

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN FOURTH GRADE MALES.

By:

Dana C. Madison

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this causal comparative study was to examine if there was a statistically significant difference in the academic achievement of African American 4th grade males who had strong parental involvement and those who had little to no parental involvement. The data for this causal comparative study was obtained through the benchmark and developmental assessment reading scores as well as the results of the Parent Success Indicator Survey. This survey was designed to measure how the parents viewed their involvement in their child's education. The research questions were (1) Is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that has little to no parental involvement according to their Development Reading Assessment(DRA) scores and (2) Is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that has little to no parental involvement according to their Benchmark(BM) scores. Two independent sample *t*-tests and the Mann-Whitney U test were used to assess the research questions. The findings revealed that there is a statistically significant difference in academic achievement between participants who have strong parental involvement and those who have little to no parental involvement.

Keywords: achievement gap, African American males, parental involvement, No Child

Left Behind, Title I

Dedication

First, giving all honor and praise to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because I know that through him all things are possible and had it not been for him holding my hands through my dark days and nights I would not be where I am today. I dedicate this dissertation to my dad and mom, Paul and Mary A. Cary who are both resting in heaven. To my mom who has always been my rock until the very end. She impressed upon me and inspired me to work hard and always do my best.

I also dedicate this final work to my wonderful daughter Jasmine for always being there and motivating me throughout my entire doctoral program. She has always been my number one cheerleader.

In this dedication, I would like to also include my true friends and coworkers who have supported me through this journey, even if their support was only a positive word or two, it really did keep me encouraged.

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List of Abbreviations

Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)

Benchmarks (BM)

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Parent and Teacher Involvement Questionnaire (PTIQ)

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

According to research conducted by Taylor (2012), the achievement gap between blacks and whites continues to be a major challenge to educational research and governing policies in the United States. Even though this disparity in achievement has been the focus of years of research and intervention, efforts to address this dilemma continues to fall short. In this chapter the problem statement; significance of study; hypothesis and definitions relative to this study will be discussed.

Background

African American males are faced daily with challenges, such as homicide, incarceration and the contracting of diseases such as HIV at a much more alarming rate than their peers and counterparts (Lee, Lewis, Sly, Carmack & Roberts, 2011). These challenges present a very dismal situation for the African American male population. The education of these young men has also become a crisis, which has become a very important concern to the United States. Studies have shown that the African American male continues to do poorly in their academic achievement. As they continue to struggle with academics, the likelihood that they will live in poverty because of the poor education and the lack of skills they have obtained increases (Lee, Lewis, Sly, Carmack & Roberts, 2011).

According to White (2009), by the time a student enters kindergarten and first grade, math and reading gaps are already present. Often times for the African American male, the academic gaps in math and reading impacts their future. As African American males continue to

be unsuccessful in their academic endeavors, the probability increases that they will be recommended to receive special education services, be suspended or expelled from school (White, 2009).

Childhood poverty, the lack of early childhood education, and a low quality literacy education are key components to the school-prison pipeline (Winn, Behizadeh, Duncan, Fine & Gadsden, 2011). Reading and writing are necessary tools for success in the educational system whereby students of color are placed in special education, suspended, or expelled in a disproportionate rate, all of which are contributing factors to a higher probability of being incarcerated (Winn, Behizadeh, Duncan, Fine & Gadsden, 2011). According to Steve Cohen (2010), in the State of Texas, they use their fourth-grade reading scores to predict the number of prison cells they will need in ten years. He further goes on to state that 60% of America's prison inmates are illiterate and 85% of all juvenile offenders have reading problems (Cohen, 2010). According to statistics from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests as reported by Cohen (2010), a standardized test given to all fourth graders, reflects that 67% of American fourth-graders cannot read at the fourth-grade proficiency level and 33% of them score below the basic competency level.

African American males' academic achievement is also influenced by their environment. Authors Joe and Davis (2008), report that through empirical investigations, the role of the parent is an important mediating factor in a child's academic achievement and is especially true for the African American boys. Joe and Davis (2008), further report that the differences exhibited through parental involvement are based on things such as the parental academic beliefs by

family, socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity which all provide a link to a lack of school readiness.

Scott Graves (2010), states that research shows African American males consistently demonstrate underachievement starting at school entry. These young men have the lowest performance on standardized assessments of academic achievement, which contributes to the trend that includes subjective placement of them into special education. Graves (2010), also states that it has been documented that children with low levels of academic achievement in elementary school are less likely than their high achieving peers to have positive outcomes. Another area of concern with their education is African American males are disproportionately likely to receive suspensions and expulsions at a higher rate (Darensbourg, Perez & Blake, 2010). According to the authors (Darensbourg, Perez & Blake, 2010) African American males inequitably experience exclusionary discipline practices in general and out of school suspensions specifically. African American male students are suspended 2 to 3 times more frequently than other students and all the while continually to underachieve.

Academic problems that impede the educational progress of African American males begin early according to Palmer and Maramba (2012). In their research, Palmer and Maramba (2012), point out that the academic problems that the African American males face daily impinge on their ability to graduate. In fact, according to research, cited by Neblett, Chavous, Nguyen and Sellers (2009), less than half of the African American males that start high school actually finish, and they are more prone to school failure and negative academic achievement than that of their peers.

Problem Statement

Poor academic performance among the African American male can be attributed to a variety of risk factors (Lee et al., 2011). Such risk factors include low socioeconomic status, single parent households, parental involvement, the lack of availability of an external support system and teacher expectations. These risk factors often place African American males at risk of retention at all grade levels. According to Lee et al. (2011), retention is a strong indicator to these young men to consider giving up on their education and dropping out.

According to White (2009), the academic achievement gap that exists between African American adolescents (between the ages of 8-15 years old) and their Caucasian counterparts is one of the most important issues in the United States. In fact, Barton and Coley (2010), state that the nation's attention has been and remains steadfast on the persistent Black-White gap in the achievement of our elementary and secondary school students. Addressing the achievement gap can be traced back to the *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 when the expectations increased by focusing on the inequality of school resource. Barton and Coley (2010), reported that from the early 1970's until the late 1980, there was a very large narrowing of the gap in reading and math with the size of the reduction dependent on the subject and age group examined, however during the 1990's the narrowing halted and in some cases the gap increased. White (2009), stated in her research which supports Barton and Coley(2010), while gains in the educational endeavors of African American adolescents have been noted, unfortunately in the 1990's there was a reduction in the academic gains with the achievement gap widening.

In a study conducted by Meade, Gayton, Fergus and Noguera (2009), of African American and Latino males, it was reported that according to the national estimates, only 59% of African American males and 49% of Latino males complete high school. That leaves approximately 50% of these two populations in statuses other than a high school graduate. In research conducted by Meade et al. (2009), it was reported that some of these young men may still be enrolled after four years whereas others may have taken the option of dropping out. Dropping out is severe for the young African American male. These individuals because they have had difficulty in their educational endeavors are low-skilled and will have the lowest rates of employment and the highest rates of incarceration. This is another clear indication of the risk that African American males are facing (pg.6).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this causal comparative research study was to determine if parental involvement impacts the academic success of fourth grade African American males enrolled in School A, School G, School L and School S. The four elementary schools chosen were all Title I schools. The schools' identification as Title I is as a result of having a minimum of 40% of their students coming from low income families and receiving free and reduced lunch (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The schools were located in the same district and had some attributes in common such as socioeconomic status, difficulty in obtaining the accreditation standards and low parental involvement. The four elementary schools selected were located in an urban area.

Significance of the Study

This research study will assist the field of education in gaining further knowledge and information in reference to the role parental involvement plays in the academic progress of elementary school aged African American males in schools that are considered Title 1 schools. According to Higendorf (2012), research conducted in recent years has indicated that the involvement of their parents and families in the educational process can positively contribute to closing a persistent achievement gap. However, there is still a great deal to be learned about the differences in the nature and diversity of the school related support that students experience within their families. There exists little research on how families of low income and racial ethnic minorities view the support they are able to provide and contribute to their children's education or how it may compare to the institutional ideals of parent involvement.

According to other researchers there exists empirical evidence that links parental involvement to student achievement (Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz & Bowman-Peerot, 2011). An earlier review indicated that a positive learning environment at home has a powerful impact on student achievement as well as having school-based training programs for low income families to improve language skills, test performance and school behavior for their children.

Additionally, the mother's educational level influences their students' academic achievement. According to Lacor and Tissington (2011), a mother's education had a more significant effect on the scores of their children and there have been multiple studies conducted that support the mother's educational level was a predictor of school completion. Smith, Brooks-Gunn and Klebanov (1997), as cited by Lacor and Tissington (2011), reported that the

effect of the mother's education impacts the student achievement because of the way they talk, play, interact and read to their young children.

Authors Joe and Davis (2009), suggests that parents who are involved in their children's schooling see benefits such as higher academic achievement, reduced absenteeism and a more positive attitude toward school. However, various parental and social factors that affect parental involvement exist. For example, African American parents tend to be more involved in the educational process and activities within their home whereas other races choose to be more involved in their children's educational process in the school setting (Joe & Davis, 2009).

Knowing and exploring factors that the different researchers have mentioned in this study, that can influence a parents involvement in the academic achievement of the African American 4th grade males, will be of high value to all educational stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, parents and students.

Research Questions

RQ₁- Is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that has little to no parental involvement according to their DRA Scores.

RQ₂-Is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American t 4th grade male that has little to no parental involvement according to their Benchmark Scores.

Definitions

1. *Achievement Gap* is the difference between high and low academically performing students as indicated by scores on standardized reading and math assessments.

2. *Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)* is annual measurable objectives of proficiency in reading and mathematics, testing participation, and graduation and attendance (Department of Education, 2012).

3. *African American Fourth grade male* is a boy who is between the ages of nine and ten and is in his fifth year of public school and is in grade 4. They may have been in the fourth year two times, also known as a repeater.

4. *Parental Involvement* is a combination of active participation and commitment of the parent(s) or guardian in regular, two way and meaningful communication involving their child's academic learning and other student activities.

5. *Rural Schools* are Schools that reside within a geographic area that is located outside of cities and towns (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012)

6. *Standards of Learning (SOL)* establishes minimum expectations for what students should know at the end of each grade or course in English, mathematics, history/social studies and science (Department of Education, 2012).

7. *Suburban Schools* are schools located in residential areas on the outside of metropolitan areas (Tefera, Frankenburg, Siegel Hawley & Chirichigno, 2011).

8. Title I The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which provides financial assistance to local educational agencies(LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards(www2.ed.gov). Federal funds for Title 1 are allocated through four statutory formulas that are based on the census poverty estimates and the cost to educate in the respective states (www2.ed.gov/programs).

9. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) A law that addresses the academic achievement of America's youth and the differences in test scores that exist between low-income and minority students and their White, middle-class counterparts (Rowley & Wright, 2011).

10. Developmental Reading Assessment(DRA) is a standardized reading test used to determine a student's instructional level in reading(www.scholastic.com).

11. Economically Disadvantaged is a student that is eligible for free/reduced meals, receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or is eligible for Medicaid (www.doe.virginia.gov).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review will examine the effect of parental involvement on the academic success of fourth grade African American males. Authors Owens, Simmons, Bryant and Hanfield (2011), state that urban African American male students face many obstacles, which include disproportionate placement in special education or remedial reading courses; higher rates of suspensions and expulsions than any other race of males; underrepresentation in gifted or advanced courses; and educational experiences that generally have derailed their dreams. Historically urban African American males have been viewed with some degree of dissonance and trepidation by what's considered the larger society. The authors(Owens, Simmons, Bryant & Hanfield, 2011) go on to state in their research that schools which act as microcosms of the larger society can reflect this trepidation and consequently fail to assess how policies and pedagogy may not support a positive academic outcome for the African American male student. It is suggested that African American male students have the tendency to internalize the negative stereotypes portraying them as academically incapable, lazy or uninterested, which leads them to not perform as well academically (Owens et al., 2011)

In the *State of Black Boys special report* compiled by Nick Chiles (2013), he states that the African American male is struggling desperately in school. Only 11 percent of the African American fourth grade male students in cities with populations larger than 250,000 were proficient in reading in 2009 and only 10 percent of the African American eighth grade males were acknowledged as being proficient at their grade level. Interestingly he goes on to state that while school is where many of the problems that are misinterpreted and played out, home is

ultimately where it all starts. African American parents with the best intentions can destroy their son's chances of doing well in school by burdening him early with the thoughts and sense of low expectations (Chiles, 2013). At birth the contextual stage of individuals is somewhat set according to Grimett (2010). This stage includes socioeconomic status, family net worth, parental educational attainments, parental careers neighborhood and school systems. For example children who are born to college educated parents who have careers with salaries that would afford them an opportunity to live in safe neighborhood will begin their lives enhanced with career development resources. Life choices and career development are not determined by the children but by the responsibility and ethical obligation of the adults and professionals that have a responsibility for their care, guidance and education (Grimett, 2010).

Over the past years there has grown a great concern about the plight of African American males. According to Nebitt (2009), African American males are one of the nation's most vulnerable populations. African American males fall behind their female peers in the area of education, labor and career development. Because African American males are vulnerable they are most likely to be arrested and adjudicated.

Theoretical Framework

Usher and Pajares (2008), in their article stated that Albert Bandura theorized that the beliefs that individuals hold about their capabilities and the outcomes of their efforts strongly influence the ways in which they behave. Self-efficacy according to Bandura is an important linkage between possessing knowledge or skills and engaging in relevant behavior to appropriately accomplished desired goals (Nebitt, 2009). According to Uwah, McMahon and Furlow (2008), researchers have shown that academic self-efficacy is predictive of a students'

ability to succeed and that students with higher academic self-efficacy work harder, are more persistent and develop better goal setting and time monitoring strategies which are positively related to academic performance. Nebitt (2009), continues by stating that self-efficacy has been linked to a number of positive outcomes in adolescence including the ability to negotiate risk, academic achievement, health promoting behaviors and greater orientation toward their future. Usher and Pajares (2008), further go on to report that with Bandura's social cognitive theory, an individual's self-efficacy beliefs help them to determine the choices that they make, any efforts they put forth, persistence and perseverance used when faced with difficult situations and the degree of anxiety or serenity that they experience as they engage in the many tasks that are a part of their lives.

African American adolescent males according to Nebitt (2009), are one of our nation's most vulnerable populations. They are more likely to be arrested, adjudicated and detained than their Caucasian and Latino counterparts. The author further states that African American adolescent males fall behind their African American female counterparts in educational outcomes. As referenced earlier in this research by authors, Lee et al. (2011), African American males face challenges daily such as being more likely to die from homicide and be incarcerated more than that of their white counterparts. Facts such as those present a very dismal situation for African American males causing their education to suffer. The authors go on further to point out, that as a result of the educational woes of the African American male they are disproportionately represented in several categories of academic failure. Lee et al. (2011), references a study conducted by Noguera in 2003 in which the results indicated that 90% of African American males agreed that their education was important and continuing on with their education was just as important, but only 18% of these same respondents stated that they worked

hard to achieve the grades necessary to complete such a goal—which suggested that there is a disconnect between what African American males want to do and their behavioral outputs.

Authors Uwah, McMahon and Furlow (2008), stated in their article that there are multiple hypotheses that have been suggested that could assist in the explanation of the unique struggles faced by the African American male students from the different socioeconomic backgrounds. They report that cultural misunderstandings, low expectations by school staff, inequality in resources, and parenting styles have all been mentioned as contributing factors in their plight. Uwah et al. (2008), suggest that the combination of race and gender may contribute to imposing further barriers to the academic success of many of the African American males.

According to Nebitt (2009), the role parents play in the lives of their adolescent is important in their developmental context. There is evidence that suggests that there is a link between a parents' behavior and their adolescent's outcomes, which includes self-efficacy. A youth's relationship with his parents' serves as an important developmental context according to the research. The research goes on to state that there is a link between a parents' behavior and that of the different adolescent outcomes of which self-efficacy is included. This suggests that supportive parents are associated with their adolescent's self-esteem and involvement in prosocial behavior. In contrast if a parent is not supportive, exercise rigid psychological control, their parenting practices are harsh and coercive in nature, then most likely there will be poor outcomes for their adolescents and as well lower levels of self-efficacy as well (Nebitt, 2009).

Historical Context

Closing the achievement gap has been a the focus of both academic and popular dialogues on education reform, argued about in congressional offices, teachers lounges as well as

discussed on C-Span and Oprah (Chambers, 2009). The concern about black-white disparities in academic performance on standardized tests has gained attention at the highest levels and was made one of the most important focuses of President Bush's, No Child Left Behind Act, 2002. Interestingly, No Child Left Behind is the largest and most sweeping federal education reform initiative since the 1960's. Rowley & Wright (2011), point out in their article that racial inequality is a serious problem in the United States. In the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 1954, the United States Supreme Court decision paved the way to desegregate and bring about racial equality in public schools. In 1957, three years after the *Brown v. Board of Education*, the National Guard forced Little Rock, Arkansas to admit Blacks in public school and eight years after Little Rock, the landmark decision of the Civil Rights of 1964 placed a ban against the discrimination based on race, but even with these historical decisions in place, the issues of racial inequality in education still exist. This inequality is quite prevalent among the African American community.

According to Chambers (2009), after the emancipation and in the wake of *Plessy v. Ferguson* 1896, African Americans were forced to attend segregated, resource-poor schools, plagued by a lack of monetary and tangible resources in which they were entitled. African American reverence for education was further exemplified by the numbers of Blacks who put their resources together which was double taxed, paying regular government taxes plus making additional financial donations to the local schools while their tax money was being diverted to white schools.

According to Cobb (2011), a school attendance research study was conducted in Sunflower, Mississippi. The population consisted of approximately 20,473 African American

adolescents and out of that number; there were only 7,709 of them who were enrolled in and attending school. The low representation of this population in attendance of school was attributed to the communities attempt to make separate and equal schools. The ability to accommodate separate and equal schools was seriously hampered by the strained economics of the state of Mississippi. During this time there were approximately eighty two counties who could not offer education to the Caucasian or African American population because of the strain on the economy. In Mississippi there were attempts made to have dialogue about solutions to the separate but equal schools, but opportunities to have meaningful and positive dialogue was met with resistance because of the noted “white” rage over the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court Decision of 1954. This decision was handed down to assist states in ensuring that the public schools were segregated (Cobbs, 2011).

Zion and Blanchett (2011) reported in their research that the 1954 Brown Legal decision requiring schools to provide an equal educational opportunity for all students launched a new era that conversations about race and inequality were a part of law and public policy. Brown provided the motivation for the current legislation such as the Individual with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act of 2004 and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and 2002, which set forth the requirements that address the need to ensure that all students in the United States are provided equal educational opportunities. The authors (Zion & Blanchett, 2011) further go on to report that the Brown v. Board of Education force public education to face a variety of pressures to live up to the expectations that were set forth. Brown set the stage for students of color to be allowed to pursue equality in all their educational opportunities (Zion & Blanchett, 2011).

Research according to Palmer and Maramba (2012), state terms, such as endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional and dangerous are used to describe the African American male. Academic problems' hindering the educational progress of the African American male begins early, which affects their ability to finish school. In elementary and secondary education, teachers and counselors are far likely to levy negative expectations upon African American males as it relates to continuing their education. They are disproportionately disciplined, more likely to face expulsions, and suspended longer and more frequently than their white counterparts (Palmer & Maramba, 2012).

According to Rashid (2009), preschool and early education years play a major role in transforming young African American boys from brilliant babies into what they are called today children at risk. For this reason a "preschool" to "prison" pipeline now exists. The research further goes on to report that the "pipeline" runs from the preschool setting through elementary, middle and high school. Elementary education is viewed by some as land mines for the young African American boys. The article further states that that these young African American boys emerge from this six-year period and head into fourth grade with the lowest reading levels; the lowest expectations from teachers; and the highest suspension, expulsion, and special education referral rates of any group of children in the United States.

According to Grave (2010), increasing the academic achievement of all children has taken on a national importance as it has been so noted by the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, Public Law 107-110). The opening statement of the NCLB Act states that its purpose is to close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice so that no child is left behind. Also cited in his article was data from the National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) which indicates that the African Americans perform at unacceptable levels. According to the data, only 12% of African American 4th graders can read at a proficient or advanced level; in math 37% of the African American children perform at the below basic level. In states where there is a high proportion of African American children, such as Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana, their scores are even worse—45%, 50% and 40% respectively (Graves, 2010).

According to Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz and Bowman-Perrott (2011), the recent authorizations of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) holds states and local schools accountable for ensuring all students are achieving high academic standards. Further noted is that there were two recent documents that listed progress and continuing challenges, but students with disabilities as well as those from ethnically/linguistically diverse backgrounds were most likely not going to make adequate yearly progress under NCLB accountability measures.

The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has continued to cause substantial debates regarding the usefulness of its provisions and the education of African American children. The many challenges that are part of this act can provide for meaningful opportunities to transform the educational system for African American children. The intent solely is to hold every public school in that state to the same standards of academic achievement and the students to the same continuous progress (Graves, 2011).

Thomas Toch (2012), stated that the problem is not that NCLB requires states and local school systems to meet standards, but that it encourages states and their districts to low and meaningless standards. The author further explains that NCLB places schools with large number

of impoverished, low achieving students at a huge disadvantage. These schools, even with improved student performance, may still possibly be labeled as failures through NCLB.

The Environment of the African American Male

Marian Wright Edelman, President of the Children's Defense Fund (2011), states that the toxic cocktail of poverty, illiteracy, racial disparities, violence, massive incarceration and family breakdown are the ingredients that are sentencing millions of children to dead ends, hopeless lives which combine ultimately produces the achievement gaps in education. Educational Testing Service (2011), formulated statistical fact that contributes to the environment of the African American boys. The facts are as follows:

- * Infant Mortality rate for blacks is 13.2 percent compared with 5.6 percent for whites;*
- * Percentage of low birth weight black boys is near 14 percent, almost twice the rate of whites;*
- * Three fourths of black children are born out of wedlock;*
- * Black children account for only 15 percent of the U.S. child population, but make up 30 percent of children in foster care and stay in foster care longer than children of other races;*
- * 13 percent of black children (ages 6-18) have a mother with less than a high school education compared to 5 percent of white children and 17 percent of black children have a mother with at least a bachelor's degree compared with 36 percent of white children;*
- * 38 percent of black children live in a household where neither parent has full-time year around employment compared to 19 percent of white children;*
- * 12 percent of black children compared to 7 percent of white children are uninsured;*

- *More than three fourths of black children born between 1985 and 2000 grew up in high disadvantage neighborhoods compared to five percent of that cohort of white children.;*
- * The poverty rate for black children is 36 percent compared to 12 percent for white children;*
- *18 percent of black children live in extreme poverty compared to 5 percent of white children;*
- *35 percent of black children were in food insecure households in 2009 compared to 17 percent of white children;*
- *At 24 months, black babies scored significantly lower than white babies on the cognitive assessment administered as part of Early Childhood Longitudinal Program;*
- *Two-thirds of black 2 year olds were in regular non-parental care compared to about half of white children;*
- *Black teens were about 2.4 times more likely than white teens to have baby;*
- *At grade 4 only 11 percent of black males attending large city schools are proficient in reading compared to 38 percent of white student and 14 percent black are proficient in math as compared to 53 percent white;*
- *39 percent of black students attend a school where the percentage of low income student is 59 percent compared to the average white student is 32 percent;*
- * 25 percent of black males repeated a grade in school compared to 11 percent of white males;*
- * 50 percent of the black males have been suspended compared to 21 percent of white males;*
- *Black males are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as white males.*

Approximately 53% of African American children under the age of 18 live with just one parent and 49% of the households are headed by a single mother. In contrast, the percentage of Hispanic and Caucasians youth who live with two parents is 65% and 78% respectively (Roberts, Lewis & Carmack, 2011). The authors further go on to suggest that African American adolescents live in single parent households more than the Caucasians because of the (a) disorganization and instability in African American families as a result of slavery; and (b) the disadvantaged position placed on the African American is not as a consequence of single family home but the cause of it—income and residence (Roberts et al., 2011). A single parent environment may increase a child's risk of having low grades and test scores, because of the notion of lower educational expectations from parents less monitoring of school work, decreased supervision of activities associated with schools and finally the less likelihood of attending school. Chiles (2003), stated that the results of research conducted through workshops for single African American mothers suggested that their gender often serves to cause harm to their sons because they are being raised by women who are “bewildered” by what they do.

According to research by (Brown-Wright & Tyler, 2010) the tendency exists that African American male students do not fare as well academically as their counterparts. Interestingly, it was stated that 61% of the African American students performed below the basic levels on eighth grade math achievement examinations and the majority of that group are African American males. The article goes on to point out that 52% of the African American males who make the choice to leave high school without graduating will have a prison record by the time they reach their thirties. These are all considered facts that are associated with what is called home-school dissonance. Home-school dissonance simply stated is a difference between the values and operations within the home or in the environment as opposed to what is valued within

the formal educational setting. Tyler et al. (2009), point out that all student experience some degree of home dissonance when the values, beliefs, practices of their home or out of school practices are ignored or put aside in school. According to Brown-Wright and Tyler's (2010), research study findings of 80 African American male school students, suggested that the home-school dissonance experience by these males supported increases in factors such as academic cheating and classroom disruptive behavior.

Ceballo, McLoyd and Toyokawa (2004), pointed out in their research on the environment of the African American that the quality of the neighborhood that they reside in is positively linked and as well a factor in a child's educational performances and school completion. The authors used census data associated with zip codes of urban males ranging from the age of 13-22 and found that the neighborhood income had a strong correlation to the success and or failure of these young men.

Parental involvement of the African American male

Educational research has consistently indicated that the underachievement of African American males through their academic journeys begins at the elementary school level and continues through the post-secondary school level. Educational policy initiatives such as No Child Left Behind have increased the accountability among institutions, educators and parents to better prepare children to succeed academically (Joe & Davis, 2009).

A major problem faced by many American schools is the persistent achievement gap between African American students and their white peers, with the gap being even more striking in urban school districts (Hayes, 2011). Research indicates that at the end of the 20th century a wave of reforms had flowed throughout the nation's welfare system, which triggered an overhaul

of federal programs such as Aid to Families with dependent Children. This change in the welfare system now requires that parents work or engage in work related activities and as well faced a 60-month life time limit on welfare benefits afforded to them under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. The balancing of the interests of the child and the responsibility of the parent to be economically self-supporting has influenced the social welfare policy. Supporting a child's education is widely understood as being an important parenting responsibility (Shiffan, 2012).

Further research conducted by Joe and Davis (2009), indicated that the differences in early academic achievement among children begins prior to their school entry and is significantly influenced by such things as their families, race/ethnicity, parents educational level and the child's living environment. According to Kea (2009), parents and families are their children's first teachers and they have a powerful impact on their young children's development. African American parents express the very same concerns as those of other parents—they want their children to attend schools that offer them safety and as well, be academically strong and filled with personnel that supportive (Gardner & Mayes, 2013). It was pointed out that the early parental and family involvement in a child's preschool educational experience is indeed critical in their educational journey (Kea, 2009).

The benefit of parental involvement is thought to be important throughout a youth's preK-12 schooling career as stated by authors Robinson and Harrison (2014). Parental involvement in the home environment has been linked to key outcomes in a child's development. Some benefits that are realized as a result of parental involvement in the home include higher academic achievement, an increased in reading, writing and math achievement (Rogers, Markel,

Midgett, Ryan and Tannock, 2014). Parental involvement during a child's early education is encouraged as a means of promoting positive attitudes and behaviors toward learning. Parental involvement is defined as a multidimensional construct that includes both direct involvement in schools such as volunteering in the classrooms, attending parent-teacher conferences and indirect behaviors such as discussing school and family issues while conveying educational expectations (Hayes, 2011). Parents, who are actively participating in their child's education, are promoting the social, emotional and academic growth (Robinson & Harrison, 2014). The authors maintain that the importance placed on parental involvement by educators is channeled by their belief that poor achievement results from the lack of involvement or the lack of value placed on schooling by the parents (Robinson & Harrison, 2014).

Hayes (2011), states that nearly 90% of 4th and 8th grade African American students attending urban schools in 11 urban districts, who are a part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) database, did not meet the proficiency rates in reading and math in 2005. Lee et.al (2011), identified in their research what they considered are risk and protective factors. Risk factors for the African American males are things such as impoverished living conditions, neighborhoods with high crime rates, exposure to substance abuse at an early age, low socioeconomic status, single parent households and the lack of positive male role models. The protective factors identified by the authors that impact their academic success are having a supportive family environment, parental involvement, the availability of an external support system and the presence of a familial role model—that of parental involvement having important implications. Authors Trask-Tate and Cunningham (2010), support that parents are a dynamic force in their children's development. The dynamic force, they believe is due largely to the fact parents, unlike educators, counselors, and other professionals serve as a continual, stable and

persistent resource for their children throughout their lifespan. However, it remains unclear as to what type of parental involvement is most influential for positive academic outcomes for that of the African American adolescent.

Author Hayes (2011), states that one way of addressing the persistent achievement gap that is evident is to focus and increase parental involvement. Accordingly, parental involvement has consistently been associated with school success in areas such as but not limited to better achievement, responsible behavior decrease in absenteeism and more developed positive attitude toward school. Joe & Davis (2009), point out that the home environment of a family is a crucial setting for academically preparing children and being involved with their children. Some of the more common educational and social activities that the parents can engage in to assist with the academic preparation of their children include homework and school related projects, reading books with their children and ensuring that their child is prepared for school.

Wilson (2009), in his research study states that relationship between the student and their parents and as well the perceived monitoring and attitudes of the parent(s) is another major factor in the retreating of the academic achievement of the African American youth; however there exist other factors that also could have an influence on their academic success. According to Wilson (2009), families with inadequate support are more apt to experience higher levels of stress and more negative events which impact the relationships that the households may have. The monitoring and supervision of the student is an important aspect in what is considered parental involvement. The monitoring by the parents is considered crucial in this age group that is considered adolescent. These African American adolescents considered parental involvement as important in assisting them in navigating through a potentially stressful developmental period.

It was concluded in the research study that parental monitoring and involvement was related to the achievement of their children. In fact the closer the child was monitored or perceived to be monitored the better they seemed to perform. Parental monitoring of the African American adolescent in the household by the parent is indeed a useful method that augments school success (Wilson, 2009).

Research conducted by Brandon and Brown (2009), supports that there is a direct correlation between the student's parental involvement and their achievement. The lack of parental involvement, according to the researchers, is due to the parents' feelings of being alienated and discriminated against. Unfortunately, the noninvolvement of the African American parent in the school setting is looked at as "apathy" so therefore this assists educators and administrators in making the decisions to place African American adolescent males in more restrictive environments such as special education. In other research, parents especially those non-whites and or of a lower socioeconomic class, viewed their parental involvement differently than that of the school personnel. According to research conducted by Fogle and Jones (as cited by Hilgendorf, 2012) it was stated that low income African American parents were concerned that school staff misconstrued their lack of attendance in formal school activities as disinterest, but in fact in their opinion they felt they were quite involved with their children at home assisting with homework and reinforcing high standards.

Trask-Tate and Cunningham's (2010), continual research goes on to examine how school support and parental involvement are associated with the African American adolescents' academic expectations. In their research they examined 206 African American students to ascertain whether or not parental support was a factor in the ideal of low school support and

expectations. Their research revealed that the African American males that had low parental involvement but had a higher socioeconomic status had the tendency to perform better. In other words, students (which included the African American adolescent male) from higher socioeconomic families would most likely complete advance academic courses more than the students coming from a lower socioeconomic family. These families are promoters of more positive relationships with others involved in the education process. Also according to the research findings in the article, the parents of a higher socioeconomic status tended to be more involved with their children in all aspects of their lives (Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2010).

Active involvement of a parent in their children's schooling could be challenged by barriers. According to Lopez (2011), the most discussed barriers are those of low socioeconomic status, psychological barriers and the school and parents' perception of each other's roles. Research as indicated, suggests that low income parents are less involved in their children's schooling and educators already expect low-income and African American students to fail so the curriculum is often watered down and less challenging (Lopez, 2011). Other researchers (Hilgendorf, 2012) have also examined differences in parent involvement and how it can be influenced by socioeconomic status and race and ethnicity and have described ways by which parental involvement happens in both the home and school. The forms that have been identified as school related involvement include parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home decision making and collaborating with their community. According to Lopez (2011), psychological barriers as mentioned that impact parental involvement are parents' feelings and confidence as it relates to the contact with school personnel. Parents who feel that they are educationally challenged or suffer from mental illness tend to not to be involved with their child academically.

Achievement of the African American Male

Authors Irving and Hudley (2008), point out in their research that cultural mistrust proves to be a significant predictor of academic achievement. An increase in African American males' mistrust produces a decrease in their academic expectations. This decrease is an indication that risks exist. Risks could come in the form of apathy and damage to their self-esteem.

For the African American child there exist not only the pressure to perform well academically, but they must also navigate through environments that do not take into consideration their strengths (Graves, 2011). According to Scott, all individuals experience limitations that potentially can impact their development, but the African American child often face additional barriers because of their ethnicity. One such barrier that has been overlooked is that of the health status of these young men. According to Caldwell, Sewell, Parks and Toldson (2009), student outcomes have been sacrificed for educational outcomes. For the African American boy the combination of fragmented families, school failure, a lack of cohesion in their communities and a practice that expect substandard performance can lead to what's considered lethal consequences as evidenced as disparities in their health and life expectancy. They often come from single family mother led homes, live in poverty and suffering from chronic disease such as asthma. Such conditions can interfere with the readiness of the child causing a diminishing in their physical function which impacts their quality life and continues to increase the achievement gap between African American males and the other races.

Research indicates that even though gaps exist between the African American students and their counterparts, there is also a gap between the African American female and the African American male that also exists (White, 2009). In White's (2009) research she points out that at

every socioeconomic level of the African American population, the African American female outperformed the African American male. Some factors that are representative of this are the tendency of males to attend schools where there is a high percentage of free and reduced lunch; they are very overrepresented in every category of academic failures; underrepresented in honors and advanced placement classes, but overrepresented in special education and matters relating to discipline.

Scott Graves (2011), in his research supports the fact that the achievement gap between that of the African American and the European American is documented and does exist. The article indicates that an analysis conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) released data that states that 61% of African American fourth graders scored below the basic proficiency level in reading as compared to that of 25% of the European Americans, 57% of Hispanics, 31% of Asians and 53% of Native Americans.

It is noted that the achievement gap becomes more evident by the fourth grade and increases as the child grows older (Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). The fourth grade is considered to be a “critical” transition for students. These students make a shift from Stage 2 to Stage 3 in their reading development. In other words this stage of transition involves transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn. It was further stated that when this transition is not successfully made then it is considered the fourth-grade slump. This “slump” is more apparent in boys and students with negative attitudes toward reading and with a low achievement in reading.

Dr. Kunjufu (as cited in Johnson 2010), points out that the educational system further compounds the problem of the African American male’s achievement gap because of the lack of

representation of black males in the teaching force. The statistics reported that white women make up 83 percent of teachers nationally as compared to only one percent of African American males. These young men do not have role models in the schools that look like them. According to Fontaine (2009), the U.S. Bureau of labor statistics reported that only 2 percent of the nation's 4.8 million public school teachers are African American men. This shortage of African American male teachers only serves to compound the difficulties that many of the adolescent African American males face in school. Most African American boys may never be educated by someone who looks like them and unfortunately some of the African American boys will never have an opportunity to experience a black male role model in their public school classroom (Fontaine, 2010).

Teacher/School Personnel Involvement

Another factor that can affect African American males and their educational desires is teacher expectations according to Lee et al. (2011). Caring and supportive relationships are very important in the developmental outcomes throughout a person's life span. Even though the effects of a supportive relationship between a parent and the child has been studied, there now exists a growing focus on the effects of the teacher and student relationship as it relates to academics (Murray & Zvoch, 2010). The expectations of the teacher play a very important role in the achievement of the African American male. According to Lee et al. (2011), the educational outcome as well as the possibility of disengagement is influenced by the classroom environment and especially that of student-teacher relationships. If the African American student feels that the relationship between them and their teacher is positive, the teacher will have a higher expectation and as a result the student will perform better.

A teacher's perception of a student's behavior has a significant impact on how they treat their students. According to Graves and Hewes (2011), teacher-child relationships that are high in closeness possess the likelihood to reduce problematic behavior that may otherwise be exhibited. Further findings suggest that the teacher-child relationship can be affected by student racial background. Simply stated when a teacher and children are of the same ethnic background, the negative ratings and actions tend to be not as pronounced and their relationship yields more positive results.

According to Scott Graves (2011), a teacher's expectation is vital in the development of children and their subsequent later academic posture. In a study conducted on both white and black first graders, Grave's (2011) reveals that a teacher's judgment of the African American child's maturity, classroom achievement and behavior were all factors that assisted them in determining achievement scores. According to Graves's (2011) research, some believe that this was instrumental in further perpetuating the achievement gap. Schools where the teachers consistently expressed high expectations of all students, continued to yield positive academic results. If the teachers continually stereotype low achievement expectations for poor and minority students, then low achievement with marked apathy is what will be exhibited (White, 2009). Children have the tendency to live up to what they believe others believe and articulate to them and about them.

Another area of concerns is with how schools view parent involvement as it relates to the increasing diversity of the family. According to Hilgendorf (2012), schools and researchers are aware that there are children that are being raised by their grandparents. For these families the schools have the tendency to not engage well with them because they do not fit the vision of the

nuclear standard North American family. This is particularly common among those low income and racial ethnic minority groups. Because these families don't fit the structural models that the school thinks they should, then they may not be effectively reached and engaged.

Psychological research according to Rocque and Paternoster (2011), indicated that African American youth are likely to disengage from school and their academic pursuits if they perceived that there is negative information within their academic environment about themselves or their racial group. The African American youth are approximately three times as likely as their white counterparts to live in poverty and the links between poverty, stress and developmental outcomes are well established (Murray & Zvoch, 2010). Research shows that when these youth are exposed to poverty induced stressors, they are more likely to perform poorly, exhibit antisocial behavior and eventually detach themselves from the educational process if a negative perception of their situation is coming from their teachers (Murray & Zvoch, 2010; Roque & Paternoster, 2011). Authors (Roque & Paternoster, 2011), explained this phenomenon as being "stereotyped" which often leads to the outcome of perceived racial discrimination. The stereotype often observed being practice by the teachers is that of African American students are academically deficient and hostile which leads the educators to view these students as trouble makers. This mindset can cause the outcomes for these students to be more punitive in nature causing an environment that is nonproductive.

Intentionally or unintentionally, teachers tend to bring their preconceived beliefs and biases to the classrooms they are responsible for. According to Thomas and Stevenson (2009), the biases that are reinforced in the media, the judicial system and maybe even in the personal lives of the teachers are kept in their minds as they assess and evaluate the school work and

behavior of all students. However the perception of the African American male and females are different. The African American male is viewed as possessing characteristics such as laziness, being aggressive and violent, whereas the African American female is often perceived as loud and brash which all are in contradiction to those characteristics needed for success (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009).

Teacher quality and characteristics plays a vital role in student achievement and can have a positive effect on students. A teacher's professional qualities can serve as an accurate indicator of a student's performance in the classroom and school (White 2009). If a teacher is caring, fair and their quality of their instructions is good, then the students will develop a positive perception which encourages students to perform in a positive manner (Rowley & Wright, 2011). The research goes on to state that if a teacher perceives a student to be inefficient in the school environment because of behaviors, speech, average or lower intelligence that student has a higher possibility of academic failure. It was also noted that it is also important for teacher to have the ability to address cultural diversity in the classroom.

African American adolescent males place a high value on positive and encouraging interpersonal interactions. According to Trask-Tate and Cunningham (2009), in their article *Planning Ahead: The Relationship among School, Parental Involvement and Future Academic Expectations in African American Adolescent*, the role that the teachers have in promoting the academic development of youth has been described as a protective factor for the adolescent. A positive relationship between the school support system which includes the teacher and the academic achievement is more than likely going to promote a sense of community or connection to the school environment. For the African American adolescent males this relationship is

important to them. Gardner and Mayes (2013), stated that prior to Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas in 1954, African American children typically had African American teachers and they served as role models and guided the African American children. However, the reality of today is that there are a decreasing number of African American teachers. Because the African American adolescent male is more likely going to be instructed or educated by a Caucasian educator, the possibility exists of the cultural gap widening. African American adolescent males would most likely report that their teachers did not trust them, expected less of them and called on them less in class because of the relationships formed from misunderstandings (Trask-Tate & Cunningham, 2009).

Discipline of the African American Male

Do African American male students believe they are treated equitably when being disciplined in school? According to author Sheryl Venable (2009), research shows that the African American students especially African American male believe that they received less favorable treatment than their counterparts as it relates to discipline matters. Beginning in Kindergarten according to Grimmert (2010), African American boys experience threats to their success even before they are developmentally able to perceive or counteract them. Other children regardless of ethnicity could be retained, suspended or expelled at different points in their academic journey but from kindergarten through 12th grade in public schools, however African American boys experience these forms of punishment disproportionately.

Venable (2009), points out in her article that when the African American male begins to believe that the teachers and other adults in the building have developed negative attitudes about them, it encourages the belief by these young men that they are not respected by the school

personnel, consequently causing them to be single out for more disciplinary actions. According to Grimmett (2010), African American boys need to be equipped with an identity that affirms and empowers them. A development of a healthy identity is damaged because of the deficient and inaccurate information and media attention that society, which includes the teachers has received.

Author Richard Milner (2013), asks these two questions: Why are students of color still being punished more severely and frequently than their white counterparts and; Why are Black and Brown students in the United States referred to the office and consequently suspended and expelled more frequently than white students? These questions, as he points out are not a new phenomena for educators and educational researchers. However, as it is pointed out, this is still a serious problem with the way teachers and administrators use their disciplinary practices on the black and brown children and especially those children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The referrals that are being referred to, originate in the classroom and more times than not, are for students of color which unfortunately takes them out of class causing their academics to suffer.

In a local school districts student handbook (Hampton.k12.va.us) it states under the Freedom from Discrimination Statement:” *Students should not be discriminated against for reason of race, religion, gender, disability, ethnic or national origin. Students have the responsibility to refrain from discriminatory expressions, either verbal or physical against others.*” However, according to Lousen (2011), the Secretary of Education in 2010 delivered a speech that the racial disparities in school suspensions and expulsions call for a more rigorous civil enforcement in education. He further goes on to report that students with disabilities and

African American students specifically the African American males were suspended far more often than their white counterparts and as well were often punished more severely for similar misdeeds. From these findings he suggested that there exist a need for reform.

Darensbourg, Perez & Blake (2010), states that African American males risk is higher for experiencing disciplinary practices that take them away from their academic environment. This perceived overrepresentation of more disciplinary practices contributes to their involvement in the criminal justice system. According to the authors, thirty five percent of the state and federal male prisoners were African American even though the African Americans only constituted 12.4% of the United States population in 2006. This suggests that the African American male is three times more likely to be incarcerated than that of the non-African American males. Other points brought out is that 52% of African American males who do not complete high school have been incarcerated at least once by the age of 30; 68% of male prison inmates did not graduate from high school; and 35% of the prisoners reported behavior, academic problems and academic disengagement as the reason for not completing their secondary academics (2010).

In other research conducted on discipline it was stated that the disciplinary actions faced by African American males is indeed disproportionate (Lewis, Butler, Bonner & Joubert, 2010). They stated that the African American males are dealt with what is called an uneven hand. This uneven hand is simply that African American males are often times targeted for disciplinary action in greater numbers. The report stated that in spite of the lack of conclusive evidence supporting the claims that African American males display higher levels of disruptive behavior, the tendency still exists that they will be suspended and or expelled at higher rates at least two to three times higher than their counterparts.

According to Monroe (as cited in Venable, 2009), the primary reason for the large number of African American discipline issues is simply having an understanding of the culture. Classrooms and school discipline approaches suffer from an inattention to cultural context. This occurs because expectations are buried in middle class white norms which fail to prove to be of use for the student of color. Anderson's (as cited by Venable, 2009), research substantiates that a problem exists with the understanding of culture because many of the parents of the African American males instill in them that they are the men of the house and are expected to act accordingly. This thought process often times teaches these young men that it is okay to show aggression, causing them to be confused at school.

According to other researchers (Thomas & Stevenson, 2009), approximately seventy-one percent of all referrals for disciplinary procedures are applied to male students, however the African American male represents a disproportionate percentage of boys subjected to exclusionary disciplinary actions. This overrepresentation of the African American male has been well documented since the early seventies. These findings go on to state that the gap in discipline between African American students and other groups have not received as much attention as that of the achievement gap, however this gap is a major culprit in the compromising of the educational equity.

Neblett et al. (2009), in their research reflect that the African American males are at risk for the adverse impact of experiencing racial discrimination on academic outcomes. He noted that because of the African American adolescent male's physical development during puberty, coupled with gender racial stereotyping as being aggressive and violent often results in them

being threatening. Because of this they often outnumber other youth in rates of school based punishment such as suspensions and expulsions.

According to author Sheryl Venable (2009), the African American male's disproportionate rate of suspensions and expulsions contributes negatively to their levels of academic achievement. This dilemma is at a high epidemic proportion throughout the country. According to data released by the Department of Education (2011), suspension rates have more than doubled over the last three decades across all grade level. Along with the suspension rates doubling, the racial gaps are also widening with- African American students being three and half times as likely to be suspended or expelled as are their white peers and class mates.

Solutions to curtail the effects of exclusionary discipline practices on the African American male and its potential contribution to the school to prison pipeline have been proposed as noted by Darensbourg et al. (2010). The authors suggest that there should be less punitive and more proactive alternatives to decrease the contribution to the school to prison pipeline for the African American male. They suggest that there should be an implementation of interventions such as social skills training and anger management programs. These would target the specific needs of individuals, but also by adding a school wide program such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), a more comprehensive approach to reduce school disruption by incorporating proactive alternatives, such as the promoting of positive discipline, improving school management and a tiered approach to addressing the daily increasing behavioral needs of the students. Wyatt (2009), supports the ideal of instituting male mentoring programs to assist in closing the achievement gap and reducing the discipline issues by providing continuous academic, personal and social support to the young men through active mentoring groups.

Another recommendation for closing the gaps faced by the African American males is to shape and restructure institutional practices.

Discipline issues of the African American male are controllable according to Venable (2009), by the teachers of these students. Using student inventories, incorporating proactive stance, the incorporation of physical movement and improving literacy can all be of benefit. The discipline issues can also be reduced while also reducing the gap in discipline by ensuring that the standards and expectations are clear and concise. It is clear that when expectations are clear and free of confusion it significantly reduces problems and teachers can continue to prepare the students for success.

Many times the African American male may be struggling academically and for some reason may not envision schools as a place where they have a chance to excel. The African American male may choose then to demonstrate alternative ways to gain positive attention and increase their sense of pride, which would reduce their disciplined infractions and increase their sense of “belonging” (Darensbourg, Perez and Blake, 2010). This developed sense of belonging, to be more involved and open for other positive interventions all in an effort to hopefully increase their academic success.

Summary

The review of literature suggests that there exist gaps in the academic success of the African American male. This gap begins at the elementary school level for various reasons and continues to grow throughout their academic career. Trask-Tate and Cunningham (2010), reported that the gap in the research as it relates to the disparity in the academic achievement of the African American male involves the relationship among parental involvement, school

support, gender and social economic status. Bogenschneider as cited by Trask-Tate and Cunningham (2010), state that there exist a difference in the parental support given to the female and the male student— research shows that the tendency is for the parent become involved with the son only after they have been notified that they have been misbehaving or have received poor grades.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

According to authors Brandon, Higgins, Pierce, Tandy and Sileo (2010), research suggests that parents are a key component to the educational success of their children. In the world of today, parents are often working later, have multiple jobs and have multiple responsibilities that sometimes hinder them from actively participating. Often because of these variables, parents are criticized for their limited participation by educators (Brandon et al., 2010). For the purpose of this study this researcher looked at the difference between the degrees of parental involvement of the adolescent African American male and their academic success in the fourth grade.

Design

This study utilized a causal comparative design. According to Ary (2012), a causal comparative research is also referred to as an ex post facto design, “after the fact” study. This design was quantitative, and by using a mathematical method determines if and to what degree, a statistical difference exist between an independent variable and a dependent variable. It is conducted after the variation in the variable of interest has already been determined in the natural course of events. African American 4th grade males DRA scores, benchmark scores and results of a survey on parental involvement was gathered to determine if a statistical difference in the means existed between the African American 4th grade male who had strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male who had little or no parental involvement. Parental involvement survey results were based on the parents’ relationship with their son’s teacher, contact with school and their involvement at home.

Variables

Independent Variable: Parental Involvement

Dependent Variable: Academic Success of the African American 4th grade male as measured by their Developmental Reading Assessment and Benchmark scores.

Research Questions

RQ₁: Is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that has little to no parental involvement according to their Developmental Reading Assessment(DRA)scores.

RQ₂: Is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that has little to no parental involvement according to their Benchmark (BM) scores.

Null Hypotheses

*H*₀₁. There is no statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American male that has little to no parental involvement as measured by their Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores.

H₀₂. There is no statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American male that has little to no parental involvement as measured by their Benchmark (BM) scores.

Participants and Setting

Participants in this study were selected from African American males ranging from ages of nine to ten years of age and in grade four from four elementary schools located in a Public School district in Eastern Virginia. According to James Earl Davis (2003), it was stated that the African American male at the end of their 3rd grade year performed equally as well as their peers in their reading and math district wide assessments, however by the beginning of their 4th grade year their performance begins to decline. Their presence in top reading groups drop from 23% to 12% by the time they reach middle school. This declining cycle is often as a result of these young boys' attitudes, unequal access to curriculum and achievement inequalities (Davis, 2003).

The African American fourth grade males and schools selected for the setting were students in four of the Twenty-four elementary schools in a Public Schools district located in Eastern, Virginia. For this study, 44 participants were sampled. According to VanVoorhis & Morgan (2007), a medium to large effect size of at least thirty participants should lead to about a 80% power, the minimum power suggested for statistics used to detect difference. The district had 5 early childhood centers; 24 elementary schools; 7 middle schools, 5 high schools, 1 middle/high combination school and 9 program sites. The district had a population of a little over 29,000 students. The four elementary schools chosen for the research study had a combined population of over 2600 students. The first school, School A is fully accredited and had a population of 696 students; 633 were economically disadvantaged; 621 of the school's

population were African Americans; 289 were African American males and 92 students total were in 4th grade of which 33 are African American males. The second school, School G is fully accredited and had a population of 676 students; 429 were economically disadvantage; 321 of the schools' population were African American; 186 were African American males and 100 students total were in 4th grade of which 27 were African American males. The third school, School L, was denied accreditation and is now a Title 1 focus school. School L had a population of 613 students; 402 were economically disadvantaged; 346 of the school's population were African American; 168 were African American males and 102 students total were in 4th grade of which 33 were African American males. The fourth school, School S, is a partially accredited reconstituted school and had a population of 703 students; 481 were economically disadvantaged; 325 of the schools' population were African American; 157 were African American males and 107 students total were in 4th grade of which 47 were African American males.

The African American male participants were fourth graders for the first time and were not repeating the grade. The sampling of the population originated from four schools, all of which were Title 1 schools and each were in the same school district.

The adult participants were the parents and guardians of the fourth grade African American males at each school. At each school, the students remained with their classes and the same teachers the entire day. Therefore, parental involvement was limited to the school that their son(s) attended and the core teacher their son(s) is involved with on a daily basis. Each of these schools had at least 3 classes of fourth graders. The choice to use this class level was that an adequate number of students to meet sample standard to test the hypothesis was available.

Instrumentation

The Parent and Teacher Involvement Questionnaire-Grade 4+ (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group) was used to collect data for this research study. Parents were administered the questionnaire to assess the amount and different types of contact that occurred between parents and teachers; the parents' interest and comfort in talking with teachers; and the parents' degree of involvement in their son's education (e.g. reading to them, child reading the parent, helping them with their homework, taking them to library, talking to them about their day, volunteering, attending school events such as PTA meetings and how often).

The PTI questionnaire consisted of eighteen questions and the answers were coded on an item specific 5-point scale where 0 represents no involvement and 4 represents high involvement for the items pertaining to the parents' involvement with the school and the teacher. The responses were as follows: NA, 0=Never, 1=Once or Twice a Year, 2=Almost every month, 3=Almost every week and 4= More than once per week. The responses for the items pertaining to the level of involvement of the parent with their son at home were: NA, 0=Not at all, 1-A little, 2=Some, 3- A lot and 4-A Great deal. The Cronbach's alphas for the subscales range from .77- .92 and the reliability coefficients were listed as .93(parent involvement), .79(parent involvement) and .68(parent-teacher contact). The permission to use this instrument was obtained verbally and it was listed on the website that the instrument could be used, however it could not be photocopied and distributed, but instead recreate the instrument from the measure and cite the source. Other tools that were used to validate the academic success of the African American adolescent fourth grade male was that of their Developmental Reading Assessment score of 40 or better and benchmarks scores of at least 70. These items, because of

confidentiality, were all obtained and put together by the district's Instructional Accountability office.

The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a standardized reading test used to determine a student's instructional level in reading. The DRA is administered individually to students by teachers and/or reading specialists on an annual or semiannual basis. The tasks that are measured in the DRA are included in 3 skill sets. The skills set are: phonemic awareness; alphabetic principle/phonics and fluency. Students can score in the range from of 1-80. A score between 1 -3 the student is reading at the kindergarten level; a score between 3-16 the student is reading at the first grade level; a score between 18-28 the student is reading at the second grade level; a score between 30-38 the student is reading at the third grade level; a score of 40 the student is reading at the fourth grade level; a score of 50 the student is reading at the fifth grade level; a score of 60 the student is reading at the sixth grade level; a score of 70 the student is reading at the seventh grade level and finally a score of 80 the student is reading at the 8th grade level (www.scholastic.com).

The Benchmark assessments (BM) are short tests, given quarterly in the various disciplines and grade levels that are used to give educators immediate feedback on how and if students are meeting the academic standards or mastery of standards targeted for instruction. Benchmarks are designed to be used in conjunction with daily classroom data to monitor and measure student's growth and lay the foundation for future curriculum design (www.learnnc.org & www.ati-online.com).

Procedures

Before conducting this study, permission was sought and received to work with human subjects through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Liberty University. Required documents were submitted to both the University and the Public Schools division where the African American males were students. The division's instructional accountability provided the DRA, Benchmarks and final grades on a spreadsheet according to the random derived number assigned to each male, by the school division which assisted the researcher in matching up the survey responses to the correct student information.

Data Collection

Upon receiving approval from both Liberty University and the Public Schools district, the data collection began. However, due to the district policy on maintaining and ensuring confidentiality, the district maintained full control of the data collection process. Letters were sent by the district instructional accountability department to the four building administrators apprising them of the nature of the research and what their parents would be asked to do (see Appendixes A, B & D). The parents of the sample population were each mailed a consent letter and a survey instrument (see Appendixes C & E) by the district instructional accountability department. The consent letter also asked the parents' permission for the researcher to receive their son's DRA and Benchmark Scores. A total of 44 survey instruments were returned, reviewed and paired with the student's academic information by the schools division Instructional Accountability Department. This information was then forwarded to the researcher who placed each of the 44 surveyed parents into one of the two parental involvement groups for data analysis. All the information received was randomly assigned a number so that the identity

of the participants was protected. The two groups were identified as strong parental involvement (6 or more 3's and 4's) and little or no parental involvement (6 or more 0 and 1's and 2's). Data analysis was performed using two independent sample *t*-test and a Mann-Whitney U test.

Data Analysis

According to Ary (2012), when conducting data analysis in a causal comparative study it is important to look for the causes of the differences. Causal comparative studies investigate the cause and effect relationship. With this type of research the subjects differ on an observed independent variable and a determination is made of the consequences of the differences. The use of two independent samples *t*-tests and the Mann-Whitney U test were used to analyze the data received from this research. The *t*-test is a common test in statistics that is used to determine if the means of two groups are equal and the *t*-test for independent samples is the appropriate analysis for assessing group differences on a single dependent variable. For this study, the *t*-test was used to analyze the differences between the two groups of African American 4th grade males-those with little or no parental involvement and those with high parental involvement. The dependent variables are the DRA and Benchmark scores for which the *t*-test analysis was used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference amongst the two groups. The Mann-Whitney U test is the non-parametric alternative test to the independent sample *t*-test (Morgan, Leech, Glockner & Barrett, 2007). The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare two sample means that come from the same population and whether the means are equal or not and it does not require the same parametric assumption testing (Morgan et al., 2007). The assumptions of the Mann-Whitney U Test that must be assessed are: two

investigated groups must be randomly drawn; independence within the samples and mutual independence is assumed; and measurement scale is at least ordinal (Nachar, 2008).

When using the *t*-test, assumptions of the statistical analysis must be assessed. The assumptions for this analysis included the absence of outliers, normality and equality of variances. Outliers, which are data points outside of the other points which can skew the analysis if not detected was assessed using boxplots. According to Aguinis, Gottfredson and Joo (2013), the presence of outliers is one of the most enduring and pervasive methodological challenges in research. Outliers because they are different from other cases can exert a disproportionate influence on the conclusion regarding relationship among variables (Aguinis, Gottfredson & Joo, 2013). The researcher also used the Shapiro-Wilk to determine if the data was normally distributed. The assumptions of normality and of homogeneity of variances are required to be met for the *t*-test for independent group means. The assumption of normality is that the scores in the population in a *t*-test be normally distributed because the validity depends on it (Hoekstra R., Kiers, H. & Johnson, A., 2012). Lastly, the assumption that the random samples have and or have equal variances was assessed using Levene's test. According to Nordstokke, Zumbo, Cairns and Saklofske (2011), the assumption of variance is based on the premise that the population variance on the variable being analyzed for each group is equal. When two groups are being compared the assumption of homogeneity of variance is essential because the validity of the results is jeopardized if the variances are unequal (Nordstokke et al., 2011). The two groups assessed were identified as follows:

*Group 1 (strong parental involvement)—will consist of the parents of the 4th grade African American males who have 6 or more 3's and 4's.

*Group 2 (little or no parental involvement) –will consist of the parents of the 4th grade African American males from 6 or more 0's, 1's and 2's.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

It has been established that parental involvement is linked to student involvement (Higendorf, 2012; Joe & Davis, 2009; Zhang et al., 2011). However, there is little research investigating how parental involvement affects male African American students, a population that has been shown to have consistently low academic achievement (Graves, 2010). Accordingly, the purpose of this causal comparative research study is to either validate or reject the theory that parental involvement influences the academic success of fourth grade African American males enrolled in urban, Title I schools. This chapter details the results of the data analysis procedures described in chapter 3. This chapter begins with a restatement of the research questions and hypotheses. Descriptive statistics are provided, followed by the results of the current study.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that has little to no parental involvement according to their Developmental Reading Assessment(DRA) Scores.

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that has little to no parental involvement according to their Benchmark(BM) Scores.

Null Hypotheses

H₀₁. There is no statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American male that has little to no parental involvement as measured by their Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores.

H₀₂. There is no statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American male that has little to no parental involvement as measured by their Benchmark (BM) scores.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 44 participants. Of these 44 participants, most had low parental involvement (63.60%), while 36.40% had high parental involvement. Table 1 presents the output for these frequencies. The students scored an average of 41.36 ($SD = 10.28$) on their Developmental Reading Assessment. Scores of 40 and above indicate that students are reading at grade level or above, and scores below 40 indicate that students are not reading at grade level. For grade level benchmarks, students scored an average of 69.89 ($SD = 9.91$). For this score, scores below 70 indicate that the student is not meeting benchmarks for their grade. The descriptive statistics for these variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 1

		Parental Involvement			Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	low	28	63.6	63.6	63.6
	high	16	36.4	36.4	100.0

Total	44	100.0	100.0
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Table 2

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
DRA	44	24.00	60.00	41.3636	10.27775
BM	44	40.00	85.00	69.8864	9.91174
Valid N (listwise)	44				

Results

Data Screening

IBM's SPSS software was used to organize, manage, and analyze the data. First, the assumptions of the statistical analyses were assessed. These include absence of outliers, normality, and equality of variances. Data screening was conducted for both Developmental Reading Assessment and benchmark scores. Data screening results for both dependent variables are presented below.

Developmental Reading Assessment Scores. Outliers were assessed using boxplots calculated for the dependent variable of Developmental Reading Assessment scores (see Figure 1). In this manner, outlying values can be visually examined. Examination of these boxplots indicated that there are no outliers in the dataset for this variable.

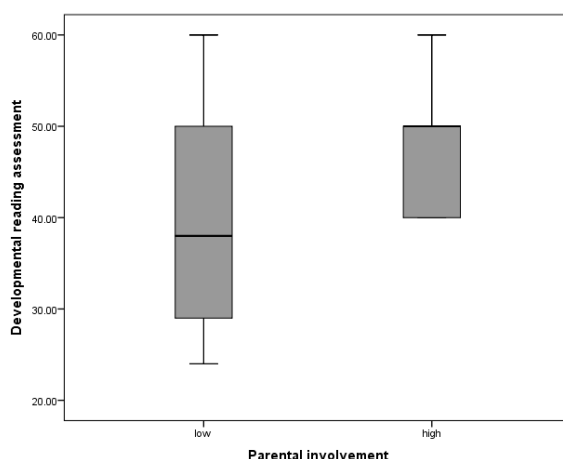


Figure 1. Box plot for Developmental Reading Assessment scores by involvement group.

To assess the normality of the continuous dependent variable of Developmental Reading Assessment score, Shapiro-Wilk tests were conducted (see Table 3). The Shapiro-Wilk test was selected due to the relatively small sample size of 44. The Shapiro-Wilk test was significant for both high and low levels of parental involvement (high: $p = .002$; low: $.023$). According to the Shapiro-Wilk tests, normality cannot be assumed.

Table 3

		Tests of Normality					
		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Parental involvement	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
DRA	low	.165	28	.049	.913	28	.023
	high	.268	16	.003	.796	16	.002

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

t -tests can be sensitive to even minor deviations from normality; Tabachnick & Fidell (2013), and Stevens (2009) recommend checking normality using skew and kurtosis values. Kline (2015), states that skew values less than or greater than ± 2.00 , and kurtosis values less than or greater than ± 7.00 indicate that there are no issues with skew and kurtosis. The skew and kurtosis values for Developmental Reading Assessment scores in the high parental involvement

group were within this range (skew: 0.36; kurtosis: -0.59), as were the values in the low parental involvement group (skew: 0.24; kurtosis: -0.92), indicating that normality can be assumed by this measure. Table 4 presents the skewness and kurtosis values.

Table 4

Descriptives				
		parental involvement	Statistic	Std. Error
DRA	low	Mean	37.8571	1.95702
		Skewness	.241	.441
		Kurtosis	-.920	.858
	high	Mean	47.5000	1.70783
		Skewness	.358	.564
		Kurtosis	-.592	1.091

Although normality was not assumed for either parental involvement group's Developmental Reading Assessment scores based on the Shapiro-Wilk test, Stevens (2009), Pallant (2007), and Morgan, Leech, Gloekner, and Barrett (2012) have stated that such deviations do not tend to interfere with the *t*-test's power when the sample size is greater than 30. Equality of variances was assessed using Levene's test, which was not significant ($p = .109$). This indicates that equality of variances can be assumed for Developmental Reading Assessment scores between parental involvement groups. Table 5 presents the output for Levene's test.

Table 5

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			
		F	Sig.
DRA	Equal variances assumed	2.687	.109
	Equal variances not assumed		

Benchmark scores. Outliers were assessed for the dependent variable of benchmark scores using boxplots, which indicated that there are no outliers for this variable (see Figure 2).

Normality was tested using a Shapiro-Wilk test, which was not significant for low ($p = .209$) parental involvement, but was significant for high ($p = .029$) parental involvement (see Table 6).

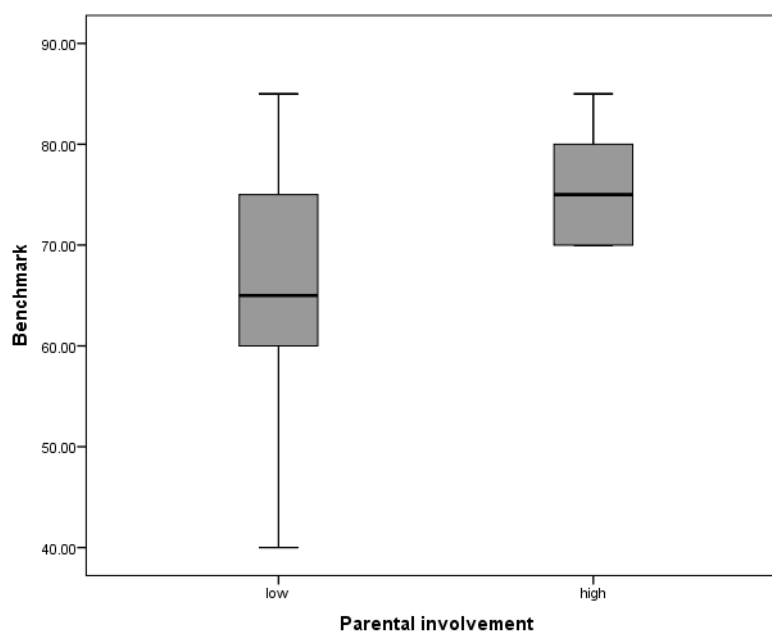


Figure 2. Box plot for benchmark scores by involvement group.

Table 6

		Tests of Normality					
		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Parental involvement	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
BM	low	.160	28	.064	.951	28	.209
	high	.196	16	.101	.872	16	.029

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The skew and kurtosis values were checked as well. For high parental involvement, skew values were within an acceptable range (0.38), and kurtosis values were within an acceptable range (-0.95). Skew (-0.39) and kurtosis (0.33) values were within an acceptable range for the low level of parental involvement, as well. Table 7 presents the skew and kurtosis values.

Table 7

Descriptives				
	Parental involvement		Statistic	Std. Error
BM	low	Mean	66.4286	1.95615
		Skewness	-.386	.441
		Kurtosis	.331	.858
	high	Mean	75.9375	1.30853
		Skewness	.375	.564
		Kurtosis	-.948	1.091

Although the statistical test for normality did not indicate that the assumption of normality was met, deviations from normality do not tend to unduly interfere with the *t*-test when sample sizes are larger (i.e., $n > 30$) (Stevens, 2009; Pallant, 2007; Morgan, Leech, Gloekner, & Barrett, 2012). Levene's test was significant for benchmark scores ($p = .029$; see Table 8), indicating that the assumption of equality of variances cannot be assumed. The equal variances not assumed test coefficients were used when interpreting the *t*-test for benchmark scores.

Table 8

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
		F	Sig.
BM	Equal variances assumed	5.097	.029
	Equal variances not assumed		

Results for Null Hypotheses

To answer the research question, two independent samples *t*-tests were performed. While testing the assumptions of the *t*-test for each group, there was a violation of normality so a Mann-Whitney U test was also performed to strengthen the *t*-test results due to a violation of normality with one or more of the groups. The *t*-test is the appropriate analysis when assessing group differences on a single dependent variable (Field, 2013) and the Mann-Whitney U test is an

appropriate analysis when there is a violation of normality with t -tests and all other assumptions of the Mann-Whitney U test are met. The assumptions for the Mann-Whitney U test that must be met are: two investigated groups must be randomly drawn; independence within the samples and mutual independence is assumed; and measurement scale is at least ordinal (Nachar, 2008). For both analyses, the independent grouping variable was parental involvement, categorized as high or low. For the first analysis, the dependent variable was Developmental Reading Assessment. For the second analysis, the dependent variable was benchmark scores.

Null Hypothesis One

Developmental Reading Assessment – t -test Results. The results of the independent samples t -test involving the Developmental Reading Assessment were significant, $t(42) = -3.33$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .21$. Table 9 presents the full results of this analysis. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in students' Developmental Reading Assessment scores based on their parental involvement. On average, 4th grade African American males with high parental involvement, $M = 47.50$, $SD = 6.83$, achieved higher DRA scores than those 4th grade African American males with little or no parental involvement, $M = 37.86$, $SD = 10.36$. The eta squared coefficient indicates that approximately 21% of the variance in Developmental Reading Assessment scores is associated with whether a student had high or low parental involvement.

Table 9

Independent Samples Test							
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference

									Lower	Upper
DRA	Equal variances assumed	2.687	.109	-3.326	42	.002	-9.64286	2.89960	-15.49449	-3.79123
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.712	40.991	.001	-9.64286	2.59742	-14.88849	-4.39722

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: DRA

Parental involvement	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
low	37.8571	10.35558	28
high	47.5000	6.83130	16
Total	41.3636	10.27775	44

Developmental Reading Assessment – Mann-Whitney U results. The Shapiro-Wilk test was significant for both high and low levels of parental involvement (high: $p = .002$; low: .023) for DRA scores, therefore a Mann-Whitney U test (Table 11) was performed to strengthen the results of the t -test performed above. The results of the test were significant, $U = 97.00$, $p = .001$. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in students' Developmental Reading Assessment scores based on their parental involvement. Students with high parental involvement had a mean rank of 30.44 for DRA scores, while students with low parental involvement had a mean rank of 17.96 for DRA scores.

Table 11

Mann-Whitney Test

		Ranks		
Parental Involvement		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
DRA_Scores	High	16	30.44	487.00
	Low	28	17.96	503.00
	Total	44		

Test Statistics ^a	
	DRA Scores
Mann-Whitney U	97.000
Wilcoxon W	503.000
Z	-3.187
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

a. Grouping Variable:
Parental_Involvement

Null Hypothesis Two

Benchmark scores. The results of the independent samples *t*-test involving benchmark scores were significant, $t(41.58) = -4.04, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.22$. This suggests that there is a statistically significant difference in students' benchmark scores based on their parental involvement. On average, 4th grade African American males with high parental involvement, $M = 75.94, SD = 5.23$, achieved higher benchmark scores than those 4th grade African American males with little to no parental involvement, $M = 66.43, SD = 10.35$. Table 12 presents the full results of this analysis. Table 13 presents the mean scores of each group.

Table 12

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
									Lower Upper
BM	Equal variances assumed	5.097	.029	-3.421	42	.001	-9.50893	2.77952	-15.11822 -3.89964

Equal variances not assumed			-4.040	41.583	.000	-9.50893	2.35346	-14.25981	-4.75804
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Table 13

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable: BM

Parental involvement	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
low	66.4286	10.35098	28
high	75.9375	5.23410	16
Total	69.8864	9.91174	44

Benchmark Scores – Mann-Whitney U results. Normality was tested using a Shapiro-Wilk test, which was not significant for low parental involvement ($p = .209$), but was significant for high parental involvement ($p = .029$) (see Table 6), therefore a Mann-Whitney U (see Table 14) test was performed to strengthen the results of the t -test performed above. The results of the test were significant, $U = 95.50$, $p = .001$. This suggests that there is a statistically significant difference in students' benchmark scores based on their parental involvement. Students with high parental involvement had a mean rank of 30.53 for Benchmark scores, while students with low parental involvement had a mean rank of 17.91 for Benchmark scores.

Table 14

Mann-Whitney U Results

Ranks				
Parental Involvement		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Benchmark_Scores	High	16	30.53	488.50
	Low	28	17.91	501.50
	Total	44		

Test Statistics^a

	Benchmark_Scores
Mann-Whitney U	95.500
Wilcoxon W	501.500
Z	-3.178
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

a. Grouping Variable:
Parental_Involvement

Summary

An independent samples *t*-test was used to determine if there is there a statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement as opposed to the African American 4th grade male that has little or no parental involvement? After performing the *t*-test and testing assumptions for this test, three of the four groups tested violated normality and subsequently, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed to strengthen the results of the *t*-test reported for this research.

The researcher sought to determine whether two measures of academic success, Developmental Reading Assessment scores and Benchmark scores, differed based on whether the 4th grade African-American male student had high parental involvement or low parental involvement. Analysis of the DRA scores with both the *t*-test and the Mann-Whitney U test were significant, indicating that students with higher parental involvement also had significantly higher Developmental Reading Scores than students with low parental involvement. Analysis of the of Benchmark scores with both the *t*-test and the Mann-Whitney U test were significant, indicating that students with higher parental involvement also had significantly higher Benchmark scores than students with low parental involvement. As results suggested that higher parental involvement was significantly associated with higher measures of academic achievement in the 4th grade African-American male student, the researcher rejected both null hypotheses for this research study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss these results in terms of the extant literature. The limitations and strengths of the study will be outlined. Finally, recommendations for future research will be presented.

Discussion

The purpose of this causal comparative research study was to determine if there was evidence to either validate or reject the theory that parental involvement influences the academic success of fourth grade African American males enrolled in urban, Title 1 schools.

H₀₁ There is no statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American \ 4th grade male that does has very little to no parental involvement as indicated by their Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) scores.

H₀₂ There is no statistically significant difference between the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that does has very little to no parental involvement as indicated by their Benchmark(BM) scores.

As discussed in Chapter four, the researcher rejected both null hypotheses. This rejection of these hypotheses is aligned with Lee et al. (2011), who stated that because of some noted risk factors and protective factors such as a supportive family environment, parental involvement, the availability of an external support system and the presence of a familial role model – parental involvement has important implications. In a study conducted by Jeynes (2017) on the effects of

parental involvement on the academic achievement of the African American youth, the results indicated that the highly involved parents contributed as a predictor to the successful academic outcome realized by the African American youth. In other words, there was a statistically difference in the academic outcome based on the level of parental involvement. The results of this study indicated that there was an average difference of 4.08 points on a test between African American students that had a higher level of parental involvement than those students whose parents were less involved. Jeynes (2017) did also note that when the variables of SES are considered, there is no longer a statistically significant difference between the two levels of involvement. Zhang et.al (2011) notes that in their research findings on how the SES of the parents impact their parental involvement, is mixed. It was further noted that in a small sample of parents with higher SES, the results were more positive as it relates to their involvement in school. However, on the other hand the same research indicated that SES was not as big of influences as the educational level of the parent (Zang et. al, 2011).

Parental involvement is seen as an effective strategy to ensuring student success. According to Bower and Griffin (2011), conversations in schools are centered around parental involvement. Parental expectations and influence has been demonstrated to have a positive relationship with educational aspirations according to Kirk, Lewis-Moss, Nilsen and Colvin (2011). In fact, parental expectations and parental influence can act as a moderating factor between a student's academic abilities and their educational desires. Interestingly, authors Kirk et al (2011) point out that even though the relationship between parental expectations and their child's aspirations are strong, there still is debate as to causation. Parental involvement and expectations may be linked to a child's academic achievement, but a child with high academic achievement aspirations can influence their parents' future expectations (Kirk et al., 2011).

Empirical investigations on the family influence with emphasis on the role of the parent have been noted as an important factor in the academic achievement of African American boys (Joe & Davis, 2009). However, research still remains unclear as to what degree early schooling and the social context can impact the readiness and early academic achievement of African American boys (Joe & Davis, 2009).

The home environment of supported and involved parents serves as a crucial setting for the academic preparation. Things such as helping with homework, reading books and ensuring child is prepared for school are all part of this preparation (Joe & Davis, 2009). Hayes (2011), states that one way of addressing the persistent achievement gap that of which is evident, is to focus and increase parental involvement. Parental involvement has consistently been associated with school success in areas such as but not limited to higher achievement, responsible behavior, decrease in absenteeism and a more developed proactive attitude toward school (Hayes, 2011). A lack of parental involvement is seen as a cause for the students' low achievement and engagement (Bower and Griffin, 2011).

Rogers, Markel, Midgett, Ryan and Tannock (2004), found that parental involvement in the home environment has been linked to key outcomes in a child's development. Some benefits that are realized as a result of parental involvement in the home include higher academic achievement, an increased in reading, writing and math achievement. African Americans have the tendency to spend more time in home based activities than their white counterparts, but to the schools, these activities are hard to measure, which leads to families efforts not being recognized(Bower & Griffin, 2011).

According to Joe and Davis (2009), the differences in early academic achievement among children begins prior to their entry in to school and is significantly influenced by such things as their families, race/ethnicity, parents' educational level and their living environment. Kea (2009), points out that parents are their children's first teachers and they have a powerful impact on their young children's development. According to other studies (C.M. Kirk et al., 2011), parental self-efficacy and the perception of the degree of maternal support, are both cited as predictors of the future aspirations of their children. In fact, the parents' educational level that may or may not have been obtained can have a noticeable impact on the future and aspirations of both the child and parent (C.M. Kirk et al., 2011). Early parental involvement in a child's educational experience is indeed critical in their educational journey.

When we look at parental involvement, we should view it as being a multidimensional construct that includes both direct involvement in schools and indirect or hidden behaviors. Direct involvement includes volunteering in the classrooms, attending parent-teacher conferences and indirect or hidden behaviors are things such as discussing school and family issues while conveying educational expectations (Hayes, 2011). Zhang, Hsu, Kwok, Benz and Bowman-Perrot (2011) go on to state that parental involvement can be looked at in many ways which includes an activity based perspective. This prospective can be looked at through a model that is three dimensional: parent-teacher contact which allows for monitoring the child's progress and helping them with homework; parent involvement in school activities and finally the parents direct involvement at home to further facilitate academic stimulation(Zhang et al., 2011).

Conclusions

Parents are a dynamic force in their child's development according to Trask-Tate and Cunningham (2009). The dynamic force, they believe is due largely to the fact that parents, unlike educators, counselors, and other professionals serve as a continual, stable and a persistent resource for their children throughout their lifespan. The researcher designed this study to determine if there is a statistically significant difference in the academic success of the African American 4th grade male that has strong parental involvement and the African American 4th grade male that has very little or no parental involvement. This study used African American 4th grade males and their parents from four title one elementary schools located in the same school districts, which have some of the same demographics in common. The rationale behind this decision was in an effort to reduce as many external variables as possible while ensuring the most unambiguous results. The results of the study showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the various forms of academic achievement between those who have high parental involvement and those who have little or no parental involvement.

Implications

The results of this study indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between strong parental involvement or little or no parental involvement and the academic success of the African American 4th grade male. As suggested by Nesbitt (2009), and in support of Bandura's self-efficacy theory, the role parents play in the lives of their adolescent is important in their developmental context. Self-efficacy for the African American 4th grade male is the important link between possessing knowledge or skills and engaging in appropriate

behavior while accomplishing their desired goals each of which parents' involvement is crucial in this.

Nick Chiles (2013) stated that African American males are struggling desperately in school. Only 11 percent of the African American fourth grade male students in cities with populations larger than 250,000 were proficient in reading. He further notes that while school is where many of the problems that are misinterpreted and played out, home is ultimately where it starts.

There is evidence that supports that there is a link between a parent's behavior and their adolescent's outcome, with the African American parents having the best intentions. In a research study conducted by Wilson (2009), he stated that the relationship between the student and their parents as well as the perceived monitoring and attitudes of the parent(s) is considered another major factor in the retreating of the academic achievement of the African American youth. According to Wilson (2009), families with inadequate support are likely to experience higher levels of stress and encounter more negative events which impact the relationships that the households may have. Parental involvement for African American adolescent males is considered important in assisting them in navigating and negotiating their way through what could be a potentially stressful developmental period. Parental monitoring/involvement of the African American adolescent male in the household by the parent are useful in the augmenting of school success.

Active involvement of a parent in their child's schooling will be met with some barriers. Lopez (2011), states that three of the most discussed barriers to the success of their involvement are being of low socioeconomic status; psychological barriers and the perception of the roles of

the school and parents. Low income parents tend to be less involved in their children's education and educators tend to expect that low-income African American students will fail so these students are often given a watered down and less challenging curriculum (Lopes,2011).

Limitations

This study was conducted with the primary concern of finding out if there is a statistically significant difference between parental involvement and the academic success of the African American 4th grade male. The internal and external threats to the validity even though minimum could still have an impact on the results. The instrument was developed for the parent/guardian of the African American male. This researcher did not have full control of the data collection procedure, because the school district wanted to ensure that confidentiality was not violated which was a limitation in this study. There was no way for this researcher to know if the instrument returned was actually completed by the parent or guardian that it was sent to or if it was answered truthfully. There was also no way to determine how different the responses would have been of those who did not return the document because there was no contact allowed by researcher to participants. However, each of the households of these males was given two opportunities to complete the instrument. The entire data collection procedure was handled at the school district level and then sent to the researcher. This limitation could be limited or even eliminated if the parents/guardians were invited to a central location and the instrument be administered in a group setting and data collected personally by the researcher.

The lack of parental involvement, according to Brandon and Brown (2009), is due to the parent's feelings of being alienated and discriminated against. This perceived noninvolvement of the African American parent in school is viewed as apathy or the blatant unwillingness to

participate in their child's education. Due to this perception, the parents may choose to answer the questions in way that reflects the attitude that they believe others have of them or over inflate the answers in hope that it will change the perception which is also a limitation in this study. Eliminating or reducing the noted perception on both the parents and educators part would require consistency and honest attempts on the part of everyone to change the current attitudes.

The instrument was specifically targeted the parent(s) or guardian(s) relationship with their son's teachers and their involvement with their son at home and school. However, the instrument did not allow for parent(s) or guardian(s) who were assigned to the group or little or no parental involvement to indicate why they may not have exhibited more parental involvement, which is a limitation. Having the options to indicate why they may not have been more involved with their son's academic achievement, i.e. work conflicts or lack of transportation, would have presented more supporting evidence that may have allowed them to be placed into the category of strong parental involvement.

This study is limited to African American males in the 4th grade in four specific schools and may not be generalizable to all 4th grade males and to the school district where it was conducted. With both of these limitations, demographics, family makeup, occupation/education level of parent(s), value systems and what type of family involvement could all have a significant impact on the results of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher has identified several areas to for future research.

1. A study should be replicated using Non-Title 1 and Title 1 schools located in suburban, urban and rural communities and compare the results. The results from such study would shed light to educators on the similarities and differences of each.
2. A study on the parents' education, behavior and its links to the educational expectations for their children. Educators having information on what the beliefs of the parents are as it relates to education would provide the schools with evidence on how to improve parental involvement activities.
3. A study on nature and diversity of the school related support that African American male students experience within their families. There exists little research on how low income and racial ethnic minority families which includes the African American families view the support they are able to provide and contribute to their children's education and how it compares to what educators view as parent involvement.
4. Design a study that measures the relationship of the parental support of the African American female and their academic success. According to White (2009), there is a gap between the African American female and the African American male. She further points out that at every socioeconomic level of the African American population this occurs.
5. A study that helps the African American male to better advocate for themselves while also assisting them in defining themselves as it relates to their social status.
6. Design a study that looks at the self-esteem and ethnic identity development of the African American male from their preteens to young adulthood.
7. Design a study that includes all Title 1 schools in a division. This would produce a larger sample for the study and allow for more generalization of the results.

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APPENDIX A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 26, 2016

Dana Madison

IRB Approval 2547.102616: Does Parental Involvement Impact the Academic Success of the African American Fourth Grade Male?

Dear Dana Madison,

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,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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APPENDIX B**(xxx) PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Office of Instructional Accountability

October 26, 2017

Dear Ms. Madison:

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Research Authorization Committee (RAC) has approved your research entitled *Does parental involvement impact the academic success of African American fourth grade males?* Each principal at (xxx), (xxx), (xxx) and (xxx) in (xxx) Public Schools has agreed to allow select 5th grade parents to participate in your study. Your research interest must remain confined to the provisions outlines in your approved research request application. Authorizations for additional research or changes in your current procedures must first be submitted to the RAC for review.

The RAC will handle the following information to assist you with your research:

- 1.) All communication with school administrators regarding your study;
- 2.) All distribution and collection of the Parental Involvement survey; and
- 3.) All assembly and coding of student academic data

The RAC mandates that all research applicants use pseudonyms in place of the names of students, staff, schools, and/or the school division in any documentation produced from your study. The use of pseudonyms in your study must include any mention of (x) City as this would inadvertently identify the school division. Coding of the student data is a precaution taken to ensure the safety and anonymity of all persons include in the study. It also safeguards the division from analyses produced from inaccurate and/or faulty methodologies and adds to the rigor and integrity of all reported results.

I wish you much success on your work, and look forward to reading the results of your final study. The RAC requests that a written final summary of all research be submitted to the chairperson upon completion. Please feel free to contact me at (xxx) or at (xxx) with any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Research Authorization Committee Chair

***Denotes: All identifying information on schools and schools division has been removed.**

APPENDIX C

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
10/26/2016 to 10/25/2017
Protocol # 2547.102616

CONSENT FORM

Does Parental Involvement Impact the Academic Success of the African American Fourth Grade Male?

Dana C. Madison
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of whether or not parental involvement has an impact on the academic success of the African American 4th grade male. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a parent of a 4th grade African American male currently enrolled in one of the three schools selected to participate in this study. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Dana C. Madison, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference between the level of academic success experienced by African American 4th grade males who have strong support and involvement from their parents as oppose to those who may not have as strong of support from their parents.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Consent to my having access to your son's academic history located in his respective school.
2. Complete a 20-minute survey.
3. Place this consent form and the survey, completed or not, in the stamped addressed envelope that is included and place the envelope in a nearby mail box for return to me. This entire process should be completed in 10-15 days.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The potential risks involved in this study are minimal and include a breach of confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen. There are no direct benefits to you personally, but your participation will assist the education community in learning more about the importance of parental involvement. Also there will be a better understanding on how important it is to intervene early to ensure a positive impact on these students' future.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Any and all data received and utilize will only have the initial of the school of attendance and a number assigned to your son. If there is any other personal data visible, it will be blacked out. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data will be stored on a computer which is password protected, and any documents that are in paper form will be locked away in a file box specified for this research with the only key with the researcher. All data will be destroyed by cross shredding at the end of the three-year

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
10/26/2016 to 10/25/2017
Protocol # 2547.102616

retention period as required by federal regulations. There is no anticipated future use of any data acquired from this research.

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

How to Withdraw from the Study: You will be asked to answer questions about your beliefs, and it is up to you to decide if you would like to answer these questions. As well, it is completely up to you whether you want to participate or not. You may withdraw at any time and skip questions you prefer not to answer. If you decide to withdraw at any time in the 10-15 day period, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. You do not have to return the documents received. If you decide, after you have completed and returned the survey, that you no longer want to participate, please contact me at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph so that your survey and your son's data can be properly destroyed.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Dana C. Madison. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at dcmadison@liberty.edu or at (757) 603-5645. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Vivian Jones, at vojones2@liberty.edu.

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

Please notify the researcher if you would like 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.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION
WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

Signature

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D: BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR LETTER

May 2016

To: (name), Building Administrator

Dear Sir/Ma'am

My name is Dana C. Madison and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, studying the impact of parental involvement on the academic success of the African American fourth grade male. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to allow your fourth grade parents to participate in my research. If you agree to allow participation in this study, they will be given a questionnaire that will take them approximately 20 minutes to complete.

There will be no risks to the parents or students as participants but the opportunity to gain beneficial information for assisting the education community in learning more about the importance of parental involvement in academics. The parents will be ask to answer questions about their beliefs and it is up to them to decide if they would like to answer the questions. As well, it is completely up to them whether to participate or not. They will be given the option to withdraw at any time and/or skip questions they prefer not to answer.

If you have any questions about this research please feel free to contact me via email dcmadison@liberty.edu or (757) 870-7756. Thank you in advance for your time.

Regards,

Dana C. Madison, Ed.S

Doctoral Student and Researcher

Liberty University

APPENDIX E

Information and questions for parent survey was taken from the Conduct Problem Prevention

Research Group or FAST Track Project. Permission given to utilize information from Parent-Teacher

Involvement Questionnaire: Parent Version (Original and Grade 4+). www.fastrackproject.org