’s too personal, please describe the nature of the relationship between yourself and your son’s mother prior to his birth.

*Father’s State of Being*

18. How old were you and your son’s mother when he was conceived?

19. Please tell me what your life was like during the time that your son was conceived.

20. Please tell me what your life was like when your son was born.
# APPENDIX O: Samples of Clustered Codes and Themes

"A5S" Statements, Codes, and Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Quotes from interview/focus group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td>“Help him, discipline, take his toys and games. Show up at all of his games; pop up in class.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I work on Saturdays but I do take two Saturdays off per season to go see him. I try to make some of the Monday practices since I’m off on Mondays.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“He loves basketball, videos games, sports period. Football. He played soccer. It ain’t nothing he wouldn’t play. Baseball. Any sports you can name, he’ll play it; he’ll try it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“We have fun you know. Of course, outside of schoolwork, we have fun. Wrestle, play, shoot ball. We do everything. Whatever they want to do. When I’m with them, it’s they time. They pick something, we do it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I don’t hardly get to them because of the situation; two different cities; same state; 2 hours away.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I normally go to the ones at the beginning of the school year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I’m glad you asked that. He is the, every one of his teachers has told me that he is the most attentive child they have ever worked with. He actually is the teacher’s aide in all of his classes. He helps other students. He’s very helpful. I’m glad he’s like that. Because I wasn’t.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I mean, “let’s get it”. (Accompanied by a finger snap) No rebuttal”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It's the way it’s suppose to be.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Every time I’m in town we sit down and he don’t want to do it but I make him do it. He want to go play and I say”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-----------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>“School.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions</td>
<td>“No problems. I probably had detention three times the whole time I was in school. That’s all the way through 12th grade. Suspended once. That’s because I got into a fight.” “It was great. You just had to do what you had to do. Just follow instructions you will be alright.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>“My mom has a college degree. My dad, I don’t know.” “Absolutely. Right. There you go. Mandatory.” “I didn’t either. Not as far as negative influence.” “Yeah, my momma. Every experience in the world. Good, bad, wrong or indifferent; she was there.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragers</td>
<td>“My momma.” “My mom was there the whole time. My dad was hardly there.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>“It was fun. I enjoyed school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>“People are too harsh on the teachers. I mean parents. It needs to be more of people taking care of stuff at home. More parents need to get involved with education. Teachers are doing all they can do.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objection</td>
<td>Disposition</td>
<td>“Vocational. Barber school. Trade or whatever you want to call it. It was easy; too easy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustments</td>
<td>“Learning how to cut white people hair. You have to adjust and overcome. You had to listen and just you know overcome. You can’t let it hold you back.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Subject | “Staying focused in school keeping my grades up. I dealt with him but you learned from him. You let your
negatives turn into a positive. That’s the way I did it. That’s the way my momma taught me.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accountability</th>
<th>Finish well</th>
<th>“To be the best man he could possibly be and the best father he could possibly be. When it’s the time to be a father; not early.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td></td>
<td>“He would say why wasn't I at one of his games.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Yeah, those have been good times.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Cause his momma helped him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping</td>
<td>Mother gatekeeping</td>
<td>“Jealousy basically.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Women tend to not want you to discipline your boys.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>“We was in love! (Laughter)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s kosher now. It wasn’t at first. We work it out for the kids. We make it strictly about the kids.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Preparedness</td>
<td>“I was 29. She was 25.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I was having a little fun. I working with Kev for three years at that time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I had my daughter and it was about her. Then when he was born it was about the both of them. I love for them basically. A little for me and a lot for them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I was there. I was the first one to hold him. I cut the umbilical cord. It was the second best experience of my life besides my daughter.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“As much as possible, As much as needed. Not as much as I want because me and his mom didn’t make it as a couple.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX P: Sample Textural and Structural Descriptors

“S3M”

Textural Description—What was experienced?

S3M was a teenager when his son was born. He aimed to do better for his son that what his father had done. While there were times that he and his son lived a great distance apart, he always remained “a constant presence in his life.” When he and his son were not in the same area, he would remain involved through phone calls. S3M has expressed that he’s experienced guilt for not being in the home with his son during those times when things were going on in his home where he felt like “I wish we would have done this or why couldn’t we have done that.” He then stated that he recalled, however, that there was a reason that he had left his son’s mother. He mentioned great experiences with helping his son with his homework; whether in person or over the phone; despite the fact that he was not living in the home or at times lived in another country. S3M always took initiative to remain aware of his son’s academic progress. S3M encourages his son by continuously explaining to him the importance of education and what his life could be like without it. S3M shows his son support by “calling to check on him, show up at all of his events” and attending parent-teacher conferences. Now that his son is in high school, he has played a major part in helping his son to plan his future.

Structural Description—How, in what context and setting was it experienced?
S3M was not prepared to be a father as he had just graduated high school at the time of his son’s conception. He had to face fatherhood within the realm of “doing what he had to do” to ensure that his son was taking care. This meant that he would have to forfeit the amount of face-to-face interaction he would have with his son as he had to drop out of college to join the military. S3M was unable to be as involved with raising his son as he would have liked based on the fact that he was active duty military for a major portion of his son’s life. Communication between S3M and his son’s mother was good, for the most part. However, there were times during which he was not allowed to see his based on the premise of money.
APPENDIX Q: Sample Theoretical Memo

02/27/2016

This interview with “S8B”, my final interview, was the most challenging of them all. This father was denied the opportunity to bond with his son during the mother’s pregnancy and become acquainted with him well after his birth. He was not aware that his son existed until his son was eight years old. His first notification of his son was when he received papers in the mail to report to court in the state of Florida for a child support hearing. This father struggled as we moved through the entire interview as he was unable to either answer many of the questions or provide a great deal of detail for the questions. This is due to the fact that the mother ceased all communication between father and son as soon as the verification of paternity and child support order was completed.

“S8B” was very honest with his feelings and thoughts in stating what he wished he could have done more and been a vital part in the life of his son. He focused on the many things that he was “told” about his son as he has not been allowed to remain active in his life after meeting him at age eight. This father hopes that he and his son can begin to communicate, without the interference of his mother, as his son moves up in age. He expresses the idea that he has tried to find various ways to contact his son but was intercepted by the mother each time. He expressed the idea that his mother is more interested in money versus making sure that her son knows and has a healthy relationship with his father. He expressed that he feels the only reason she decided to contact him, or have the courts contact him, was due to her lack of financial support. The
participant, however, wanted me to know that he was, in fact, a good father as he made sure to add to the discussion, the roles he plays in the lives of his others sons as well as his level of involvement.

Although “S68” agreed to participate in the second focus group, it appeared that he may have experienced feelings of inadequacy when it came to answering the focus group questions along with the other fathers as the other participants, each, had in depth experiences and involvement with their sons to share with the group.
## APPENDIX R: Summary of Interview Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Survey Completed</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Interview Medium</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1B</td>
<td>10/17/2015</td>
<td>10/18/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2T</td>
<td>10/20/2015</td>
<td>10/22/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3M</td>
<td>11/04/2015</td>
<td>11/05/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4T</td>
<td>11/14/2015</td>
<td>11/16/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5S</td>
<td>11/15/2015</td>
<td>11/19/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6B</td>
<td>12/05/2015</td>
<td>12/07/2015</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M7C</td>
<td>12/26/2015</td>
<td>12/27/2015</td>
<td>Video conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S8B</td>
<td>02/26/2016</td>
<td>02/27/2016</td>
<td>Video conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX S: Sample Transcript

“L2T” Interview Transcript

Conducted 10/22/15

Transcribed 10/22/15

CC: Please describe your experiences in school at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

L2T: Elementary, I had some really really good teachers. I did fairly well. Actually, really in elementary school. Middle I did really good too except for math. Math was a struggle for me; mainly with fractions. In high school, high school was easy but I don't feel like we were actually prepare for college in such a way we all skated by in high school.

CC: Please describe the person(s) that provided you with the most support while you were in school (elementary, middle, and high).

L2T: That's a tough one. I think, I think my family was the biggest supporters. I had a few teachers that were. But I think the biggest was my family.

CC: Please describe your mother and father’s education attainment.

L2T: My mom graduated from high school. I don't think my dad did. My mom, after some years went back to school; went back to technical, vocational school and got her degree in early childhood development.

CC: Please describe your mother and father’s involvement in your education during your childhood.
L2T: My mom was more involved in my education than my dad was. As long as I made good grades, that was fine with him.

CC: What challenges did you face in education as a child (elementary, middle, and high school)? How did you cope when you had setbacks?

L2T: Honestly, I think science projects. I think having a lack information and a lack of creativity, I didn't do that well science projects. Everything else I did well with. I'm going to say that early, at that time I had a nonchalant attitude. I really didn't care.

CC: Please describe your experiences with teachers/school officials while you were in school (elementary, middle, and high).

L2T: Throughout my childhood education, elementary through high school, my experience with my teachers was actually great except for the exception of a few teachers I had no issues with my teachers. Administrators knew who I was but I never got in any trouble. If I ever needed help they was willing to help, me out whenever I needed it.

CC: Please describe your views of education now.

L2T: The views of education now. I think it varies from school to school, city to city, state to state. It’s not, it’s not very cohesive. It’s not on the same plane right now so you get different education levels based on the school that you go to and the county. The two counties that sit next to it have a different education system. So, I think there should be some balance in there somewhere with our school system or with the standards.

CC: Please describe your post-secondary (after high school) experiences with education. (If applicable)
L2T: My experience for post-secondary life was; it was on your own. You had to do what you had to do on your own. Your professors and teachers were there to assist you; was there to help you but as to hold your hand, you were accountable for yourself. Couldn’t anybody hold you accountable for that so that gives you a more, more sense of responsibility cause you want to do great. Can’t nobody help you do that. You got to do that on your own.

CC: Please describe your experiences with teachers/instructors/professors at the technical, college, or university level (post-secondary). (If applicable)

L2T: Overall, I had good experiences. I had maybe a couple of teachers or professors that were relentless in helping people. They felt that you should already know it yourself and for whatever reason they was trying to be hardcore. So, I just got out that class and got into something else.

CC: What challenges did you face in gaining a post-secondary (technical, collegiate, graduate) education? How did you cope when you had setbacks? (If applicable)

L2T: The only challenges were holding myself accountable. Being to class on time, doing the work, studying, time management. Because doing that you also working at the same time too so you got to balance your whole life. I dealt with them. I reevaluated what I had to do. I had to go back and look at where I was failing at and see exactly what I had to do to pass. Whether I got help, whether I read extra material, got extra material from the library or off the internet which was available at that time.

CC: If you don’t think it’s too personal, please tell about when your son was born.

L2T: That was the best experience in the world. First son, first child, being in the delivery room watching them clean him, holding him, and smelling him. Just all the great joys of being a father.
CC: Tell me about your involvement in your son’s life since his birth.

L2T: My involvement was very limited due to the fact that we lived in different areas. There were people that got involved in it that should have never got involved in it so it was a lot of back and forth with that. For the most part, regardless I did the things what I had to do to go see him and when they come down from Atlanta, I got whenever, I just made available time. I made my time; I made myself available to go see him whether it was for a couple hours or if it was for a weekend. I dedicated my time to just being there with him.

CC: Tell me about your involvement with your son’s homework.

L2T: Can’t ever say that I really have.

CC: Tell me about your PTA meeting attendance at your son’s school.

L2T: Haven’t been to any.

CC: Tell me about your participation in parent conferences.

L2T: Never invited.

CC: Tell me about your participation in extracurricular activities (clubs and sports).

L2T: He played a couple sports. When I was given a schedule, depending on my work schedule I would drive up to go see him play. Whether he played on not, if he was on the team I would still go to support him.

CC: Tell me about your participation for helping your son plan his future.

L2T: We haven't took that step yet. He’s only eleven. So, I don't know if he’s thinking that far yet. But he’s a pretty bright kid. Any child that can tell you what divergence is about...He’s smarter than me.
CC: Tell me about your son. What kinds of activities does he enjoy?

L2T: Activities that he enjoy is playing games, reading, he played baseball a couple years. When he comes down we’ll play catch with the football or what not. That’s about it. Not a whole lot. He’s a pretty simple kid.

CC: What do you and your son do when you are together?

L2T: Go to the store. Go to the toy store. Go to the mall. Go to the movie. Have fun. Just, he occasionally goes to a photo shoot with me from time to time.

CC: What kind of student is your son?

L2T: He’s a, he’s an A student. Doesn’t get in trouble. I think everybody loves him. I don’t think nobody bullies him. I haven’t gotten no reports of any type of activity like that where he go to school at.

CC: Does your son enjoy school—Why or why not?

L2T: Yes, get to learn new things. Get to widen his horizon. If it’s anything like me, he has a curious mind of how things operate; how things work.

CC: What are your hopes for your son?

L2T: My hopes for him is to graduate with; I’m not gone say with honors, that’d be good, that’d be great. But to do the best that he can to graduate and not graduate at the bottom of his class. To do great, to go to college and to find himself to find out exactly what it is he want and do what drives him and gives him passion.

24. Please describe the current relationship between yourself and your son’s mother.
L2T: For the most part, we have an agreeable relationship. There is really no issues. If she tell me he needs something or he got something going on or what not, I’m there for him and that’s about it. We both work together.

CC: Well this concludes our interview. I would like to thank you for participating.
APPENDIX T: Sample Request for Verification of Study Findings and Themes

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you for your participation in the Outside Looking In study. The information you shared will contribute to a better understanding of your role in your child’s academic process.

Please remember that any data collected pertaining specifically to you will be kept in confidentiality. At this point, all data for this study has been collected and analyzed. The results of this study will be dispersed through the publication of my doctoral dissertation with the possibility of being developed into a journal article or book.

A summary of the findings and common themes are listed below. Your comments, questions and concerns are welcomed. Please forward all communications to me at crreddick@liberty.edu.

- What roles do non-residential African American fathers play in the academic process of their male children?
  - Engagement
  - Progress monitoring
  - Guidance

- What factors shape non-residential African American fathers’ perceptions of their roles in the academic process of their male children?
  - Standards
  - Academics
  - Objection

- What do non-residential African American fathers perceive as the value of their involvement in the academic process of their male children?
  - Accountability
  - Coping
  - Awareness

Sincerely,

Chaundra Creekmur
Primary Investigator
APPENDIX U: Summary of Survey Data

*Disagree strongly=1, Disagree=2, Disagree a little=3, Agree a little=4, Agree=5, Agree strongly=6

Part I: As the Parent

1. I take my child to the library, community events, or similar places.

2. I get advice from the teacher.

3. I help my child with homework.
4. I make sure my child understands his assignments.

5. I explain tough assignments to my child.

6. I keep an eye on my child’s progress.
7. I talk with my child about his learning.

8. I assume that my child is doing well if I don’t hear anything from the school.
9. The teacher/school should let me know about a problem before I can do something about it.

10. The teacher/school should notify me if my child had a problem.

11. The teacher/school should make sure my child understands his assignments.

12. The teacher/school should notify me of most of my child’s progress via the report card.
13. The teacher/school should be responsible for most of my child’s learning.

Part II: The Parent as a Student

Scale: disliked 1 2 3 4 5 6 liked

<table>
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<th>My School:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scale: were mean 1 2 3 4 5 6 were nice

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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Scale: ignored me 1 2 3 4 5 6 cared about me

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<tr>
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Scale: bad 1 2 3 4 5 6 good
### My school experience:

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I belonged</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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**Scale:** an outsider 1 2 3 4 5 6 I belonged

### I felt like:

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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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**Scale:** failure 1 2 3 4 5 6 success
My overall experience:

1 0
2 0
3 0
4 0
5 4
6 4

Part III: Demographics

1. Is your son in elementary, middle, or high school?

2. How much formal education have you completed?
3. **How much formal education would you like for your son to complete?**

4. **Are you employed?**
5. On average, how many hours per week do you work?
## APPENDIX V: Feedback from Member Checking

### Focus Group 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| S3M         | “Wow, I said all of this?”
|             | “It did not seem like we talked about that much.”
|             | “I do agree though, I said all of this.”
|             | “This is me.”
|             | “I can’t believe you typed it all word for word; even the slang. You did good though.”
|             | “You did good with how you disguised our names. I like that.” |
| K4T         | “When you see it all on paper it really makes you think.”
|             | “I did say all of these things.”
|             | “I trusted that you would write exactly what I said. You listened well.” |
| A5S         | “I really don’t need to read through it.”
|             | “I trust that you recorded exactly what I said.”
|             | “I went ahead and read through it and it looks really good.”
|             | “I think you did a great job. I like the little name you came up with. I may have to use that for my next email.” |

### Focus Group 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| R1B         | “All of this true. Nothing extra, nothing less.”
|             | “I agree with all of this. This was what I said.”
|             | “It felt good to talk about this though. Thanks.” |
| L2T         | “This was pretty accurate.”
|             | “I think I may do some things differently now that I was able to read what we discussed. I wasn’t really thinking about it as we were talking. I was just answering the questions.” |
| M7C         | “This was good. You did well.”
|             | “I think this defines all of what I had to say about my kids.”
|             | “This transcript explains how I feel about them and how I am as their father. I hope this helps someone.” |
| S8B         | “All of this is on target. It doesn’t appear that you added anything extra.”
|             | “I trusted you anyway so I figured this was how things would be.”
|             | “I apologize that I couldn’t give you more information based on my situation based on my experience with my son.” |