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Black Parents Matter, Too: Identifying and Overcoming the Barriers to School Participation for African American Parents

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Black Parents Matter, Too: Identifying and Overcoming the Barriers to School

Participation for African American Parents

A Dissertation by

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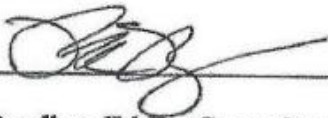
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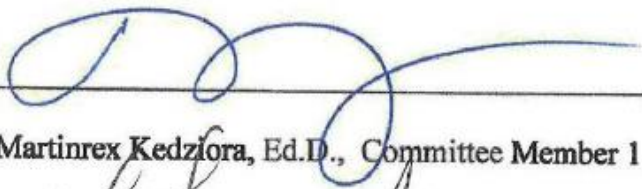
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ABSTRACT

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Participation for African American Parents

by Alycia Benson

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how African

American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be

present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's' local school

and in their children's education.

Methodology: This qualitative study identified and interviewed 12 African American

parents from four school districts in Riverside County in Southern California in order to

determine their barriers to school participation. Respondents were chosen using

purposeful, convenience and snowball sampling based on specific criteria. The researcher

collected data and determined themes in order to report findings and recommendations.

Findings: Examination of this qualitative study from the 16 participants from the 4

school districts participating in this study indicated a variety of findings to include the

following: (1) schools need to do more to make them feel welcome, (2) schools need to

share important information with African American parents, (3) there are not enough

African American staff in schools, (4) school resources are not being used based on

student need, (5) school staff do not listen to them like they do to non-African American

parents, (6) African American parents need help to effectively access technology, (7)

school staff need to increase positive interactions with African American parents, and (8)

schools do not appear to care about all students based on the way they treat African

American students.

Conclusions: Schools need to create a welcoming atmosphere for African American parents because they do not believe it matters to schools if they are present. In addition, more African American staff need to be on campus. Moreover, participants expressed that African American students need specialized programs and school resources should be targeted toward African American children based upon their needs. Also, African American parents have a lack of technology knowledge and their lack of understanding of, and access to, technology as a barrier to successful participation in their children's school experience.

Recommendations: Further research is recommended to repeat this study using a larger sample and more African American male parent voice, perspectives of African American teachers, students and district administrators.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The construction of the African American family impacts its success and failure in many ways. Today, many African American families consist of women as the head of the household, and research shows this phenomenon is the aftermath of slavery. Historically, Southern states were highly populated by African Americans because of slavery. Moreover, after the end of slavery, African Americans suffered many violent injustices and lack of opportunities to work while living in the South. As a result, many of them migrated North in hopes of better living conditions and employment (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). Once African Americans arrived in the North, many men were unable to find employment or were under-employed and women had to work outside of the home in order to help take care of their families. In addition, by 1995 two thirds of African American babies were born to single mothers (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997).

Unfortunately, growing up in a single parent home had its disadvantages. Research suggests, in the early twentieth century, a single parent living status created poverty for African American children (Frazier, 1937). Conversely, Sowell (2013) reports "more black children grew up in two-parent families, even under slavery for generations after" than today (p. 120). Furthermore, higher percentages of African Americans were married a century ago than were Caucasians (Sowell, 2013). In addition, Sowell (2013) suggests this stable family structure allowed African American children opportunities to excel in employment opportunities, school, and college.

However, if it is true that there are more single parent matriarchal families today, what is the root cause of the breakdown of the African American family? Sowell (2013)

suggests "less than a generation after a large expansion of the welfare state and its accompanying non- judgmental ideology", there were declines in two parent families (p. 121). This view indicates the welfare system is a contributing factor to the demise of the African American family, because welfare allowed mothers to be able to depend on the government for financial stability instead of the fathers of the children. This is evident, because prior to the rising social welfare legislation in the 1960's, African Americans had the largest decline in poverty (Sowell, 2013).

In summation, the African American family has experienced changes through the years and these changes have impacted African Americans' abilities to participate in their children's educational processes. Moreover, the current state of the African American family sets the stage for this study, which seeks to understand the barriers that African American parents experience to school participation in local school districts in California and how to overcome them.

<div align="center">**Background**</div>

Modern Learning Theory

Just like the changing African American family, learning environments and expectations of schools have changed drastically over the past two centuries. For example, in the early 1800s, the goal of schooling was to produce students that could take good notes from teacher dictation. In addition, students were not expected to compose their own writing until the late 1800s (National Research Council, 2000). Moreover, it was not until the 1930s that students were expected to communicate in writing in a meaningful way.

Furthermore, schools were viewed as factories where children were products who were processed by teachers. In the past, teachers had the job of following the orders they were given by supervisors and managers in this factory. This factory mindset fueled the creation of standardized testing because the "product" or student gains needed to be measured by others (National Research Council, 2000).

Conversely, today the expectations of schools and students have evolved. Now students are expected to understand what they are learning and be able to build on it. They need to be able to analyze information taught and problem-solve next steps. Students need to be able to make decisions with missing information regularly. Moreover, students are expected to make contributions to their communities and the world. Furthermore, the environment in schools have also changed from the factory model to environments that are learner, knowledge, assessment and community centered; parents are also considered a part of the school community and their participation is desired.

Learner Centered Environment

Learner centered environments are environments where attention is placed on the skills that learners bring into the school setting. Culture is important in the school setting in the modern school for students. Teachers are intentional in learning about students, their languages and their community in the learner centered perspective (Bell et al., 1980; Duckworth, 1987; Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1995; National Research Council, 2000).

Knowledge Centered Environment

In addition, knowledge-centered environments provide teaching in a manner that facilitates the transfer of knowledge to students in a meaningful way. In a knowledge-centered environment, student preconceptions are used and new knowledge builds upon them (Bruner, 1981; National Research Council, 2000).

Assessment-Centered Environment

Furthermore, the assessment-centered environment provides opportunities for "student feedback and revision" and the assessment should match student goals (National Research Council, 2000, p. 140). Students are assessed using multiple measures and assessment should be informal and formal.

Community-Centered Environment

Finally, the school environment has evolved including community-centeredness. Research suggests environments that are community-centered are important for learning. In this sense, community refers to all aspects of community including the classroom, the school, the family and the community at large in which the student lives (National Research Council, 2000). All educational stakeholders need to feel connected, in order for a community-centered environment to exist. Moreover, this community centeredness needs to be experienced by African American parents, in order to increase their school connectedness and engagement (Brown & Campione, 1994; Cobb et al., 1992).

<center>**Theorist Dewey's Sense of Connectedness**</center>

This idea of connectedness is not a new idea. For example, Dewey (1916) suggests that if students do not have opportunities to make their experiences relevant in school settings and make connections, schools have wasted opportunities for meaningful

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learning and transfer to occur (Leonardo, 2004; Stefanski et al., 2016). However, as a result of the new expectations and environments for schools, schools today need to master the blend of learner, knowledge, assessment and community- centeredness in order to maximize the success of its' students. They also need to reach out to parents and include them as vital stakeholders.

Barriers to African American Parent School Participation

African American participation on elementary school campuses is lacking and this is a problem (Latunde, 2017). Harris and Graves (2010) indicate there is a relationship between parent involvement on campus and student achievement. However, the research also shows many barriers to participation including not feeling welcomed by school personnel, lack of trust between school and home, transportation issues and setting concerns (Francis et al., 2016; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Wilkins, 2006). Parents may not have the ability to access the school because they are not able to get to the school. They may also prefer meeting off campus like at churches instead of on the school campuses. In addition, African American parents have to feel their presence and participation with the school matters.

Parents Feel Concerns are Mis-Handled

Furthermore, the research shows parents do not participate at schools because they feel the leaders of the school mishandle concerns or ignore them and this mishandling hinders school engagement (Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). As a result, there is a need for school districts to reach out to African American parents and discover ways to improve participation of African American parents on school campuses. Moreover, understanding the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement

can inform school districts on how to engage parents. This indicates that a mindset shift is critical. Research shows that transforming the mind needs to happen first, for sustained change in behavior and culture to take place in an organization (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). This new mindset needs to be present in all staff on campus for sustained change to take place.

Furthermore, Bartel (2010) reports when parents feel their participation matters, it will increase. African American parents need to be treated by school staff like their engagement is a vital part of the school process. As a result, school policies and practices need to change to facilitate this parent involvement (Bartel, 2010; Jefferson, 2014). Moreover, other barriers to African American parent participation involve school practices of segregation, disproportionality of discipline, and inequalities of academic tracking and school funding for African American students (Allen & White-Smith, 2017).

Conversely, some research suggests that when specific conditions are present like economic security and a large concentration of African American students at schools, parental engagement increases (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Sudduth, 2011). Nevertheless, based on the lack of participation of African American parents in school districts in general and the research findings on the topic, the researcher seeks to determine the barriers that African American parents experience to school participation. Consequently, barriers to school participation have been considered and organized in several themes including social, economic, environmental, political and technological in this research.

Social Factors

Parent Involvement Versus Engagement

Traditionally, research on barriers to parent school participation focuses on parent involvement like attending parent nights or meetings. In addition, school personnel see the barriers as one dimensional, and unidirectional (Barton et al., 2004). In this view, the desired outcome is parent attendance. Parents are not considered valued team members, but are more like guests (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). Some research suggests barriers to parent school involvement include not feeling welcomed by school personnel, lack of trust between school staff and parents, transportation issues and setting concerns (Francis, et al., 2016; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Wilkins, 2006). Furthermore, this research reveals that African American parents have to feel their presence and participation with the school matters, in order for involvement to increase. In the same way, Bartel (2010) reports when parents feel their participation matters, involvement will increase.

While much of the literature focuses on parent involvement, Barton et al. (2004) suggest that parent involvement is not the true goal. Instead, he believes schools aim to achieve parent engagement, which he defined as an interconnected relationship between parents, teachers, and other community members. Parent engagement is viewed as "a social practice sustained through active participation and dialogue in a social world" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 6). In this view, engagement is not just an outcome, but a set of relationships that are interconnected. Consequently, African American parents need to be treated by school staff like their engagement is a vital part of the school process.

Cultural Capital

Furthermore, research suggests that for African American parents to engage at meaningful levels, they must possess the cultural capital to navigate the school system (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Jefferson, 2014). Allen and White-Smith (2017) define cultural capital for African American parents as the "knowledge, dispositions, orientations, goods and credentials that members of the dominant group possess" (p. 5). Barton et al. (2004) explain African American parents have limited access to school systems unless they possess the beliefs and opinions of the dominant culture. Moreover, cultures of poor and minority people are seen as less than equal in school systems and not as capable as those in the dominant culture, further complicating the situation. Bartel (2010) and Jefferson (2014) offer that African American parents are often viewed as deficient or invisible in traditional K-12 educational settings.

In addition, research predicts that parent engagement will occur when multi-dimensional relationships exist between school stakeholders; however, historically, many inequities have prevented these interconnected relationships in African American culture (Barton et al., 2004). To overcome these inequities, research convincingly reveals school policies and practices need to change to facilitate meaningful parent engagement in African American populations A lack of cultural capital of African American parents limits their abilities to fully engage with schools to level the educational playing field for their children (Barton et al., 2004).

Mistrust in School Setting is Present

Research reveals that cultural differences could affect school participation, because African American parents have a history of mistrust in school settings (Francis,

et al., 2016; Latunde, 2017). This mistrust could be a result of repeated negative interactions with school officials because of student discipline and attendance issues. These interactions can make African American parents avoid coming to schools and avoid contact.

Parents not Welcomed at School

Parents may also feel their participation is not welcome; they may have negative self- images of themselves and their children because of negative interactions with the school and district staff and this blocks African American parent engagement (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Wilkins, 2006). Language barriers also affect participation (Murray et al., 2014). Because African American parents themselves are often undereducated, they are intimidated by formal communication with highly educated adults at schools, which further results in withdrawal.

In addition, there have traditionally been variances between participation of mothers and fathers. School site personnel must be conscious of these dynamics and make intentional efforts to include fathers to participate on school campuses (Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). They are often excluded but desire to contribute in their children's education. Furthermore, extended family members should be invited to participate in the school culture, because they are a part of the African American family (Sudduth, 2011).

Parents Have a Lack of Access to School Resources

Partially to address the needs of working parents, schools are looking to technology to allow higher levels of parent engagement. While this shift is with good intent, African American parents have not always developed work or life experiences to develop the technology skills needed to successfully engage. To combat these barriers,

workshops should be offered to African American parents using a variety of modalities to increase parent access like in-person and through webinars or Zoom meetings (Jefferson, 2014; Sudduth, 2011). Research does suggest a correlation between student achievement and parent involvement so schools have to continue to work on building these relationships (Harris & Graves, 2010).

Economic Factors

African American Parents Experience Financial Instability

Economic resources influence African American parent actions (Stacer & Perrucci, 2013). Economic factors involve concerns about parent income and job stability and the lack of finances inhibit African American parent engagement at school. For example, African American parents may not have the ability to participate on the school campus if their financial situation is not stable. Moreover, poverty is a barrier that cannot be easily fixed and African American parents do not have access to the same networks (Harris & Goodall, 2008). This lack of economic capital blocks African American parents from having the same access as Caucasian middle-class parents and decreases their abilities to engage with the school on the same level as other families (Trainor & Bal, 2010).

African American Parent Access to Resources

In addition, sometimes when the schools offer resources, African American parents may choose not to participate because they are embarrassed to accept help and this lack of self- confidence impedes parent school engagement (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Pride can keep African American parents from accessing help. The lack of financial stability of African American parents also affect transportation and child-care

needs, because the lack of transportation and child-care limits mobility (Francis et al., 2016). Furthermore, technology access from home is limited for African American families and this hurts their abilities to be informed and denies access to their children (Jefferson, 2014). Jefferson (2014) suggests this lack of technology access allows schools to maintain institutional power and restricts the families' access to school information.

Environmental Factors

African American Parent Lack of Access to Community Resources

Environmental factors that affect African American parent participation included transportation issues, lack of flexibility of work schedules and disability issues (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). For example, African American parents may not have their own transportation and they may have to rely on others or public transportation to get to the school. Consequently, schools could provide transportation opportunities like vans or vouchers that would allow parents to ride the bus. In addition, the lack of flexible schedules may prevent African American parents from being able to help their children with assignments when they are home, as well.

Mental Health Concerns

Likewise, parents may have mental disabilities that reduce their access to schools (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Harris and Goodall (2008) indicate that parent school engagement is impacted by emotional capital and emotional well-being. Moreover, middle-class parents have an advantage over poor parents in securing mental health school resources, because they know how to efficiently maneuver the school system.

Political Factors

African American Voting Barriers to Engagement

Even though the 1965 Voting Rights Act stated voting rights should not be denied because of race, many barriers were put in place to prevent African American citizens from voting and many African American parents are still apathetic about the voting process (Thernstrom, 1987). Consequently, voting for African American parents is another area where they fail to use their voices and engage on school campuses (Stuart, 2009). Unfortunately, if African American parents are not engaged in school voting, they are not able to make their vote count on specific issues that could benefit African American students.

School and Community Policy Barriers

Moreover, other barriers to African American parent engagement involve school practices of segregation, disproportionality of discipline, and inequalities of academic tracking and school funding for African American students (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). School practices of segregation occur when school funding is based on community tax revenue where schools in specific zip codes are the beneficiary of increased district budgets. In addition, school zoning practices contribute to school segregation, because they are designed to exclude the poor and students of color from attending certain schools (Allen & White-Smith, 2017).

Consequently, African American parents need to have the navigational capital to maneuver through school systems and advocate for their children. Navigational capital is defined as the ability to "maneuver through and manipulate institutions and practices that were designed to exclude black families" (Allen & White-Smith, 2017, p. 10). For

example, possessing the cultural wealth of navigational capital informs African American parents on where to purchase or rent homes. Navigational capital also informs African American parents to pay attention to which school districts are high performing and give them an opportunity to send their children to these schools (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). Because students in higher socio-economic areas are offered different programs and resources that prepare them to be productive citizens, African American parents must be aware.

Disproportionality of Discipline in Schools Discourages Engagement

African American students are disproportionately disciplined at a higher rate compared to other students and these negative interactions with school staff are barriers to parent engagement (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Jefferson, 2014). Because of this issue, African American parents must possess navigational capital, be present at schools and advocate for their children. Allen and White-Smith (2107) suggest these increased discipline rates are connected to negative stereotypes about single mothers and their children. Consequently, African American parents need to know this and make changes in the way they interact with school officials (Allen & White-Smith, 2017).

Academic Tracking Practices in Schools Limit Engagement

African American parents must also possess the navigational capital to ensure their students have access to the proper classes in schools and a school partnership facilitates this understanding. Parents must partner with counselors and other school leaders to map out student school courses. For example, if African American parents allow the school officials alone to map out the course schedules for their children, they may not be ready for college (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Jefferson, 2014). Therefore,

understanding how to navigate the school system and be advocates for their children with regard to scheduling will increase their school participation.

Critical Social Theory and Ecological Approaches to Social Systems

Critical Social Theory

A critical social theory framework in education focuses on the relationship between social systems and people, how they exist with each other, and "how critical social theory can contribute to the emancipation of both" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 11). Quality education in this theory exists when students can question, breakdown and then rebuild knowledge in a unique way (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Giroux, 1988; Marx & Engels, 1970; McLaren, 1991; Shor, 1993).

Ecologies of Parental Engagement

Furthermore, the Ecologies of Parental Engagement framework seeks to explain how we understand parents' involvement in their children's education (Barton et al., 2004; Civil et al., 2000; Friedel, 1999; Hammond, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Samaras & Wilson, 1999). The focus is not on what parents do to engage with schools but on how parents comprehend "the how and why of their engagement and how this engagement relates to their experiences" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 3).

Statement of the Research Problem

African American parents are not forming the relationships necessary to be the best advocates for their children. Many barriers exist and prevent these school relationships like setting concerns, transportation issues, language barriers, social and cultural barriers (Francis et al., 2016; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Jefferson, 2014; Murray,

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et al, 2014; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Wilkins, 2006). Moreover, research shows other barriers to include mistrust and not feeling welcomed by school personnel (Francis et al., 2016; Latunde, 2017; Wilkins, 2006). In order to increase African American school engagement and understand their school barriers, African American parent voice on the matter is needed. Also, parent engagement for this population needs to be pursued by school personnel and they must be valued as team members.

Overcoming barriers to school engagement faced by African American parents will improve relationships between parents and school officials, and allow these parents to be better advocates for their children (Harris & Graves, 2010; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). In addition, research shows there is a relationship between African American parent participation with school and student achievement (Harris & Graves, 2010). As a result, research suggests that building strong relationships with parents will benefit stakeholders. However, school policies need to change to facilitate this involvement (Bartel, 2010; Jefferson, 2014). For example, staff need to participate in professional development that builds their capacity about African American barriers to school participation. In addition, based on past school practices, a mindset shift is needed. Research shows that transforming the mind needs to happen first, in order for sustained change in behavior and culture to take place in an organization (Anderson & Anderson, 2010). This new mindset needs to be present in all staff on campus.

Understanding and overcoming barriers will lead to increased access for African American parents on school campuses. In addition, building capacity in school staff about barriers to school participation for African American parents will deepen their understanding and build better relationships. However, in order for this transformational

change to take place, school policies and practices will need to change to reflect the value that African American parents bring to schools (Bartel, 2010; Jefferson, 2014) and factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's' local school and in their children's education.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's' local school and in their children's education.

Research Question

How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for them to be engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues, economic issues, environmental issues, political issues, trust issues and technological access?

Research Sub-Questions

1. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

2. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

3. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

4. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

5. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

6. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Significance of the Problem

African American parents are not forming the relationships necessary to be the best advocates for their children due to many barriers. In order to understand and increase African American school engagement, African American parent voice on the matter is needed. African American parents need to be entreated by school personnel in order for these parents to feel like valued team members.

Technology Access

Many common themes were raised about technology and there is a gap in the literature surrounding technology for African American parents. For example, technology access and skill were mentioned as barriers to African American participation on school campuses but there is not enough research on the topic (Jefferson, 2014; Sudduth, 2011). However, the issue was raised that these barriers were disproportionately an issue in school districts that had higher socio-economically disadvantaged student populations (Jefferson, 2014). Therefore, school districts have to be mindful of this phenomenon and provide training, devices and internet services to combat these obstacles for African American parents.

Missing Parent Voice

Furthermore, there is a gap in research on African American parent perspective on what they need to overcome barriers to their school participation. Gaps in the literature remain on the topic, because African American parent perspectives on what they need to address barriers to school participation is limited (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). Additional research on the topic is needed, in order to inform school officials and create the environment for this essential partnership (Barton et al., 2004).

Definitions

The following terms are used in this research study and these definitions are used to clarify the meanings when used in this dissertation.

African American Parent. Custodial care takers of African American students.

Cultural Capital. "Knowledge, dispositions, orientations, goods and credentials that members of the dominant group possess" (Allen & White-Smith, 2017, p. 5).

Economic Issues. As defined for this study, economic issues refer to the lack of financial stability, poverty and access to resources (Harris & Goodall, 2008; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Stacer & Perrucci, 2013; Trainor & Bal, 2010).

Environmental Issues. As defined for this study, environmental issues refer to access to community resources and transportation, flexible work schedules and mental health concerns (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014).

Navigational Capital. Navigational capital is defined as the ability to "maneuver through and manipulate institutions and practices that were designed to exclude black families" (Allen & White-Smith, 2017, p. 10).

Parent Involvement. This is one directional and linear participation of parents. Parents are seen as quests and not team members (Barton et al, 2004).

Parent Engagement. Engagement as a set of relationships and actions that cut across individuals, circumstances and events that are produced and held together by the context in which the engagement takes place (Barton et a, 2004).

Political Issues. As defined for this study, political issues refer to voting barriers, school and community policy barriers, disproportionate school discipline practices, and academic tracking policies (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Stuart, 2009; Thernstrom, 1987; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997).

Social Issues. As defined for this study, social issues refer to the interconnectedness between African American parents and school staff which includes a lack of trust and feeling unwelcomed (Francis et al., 2016; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Wilkins, 2006).

Technological Access. As defined in this study, technological access refers to African American access to technology devices and training (Jefferson, 2014; Sudduth, 2011).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to African American parents in Moreno Valley Unified (MVUSD), Hemet Unified School District (HUSD), Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) and Perris Elementary School District (PESD) in Riverside County in Southern California.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized in five chapters with references and appendices. Chapter I presents an overview and significance of the dissertation. Chapter II includes an in depth review of the literature with frameworks and various barriers identified in the research by theme. Chapter III presents the methodology, research design and explains how data was collected and analyzed. The population and sample are also reviewed in this chapter. Chapter IV is where an analysis of the data from the study is found. Common themes and findings are explained in this chapter. Chapter V provides the conclusion, implications, and recommendations for future research on the topic. This dissertation will conclude with references and appendices.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

African American parents have a decreased rate of parent participation on school campuses when compared to other parent groups and this lack of participation has negatively impacted African American student achievement (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Bartel, 2010; Francis et al., 2016, Latunde, 2017; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Wilkins, 2006). Research reveals many barriers to African American participation and sheds light on the historical causes of these barriers (Allen & White-Smith, 2017: Frazier, 1937; Jefferson, 2014; Sowell, 2013; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). This study seeks to identify and understand what African American parents need to increase school engagement and become partners with school stakeholders, in order to have positive outcomes for African American students.

In order to increase African American school involvement, the research reveals the importance of school community partnerships, and reviews how this parent involvement affects how students feel about school. Research will also show how critical a parent/school partnership is to the African American parents and students. In addition, in order to understand how African American parents feel about school systems, it is important to consider the history of minority parents' school participation and the reasons why African American parents act the way they do toward school personnel. The theoretical framework of this study also examines how various barriers involving social, economic, environmental, political, and technological factors have impacted African American school participation. Furthermore, the theoretical models of the critical social

theory (CST) and the ecological approach to social systems are explained in this study to

help the reader understand parental engagement in schools.

The Importance of School/Community Partnerships

Research suggests that schools are not able to meet the needs of its students on

their own (Stefanski et al., 2016). Schools need to coordinate with social service systems

and provide full service to students and their families (Stefanski et al., 2016).

Community partners in the health department, social welfare and juvenile justice will

help students and their families have access to the resources and support that they need to

successfully navigate the educational system (Harris & Graves, 2010; Latunde, 2017;

O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Stefanski et al., 2016; Wilkins, 2006). Therefore,

connecting students and families to community resources increases school-community

partnerships. Schools are able to better serve student needs if they are able to access the

needs of the whole child and build working relationships with their families (Bartel,

2010; Jefferson, 2014; Stefanski et al., 2016).

Parent Involvement Affects How Students Feel About School

Parent school participation is important. When parents are interested in

partnering with schools, this affects how children feel about school (Froiland & Davison,

2014; Hill et al., 2017; Svraka, 2019). One of the methods used to increase parent school

participation is to increase communication between parents and school officials. Quality

communication keeps parents actively involved with schools (Hill et al., 2017; Svraka,

2019;). Parents need to be involved in school decision making and this ensures that

parents know their partnership is valuable (Svraka, 2019). Many parents do not realize

that their school involvement shapes how their children think about what they can do,

how they do it and if they will be successful doing it (Hill et al., 2017). This parental

connectedness to the school also affects how students feel about future goals and if they

see a productive future for themselves (Hill et al., 2017; Svraka, 2019). Research also

reveals that parent school involvement has a positive relationship with student

achievement, especially for African American students (Harris & Graves, 2010; Hill et

al., 2017; Latunde, 2017). Moreover, parent expectations of what students can do has

more of a positive effect on their academic achievement than their socio-economic status

(Froiland & Davison, 2013). In addition, Hill et al. (2017) reveal parents of older

students tend to provide less hands-on support with school. In addition, research suggests

there is a correlation between parents that do not have a college degree and students

having fewer academic goals or aspirations. Furthermore, there was a connection

between parent school connectedness and achievement for African American students

(Hill et al., 2017). Even though parents had dreams or aspirations for their children, there

was no evidence of executable academic plans for their children (Hill et al., 2017).

Gender and Ethnicity Affects Parent/School Participation

In addition, research reveals that gender and ethnicity affect parent/school

partnerships (Hill et al., 2017; Svraka, 2019). Mothers are a more powerful influence on

children and are usually more involved in their children's educational experiences and

upbringing (Svraka, 2019). Furthermore, Svraka (2019) indicates that parents that are

high school graduates value school partnerships. In addition, parent structure is an

overlooked variable that affects parent involvement and student achievement. Single

parent families' children have lower academic achievement when compared to children

from two parent homes (Froiland & Davison, 2013).

School/Family Partnership is Critical

Research also reports that a school/family relationship is critical to parent involvement, but this relationship is not always viewed as a quality partnership by school management (Francis et al., 2016; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014; Svraka, 2019; Wilkins, 2006). When parents received school invitations and support, their school involvement increased (Avvisati et al., 2013). In addition, when there was a parent/school partnership, students were more likely able to see a meaningful future, which resulted in academic engagement (Hill et al., 2017). Also, this parent school engagement reinforces students to have long-term academic goals.

Research also reveals parent/school partnerships have a positive impact on student discipline, as well (Avisati et al., 2013). When parents get involved in the school, they have better relationships with the teachers and students behave better in school. Research shows this was especially true for teenage students. In addition, the students generally have more positive attitudes about school when their parents were more involved with the school (Avvisati et al., 2013). Students discuss school with their parents more when they feel their parents are concerned about their schooling. For example, when parents volunteer in their students' classrooms, students are more engaged, they have better school attendance, and they have better attitudes about school (Avvisati et al., 2013; Svraka, 2019). In addition, research suggests that teachers form stronger bonds with parents and have a stronger empathy for students when parents volunteer. This increased school participation ensures parents will stay involved and builds trust (Avvisati et al., 2013; Froiland & Davison, 2013).

Conversely, research reveals that younger children benefit from increased parent/school involvement in academics and behavior more than teenagers. Secondary students view increased parental involvement as their parents being controlling and this involvement can backfire yielding negative student outcomes. This attitude occurs because teenage students seek more independence from their parents and want more control over their lives (Froiland & Davison, 2013).

Research reports the impact of social capital on student achievement (Stefanski et al., 2016). Social capital is defined as "networks of supportive relationships and resources that make goal achievement possible" (Stefanski et al., 2016, p. 138). Many factors affect increased student achievement including being healthy, family and community support, and steady employment. Stefanski et al. (2016) report that when stakeholders work together, the best student outcomes are present.

There has been a shift from parent involvement to parent engagement. Parent involvement concentrates on projects and school needs and then tells parents how they can get involved. Conversely, engagement focuses on listening to what parents "think, dream and worry about" (Stefanski et al., 2016, p. 138). The school partners with the parent instead of seeing the parent as a client (Stefanski et al., 2016). In addition, research reveals parent involvement is separated into six different types: bystanders, decision-makers, classroom volunteers, paid para-professionals, learners and teachers at home (Epstein, 1995; Stefanski et al., 2016). Each of these parent roles fulfill a school need and do not necessarily form a partnership between the parent and school.

The History of Minority Parent School Participation

Research supports that parent school involvement has a positive relationships with student achievement (Latunde, 2018; Shah, 2009). Research also suggests that parental school participation is especially important for minority students in order to address dismal educational outcomes as compared to other student groups (Fan et al., 2012; Latunde, 2018; Shah, 2009; Sil, 2007; Voto & Wronowski, 2018). Some of the barriers research reveals that blocks minority parent school participation are psychological barriers of internalized feelings of powerlessness and seeing individuals that look like them in positions of power (Shah, 2009). When minority parents see persons that look like them in power positions on school campuses and on the school board, they feel a sense of gained political power and are more responsive to the schools (Shah, 2009). These parents believe the schools will be more responsive to their needs because they understand them better. Minority parents that share the same culture as district personnel connect this shared culture with a positive school climate and are more willing to partner with schools.

The Changing African American Family and its Impact on School Participation

Frazier (1937) suggests in the early twentieth century, the African American single parent living status created poverty for African American children. Similarly, research suggests the decline in two parent African American family structures was heavily influenced by the expansion of social welfare legislation in the 1960s (Sowell, 2013). This government assistance allowed African American mothers the opportunity to depend financially on the government and the not the fathers of their children. Sowell

(2103) further indicates that prior to this welfare given to African American mothers; African Americans had the largest decline in poverty.

In order to understand the changing African American family structure, it is important to understand African American history. A majority of African Americans lived in the southern states, because they were originally taken from their homelands and brought to America in chains to work as enslaved people harvesting cotton, tobacco, rice and other crops (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). These crops were the foundation of the southern agricultural economy. Before 1939, prior to World War II, the majority of African Americans lived in the South as second class citizens dedicated to white domination (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). As a result, many African Americans migrated to Chicago and other northern cities. Even though in the North African American citizens were not faced with overt violence, they still faced discrimination in the workforce and in education (Frazier, 1937; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). However, African Americans were able to obtain work and earn a living in the North.

In 1940, 87% of African American families were living in poverty but by 1960 only 47% of African American families were living in poverty (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). Moreover, by 1995, only 26% of African American families were living in poverty. In addition, African Americans attending college also increased from 45,000 in 1940 to over 1.4 million in 1997 (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). These increases appear to be headed in the right direction. However, the population of African Americans living in poverty is still triple that of Caucasians. The unemployment rate is double that of Caucasians and the rate of death by homicide is six times that of Caucasians (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). Similarly, two-thirds of all African

American babies are born to single mothers and only 35% of African American children live in a two parent home.

As it relates to African American students education, the statistics are alarming. Thernstrom and Thernstrom (1997) report African American twelfth grader's reading scores are not better than that of Caucasian eight graders. Similarly, African American students are about five years behind Caucasian students in science. In addition, African American family income has not leveled the playing field for African American students either. For example, research indicates that African American families earning $70,000 a year have lower SAT scores than do Caucasian families earning less than $10,000 a year (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997).

Background of School Participation for African Americans

Obtaining an education for African Americans was not an easy accomplishment, and history records the caste system they endured. Decisions were made to ensure that African Americans remained inferior to Caucasians. In the Jim Crow South, the common purpose was "to express the subordinate status of the Negro people and the exalted position of whites" Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997, p. 42). During slavery, African Americans were forbidden to learn to read or write. It was believed by slave owners that keeping enslaved persons from education would help them to be more cooperative and good laborers (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). Consequently, African Americans are faced will the aftermath of illiteracy today. In the early 1900s, 45% of African American adults could not read and write. In addition, by 1940, the average African American adults had only spent five years in school and one in twenty had a high school diploma (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997).

Similarly, the schools that African Americans attended were not only deficient but they were also segregated by law (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). It was not until the decision in the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case that education for African Americans was no longer considered *separate but equal* and more funding was given to increase equity for African American students. However, there were still three times as much money spent on basic education for Caucasian students versus African American students (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). In addition, in the 1920s in the South, students ranged in age from six to seventeen stuffed in one classroom taught by teachers who were not academically prepared to teach them (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). During this time, the sentiment was that African Americans did not need an education for the types of employment offered to them. It was also a worry that African Americans would develop political ideas with increased access to educational opportunities. From 1914-1932, many African American schools were not even built using tax dollars but by receiving funds from liberal Caucasian philanthropists and from the African American citizens themselves (Thernstrom &Thernstrom, 1997).

Modern Learning Theory on the Perspective of School Goals

Just like the changing African American family, learning environments and expectations of schools have changed drastically over the past two centuries. School goals have changed from students only being able to do what they are told to students being able to think for themselves. For example, in the early 1800s, the goal of schooling was to produce students that could take good notes from teacher dictation. In addition, students were not expected to be active participants in their learning until the late 1800s (National Research Council, 2000). Moreover, it was not until the 1930s that students

were expected to communicate in writing in a meaningful way. Furthermore, schools were considered factories where children were products who were processed by teachers. In the past, teacher roles were given by supervisors and managers in this factory. As a result, standardized testing was created as the *product* to show student gains (National Research Council, 2000).

Conversely, today the expectations of schools and students have evolved. Now students are expected to understand what they are learning and be able to build on it. Students also need to be able to make decisions in the face of uncertainty. Dewey (1916) identified the need for students to be active thinkers and problem solvers in order for them to experience true success. They need to be able to analyze information taught and problem-solve next steps. Students need to be able to make decisions with missing information regularly. Moreover, students are expected to make contributions to their communities and the world as productive citizens. Furthermore, the environment in schools have also changed from the factory model to environments that are learner, knowledge, assessment and community centered; parents are also considered a part of the school community and their participation is desired (Dewey, 1916; National Research Council, 2000).

Learner-Centered Environment

Learner centered-environments refer to environments that focus on "the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that learners bring to the educational setting" (National Research Council, 2000, p. 133). In the learner centered- environment, teaching practices are culturally responsive and focus on diagnostic teaching (Bell et al., 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In addition, in this environment, student misconceptions are a

focus as well as understanding how students think about specific problems in order to empower them to readjust their thinking about a matter. Moreover, learner- centered environments provide instruction that is cultural sensitive to students and affects classroom practices. For example, teachers in this environment make conscious efforts to learn about students' home lives and the cultural practices in the communities they live in (National Research Council, 2000). Furthermore, teachers in this environment respect the language practices of their students and attempt to relate to all students, especially those students that do not belong to the dominant middle class culture. Teachers recognized that language was a barrier for students to fully participate in the leaner – centered environment and they had to teach students how to code switch language when at school (Heath, 1983). Finally, teachers understood in this environment that learners construct their own meaning and come to classrooms with their own beliefs and experiences that shape how they interact with the world. They also saw these beliefs and experiences as bridges that would serve as foundations for increased learning and new understandings (Duckworth, 1987).

Knowledge-Centered Environment

Knowledge-centered environments focus on the best practices to help students master the transfer of knowledge (Bruner, 1981). Knowledge-centered environments and learner- centered environments intersect when student concerns and preconceived notions about subject matter combine (National Research Council, 2000). Therefore, it is very important to understand the knowledge that students bring to their learning situations in order to predict what they will understand. Another focus in the knowledge-centered environment is to ensure that students know how to critically examine curriculum and not

just memorize information presented to them (National Research Council, 2000).

Students are encouraged to learn to make sense of information. In the knowledge-centered environment this can be achieved by having students use their own words, pictures or diagrams to construct their own meaning. However, one of the drawbacks of a knowledge-centered environment is striking the proper balance between remote learning for automaticity and activities that promote deeper understanding (National Research Council, 2000).

Assessment-Centered Environment

The key aspects of an assessment-centered environment are that it should provide many opportunities for feedback and chances to revise. In addition, assessment should be constituent with student learning goals (National Research Council, 2000). Moreover, multiple assessments styles should be used like formative and summative assessments. Feedback should also be given both informally and formally in the assessment-centered environment. Effective teachers also help students build their self-assessment skills and the ability to critique their peers. However, one of the obstacles to successful assessment-centered environments is changing the mindset of stakeholders concerning what qualifies as assessment. For example, many teacher test involve too much memorization of facts and standardized tests put too much emphasis on memorizes isolated facts. Because these types of test are used for accountability purposes, teachers are required to rely on standardized testing too often (National Research Council, 2000). Moreover, assessments that are designed appropriately allow teachers the ability to rethink their teaching practices to better serve students. Unfortunately, one of the

challenges in the assessment-centered environment is providing a theoretical framework that joins assessment practices to learning theory (National Research Council, 2000).

Community-Centered Environment

In community-centered environments there is an understanding that student learning increases when it is community centered (National Research Council, 2000). It is also understood in this environment that people learn from each other. In addition, community is used to refer to multiple aspects of community including classrooms, schools, student homes, local community businesses, states, the country and the world (National Research Council, 2000). Research suggests norms and expectations are different depending on the environment and they influence what is taught and assessed (Brown & Campione, 1994). For example, teachers may have different expectations of success for some students and have expectations of failure for other students like female students being discouraged from participating in math and science (Cobb et al., 1992).

In addition, research suggests that student connections between school and the outside world are critical (Dewey, 1916). Learning takes place in the family even when the participants in the family do not view themselves as teachers. Therefore, family members' attitudes about schooling affect what value students place on education.

<center>**Theorist Dewey**</center>

According to Dewey (1916), there needs to be a connection between the school environment and the broader community. This connection should involve schools, student homes, community centers, after-school programs and businesses. Dewey (1916) indicates from a student perspective time in school is wasted if students are not able to utilize their experiences from their home lives and the outside world in school settings or

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be able to apply what they are learning in school to their lives outside of school. Partnerships between families and schools have been a focus to help struggling students since the Progressive Era because schools were viewed as the community's main institution (Dewey, 1902). School was a community hub where community members could listen to lectures, have debates about social issues, and have recreational activities and various clubs. Community associations also held meetings at schools and they formed working relationships with schools and mutual partnerships (Stefanski et al., 2016).

Historically, the idea of the common educational experience was a combination of the focus on core subjects and the factory model of learning (Leonardo, 2004). However, educational theory reached its peak under Dewey who suggests that quality education was not reachable if the educational experience was not also considered a major factor for students (Dewey, 1938; Leonardo, 2004). As a result, Dewey is viewed as a major influence on the development of the critical social theory (CST; Leonardo, 2004). CST's main focus is training students to learn how "to question, deconstruct, and then reconstruct knowledge in the interest of emancipation" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 12). Students need to be able to think for themselves and critique information; cultivating this skill will empower them.

Earlier Works on Barriers to African American Parent School Participation

In the 19th and 20th centuries, history records African Americans parents have participated in their children's schooling when schools were segregated (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). This parent participation was viewed as a necessary investment in their children's education and a way to lift themselves up to a better future in society (Allen &

White-Smith, 2017; Anderson, 1988; Fairclough, 2007; Walker, 1993). Parents

volunteered in classrooms and participated in many school based activities that focused

on school needs. However, today African American parents still participate in school

based activities, but they also experience time poverty, inflexible work schedules, and

child care concerns and feel unwelcomed at schools. These circumstances are barriers to

meaningful school engagement (Francis, et al, 2016; Harris & Graves, 2010; Jeynes,

2007; Latunde, 2017; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Quiñones &

Kiyama, 2014; Wilkins, 2006).

Research also reveals that African American parents do not feel confident about

their abilities to help their children with their assignments and this insecurity makes them

avoid school participation (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Green et al., 2007; Sudduth, 2011).

Unfortunately, school personnel view African American lack of engagement as not caring

about their children's academic success because this parent absence is seen as not

supporting the school norms of parent participation should look like (Lipman, 1997;

Shumow & Harris, 2000). Moreover, other ways that African American parents are able

to participate are ignored or considered not important to the school (Cooper, 2005;

Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Fine, 1993).

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Theoretical Framework

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Literature on Barriers to African American Parent School Participation

Social Factors

Parent Involvement Versus Engagement. Traditionally, research on parent

school participation focuses on parent involvement as various activities they can get

involved in (Stefanski et al., 2016). In addition, school personnel see parental

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relationships as one dimensional, and unidirectional (Barton et al., 2004). In this view, the desired outcome is parent attendance. Parents are not considered valued team members, but are more like guests (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Murray et al., 2014). Schools identify the needs, projects and goals and then tell parents how they can help (Stefanski et al., 2016). Gordon (1977) identified six types of parent involvement to include parents as: bystanders, decision-makers, classroom volunteers, paid para-professionals, learners, and teachers at home.

In addition, some research suggests barriers to parent school involvement include not feeling welcomed by school personnel, lack of trust between school staff and parents, transportation issues and setting concerns (Francis et al., 2016; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Wilkins, 2006). Years of negative experiences with these barriers and with school personnel have solidified the apathy that parents feel. Furthermore, this research reveals that African American parents have to feel their presence and participation with the school matters, in order for involvement to increase. In the same way, Bartel (2010) reports when parents feel their participation matters, involvement will increase.

While much of the literature focuses on parent involvement, Barton et al. (2004) suggests that parent involvement is not the school's true goal. Instead, he believes schools should aim to achieve parent engagement, which he defined as an interconnected relationship between parents, teachers, and other community members. Parent engagement is viewed as "a social practice sustained through active participation and dialogue in a social world" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 6). In this view, engagement is not just an outcome, but a set of relationships that are interconnected. Similarly, Stefanski et al. (2016) define parent engagement "as goal-directed relationships between staff and

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families that are ongoing and culturally responsive; family and staff members share responsibility and mutually support what is best for children and families" (p. 139). This shift allows parents to be more than clients but partners. A parent/school partnership facilitates school officials to listen to parent ideas, dreams and worries about the school system (Stefanski et al., 2016). This partnership is not based on a deficit model but values parents as resources and collaborators (Stefanski et al., 2016). Consequently, African American parents need to be treated by school staff like their engagement is a vital part of the school process and connected to the success of African American students. Parents need to be treated like they are necessary part of the school culture and climate, in order for a true parent/school partnership to form.

  Cultural Capital. Furthermore, research suggests that for African American parents to engage at meaningful levels, they must possess the cultural capital to navigate the school system (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Jefferson, 2014). Allen and White-Smith (2017) define cultural capital for African American parents as the "knowledge, dispositions, orientations, goods and credentials that members of the dominant group possess" (p. 5). Barton et al. (2004) explain African American parents have limited access to school systems unless they possess the beliefs and opinions of the dominant culture. Moreover, cultures of poor and minority people are seen as less than equal in school systems and not as capable as those in the dominant culture, further complicating the situation. Bartel (2010) and Jefferson (2014) offer that African American parents are often viewed as deficient or invisible in traditional K-12 educational settings. Their opinions are not perceived as valuable by the dominant culture and school personnel.

In addition, research predicts that parent engagement will occur when multi-dimensional relationships exist between school stakeholders; however, historically, many inequities have prevented these interconnected relationships in African American culture (Barton et al., 2004). To overcome these inequities, research convincingly reveals school policies and practices need to change to facilitate meaningful parent engagement in African American populations   A lack of cultural capital of African American parents limits their abilities to fully engage with schools to level the educational playing field for their children (Barton et al., 2004). Furthermore, many African American parents are not even aware of the need for cultural capital or the effect of their lack of cultural capital.

In addition, Stefanski et al. (2016) suggest there is a strong relationship between social capital and student achievement. They define social capital "as networks of supportive relationships and resources that make goal achievement possible" (Stefanski et al., 2016, p 138.). Furthermore, it is argued that being healthy, having family and community support, and steady employment are key elements in student overall success. Research suggests this is especially true in high-poverty neighborhoods. As a result, schools, families and communities must work together for the best student outcomes; which include academics, social and emotional needs (Stefanski et al., 2016). The hierarchal structure of power between parents and schools limits parent engagement and has to be reconfigured to allow parents to come alongside school officials and determine the next educational steps for their children (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Sefanski et al., 2016: Wilkins, 2006).

Mistrust in School Setting. Harris and Goodall, (2008) report there are many barriers that parents experience that involve mistrust. For example, parents' socio-

economic status affects how they are treated or respected by school officials (Francis et al., 2016; Latunde, 2017; Wilkins, 2006). Research suggests that parents are talked down to or just excluded from important conversations altogether (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). In addition, parents do not have the same access to school materials because of a lack of awareness that specific materials are necessary for student success. Moreover, some parents do not display the proper attitudes or behaviors toward the benefit of education, as a result of many negative school experiences suffered by themselves and their children (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Other factors that have increased parental mistrust in school systems include the mother's educational status and poor school success, parental emotional capital and the power imbalance between school officials, teachers and parents (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Parents not Welcomed. All parents do not have the same needs but schools have not done a good job of recognizing that African American parents do not feel welcomed in the school setting. Structural racism has not been addressed and many parents do not feel they are partners with school officials. School is viewed by many African American parents as something that must be endured or escaped as quickly as possible (Harris & Graves, 2010; Jefferson, 2014; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014; Sudduth, 2011). Furthermore, these parents lack the knowledge of how to successfully navigate the educational system (Allen & White-Smith, 2014; Wilkins, 2006). They also experience a lack of confidence in themselves to be the best advocates for their children in this system. Moreover, other barriers to parents feeling welcome include flawed parental involvement policies due to their lack of ethnic diversity (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Unfortunately, barriers to parent school involvement are mistakenly interpreted as parent resistance or apathy and need to

be considered (Harris & Goodall, 2008, Latunde, 2017). On the other hand, some parents believe that it is not their place to partner with the school. These parents feel their job is to raise the children and it is the schools job to educate them. Moreover, these parents do not see their presence in school as necessary or that it makes a difference for the children (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Parents Have a Lack of Access to School Resources. African American parents lack access to the same resources as other parent groups. For example, many African American parents do not have the technology skills to digitally engage with the school (Jefferson, 2014; Sudduth, 2011). Technology access is definitely an area where schools can meet a need for African American parents to increase school partnerships.

Economic Factors

African American Parents Experience Financial Instability. Economic issues affect parent school participation. The lack of resources and poverty prevent African American parents from be advocates for their children in the school systems (Harris & Goodall, 2008; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Stacer & Perrucci, 2013; Trainor & Bal, 2010;). The lack of resources is a barrier that African Americans face disproportionately when compared to Caucasian parents (Trainor & Bal, 2010). Many African American parents lack the economic privilege of middle class families and are not able to participate in school and home based activities like Caucasian families (Allen & White-Smith, 2017).

African American Parents Access to Resources. African American parents have not been welcomed partners in school settings and, therefore, have not had access to various resources available in schools. In addition to a lack of access to resources,

African Americans also have a lack of knowledge with specific resources like

technology. Schools are looking to technology to allow higher levels of parent

engagement, but increased engagement will only occur with increased knowledge on how

to use technology (Jefferson, 2014; Sudduth, 2011)

Environmental Factors

African American Parents Lack of Access to Community Resources.

Environmental factors that affect African American parent participation included

transportation issues, lack of flexibility of work schedules and disability issues (Allen &

White-Smith, 2017; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014;). These barriers are often overlooked by

school stakeholders because many times African American parents do not share their

barriers with school staff (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). In order for African Americans

to share personal information with you, they first must trust school personnel.

Mental Health Concerns. African American parents may have mental

disabilities that reduce their access to schools (Harris & Goodall, 2008). Harris and

Goodall (2008) indicate that parent school engagement is impacted by emotional capital

and emotional well-being. Unfortunately, seeking counseling for mental health concerns

is viewed as being weak in the African American community and it is difficult to get

African American parents to trust outsiders and be vulnerable enough to share issues with

mental health professionals (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

Political Factors

African American Voting Barriers to Engagement. Historically, in the South,

Caucasians did not want African Americans to understand their political power. For

example, in 1940, the Mississippi State Senate argued a position to eliminate all

references to voting, elections, and democracy in books used in African American schools. This argument was barely defeated by a slim margin at the time (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997). However, this position was argued because of fear that increased political knowledge would "lead to political equity" and increase the African American voice. It was further argued this proposed political strength would eventually lead to inter-racial marriage, which could not be tolerated (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997, p. 39).

Consequently, this history of the expectation of an inferior political voice has made an impact on current voting practices of African Americans. They do not realize the power of their vote and the impact that their vote has on current policies in the community and the school system (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Stuart, 2009; Thernstrom, 1987; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 1997).

School and Community Policy Barriers. African American parents face school and community barriers that prevent school engagement like segregation. School practices of segregation occur when school funding is based on community tax revenue where schools in specific zip codes are the beneficiary of increased district budgets. This access to better schools affects educational opportunities for the students who attend them. Conversely, access is denied to specific students and African American parents may not feel comfortable in the school setting where their children are forced to attend and this further discourages their school participation (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Jefferson, 2014; Sudduth, 2011). In addition, school zoning practices contribute to school segregation, because they are designed to exclude the poor and students of color from attending certain schools (Allen & White-Smith, 2017).

Disproportionality of Discipline in Schools Discourages Engagement. African American parents have negative experiences with schools as a result of discipline issues and this affects their participation (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). Many school personnel are not people of color and African American students are disproportionately singled out for discipline on school campuses. The lack of representation of African American personnel on school sites is perceived by African American parents as a lack of understanding for African American students (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Coopersmith, 2009). Research also indicates that the racial make-up of the school staff leads the staff to underestimate the value of African American parenting styles (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002; McGrady & Reynolds, 2013; Reay, 1998; Toldson & Lemmons, 2013).

Academic Tracking Practices in Schools Limit Engagement. African American parents are not given the same information and access to academic tracking as other parent groups that are part of the dominant culture (Allen & White-Smith, 2017). This lack of equity increases the lack of trust that African American experience and as a result limits the desire to partner with schools. In addition, research suggests a contributing factor to the disconnect that African American parents feel related to academic tracking practices is the poor and unresponsive relationships they have with the children's teachers and counselors (Howard & Reynolds 2008; Williams & Sanchez, 2012). African American parents have been excluded from academic opportunities and educational information to the detriment of their children's educational experiences. Allen and White-Smith (2017) indicated this exclusion was especially present for parents of African American boys.

Technological Factors

Research reveals that many African American families do not have the proper access to the internet and this is a barrier to their school partnership. District policies and important enrollment information can be found on the internet and without access African American parents are disadvantaged (Jefferson, 2014). When considering the cost of internet services in a working poor school neighborhood, African American parents are blocked from increased school participation. Furthermore, even if African American parents are able to access the internet, they may not have the technology skills to effectively navigate specific programs needed for success. If institutions are not willing to provide African American parents with the necessary training on how use specific programs, they sustain their institutional power of them and keep them powerless to help their students (Sudduth, 2011).

Theoretical Model

Critical Social Theory and Ecological Approaches to Social Systems

Critical Social Theory

Leonardo (2004) describes critical social theory (CST) as a social theory based movement that concentrates on the relationships between social systems and people. CST promotes critical thinking and widens "students' horizon of possibility and expands their sense of a larger humanity" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 11). CST proposes "educational discourse not only frames the way students experience learning, it may also empower them" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 12). By students engaging in critical classroom discussion, teachers help students not only with being able to be comfortable with differing views but skilled at it. CST uses this language of critique and seeks to help students understand the

nature of oppression and the forms that it takes as it relates to power and privilege (Allen

& White-Smith, 2017).

In addition, CST pushes students to be aware of social injustice and be able to

pose critical questions to address this injustice. For example, CST does not expect

students to wait for the answer of how to end racism but rather encourage students to

consider it as a problem and ask other questions (Leonardo, 2004; Shor, 1993).

Moreover, Giroux (1988) reveals quality education revolves around the idea of being able

to imagine a different kind of educational system. The current status quo in educational

systems must be challenged with respect to supposed objective scientific discussions and

the genuineness of information in textbooks (Leonardo, 2004; Marx & Engels, 1970;

McLaren, 1991). CST recognizes the many faces of oppression and wants students to be

able to participate in social dreaming and have hope (McLaren, 1991). CST seeks to

build an unending sense of hope in students while reforming educational language and

discourse. Moreover, CST has a goal of teaching students to "appreciate the politics of

representation and production of meaning, and highlighting the narrative structure of

educational processes, like curriculum formation" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 16).

Ecological Approaches to Social Systems

The Ecologies of Parental Engagement Framework (EPE) was designed in order

to better understand parental engagement in urban schools. This Framework shifts from

thinking only about what parents do to engage with their children's schools to

understanding how parents think about why they behave the way they do when it comes

to their school engagement. As a result, parental engagement is presented as a relational

situation that depends on activity networks (Barton et al., 2004). This framework further

suggests that space and capital play an important role in the success of parents and teachers as it relates to engaging parents in the school setting.

The EPE framework defines parental engagement as "a dynamic, interactive process in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interactions with schools and among school actors" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 3). Historically, research reveals that parental involvement has been viewed using a deficit model. The focus has been on what parents do and this behavior fits or does not fit with student and school needs. Parental involvement has been considered positive when parents participate in school sanctioned activities like Back to School or Science Fair night (Barton et al., 2004). One of the downfalls of the deficit model is parents are not viewed as equal partners or decision makers but, rather, they are viewed as persons to be controlled and powerless. Parents are instructed on what successful parents do and if they choose to be successful, they will repeat the same behavior. Social networks and individual parent resources or experiences are not considered as valid barriers to parental engagement (Barton et al., 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Conversely, other research describes parents as powerful agents and recognizes the power of their voice in school systems (Civil et al., 2000; Friedel, 1999; Hammond, 2001; Samaras & Wilson, 1999).

The term ecologies is used in the framework because it seeks to understand parents in relation to their environment as a whole. Therefore, engagement is seen as parental interactions with the world and how these interactions shape the things that parents do in a school setting (Barton et al., 2004, Calabrese & Drake, 2002). Barton et al. (2004) used the cultural-historical activity theory and critical race theory (CRT) in

order to develop a conceptual framework to support the ecological perspective on parental engagement. The cultural-historical activity theory suggests that organizations like schools are embedded with cultural values and these values are seen through repeated social practices that produce order and continuity to life in the school (Barton et al., 2004; Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Engestom, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978, 1987).

Engestrom (2001) suggests the cultural-historical activity theory allows others to see how social practices and the surrounding environment display unequal balances of power and division of labor. For example, parents are not given the same power within the school organization or allowed to form the same networks and as a result, they do not receive the same benefits within the organization as other stakeholders. Moreover, CRT seeks to explain the ways race and language cross with culture and social institutions (Barton et al., 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1996; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Villenas & Dehyle, 1999). CRT explains that schools perpetuate the ideals and beliefs of the dominant, capitalistic culture in society. Consequently, cultures of the poor, minority, immigrant and families with language barriers are viewed as subordinate (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Barton et al., 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1996; Villenas & Dehyle, 1999). In addition, CRT reveals how the school environment with its ideals and beliefs that support the dominant culture allow racist beliefs to affect the organization as a whole as well as individuals within it (Villenas & Dehyle, 1999).

Space and capital play a role in parent participation in schools (Barton et al., 2004). Research suggests spaces are defined by the people that occupy them and they are shaped by the "rules and expectations for participants coming together in that space" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 5). In addition, people behave in certain ways based on the capital

that they bring to that space. Capital is defined as "the human, social and material

resources one has access to and can activate for their own desired purposes" (Barton et

al., 2004, p. 5). Bourdieu (1977) reveals capital exists on a macro and micro level. On

the macro level, capital is seen by the space and the social, political and cultural

boundaries that make up that space (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). An example of capital on

the macro level would be school policies about curriculum. On the other hand, on the

micro level, capital is focused on what specific individuals bring to the space. For

example, the knowledge and experiences that teachers and parents bring to the space

(Barton et al., 2004).

Furthermore, Barton et al. (2004) indicates that parental engagement is affected

by space and capital in the school setting. As a result, parental engagement will look

different across various spaces in school settings. Parental engagement is also more than

just an event or outcome but, rather, it is "a set of relationships and actions that cut across

individuals, circumstances and events that are produced and bounded by the context in

which that engagement takes place" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 6). Therefore, parental

engagement is not an isolated act but it needs to be viewed in the context of other

stakeholders in the organization and the community (Barton et al., 2004). In addition,

Allen and White-Smith (2017) explain cultural capital is needed to navigate school

systems effectively. Cultural capital is defined as "having specific skills from the

dominant culture, knowledge, connections and abilities used by communities of color to

fight discrimination and oppression" (Allen & White-Smith, 2017, p. 5). Furthermore,

African American families should not be seen as deficient by school personnel when they

do not display Caucasian middle class cultural capital (Allen & White-Smith, 2017).

Study Variables Derived From Theoretical Framework and Model

Based upon the literature cited in the theoretical framework and model, there are

six recurring variables that will be addressed in this study. These variables, and the

major authors associated with them, are listed below:

1. Social Barriers (Stefanski et al., 2016)

2. Economic Barriers (Thorson & Bal 2010)

3. Environmental Barriers (Allen & White-Smith, 2017)

4. Political Barriers (Thurstrom & Thurstrom, 1997)

5. Technological Barriers (Jefferson, 2014)

6. Trust Barriers (Barton, 2004)

Literature Gap

One of the gaps in the literature involves adding interventions and programs

aimed at increasing parental engagement. However, in order to add specific

interventions, it is critical that African American parent voice be sought after (Harris &

Goodall, 2008). African American parents must be viewed as integral parts of the

learning process and they need to know they matter. In addition, more research needs to

be done on what schools are willing to do to make African American parents an integral

part of the educational process for African American students. Too much focus is spent

on hard to reach African American parents and not enough on the African American

parents that are willing to partner with schools (Harris & Goodall, 2008).

In addition, more qualitative research is needed "to document the agency, cultural

capital, and involvement practices of Black families, particularly those in secondary

education settings" (Allen &White-Smith, 2017, p. 5). Finally, more research needs to be

done on how to remove the barriers to African American parent school participation. What do parents need to be able to successfully partner with schools?

Summary

This study revealed the importance of school community partnerships, and reviewed how this parent involvement affects how students feel about school. Research also shows how critical a parent/school partnership is to the African American parents and students. Moreover, in order to understand how African American parents feel about school systems, it was important to consider the history of minority parents' school participation and the reasons why African American parents act the way they do toward school personnel. The theoretical framework of this study also examined how various barriers involving social, economic, environmental, political, technological, and trust factors have impacted African American school participation. Furthermore, the theoretical models of the critical social theory (CST) and the ecological approach to social systems were explained in this study to help the reader understand parental engagement in schools.

Synthesis Matrix

A synthesis matrix (see Appendix A) was used by the researcher to organize variables presented in the review of the literature. The synthesis matrix shows data on the variable and cites the author. The synthesis matrix contributes to the validity of study variables.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter focused on the barriers that African American parents face that prevent school participation in elementary schools. A qualitative research design was chosen to gain valuable insight from African American parents about what they need to reduce barriers to school participation through interviews. This allowed for purposeful selection of multiple African American parents to show various perspectives on the topic.

The purpose statement and research questions are followed by the research design to support the specific methodology. Afterwards, the population and research sample are discussed. Next, the process to validate the interviews and the procedures for analyzing the data are presented. Finally, the limitations of the study are included in this methodology chapter.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's' local school and in their children's education.

Research Question

How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for them to be engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues, economic issues, environmental issues, political issues, trust issues and technological access?

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Research Sub-Questions

1. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

2. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

3. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

4. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

5. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

6. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to

become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Research Design

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study because this type of research design allows the researcher to gain insight about the barriers to school participation for African American parents. Patton (2015) suggests that the contribution of qualitative research is interpreting how people attach meaning to their experiences through interviews and observations. In addition, artifacts were collected from African American parent interviews to triangulate the data. A phenomenological study was conducted to understand the lived experiences of the African American parents and to determine the barriers they experienced to school engagement. This is a suitable method to gain this insight. The desired insight was discovered through interviewing the parents and makes the phenomenological qualitative inquiry framework appropriate for this study.

A phenomenological framework is one that seeks to find the "meaning, structure and essence of the lived experiences" of people (Patton, 2015, p. 98). A benefit of this type of qualitative inquiry framework is the data goes deeper and captures details about the people being studied. This study, which included multiple sites from Moreno Valley Unified School District, Hemet Unified School District, Perris Elementary and Riverside Unified School Districts, was performed to give a deeper understanding and provide solutions to barriers that African American parents encounter to school engagement. This design was developed to discover common themes and patterns that allowed the researcher to add to the literature concerning the barriers that African American parents

experience to school engagement. Understanding the barriers that African American parents face to school engagement, and the solutions to remove them is critical information for parents and school officials in order for this partnership to flourish in the future.

Population

McMillan and Schmacher (2014) report that a population "is a group of individuals or events from which a sample is drawn and to which results can be generalized" (p. 5). The population of this study is African American parents in California who have elementary age children. At the time of this study there were 324,496 African American students in California, 175,228 of which were elementary school students (EdData, 2020). Assuming 1 parent/guardian per child (accounting for multiple children per family) yields an estimate of 175,228 parents of African American elementary children in California.

Target Population

According to Creswell (2014), the target population is the "actual list of sampling units from which the sample is selected" (p. 393). A target population for a study is the entire set of individuals chosen from the overall population for which the study data are to be used to make inferences. The target population defines the population to which the findings are meant to be generalized. It is important that target populations are clearly identified for the purposes of research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is typically not feasible, due to time or cost constraints, to study large groups; therefore, the researcher chose population *samples* from within a larger group.

The target population from which the participants were chosen for this study consisted of African American parents from Moreno Valley Unified School District, Hemet Unified School District, Perris Elementary School District and Riverside Unified School Districts. At the time of this study there were 5415 African American elementary school students and an estimated 5415 African American Parents in the selected districts assuming one parent/guardian per child (EdData, 2020). These numbers are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of African American K-6 Students and Parents in Hemet USD, Perris Elementary SD, and Riverside USD, Moreno Valley USD (K-5)

School District	# K-6 African American Students	Estimated # K-6 African American Parents
Hemet USD	1128	1128
Moreno Valley USD	2437	2437
Perris Elementary SD	407	407
Riverside USD	1443	1443
Total	**5415**	**5415**

Source. District LCAP 2020.

Sample

A sample is "the group of subjects from whom data are collected" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 6). In qualitative sampling, the sample size is small in order to have in depth study of the subjects (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The target population for this study was African American parents from Moreno Valley Unified School District, Hemet Unified School District, Perris Elementary School District and Riverside Unified School Districts in Riverside County, California.

Purposeful and Convenience Sampling

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that purposeful sampling provides researchers a selection of "particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest" (p. 138). The strategy employed to identify the participants was criterion sampling based on the research problem, purpose, and questions. The criterion sampling method allowed the researcher to select participants based on specific criteria (Patton, 2015). The following criteria were established to select eligible participants for this study:

1. Subject must have been the African American parent or guardian of an African American K-6 student in the Moreno Valley Unified School District, Hemet Unified School District, Perris Elementary School District or Riverside Unified School Districts.

2. Subject must have had no or minimal history of participation in their student's school site activities or in fostering their child's education.

3. Subject must be willing to be interviewed for the study.

In addition, the convenience sampling strategy allows a qualitative researcher to establish an accessible sample based on location and time (Marshall, 1996; Patton, 2015). In this study, the convenience sampling strategy was simultaneously applied with the purposeful sampling strategy to identify participants who met the criteria, were willing to participate, and were located in close proximity to the researcher's location (Marshall, 1996; Patton, 2015).

Sample Size

Qualitative analyses typically require a smaller sample size than quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. Obtaining most or all of the perceptions will lead to the attainment of saturation. Saturation occurs when adding more participants to the study does not result in additional perspectives or information. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends five to 25 and Morse (1994) suggests at least six. There are no specific rules when determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample size may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 1990). The sample size chosen for this phenomenological study was 12 participants.

Sample Selection Process

Using a combination of purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling techniques, the researcher identified and selected 12 participants (three from each of the four selected districts) for this study. The process used the following steps:

1. The researcher contacted the superintendent of each of the selected school districts asking for permission to conduct the study in their district.

2. Following superintendent approval, the researcher sent each elementary principal in the selected districts an e-mail explaining the study with a request for them to contact African American parents that met the criteria for the study to ask if they were willing to participate (see Appendix B).

3. Each parent that indicated a willingness to participate was contacted by the researcher and sent information regarding the study and materials for Informed Consent to participate (see Appendix C; Appendix D).

4. Each of the referred parents was contacted by the researcher and sent information regarding the study and materials for Informed Consent to participate (see Appendix C; Appendix D).

5. When three or more participants were identified from each district, the researcher selected three from each district for a total of twelve participants.

6. Informed Consent materials were confirmed with each participant and interviews were scheduled and administered.

Instrumentation

This was a qualitative study that sought to describe data in the form of words. For example, the qualitative method can use semi-structured interviews and this information is coded and analyzed (Schwandt, 2015). Using this type of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to go deeper and have meaningful interviews with participants. Qualitative research is a type of research that refers to an "in-depth study using face-to-face or observation techniques to collect data from people in their natural settings" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 5). In addition, qualitative data analysis is inductive and it is not based on a theory. Qualitative research is designed to describe and tell a story (Patton, 2015). The researcher lets the data create themes after analyzing all the data. Furthermore, the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research where observations and interviews occur in the field (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). As a

result, qualitative research was the appropriate method for the specific outcomes in this dissertation.

During this study, the researcher was employed as an elementary school principal and the researcher was also an African American parent. As a result, the researcher brought a potential bias to the study based on personal experiences of belonging to the same ethnicity and parent status. A research peer observed a field test interview and research questions were previewed by the dissertation committee to ensure clear meaning and for feedback on format, structure and process. These steps were implemented to reduce research bias. Qualitative interviews were conducted with all research subjects. The interview questions were conducted using Zoom as a result of the school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic and interviews were digitally recorded.

For this qualitative study, the interview was structured and selected as the instrument. Semi-structured questions were used in order to gain a deeper understanding of participant views (see Appendix E; Appendix F). This study involved subjects from several different school sites in four districts and a semi-structured interview was used for analysis.

Instrument Development

The research questions for this study were developed using variables identified from the literature that impact African American students and parents. The variables were social issues (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Bartel, 2010; Barton et al., 2004; Francis, et al, 2016; Harris & Graves, 2010; Jefferson, 2014; Latunde, 2017; Murray et al., 2014; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014 Wilkins, 2006), economic issues (Francis et al., 2016; Harris & Goodall, 2008;; ; Stacer & Perrucci, 2013;

Trainor & Bal, 2010), environmental issues (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Harris & Goodall, 2008; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014;), political issues (Allen & White-Smith, 2017; Stuart, 2009; Thernstrom, 1987;), and technological access issues (Jefferson, 2014; Sudduth, 2011). For each research question, a set of interview questions was developed using an Interview Question Development Matrix (IQDM). Finally, an interview protocol was developed for the administration of the interviews (see Appendix E; Appendix F).

Reliability

Reliability refers to consistency (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Are the findings of the research able to describe results that are of importance to others besides the researcher? In this study, reliability was promoted by using a script that included details about confidentiality of the person being interviewed, explaining the purpose of the interview and answering any questions. Also used in this study, were probing questions to build trust with the interviewee, and a list of topics and items to explore with clarifying follow-up questions.

Field Test

The interview questions and protocol were field tested to establish validity and reliability (see Appendix F). The researcher conducted a field test with two individuals who met the study criteria but were not participants. A colleague familiar with the interview process observed the administration of the interviews and provided feedback regarding researcher performance and actions during the pilot interviews. Conducting the field test provided the researcher the opportunity to ensure clarity of questions and

probes, practice interviewing methods, and determine if experiences align with conceptual areas revealed in the review of literature.

Following the field test, the researcher solicited feedback on interview methods, recording process, question length. Based upon the feedback, appropriate changes were made to the instrument before administration of the actual study interviews.

Inter-Coder Reliability

Data triangulation is the use of a variety of data sources in a study (Patton, 2015). Triangulation makes the study stronger and more reliable because multiple methods are used to observe (Patton, 2015). Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative studies, there is the potential for bias (Patton, 2015). Because this bias can affect reliability, inter-coder reliability is necessary. Inter-coder reliability is where other researchers code data and create themes and these are compared to the researchers' data (Schwandt, 2015).

<div align="center">

Validity

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Validity ensures that the study "measures or tests what is actually intended" (Shenton, 2004, p. 64). Validity also assures that the findings from the instruments are true and aligned directly to the research questions (Patton, 2015). Various strategies were employed to ensure that data collected were valid.

Interview Question Development Matrix

As a validity measure, the researcher used an Interview Question Development Matrix (IQDM) designed to directly align the interview questions with the research questions and variables of the study. The IQDM can be found in Appendix E. The use of

the IQDM assures validity in that the data gathered directly addresses the research questions and variables of the study.

Data Collection

The researcher created interview questions (see Appendix F) and these were used as the main instrument for data collection in this study. The interview questions were created by aligning them to the research questions in this study. In a phenomenological study, the researcher concentrates on getting in-depth answers from lived experiences of the participants and how this impacts the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In this study, the participants were African American parents from several schools from four school districts in Riverside County and the phenomenon is understanding what they needed to overcome barriers to school engagement. The interviews were focused on gaining understanding about what African American parents need to increase their involvement and connectedness to the school. Prior to conducting the research, the researcher completed the CITI Program's NIH Clearance and obtained permission from the University of Massachusetts Global University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix G; Appendix H)

The participants consisted of 12 African American parents from Riverside County Elementary schools. Each parent was chosen by following the seven step process previously mentioned in the sampling section of this chapter.

Data Analysis

In this study, the interviews were conducted over Zoom due to the school closure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. After transcription, the researcher coded the data based on

the emerging themes. The research questions were based on several themes that emerged from the literature to include social factors, economical factors, environmental factors, political factors and technological factors that are barriers to African American parent school engagement. The data were organized in a frequency tables to identify frequency and themes.

Furthermore, confidentiality was maintained throughout the entire data collection process. The data were also saved by the researcher for the required length of time as set forth by the University of Massachusetts Global University Institutional Review Board.

Limitations

Limitations of this study included the small sample size, which was limited to African American parents in several schools in four school districts in Riverside County. This could cause issues when attempting to generalize the data to a larger population. In addition, despite all attempts to reduce bias, the researcher is also an African American parent and this fact could influence the data. Furthermore, this was a voluntary participant study and it was limited to self-reported experiences of African American parents.

Summary

This chapter described the research design and other processes for this study. The purpose, research questions, population, and sample were reviewed. In addition, the data collection, data analysis, and limitations were examined. Chapter IV will show the results of the study and Chapter V will describe the conclusions of this study. Next steps and implications for future research will also be presented.

Chapter IV: Research, Data Collection, and Findings

This chapter begins with an overview of the chapter, a review of the purpose of the study, the research question and sub-research questions, the research methodology, the procedure for data collection and analysis, and population and sample. The data from each participant are presented according to themes in responses to the research sub-questions. In addition, the data are presented as underlying themes developed from all participants in relation to their responses to research questions. The chapter concludes with the summary of findings in the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's' local school and in their children's education.

Research Question

How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present in general for them to be engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues, economic issues, environmental issues, political issues, trust issues, and technological access?

Research Sub-Questions

1. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

2. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

3. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

4. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

5. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

6. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This qualitative study used semi-structured open-ended interview questions to determine the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become

engaged in their children's local school with respect social, economic, environmental, political, technological, and trust issues. The interviews consisted of six questions to answer each of the six sub-questions. Each participant was provided copies of the Research Participant's Bill of Rights along with details of the study (see Appendix I). In addition, each participant provided written consent to participate in study and to have their interviews recorded on Zoom. After obtaining approval, each participant interview was conducted using Zoom and it was recorded. The interviews were then transcribed by Fireflies, Inc and Zoom. These transcriptions were verified by each participant to ensure accuracy of the interviews. Afterwards, the verified transcripts were uploaded to NVivo, which is a coding software program used for qualitative data analysis. After the interview transcripts were independently coded by the researcher to identify patterns and themes among participant responses, an expert coder was given a transcribed interview to analyze and code. The researcher also analyzed and coded the same interview to measure the percent of agreement between the raters. Because the researcher and expert obtained a high percentage of interrater agreement, potential bias was eliminated.

Population

The population of this study was African American parents in California who have elementary age children. At the time of this study, there were 5,888 African American elementary school students in California (EdData, 2020). Assuming one parent/guardian per child (accounting for multiple children per family) yields an estimate of 5888 parents of African American children in California. The target population from which the participants were chosen for this study consisted of African American parents

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from Moreno Valley Unified School District, Hemet Unified School District, Perris Elementary School District and Riverside Unified School Districts.

Sample

Using a combination of purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling techniques, the researcher identified and selected 12 participants (three from each of the four selected districts) for this study. The process used the following steps:

1. The researcher contacted the superintendent of each of the selected school districts asking for permission to conduct the study in their district.

2. Following superintendent approval, the researcher sent each elementary principal in the selected districts an email explaining the study with a request for them to contact African American parents that met the criteria for the study to ask if they were willing to participate.

3. Each parent that indicated a willingness to participate was contacted by the researcher and sent information regarding the study and materials for Informed Consent to participate.

4. If less than three parents were found in any district, the willing parents were asked to refer other possible parent participants.

5. Each of the referred parents was contacted by the researcher and sent information regarding the study and materials for Informed Consent to participate.

6. When three or more participants were identified from each district, the researcher selected three from each district for a total of twelve participants.

7. Informed Consent materials were confirmed with each participant and

interviews were scheduled and administered.

Table 2 shows the characteristics of the participants.

Table 2

Characteristics of Participants

Participant	Sex	School District
Participant 1	Female	Moreno Valley Unified School District
Participant 2	Male	Moreno Valley Unified School District
Participant 3	Female	Moreno Valley Unified School District
Participant 4	Female	Riverside Unified School District
Participant 5	Female	Riverside Unified School District
Participant 6	Female	Hemet Unified School District
Participant 7	Female	Riverside Unified School District
Participant 8	Female	Hemet Unified School District
Participant 9	Female	Hemet Unified School District
Participant 10	Female	Perris Elementary School District
Participant 11	Female	Perris Elementary School District
Participant 12	Female	Perris Elementary School District

<center>**Presentation and Analysis of Data**</center>

Data Analysis by Participant

Participant 1

Participant 1 was a female African American parent from Moreno Valley Unified School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 1 responded by stating schools need to create a sense of belonging. This participant indicated that schools and districts need to be more inclusive with their policies and practices and bring the cultures together. She indicated that "we are a melting pot" and there needs to needs to be events on campus allowing everyone to come together. Participant 1 further stated staff need to reach out more to African American parents and provide important information. She felt that school engagement would increase if parents were better informed of what was going on at the school like other parents.

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 1 stated schools need to know their audience better. It is important to know what resources African American students need and spend part of the school

<center>69</center>

budget on them. From her perspective, it seems like money is spent on other student groups and their needs more often than money is spent on African American students. In addition, Participant 1 reported that more focus should be put on not wasting district funds on things that don't matter. There should be others questioning what the school budgets are spent on to ensure these budgets are being spent wisely. This is another opportunity to reach out to African American parents. What do African American parents feel their students need? School officials should be asking this question to African American parents.

School staff also need to be mindful of the educational levels of the African American parents and breakdown information about budgets in terms that they can understand. Allow them opportunities to ask questions and have things explained to them. Not all parents understand school budgets and how things work. They may like to get involved but feel intimidated by specific terms that are unfamiliar to them and they choose to keep silent because they do not want to seem like they do not understand. Also, schools should reach out to businesses and ask them to partner with schools to provide needed resources or services to help students and African American students specifically. Furthermore, Participant 1 stated schools should evaluate overtime, how budgets are spent, and the effectiveness of the expenditures. Did the school reach the desired outcome for students with that expenditure? If the answer is "No" or "I don't know", changes to the spending process need to occur. Products should also be researched prior to purchase in order to determine predicted effectiveness with students. Finally, Participant 1 stated there should be an oversight committee to ensure that funds are not being mis-appropriated so are spent on students and their school needs.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 1 stated the school staff need to develop "a listening ear." They need to create a platform for African American parents to speak up and express their environmental needs or concerns. For example, Participant 1 would like a suggestion box so that African American parents could give the administration suggestions without feeling intimidated or judged. These suggestions would be anonymous unless the parent wanted to leave their name. African American parents could let administration know they would like to have an option to have meetings on the weekends because African American parents work all week and they are tired in the evening and may not attend night meetings. Also, when an African American parent does not attend a meeting it does not mean they don't care, but they could be tired.

In addition, African American parents would like more access to principals. Sometimes, African American parents need help but it is too hard to get in contact with the principal. Schools often advertise having an open- door policy but it is still too difficult to get access to the school staff. For example, when there is a problem with a student being late all the time, the parent receives an automated phone call but someone needs to investigate why the student is late. There have been times that students are marked late but they are late because the bus was late or something like that. Furthermore, staff need to be trained to help African American parents and students more. Often times, students are not complying to something they are told because they

do not understand what they are being asked to do. How-to videos on various topics could be created to help staff work with African American students and parents.

Research Sub-Question 4*:* The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 1 indicated the apathy that African American parents face when it comes to voting or getting involved in political matters is generational. She reported that there is a need for the "oldheads" like grandparents to explain the power in voting. Participant 1 explained school s could help with this problem by providing workshops or seminars explaining the issues on ballots on the school, district and community level. The school personnel could highlight what was at stake and why it was important to vote. They could emphasize how African American students could be impacted by the vote either way. Historically, Participant 1 suggests African American parents do not believe their vote counts or matters so they do not take the time to vote.

Participant 1 also stated that issues they will be voting on could also be explained during board meetings. Districts could also allow other African American parents to act as helpers so parents would not feel intimidated or scared to ask questions. Furthermore, schools could also bring community members into the schools and let them explain how certain items on the ballot will affect school budgets and affect their students' education. African American parents do not understand how important their vote is to students and schools. The schools could take this opportunity to bring African American parents and communities together and this may help with getting them out to vote.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 1 reported schools need to frontload African American parents when it comes to technology programs and software. They do not have the background and skill to use the devices and programs. African American parents also need to get help faster. Workshops and how-to videos need to be available for African American parents in order for them to grasp what they students are doing on these devices. For example, Participant 1 suggests having an informational night for African American parents to ask questions about technology and give them devices to practice on. This would give them an opportunity to try things out while they are learning and this would increase their abilities to be able to have more success when they get home with their students. According to Participant 1, African American parents are aware that technology is the future and they want to keep up and be able to help their students be successful at school.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 1 stated that it is easier to build relationships versus repairing broken ones. She explained that it is important to have a strong foundation with African American parents. The best way to establish trust is for schools to maintain open lines of communication. African American parents want to know school staff want to hear what

they have to say. Participant 1 reported school staff should be nice and they should try to understand where African American parents are coming from. They should try to understand the African American point of view. They have to learn to give people a chance and assume good intentions of African American parents. The school staff should try to make connections and African American parents will be more engaged with the school if this happens. Overall, the most repeated theme for Participant 1 was a desire for schools to share important information with African American parents more (see Figure 1). For example, the same effort should be made to inform them about when it is time to vote like when they are informed about Dr. Seuss day at school.

Figure 1

Participant 1: Themes in Response to Research Question

Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Table 3 gives the theme codes in relation to the research question and sub-question.

Table 3

Theme Codes in Response to Research Question

Themes in Responses	Codes
Provide more workshops/seminars for AA parents	A
Ensure teachers are properly trained	B
Hire more AA staff	C
Go where AA parents are	D
Welcome AA parents	E
Listen to AA parents	F
Apply discipline equitably	G
Bring cultures together	H
Provide better access to school personnel	I
Increase positive interactions	J
Interact with AA parents with respect	K
Know the ability levels of AA parents	L
Provide more access for AA parents to attend conferences and be on committees	M
Share important information with AA parents	N
Stop over identifying AA students in special education	O
Use other AA parents to reach AA parents	P
Use resources based on student need	Q
Teach black history in the curriculum	R
Hire staff that care about all students	S

Participant 2

Participant 2 was the only father that was interviewed in this research. He is a single father from Moreno Valley Unified School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 2 stated schools need to have empathy for what African American families go through. School systems are disconnected with African American culture and this leads to a lack of understanding. For example, Participant 2 indicated this lack of understanding is evident in the way black men are profiled in society and school systems. Black men are faced with negative stereotypes about them that are perceived as fact. Participant 2 explained there are many men that "take care of their business" and that he is not an anomaly because he cares for and supports his children. He stated that school staff should stop talking to him in a condescending manner and give him the same respect that other men are given when they are in a school setting regardless of how he is dressed or if he has dreads in his hair. Participant 2 explained that he has been given "a teaspoon of hate every day that now it is a part of my diet." As a result of his negative experiences in schools, he does not feel comfortable and the school staff can do better. He further indicated that he shouldn't have to demand respect it should be given. Participant 2 stated, "I am not a person in the zoo" so staff should not be staring at him like he does not belong there. Finally, he reported that the school needs to have more staff that look like him and this representation would add to the cultural understanding on campus.
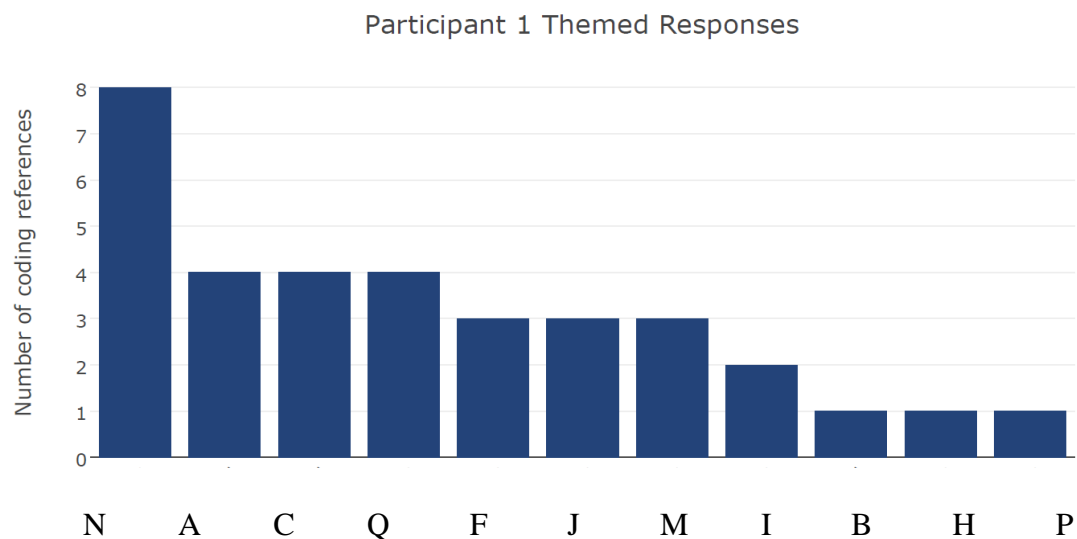
Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 2 indicated that schools need to do a better job of increasing access to information. African American parents do not know what is going on when it comes to school budgets. As a result, they are not able to get involved in decision making. According to Participant 2, schools could improve in this area according by increasing their outreach efforts. What is the school doing to reach out to African American parents? He suggested that an effective to reach African American parents is to go to them. Provide activities and meetings in spaces that they already visit frequently. For example, having events in the park or other popular places in the community. This would provide a neutral less intimidating place to interact and build relationships. This would also allow school staff to capitalize on times and spaces that African Americans already visit and African American parents could stay informed about school things.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 2 reported "it takes a village" to raise productive African American students. Schools need to do a better job of creating this village to ensure that African American parents are involved in their students' educational experiences. For example, schools could develop "a village card" instead of just an emergency card. On the village

card, African American parents could provide 10 people who are approved to conduct school business on their behalf. These 10 people would work as a team with the parent and ensure that someone on the village card would be present at all meetings and actively participate in other school business as needed. He stated that someone on the village card has time. Schools need to stop assuming that when an African American parent is not present that they do not care. They are working and taking care of their business and they care about their children. Participant 2 indicated schools have to make it easier for African American parents to partner with them by considering multiple ways for them to create this partnership.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 2 explained African American parents need a liaison to reach out to them regarding political issues. For example, African American parents may not understand everything that is being voted on. African American parents need someone they can trust to help them navigate what it on the ballot and what is at stake. In addition, Participant 2 stated it would help if the liaison looked like them because this would help the parents to feel more comfortable. He stated when a representative "comes from the people", trust is built and this will increase school engagement.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be

present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 2 admitted that technology is a problem for many African American parents. However, he indicated that schools are not leveraging the most precious technology teachers they have, the students. African American students could teach the African American parents how to use technology and various programs. The technology lessons could be in-person and also videotaped so African American parents could re-visit them whenever they need to. If the schools allowed this process to take place, they would be building partnership with African American parents and building African American student leaders simultaneously. According to Participant 2, technology is the language of students and they would enjoy doing the teaching. He sees this lack of innovation as a missed opportunity by schools and he would love to see this change.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 2 suggested trust is built over time. Schools need to make more efforts to have positive interactions. For example, he stated schools need to make more positive calls to African American parents. The positive communication ratio has to increase in order for African American parents to trust school staff. According to Participant 2, many African American parents have been mistreated in society and at our schools and there has been a great deal of damage done. As a result, schools need to do a better job of welcoming African American parents and this will build a positive

environment over time. Overall, Participant 2, felt schools need to treat African

American parents with more respect and they need to provide workshops and seminars

for African American parents to receive vital information. Figure 2 shows the themed

responses from Participant 2.

Figure 2

Participant 2: Themes in Response to Research Question

Participant 2 Themed Responses

Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 3

Participant is a married female parent and teacher from Moreno Valley Unified

School district.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African

American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be

present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's

local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 3 reported the district has made some strides in the right direction toward building relationships with African American parents by creating different African American committees on sites and at the district but they need to go further at building relationships. It is not just about attending meetings, it is critical that school staff make more of an effort to get to know the African American students. According to Participant 3, staff need to look at and treat African American students like what they will become. In the past, teachers have assumed that African American students do not care about school based on their behaviors, but this is not the case. Participant 3 stated that school staff need to assume good intentions and teach the behavior they expect in the setting. For example, when African American students are not engaged or "playing around on the floor in class," this does not mean they are special education students. Perhaps there are other reasons for this behavior and staff need to take more steps to figure out why African American students behave the way they do. African American students need to be shown the same patience and respect that other students are shown.

Furthermore, according to Participant 3, teachers need to stop assuming that African American students cannot learn and this will increase African American parents wanting to enter into relationship with them. African American students may just need the teacher's undivided attention and help. In addition, African American students and parents need to see teachers that look like them. "They need to see themselves" (Participant 3). This commonality in culture will make them feel more comfortable and when African American parents receive phone calls from teachers, African American parents may be more inclined to listen to them and not be defensive.
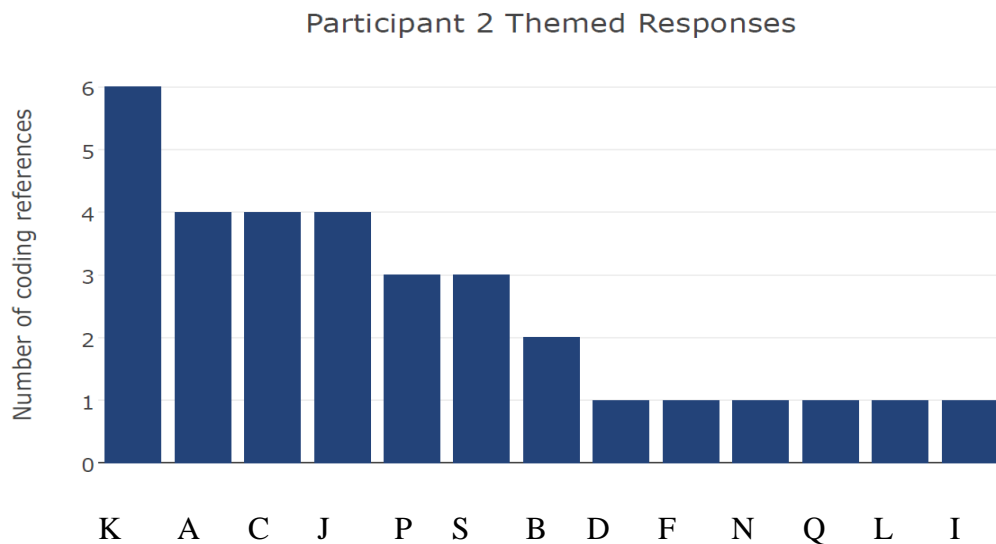
Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 3 explained there are many economic barriers that block African American parents from partnering with the school. First, she indicated that programs offered are not equitable. For example, English language learners are given access more resources and support at schools. Extra time is set aside from them daily to access the core curriculum but this same set aside time is not given specifically to African American students. African American students speak English but they still need extra supports to access the curriculum. Schools need to provide equal access to the curriculum, because this lack of access prevents African American parents from wanting to be more engaged with the school.

In addition, Participant 3 reported when there are meetings on campus for some parent groups; they are welcomed by having food and child care provided. Unfortunately, she stated when African American parents meet on campus they are not provided the same welcoming environment. There is no food, child care and sometimes not even a set space to meet in. This behavior makes African American parents feel unwelcomed and this discourages them from coming to the school to meet according to Participant 3. Moreover, she also stated that African American parents should be surveyed to determine the best times for them to meet, and these surveys could be sent home with the student to make sure the parents receive them. Also, Participant 3 suggested that if only two parents show up for a meeting, the school did not do a good

job of promoting or advertising the meeting because two African American parents "are not representative of the black voice." Furthermore, the poor turn out does not mean African American parents do not care, but that the school needs to do a better job to make them feel welcome to attend by having the meetings when they can attend, providing, food, child care and a welcoming environment to meet in. Finally, Participant 3 explained trainings and workshops could take place at meetings, in order to maximize the time together and make the meeting more meaningful.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 3 explained that access to school functions need to be sincere. "Does the school really want us there, or do they just want a body present?" (Participant 3) She continued by stating administrative staff do not give the same consideration to African American parents like they do other parent groups. For example, Participant 3 stated school administrators do not always participate in AAPAC (African American Parent Advisory Committee) meetings like they do for ELAC (English Learner Acquisition Committee). "They pop in and out. This makes the parent feel like this meeting is not important." (Participant 3) Schools can do a better job of making AAPAC meetings a priority, as well and this will go a long way toward building relationships with African American parents. Participant 3 suggested that the focus on making AAPAC a focus needs to come "from the top" in the district office and then school site administration would make this a priority. She also stated schools should reach out to parents personally

or by text when they are trying to build a relationship with them. For example, Participant 3 explained voicemails will not get the parents attention because it is not personal.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 3 acknowledged political issues are a delicate area for African American parents and the school "needs to take baby steps" toward tackling political issues. She suggested the school could start by making sure African American parents understand "their voice matters." Schools can frontload African American parents on the issues before there is a vote and adjust meetings times to include some evening options in order for more African American parents to be able to attend. In addition, Participant 3 reported schools need to listen to African American parents when they make suggestions and try to implement some. This will let African American parents know that their suggestions are valid and worth trying, according to Participant 3. Finally, "have more love for my student and then I will know that you care about me" (Participant 3).

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 3 reported the schools have relaxed on asking African American parent to pay for damage to the Chromebooks the students brought home. She indicated

this was a good idea and suggested that the district get insurance on technology devices when they buy them and parents will never have to worry about repair cost the devices given to the students by the school. African American parents were not able to pay for repair costs in the past and students were not given another device until the repair cost were made. Participant 3 stated, "this reality caused some African American students to fall behind and it denied them access to the curriculum."

One of the things Participant 3 would like to see at the schools is more training workshops on how to use various programs and software for African American parents. They need technology help because they do not understand everything the students are doing and are not able to help the students when they have a problem at home. Participant 3 admits that COVID-19 did help the district realize at some level that African American parents need help with technology.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 3 stated in order for schools to build trust with African American parents, the "schools need to learn their audience." She further stated, "loud doesn't mean hood or ghetto," and African American parents need to stop being treated as though they are a problem. Schools need to do a better job of learning African American culture and be available to them when they have a need or concern regarding their students. School staff need to listen better in order to build trust and follow-up. For example, Participant 3 expressed "when school staff tell parents that they are going to do

something, they should do it or get back to them and explain why that something did not happen." When staff show their commitments to their promises, this builds trust with African American parents, according to Participant 3.

In addition, Participant 3 explained that school staff need to show they are trying to work with African American students because these students are so misunderstood by school officials. African American students do care about their futures, despite the behavior they may show at times, according to Participant 3. Moreover, Participant 3 states schools need to provide teachers with unconscious bias training, because so many of them have no idea how to build relationships with African American parents or students. She continued by stating teachers need to learn how to have crucial conversations and be open and honest with African American parents in a respectful manner to build community. Finally, Participant 3 reported equity is the best way for schools to build trust with African American parents and students. Overall, Participant 3 would like schools to apply discipline in an equitable manner, provide African American parents access to the training they need, and hire staff that care and listen to African American parents. See Figure 3 for the themed responses from Participant 3.

Figure 3

Participant 3: Themes in Response to Research Question
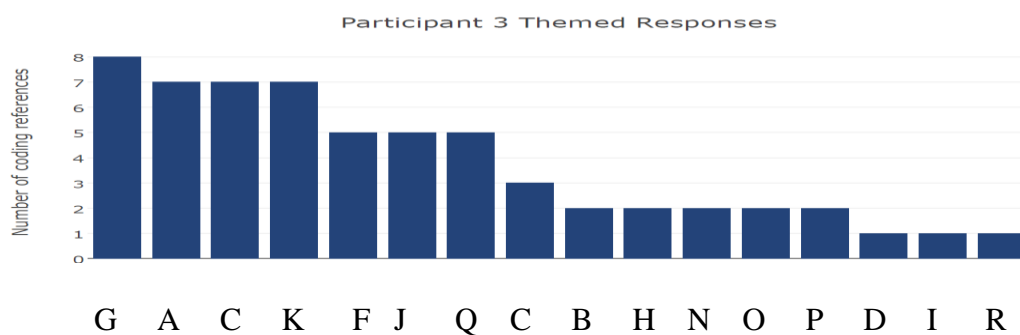
Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 4

Participant is a married female from Riverside Unified School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 4 indicated that schools need to be more welcoming to address social barriers for African American parents. She stated schools need to have meetings especially for African American parents like AAPAC. Also, surveys should be used to gather information from African American parents in order for their voices to be included in school business. Often times African American parents would get involved, according to Participant 4, but they do not know what is going on at the schools. Moreover, schools could do a better job of recognizing black history and understanding African American backgrounds. For example, schools could learn about why Juneteenth is important to African American families and teach the significance of it in school. Participant 4 feels there needs to be more opportunities for others at the school sites to learn about black history and culture.

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 4 indicated that not all parents are on the same economic level and they need to work on schedules opposite school schedules. As a result of economic

barriers, some African American parents miss out on school events. She would like the school to provide more evening events to give African American parents more access to these meetings. Participant 4 would also like the school to have more family nights where the entire school body could come together more. This would allow everyone more opportunities to get to know each other better and build community. She further suggested some events could occur on the weekend and parents could participate "when they are not tired coming from work" (Participant 4). Furthermore, Participant 4 believes schools need to have more diverse committees because this would provide a better representation of parents at the school and allow everyone's voice to be heard.   Finally, Participant 4 thinks schools need to do a better job of informing African American parents of what is happening at school on a regular basis.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 4 suggested, for African American parents, schools should promote what resources they have available more. For example, the school could advertise various resources in newsletters in order for African American parents to be able to refer to this information when they need to. Also, schools need to increase their personal communication with African American parents concerning resources. They "need to be more intentional about ensuring that African American parents are aware of what is going on at school" (Participant 4). African American parents can be contacted in multiple ways like by phone, e-mail or text and schools should be relentless about including them.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 4 suggested schools need to have direct, intentional contact with African American parents in order to address a lack of engagement as it relates to political issues. In addition, she reports schools need to do more to encourage African American parents to understand their vote matters and their voice matters. For example, the school could create special committees that describe what is being voted for and help African American parents understand why their vote is important to the school and their students. Participant 4 also suggested that parent leaders be included on committees because African American parents will trust other parents.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 4 would like to see schools provide workshops and technology training throughout the year for African American parents to help them learn technology. Sometimes, schools offer things once and expect all parents to understand when specific programs and software may be difficult for them to understand. Workshops and training could also be offered on the weekends, as well. African American parents could be surveyed to find out the best times or them to attend. According to Participant 4, when

African American parents understand technology better, they are better positioned to help their African American students use technology at home.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 4 reported that trust is a concern when it comes to schools. She suggested schools make more positive phone calls to African American parents because too many of their interactions with the school are negative. In addition, she stated that even if the school has to give negative news, the approach is critical when speaking with African American parents. She suggested that schools wrap negative news in positive observations or comments. For example, if the school phones an African American parent about some misbehavior of the student including some positive observation first will make it easier for the African American parent to engage in the conversation and not be defensive. Participant 4 explained "African American parents want to feel part of a team and not me versus you."

Another way to build trust, according to Participant 4, is to hire diverse staff. This will help African American students and parents feel comfortable on campus and this common background builds community. Moreover, black history should not be something that teachers decide to do as an option during black history month. Participant 4 expressed Black history should be taught as part of the curriculum because it is a part of the country's history. Widespread knowledge of black history will remove barriers and increase understanding among everyone on campus. Overall, Participant 4 would schools

to hire more African American staff, give African American parents better access to school personnel and share important information with African American parents in a timely manner. See Figure 4 for the themed responses from Participant 4.

Figure 4

Participant 4: Themes in Response to Research Question

Participant 4 Themed Responses

Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 5

Participant is a married female from Riverside Unified School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participate 5 responded schools need to be more welcoming to African American parents. She believes African American parents are not the school district's focus and this comes from the board. One of the ways she indicates the school district could address this problem is by having more African American representation on the school board. Participant 5 also indicated that school sites could begin to invite more African

American parents to be on school boards like PTA. Schools also need to do a better job of letting African American parents know what is being voted on at school, according to Participant 5. Moreover, schools need to do a better job of communicating with African American parents and letting them know what is going on at the school. They should not have to rely on their children to find out what is going on at school, and information should not be kept from them, specifically.

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 5 admitted that "schools cannot do everything." She believes African American parents and school staff must work together and discover what resources should be spent on which things. For example, Participant 5 believes after school programs should be available for all African American students who need it just like English language learners have special programs and resources just or them. African American students are falling behind because they need extra help from teachers and they are not able to get the help they need. School resources should be devoted to the students the students that need the most help. Participant 5 expressed that African American students are not getting their fair share and the schools can do a better job of making sure African American students are not left out when it comes to spending resources on them.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be

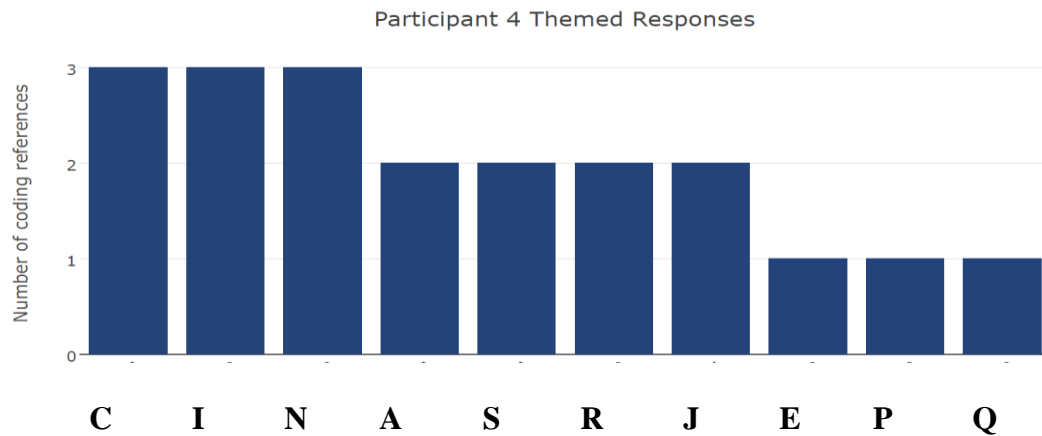present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 5 stated schools need to do a better job providing African American parents better access to school meetings by providing flexible meeting times and days. "African American parents are at work and when they miss meetings it is believed that they do not care about their students" (Participant 5). However, Participant 5 indicated this is false and the school can do something about their access by increasing their opportunities to participate in school business. She stated, "I can't make 3pm meetings because I am at work, but I still want to be included." Moreover, Participant 5 would like the school to include African American parents and share critical information with them, also. She stated that information is kept for certain parent groups and when African American parents are not present at meetings that they were not able to attend, the perception is the African American parent is not interested or does not care.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 5 suggested schools provide African American parents with technology devices if needed like hotspots, WiFi, and the Internet. She indicated that this would be an expense to the school but suggested the school could create community partners to provide these items to families at a low cost to the district. She also suggested that schools could be open during specific days and times where African American families could use the district WiFi or Internet. Finally, Participant suggested schools

provide training workshops for parents and students who need it and these things will reduce technology barriers for African American parents and students.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 5 stated African American parents need more information about what is being voted on at school and in the community. Schools could provide information for African American parents to review what the issues are on the ballot. For example, schools could create flyers that list what the voting options are and the consequences of each. This information would get more African American parents involved in voting and political issues. Participant 5 believes African American parents are not participating as much in political issues because they do not feel comfortable because "they are not sure what is at stake." Schools could provide "a voting interpreter" for each school site to help African American parents understand what they are voting for or against, and why their vote counts. The voting interpreter could also explain voting language in simple terms and this would eliminate confusion for African American parents.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 5 stated schools need to show African American parents more respect in order to repair relationships and build trust. She indicated "respect goes a long way."

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In addition, she explained the front office staff are so important in a school because they set the tone for how you feel about the school. For example, Participant 5 reported that she witnessed an interaction between an African American parent and an office staff person where the office staff person was very rude and dismissive for no reason. Participant 5 stated that she felt bad for the parent because the parent was being treated poorly and there was nothing the parent could do. She further explained that the same staff member was very nice to her and she believes it was because her student was in the DLI (Dual Language Immersion) program. Participant 5 does not believe an African American parent should be treated differently based on the academic program in which their student participates. Schools need to understand the way African American students and parents are treated affects how the students learn at school. If the African American parent has a poor relationship with the school, it negatively affects their students school success. Finally, Participant 5 stated that schools need to do a better job of allowing African American parents access to school personnel. She understands following the chain of command but it should not take weeks to get back to an African American parent about their concerns. Participant 5 would like African American parents to have access to school personnel to be able to make complaints, and the "open door policy" should be reinstated. Overall, Participant 5 would like schools to use resources based on the students who need it, school districts need to hire staff that care about all students, and schools need to provide more workshops and training for African American parents to be best positioned to help their students. See Figure 5 for the themed responses from Participant 5.

Figure 5

Participant 5: Themes in Response to Research Question

Participant 5 Themed Responses

| Q | S | A | B | C | E | K | F |

Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 6

Participant 6 is a married female from Hemet Unified School District

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African

American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be

present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's

local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 6 explained that she understood there are social barriers for African

American parents to school engagement but she is not sure of the solution. She further

stated that schools could be more respectful and listen to parents more but she is not sure

of this will fully address the social barriers.

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African

American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be

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present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 6 stated schools need to reach out to African American parents more and determine what they need. She indicated that schools need to provide more in-person contact because this kind of contact builds relationships with African American parents. Moreover, Participant 6 explained the schools should have other African American parents phone African American parents because this will make them feel comfortable.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 6 acknowledged schools could increase transportation availability by adding more bus stops. All African American students should have access to bus stops because then there would be no excuse for the student to be absent or tardy. In addition, Participant 6 suggested that more afterschool programs be added for African American students in order for them to receive the academic help they need.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?
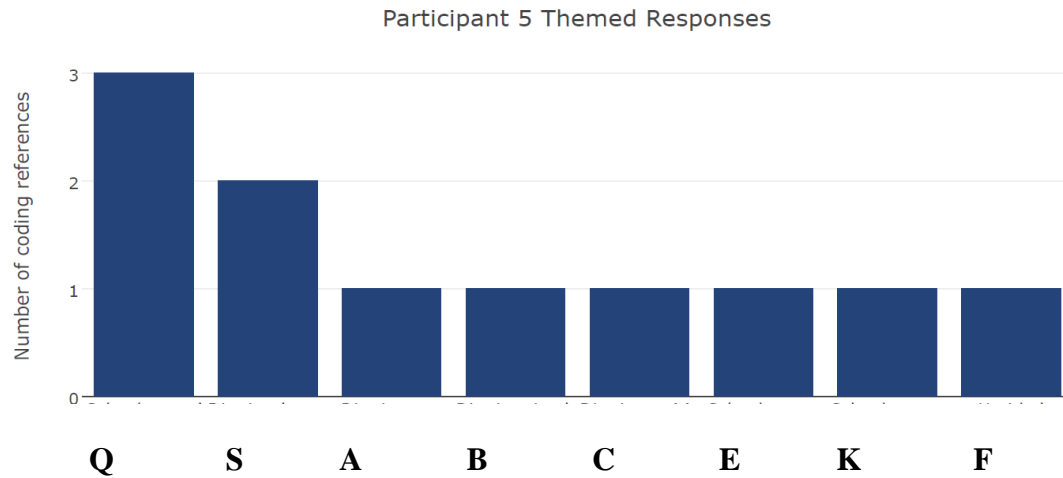
Participant 6 reported African American parents need more opportunities to vote. Schools need to do a better job of explaining the background of individuals who are on school ballots. Moreover, schools need to explain the consequences of voting one way or

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the other so that African American parents can understand what is at stake for African American students.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 6 indicated schools need to do a better job of working with community partners. For example, schools could work with cable companies to partner with them to provide cable services for African American parents. This would help African American parents stay connected to the school and be able to help their students with assignments. Furthermore, schools need to provide technology workshops for African American parents so they could increase their knowledge of computer software and programs, according to Participant 6.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 6 stated that trust takes time to build. However, schools need to begin by "giving credit for good behavior." She reported African American students are mostly highlighted when they misbehave. Participant 6 also believes school staff "pick on the students" and she believes schools need to leave them alone. Moreover, schools need to hire more staff that are African American because African American parents would feel more comfortable with them, according to Participant 6.

In addition, Participant 6 stated that school staff need to watch the students better at dismissal. She reported her student got lost after school because he got on the wrong bus and no one knew. The school needs to have a better system to keep track of students that get on the bus. Participant 6 explained, "trust cannot be built if you lose my child." Finally, Participant 6 stated schools can build trust by including black history as part of the curriculum. She stated, "learning black history should be mandatory for students." Overall, Participant 6 believes schools need to provide workshops and training for African American parents to understand technology better, share information with African American parents more, and use school resources on the students that need them the most. Figure 6 shows the themed responses from Participant 6.

Figure 6

Participant 6: Themes in Response to Research Question

Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 7

Participant 7 is a married female from Riverside Unified School District.

Research Sub-Question 1.The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for

African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 7 stated schools will continue to have social barriers because these barriers are influenced by "who sits on the board." She explains there is a lack of proper representation of African American people. As a result, this leads to a lack of help for African American parents and students, according to Participant 7. Moreover, schools need to "open up and be more welcoming" to African American parents and students (Participant 7). Participant 7 explained she has experience working with PTA at school and this organization needs to be more open to African American parents participating in PTA. In addition, school staff need to share important information with African American parents. They should not have to find out things by accident. Participant 7 stated, "everything is so hush hush and this needs to stop."

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 7 suggested there are economic barriers for African American parents but "schools can't do everything." She indicated schools and African American parents have to work together more and focus on the school issues. Participant 7 stated teachers need to make themselves more available to help African American students who need help. In addition, she feels school resources are segregated and African American students and "not getting their share." Participant 7 stated more resources are given to Spanish students and there are more programs for them, also. Schools need to do a better

job of sharing the school resources and spend more on programs specifically designed for African American students. Schools need to realize African American communities are struggling and they need help from the school, according to Participant 7.
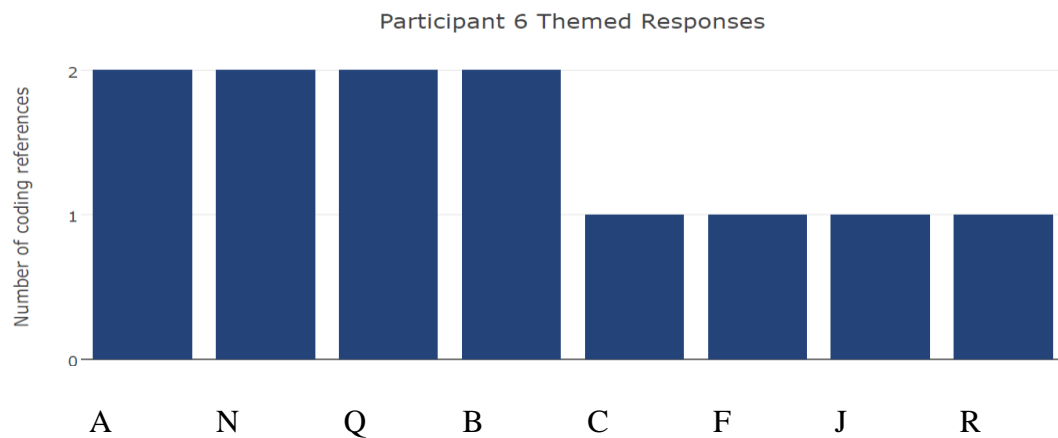
Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 7 stated schools need to provide flexible schedules in order for African American parents to attend meetings. African American parents may be at work and unable to attend meetings at the scheduled times. Perhaps the school could provide multiple days and times for school meetings and business, according to Participant 7. Moreover, Participant 7 explained schools needs to do a better job of sharing important information with African American parents like it is shared with other parents. She stated, "we are left out of critical information but it is shared with other parents."

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 7 stated African American parents need more information about what is going on at school when it comes to electing candidates. In addition, she explained schools need to do a better job of explaining what they are voting for because African American parents do not understand who or what they are voting for. Participant 7 stated African American parents can participate without "protesting or setting things on fire,

they just don't understand the power of their voice." According to Participant 7, African American parents are having the conversations about political issues with each other anyway, and schools could help them realize their political power by explaining to them how their voices matter.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 7 replied schools need to offer more technology devices to African American parents and teach them how to use them. She explained these devices and services are not cheap and African American parents do not have the resources to provide technology sometimes. Participant 7 stated some African American families are low income, and technology expenses are a burden. Schools could help African American parents by providing devices, service and training if they need it. This would allow them to be able to help their students better, according to Participant 7.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 7 stated schools need to be more respectful to African American parents, because this will help build relationships and trust. In addition, African American students need to be treated better by all staff. She stated the way students are treated impacts how they feel about their teacher and school. Furthermore, when the

student does not like the school neither does the African American parent. Schools need to provide the proper training for staff so that they treat all students the same, according to Participant 7. Moreover, schools to include African American parents and listen to them more in order to build trust. Overall, Participant 7 explained in order for schools to reduce barriers, schools need to share important information better, use resources better to support the students in the most need, listen to African American more, and work to bring cultures together. See Figure 7 for the themed responses from Participant 7.

Figure 7

Participant 7: Themes in Response to Research Question

Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 8

Participant 8 is a single grandmother that adopted her grandkids from Hemet Unified School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be

present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 8 acknowledged that some African American parents have experienced social issues from schools but she indicated she has not experienced any social barriers to engagement. She feels the school is doing a good job in this area. She further stated it is important for school staff to do their job because they love it and not because it is just their job.

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 8 stated schools need to do a better job of going to African American parents in order to discover their economic issues. African American parents may not reveal economic issues that prevent school engagement, but schools need to pursue them until they find out their needs.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 8 suggested schools "hold things on Saturdays, because weekdays are too hard for African American parents to attend." If events were on the weekend, schools could make them fun. There could be fun things for students to do while the African American parents were having their meetings and the parents would be more interested in

attending, according to Participant 8. For example, events could be held at a community park with food, because "we like to eat and snack and stuff like that." Also, she stated schools could use the census data to determine where in the community to have events. Moreover, Participant 8 stated African American parents need more time to speak and "schools could do a better job listening to what African American have to say."
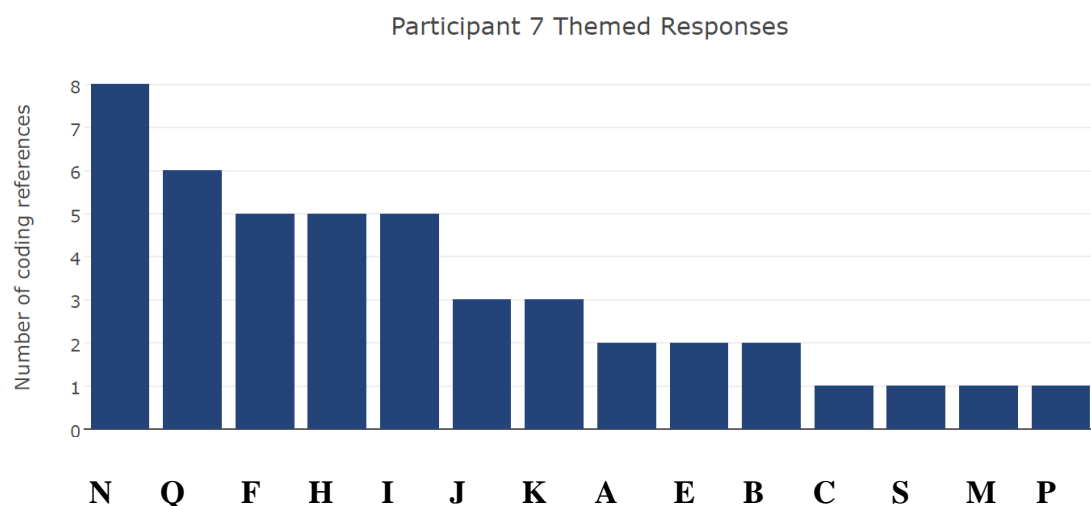
Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 8 admitted she has no interest in voting, because she feels it is a waste of time. She stated if more candidates looked like her, she might be more interested in the process. However, she suggested schools do a better job of getting African American parents involved in the process and persuade them to be candidates. If candidates were African American, Participant 8 stated they would be more relatable. In order to increase African American parent interest in getting involved in political issues, schools could advertise candidates and issues on flyers and billboards. Furthermore, Participant 8 stated "there is a lot of violence out there because we are not being heard." Consequently, schools need to listen to African American parents and students better, in order for them to have a positive outlet.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 8 reported state computer testing needs to be more culturally relevant. She believes the test limits how African American students answer the questions based on their cultural experiences. As a result, African American students have low scores, but it is because they did not understand what they were being asked. Furthermore, this false low score does not mean these African American students need an IEP, according to Participant 8. Also, African American parents need training on devices, because they do not understand what they are doing. They are not able to assist their African American students with their homework, because they have no idea what they are doing. Schools can help them understand technology better with technology training on programs and computer terminology.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 8 stated African American parents are afraid to open up to school staff because they are not sure what they will do with the information they share. She believes this mistrust goes back to slavery. Participant 8 also stated it should be up to the parent if their students return to school but African American parents are afraid if they do not comply with school rules and send their students to school, they will notify Child Protective Services (CPS) and she will not take the chance. She believes if she trusted the school, she might share her concerns more with the school. She admits trust takes time and schools have to be willing to put the time in to build trust with African American parents and students. Overall, Participant 8 stated that she is afraid of the

power imbalance between school staff and African American parents, she wants schools to provide technology training for African American parents, she wants schools to share important information and she wants schools to listen to African American parents more and validate their concerns. See Figure 8 for the themed responses from Participant 8.

Figure 8

Participant 8: Themes in Response to Research Question

Participant 8 Themed Responses

Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 9

Participant 9 was a single mother from Hemet Unified School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 9 stated schools need to be more active with the African American students in order to increase school engagement from African American parents. School staff need to be interested in what African American students are interested.

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 9 indicated schools need to address economic issues because many African American parents need resources. However, she does not know what factors need to be present to increase school engagement as it relates to economic issues.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 9 explained schools need to provide more activities for students and African American parents to get involved with the school. Schools need to work on building relationships with African American parents and students more.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 9 suggested that political issues are a problem in the black community. Unfortunately, she does not know how schools can help African American parents address political issues that affect African American school engagement. She further stated she wishes she knew what schools could do better.
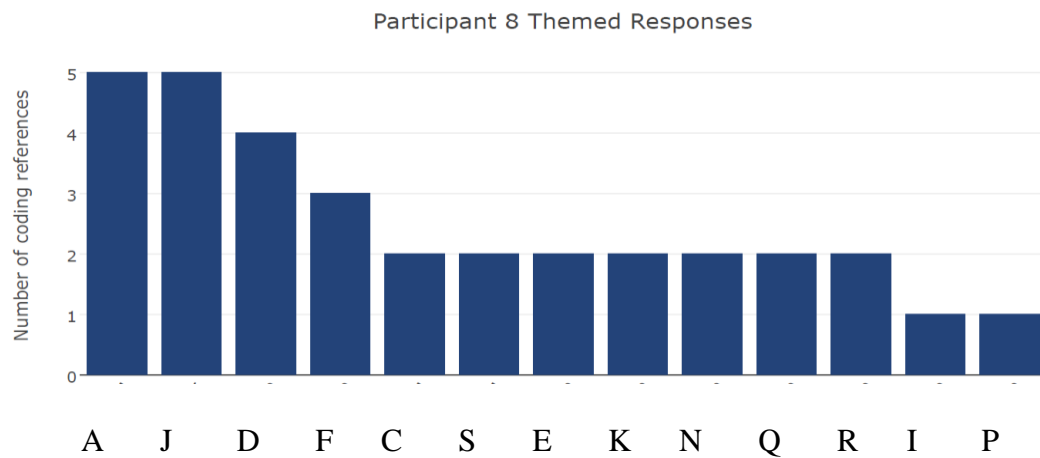
Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 9 replied schools need to make sure African American parents have access to technology devices like computers and WIFI. Also, African American parents need training on how to use computer programs and software. Schools need to make this training a priority for African American parents, according to Participant 9.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 9 suggested a lack of trust in school staff in African American parents is "deep rooted and not easily fixed." African American parents have been hurt by the staff and they are angry. School can start to build trust by spending more time getting to know the African American parents and their students. In addition, schools need to spend more resources on activities for African American students. Moreover, schools need to hire staff that are African American, because "students need someone to look up to someone on campus." Overall, Participant 9 believes schools need to spend resources based on student need, provide technology training for African American parents, increase positive interactions with African American parents, and school staff need to spend more time with African American students. See Figure 9 for the themed responses from Participant 9.

Figure 9

Participant 9: Themes in Response to Research Question

Participant 9 Themed Responses

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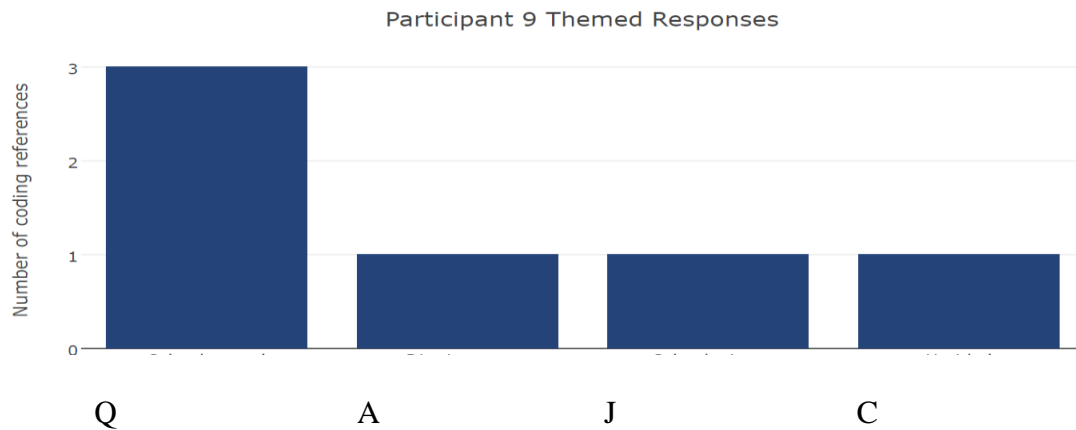
Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 10

Participant 10 is a single female from Perris Elementary School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 10 reported schools could be more welcoming. She indicated that she gets e-mails in Spanish sometimes which clearly means the e-mail was not meant for her. She stated staff should make sure they know who they are sending e-mails to. Moreover, she stated automated calls are not personal and these calls make her want to hang up. Schools need to do a better job of making personal phone calls because this will make parents feel a connection to the school and build their school engagement. She stated, "I only get calls when they want my son to go to counseling." Furthermore, Participant 10 stated the only time school staff are sure to make personal phone calls is when they have

something negative to report. As a result, Participant 10 thinks "schools need to make more good calls to African American parents." She stated, "I would like schools to make a connection with me one-on-one."

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 10 stated schools need to provide African American parents more critical information. Unfortunately, schools are not sharing with African American parents how the school money is spent and this is a problem. African American parents want to be included in decisions that affect their students when it comes to school resources. Participant 10 stated, " I never get calls about the school budget."

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 10 explained schools need to do a better job of including African American parents in school business if they want to increase school engagement. For example, school meetings need to be held at multiple times a few days per week at different times. Schools need to give African American parents a chance to participate if they really want them to attend meetings. She did report schools do a good job of providing information of the meeting day and time but African American parents need more options in order to be present.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 10 suggested in order for school to address political issues and increase African American parent school engagement in this area, they need to inform African American parents about specific candidates. Schools could give backgrounds about candidates on information sheets or send informational emails. This information would help African American parents stay informed and build interest in the political process, according to Participant 10. Participant 10 stated schools could follow the same process for local candidates in the community. Without this background information, African American parents are apathetic and "choose not to get involved in the politics."

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 10 reported technology issues could be addressed if schools provided training for African American parents because they do not know how to use all the programs. This training could be on-going and provided when the African American parents need it. Moreover, Participant 10 stated schools could create an app that has technology how-to videos on it. This app would allow parents to review things they have learned in the workshops or technology training.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 10 explained schools need to increase positive communication in order to build trust with African American parents. In addition, she feels schools "give too fast on African American parents." If the schools reach out one time and they do not get a response, Participant 10 indicated schools give up. Schools need to keep trying to connect with African American families. Participant 10 stated schools need to knock on their doors, and keep trying. These efforts will pay off and African American parents will increase their school engagement, according to Participant 10. Overall, Participant 10 would like schools to share important information with African American parents, be more welcoming to African American parents, increase positive interactions, and provide technology training for African American parents. Figure 10 shows the themed responses from Participant 10.

Figure 10

Participant 10: Themes in Response to Research Question

Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 11

Participant 11 is a single female grandmother raising her grandchildren from Perris Elementary School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 11 explained schools need to do a better job of making personal connections with African American parents. School staff need to make themselves more available and they need to listen to African American parents in order to build relationships and this will increase their school engagement, according to Participant 11. In addition, schools need to prepare more meeting that are just for African American parents to ask questions and receive information from the school. Moreover, Participant 11 reported schools could also send out more information about school business to African American parents through mail, email, flyers and phone calls.

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 11 suggested schools need to advertise more what the school budgets are and what they can be spent on. African American parents are not aware of the possibilities on how money can be spent on African American students at school. For example, Participant 11 explained schools could provide monthly newsletters that

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updated African American parents on school budgets and potential purchases. She further stated, "there is a lack of communication from the school to African American parents and this blocks participation." Participant 11 would like African American parents to be more informed on a consistent basis.

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?
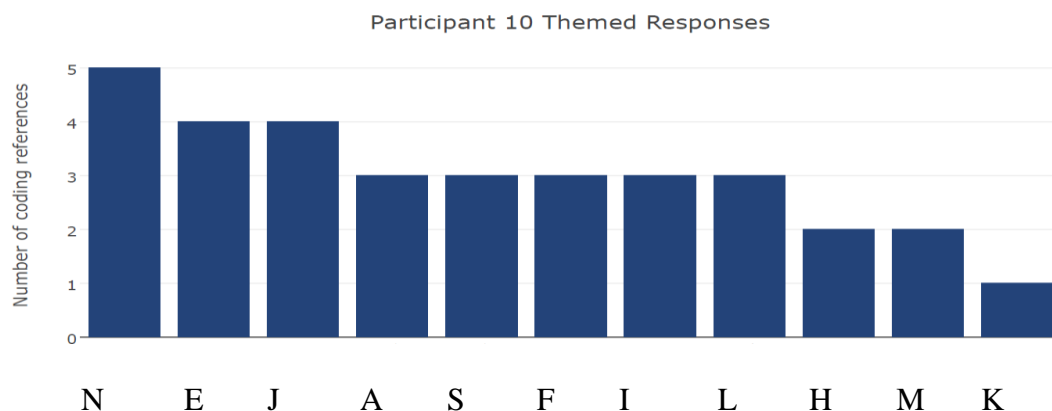
Participant 11 suggested African American parents are not always able to come to school meetings because they work. She stated sometimes they do not have transportation or they are just tired from the day. As a result of these challenges, schools provide multiple times and ways for African American parents to connect. For example, Participant 11 reported schools could have multiple meetings at different times on different days, in order to give African American parents more opportunities to engage with the school. She also stated the school could send out minutes to African American parents after meetings, because this would allow them to stay informed about school business. If the school staff were willing to do these things, African American parents would feel welcome and more connected to the school, according to Participant 11.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 11 stated schools need to do a better job of keeping them informed about what is on the ballot and when it is time to vote at school. African American parents are not aware of what is going on at school and it does not seem to matter to the school staff if they participate in the school voting process. Participant 11 stated, "It's almost like they don't want us to know what is going on so they can do what they want." She stated schools need to make sure all parents are involved in school voting and not just Hispanic parents. Participant 11 reported, "Hispanics are taken over and too much focus is on their students. What about us?" She indicated there needs to be equity in treatment of African American parents and students. Finally, Participant 11 would like to see more African American leaders because these leaders would be able to relate to African American parents better.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participant 11 explained African American parents need training and devices. They do not understand many computer programs and software. Technology training would help them to be able to help their students with their homework.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 11 stated schools "need to go back to the olden days when school was like a village." She further explained there needs to be more of a connection between the school and African American parents. Schools need to increase communication and reach out to families more. Participant 11 stated, "It should be like a party, a family. Connect the dots and makes us feel like one." Moreover, Participant 11 would like the schools to bring the cultures together, because everyone is segregated. However, she explained that African American students need special classes to like the ones for English Learner students. Figure 11 shows the themed responses from Participant 11.

Figure 11

Participant 11: Themes in Response to Research Question

Participant 11 Themed Responses
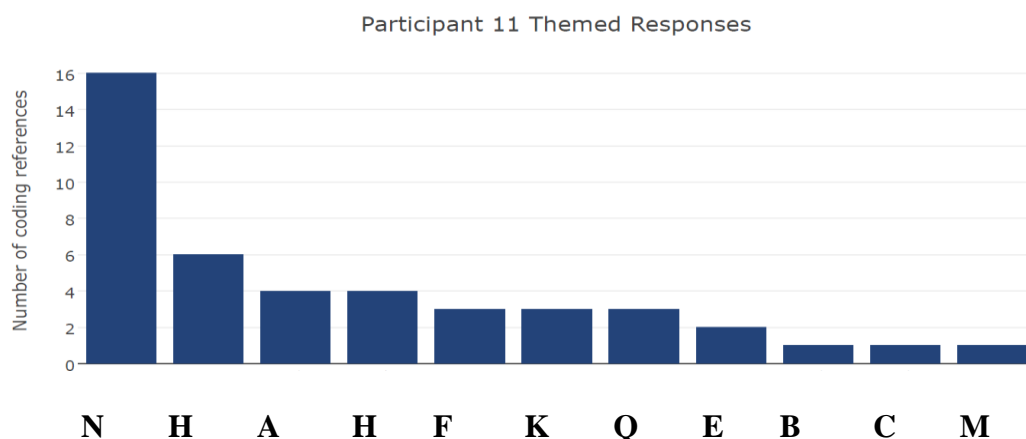
Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Participant 12

Participant 12 is a single female from Perris Elementary School District.

Research Sub-Question 1. The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Participant 12 reported schools need to listen to African American parents more. They have "important things to say but no one listening," according to Participant 12. In addition, there are not enough African American students. For example, her student's school only has eight black students out of 700 students. She reported students need to see other students and staff that look like them. Schools can help by hiring more African American staff. Moreover, school staff need to be more welcoming with African American parents. Many African American parents feel they do not matter on school campuses and choose to not engage on school campuses.

Research Sub-Question 2. The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Participant 12 suggested schools need to do more with the school budget to help the African American students and parents that are in need. For example, schools could have food pantry where African American could get food items without any judgement or cost. Participant 12 admitted that African American parents can be prideful and will not admit when they need help, but, rather they will go without instead. In the end, African American students are the ones who suffer so schools could fulfill a need for food and help African American parents maintain their dignity simultaneously. Moreover, Participant 12 expressed a desire to have more school information and an access to other school resources. She stated African American students are left out and this makes African American parents not want to engage with schools.

Furthermore, schools need to set aside more funds for workshops for African American parents on various topics. These workshops should be offered on an on-going basis and on different days and times, in order for schools to use site funds effectively. In addition, African American parents should be allowed to create committees on things that matter to them, because this would help increase school engagement. Finally, schools need to recruit younger representatives on the school board and African American parents should be considered to be on the board, as well. The current board members "are too old and not relatable to the African American young parents in the community" (Participant 12).

Research Sub-Question 3. The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Participant 12 stated schools need to provide child care for meetings after hours for African American parents, because this will help with school engagement. She reported, "It's hard to concentrate when you kids are running around." Participant 12 stressed schools should be able to afford to pay some staff extra pay like yard duties to watch students during meetings. In addition, Participant 12 explained schools need to have flexible hours for meetings. African American parents work during the day and they are not able to attend morning meetings. Moreover, school meetings need to be on multiple days in order to give African American parents options of when to attend meetings.

Research Sub-Question 4. The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Participant 12 indicated schools need to do a better job of letting African American parent know what is going on. She stated, "they have no idea who do vote for or what the issues are on the ballot." African American parents need to know what is at stake and schools could do a better job of telling African American parents they have political power and their voice matters. Unfortunately, African American parents display the lack of knowledge when it comes to local elections in the community, according to Participant 12. However, Participant 12 stated she was more interested in the political process at school because her student's school let the students nominate their parents. Participant 12 reported if schools get the students involved in the process, African American parents will get excited and choose to increase school participation like she did. In addition, schools need to advertise more like with flyers to inform African American parents who the candidates are and what they stand for. Finally, schools can use other African American parents to reach out to African American parents to increase school participation.

Research Sub-Question 5. The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Participate 12 suggested African American parents were forced to use technology during COVID. However, the technology issues were magnified as a result of COVID, according to Participant 12. African American parents need schools to provide technology training and devises, in order to increase their school engagement. For example, schools could sign out devises to African American parents to use. In addition, schools could also use surveys to find out what technology training African American parents needed and then schools could provide various trainings on different nights. Furthermore, teachers could provide parents with various apps like Class Dojo to increase communication. African American parent school engagement would increase with this help, according to Participant 12.

Research Sub-Question 6. The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Participant 12 reported that building trust with African American parents takes time. She stated, "sometimes it's like a vibe we get when we are around you. It's how they make us feel." Participant 12 expressed the "trust process" is cultural and it takes African American parents longer to trust because of past hurts and disappointments with the "system." Schools can build trust with African American parents by increasing engagement with the African American students. Participant 12 replied schools need to have more positive interactions with the African American students. For example, schools could have talent shows with the students or have fun ice breakers with African American parents to build relationships. In addition, schools could have concerts and

invite famous people like Chris Brown or someone the student like to build excitement and this will increase African American school participation. Fun events will let African American parents know school staff care and that they are not just worried about "calling CPS on us". When schools build positive relationships with African American parents and students, African American students have better self-esteem, according to Participant 12. Participant 12 also stated, "It's easier to build a child than to help a broken man."

Moreover, schools need to hire more African American staff to increase African American parent school participation, according to Participant 12. African American parents feel comfortable "around their own kind and they will talk freely" (Participant 12). Finally, Participant 12 suggested African American parents would have more trust and increase their school participation if the district was a unified school district. She indicated the school district gets away with doing improper things because it is not a unified school district, and this behavior discourages African American parents from participating fully at schools. Furthermore, schools need to be aware of how much extra curriculum activities cost African American parents, because they cannot afford all the costs to play. For example, "it cost $400 for football and $400 for cheerleading and that's too much" (Participant 12). Schools have many resources and they should spend them on extra curriculum costs when African American parents cannot afford it, according to Participant 12. She stated schools spend more money on other things away from student cost like sending teachers to conferences overnight but they are not paying these sports cost for African American parents. Participant 12 expressed there should be a separate fund set aside for extra curriculum and sports expenses for African American parent in the budget and this will build trust, because African American parents will

know schools care about their financial situations. Finally, African American parents

need schools to provide more after school opportunities for African American students

and this will build trust because African American parents will know schools care about

their academic and social needs, according to Participant 12. Overall, Participant 12

would like resources to be spent on the students based on need, schools to increase

positive interactions between African American parents and school staff, schools to listen

to African American parents and for schools to give African American parents access to

technology devices and training. Figure 12 shows the themed responses from Participant

12.

Figure 12

Participant 12: Themes in Response to Research Question
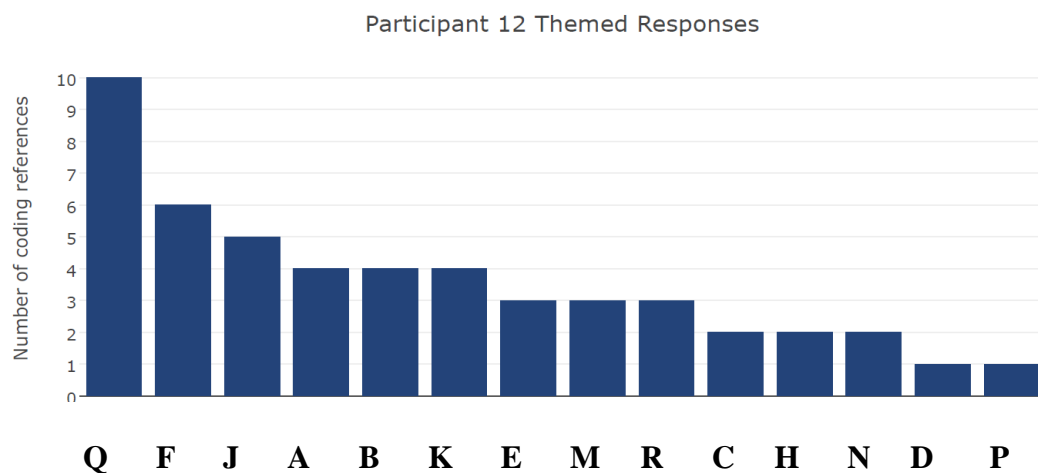
Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

Data Analysis by Common Themes in Research Sub-Questions

The following sections present an analysis of the most common themes based on

all participant data and responses to each research sub question.

Research Sub-Question 1

The first sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Once all data were collected and coded, the participant responses were analyzed for common themes and patterns (see Table 3)

Figure 13

Common Themes for Sub-Question 1
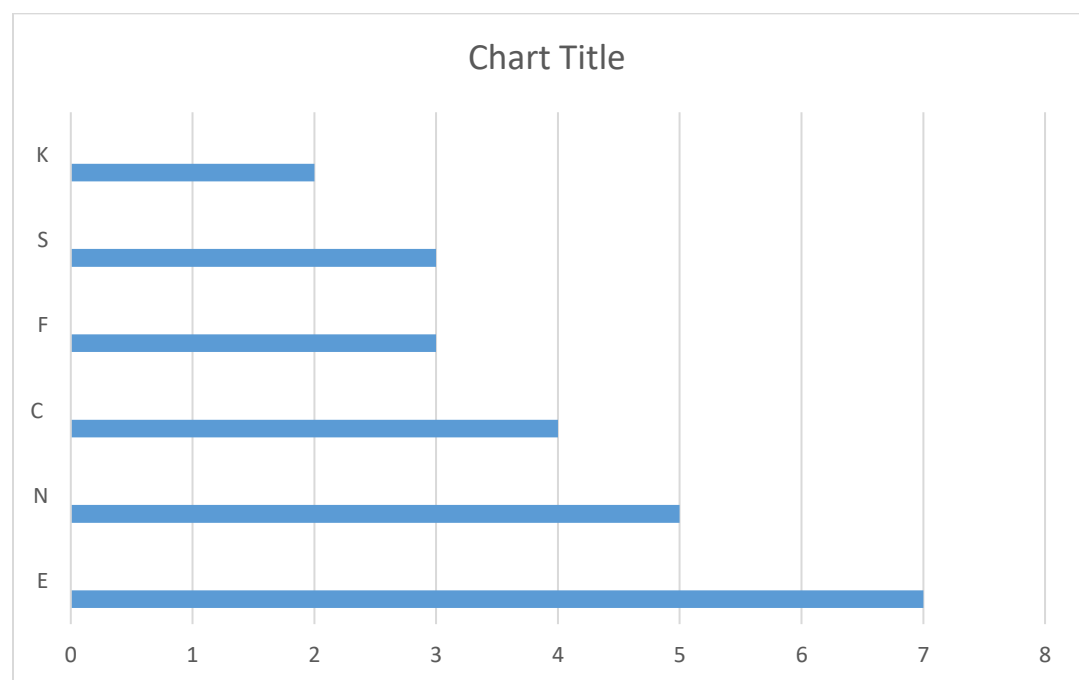
Note. Theme Codes (see Table 3).

There were six common themes for Sub-Question 1. The most popular theme was African American parents would like schools to be more welcoming and 58% or seven out of 12 mentioned this need during their interview. For example, Participant 2 stated, "I am not a person in the zoo" and he would staff to stop staring at him like he does not

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belong at the school. The second common theme for Sub-Question 1 with five out of 12 participants or 42% choosing this theme was African American parents would like schools to share important information with them better. The third most common theme for Sub-Question 1 was African American parents would like school districts to hire more African American parents. Four of the 12 participants or 33% indicated African American parents feel more comfortable when they see school staff and board members that look like them.

Moreover, three out of 12 participants had the common theme of wanting school staff to listen to African American parents. Participants reported they want to be included and they have something to say if they are asked by staff. Another common them that 25% of the African American mentioned was they believe schools need to do a better job of hiring staff that care about all students. These participants indicated African American students do not feel the teachers care about them. Finally, the last common theme, 17% of the African American parents would like to be treated with respect by school staff (see Figure 13).

Research Sub-Question 2

The second sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

Table 4

Common Themes for Sub-Question 2

Common Theme	Number of Participants
Share information with African American parents	7
Use resources based on student need	6
Listen to African American parents	5
Bring cultures together	3
Go where African American are	2
Provide more workshops/seminars for African American parents	2

There were six common themes for Sub-Question 2. The greatest common theme was reported by six of 12 participants or 50% and they would like schools to use school resources based on student need. For example, African American students "are not getting their fair share" (Participant 7). The second greatest common theme had 42% of participants desiring schools to listen to African American parents better. The third common theme was reported by three out of 12 of the participants and they would like schools to bring cultures together more. The last common themes each have two out of twelve participants reporting they would like schools to go where African American parents are to reach them and schools need to provide more workshops and seminars for African American parents (see Table 4).

Research Sub-Question 3

The third sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Table 5

Common Themes for Sub-Question 3

Common Theme	Number of Participants
Welcome African American parents	7
Listen to African American parents	6
Share important information with African American parents	5

There were three common themes for Sub-Question 3. There were 58% of participants or seven out of 12 who reported they would like school staff to welcome them more. For example, Participant 3 stated for some meetings administrators "pop in and out and this makes us feel like this meeting is not important to them." In addition, 50% of participants would like school staff to listen to them more. Finally, 42% of participants would like schools to share important information with African American parents better (see Table 5).

Research Sub-Question 4

The fourth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Table 6

Common Themes for Sub- Question 4

Common Theme	Number of Participants
Share information with African American parents	6
Provide more workshops/seminars for African American parents	3

Common Theme	Number of Participants
Hire more African American staff	3
Welcome African American parents	2
Use other African American parents to reach African American parents	2
Listen to African American parents	2

There were six common themes for Sub-Question 4. The theme with highest percentage had 50% of participants indicate they would like schools to share information with African American parents more. For example, Participant 6 would like to know backgrounds of individuals that are on school ballots so that she can cast an informed vote. The next common themes each have 25% of participants reporting these themes; African American parents would like the school to offer more workshops and training for African American parents and they would like schools to hire more African American staff. Participants reported they need help trying to navigate technology devices and programs. They also reported they would feel more comfortable interacting with school staff that look like them. Finally, the last common themes each have 17% of participants wanting to feel more welcomed by school staff, listened to by school staff and they would like schools to use other African American parents to interact with them (see Table 6).

Research Sub-Question 5

The fifth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Table 7

Common Themes for Sub-Question 5

Common Theme	Number of Participants
Provide more workshops/seminars for African American parents	11
Listen to African American parents	2
Welcome African American parents	2

There were three common themes for Sub-Question 5. This was the most common theme and 92% or eleven out of 12 participants would like schools to provide more workshops or seminars for African American parents. For example, Participant 8 suggested African American parents do not know what they are doing when using some software and they need the schools help. The other common themes each have 17% of participants wanting school staff to welcome them and listen to them more (see Table 7).

Research Sub-Question 6

The sixth sub-question was: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Table 8

Common Themes for Sub-Question 6

Common Theme	Number of Participants
Hire staff that care about students	7
Increase positive interactions	7
Use resources based on student need	5
Listen to African American parents	5

Common Theme	Number of Participants
Interact with African American parents with respect	4
Hire more African American staff	3
Welcome African American parents	3
Apply discipline equitably	2
Provide better access to school personnel	2
Bring cultures together	2

There are ten common themes for Sub-Question 6. Two common themes had 58% of participants desiring schools hire more staff that are African American and increase their positive interactions with African American parents. Two other common themes had 42% of participants expressing they would like schools to use school resources based on student need. They also would like school staff to listen to them more. There was also a common theme where 33% of participants would like staff to increase their positive interactions with African American parents. Moreover, there were two common themes where 25% of participants would like to see schools hire more African American parents and be more welcoming to African American parents. Finally, the last three common themes for sub-question 6 indicate 17% of participants would like schools to apply discipline equitably, provide more access to school personnel, and do more to bring cultures together (see Table 8).

Summary

This chapter presented a summary of responses from the 12 study participants. Each participant answered a set of open-ended, semi-structured interview questions designed to identify and understand the factors that needed to present for them to increase school participation with respect to social, economic, environmental, political,

technological and trust issues. The participants were African American parents from four

districts in Riverside County to include Riverside Unified, Moreno Valley Unified,

Hemet Unified and Perris Elementary School District. Once the participants agreed to

participate and signed all the consent forms, the researcher scheduled individual

interview appointments using Zoom. All participant interviews were recorded using

Fireflies, Inc and Zoom. Once all interviews were completed, all data was transcribed

and then analyzed using NVivo coding software. The researcher analyzed and coded

data. In addition, the researcher identified common themes and patterns among

participant responses. Intercoder reliability was used and another researcher coded

participant transcripts to reduce researcher bias. Each transcript was analyzed

individually in order to determine themes for each interview. Finally, once all interviews

were analyzed, the researcher combined all data to find common themes and patterns

from participant responses.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations for this study. It begins with a summary of the purpose statement, research questions, methods, population and sample. Next, the researcher reviews major findings of the study including unexpected findings, and conclusions that can be made from the data analysis. Finally, implications for research are revealed and recommendations for future research with concluding remarks and reflections.

Summary of the Study

This study identified and described the factors that need to be present for African American parents of school aged children to increase their school participation with regard to social, economic, environmental, political, technological, and trust issues. The researcher used the research question to determine what factors were most commonly requested to be present by African American parents.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's' local school and in their children's education.

Research Question

How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for them to be engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues, economic issues, environmental issues, political issues, trust issues and technological access?

Research Sub-Questions

1. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

2. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?

3. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

4. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

5. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

6. How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to

become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with

respect to trust barriers?

Research Methods

This qualitative study used semi-structured open-ended interview questions to

identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents of

school age children to increase school participation with respect to social, economic,

environmental, political, technological, and trust issues. A qualitative research design was

selected for this research to allow an in-depth study of African American parent

perspectives through interviews. These interviews allowed the researcher to reveal

multiple perspectives on the topic.

Population and Sample

The target population from which the participants were chosen for this study

consisted of African American parents from Moreno Valley Unified School District,

Hemet Unified School District, Perris Elementary School District, and Riverside Unified

School District. At the time of this study there were 5415 African American elementary

school students and an estimated 5415 African American parents in the selected districts

assuming one parent/guardian per child (EdData, 2020). These Riverside school districts

were chosen because they had similar demographics. For the purposes of this study, the

participants were African American parents with school age children in the following

school districts: Riverside Unified, Moreno Valley Unified, Hemet Unified, and Perris

Elementary School District.

The researcher contacted 25 potential participants individually and invited them to

participate in the study. Twelve of the participants confirmed and were interviewed. The

remaining potential participants did not respond to requests to participate or change their mind about participating in this study. The research included four African American parents from each of the four school districts in the study.

Major Findings

Chapter 1 introduced the research question and sub-questions as well as the literature reviewing the barriers that African American parents face to school participation. The data collected from the 12 African American parents proved African American parents have a great deal to say when asked what factors need to be present in schools, in order to increase their participation. The data suggest schools have to make many changes to the way they interact with African American parents in order to increase their school participation. The major findings of this study are organized by research sub-questions.

Research Sub-Question 1

Research Sub-Question 1 sought to answer: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?

Major Findings 1. The first major finding was seven out of 12 African American parents reported schools need to do more to make them feel welcome. Participants reported staff being rude to them and not including them in school business like other parents.

Major Finding 2. The second major finding was five of the 12 African American parents indicated schools do not share important information with them. Participants

reported receiving other trivial school information but stated they were not given

necessary school information. In addition, participants indicated being excluded from

important school information made them feel as though their participation did not matter

to school staff.

Major Finding 3. The third major finding was four of the 12 African American

parents stated there are not enough African American staff in schools. Participants

indicated the lack of African American staff makes them feel uncomfortable and

misunderstood at schools. In addition, they indicated they believe there is a lack of

empathy when they are interacting with their students and staff do not assume good

intentions of their students.

Research Sub-Question 2

The second sub-question sought to answer: How do African American parents of

school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African

American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their

education with respect to economic issues?

Major Finding 4. The fourth major finding was 50% of the African American

parents indicated school resources are not being used based on student need. This is a

problem for African American students in their eyes because their students have

academic needs, also. They noted other student groups have access to resources and

programs and African American students should have the same access to resources and

programs.

Research Sub-Question 3

The third sub-question sought to answer: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?

Major Finding 5. The fifth major finding was six of the 12 African American parents indicated school staff do not listen to them like they do to other parents. They would like to be heard on school matters. African American parents would like school staff to pursue them like valuable partners.

Research Sub-Question 4

The fourth sub-question sought to answer: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?

Major Finding 6. Three out of the 12 participants would like to see more school staff who are African American. Participants indicated seeing staff that look like them would make them feel more comfortable at schools. In addition, 50% of the participants also share the view that schools need to share important information more.

Research Sub-Question 5

The fifth sub-question sought to answer: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?

Major Finding 7. The seventh major finding was 11 of the 12 African American parents need help to effectively access technology. They would like to participate in workshops or seminars to increase their technology knowledge. Participants would like to have on-going access to technology training in multiple forms, days and times in order to increase school participation. They indicated this increased access will benefit them and their students because they will be able to help their students and understand what they are doing in school.

Research Sub-Question 6

The sixth sub-question sought to answer: How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Major Finding 8. The eighth major finding was 7 of the 12 participants indicated school staff need to increase positive interactions with them. African American parents reported much of their school interactions are negative and this discourages them from increasing interactions with schools. African American parents stated they want to be treated with respect and school staff should be nicer to them.

Major Finding 9. The ninth major finding was 7 of the 12 African American parents reported schools do not appear to care about all students based on the way they treat African American students. They reported they have witnessed school staff withhold academic help and support from their students but other student groups appear to have better access to teachers. African American parents suggested they would like

staff to care about all students and demonstrate this concern by the way they interact and provide support to all students.

Unexpected Findings

The data collected through interviewing African American parents was a method for them to identify and describe what factors needed to be present to increase their school participation. An unexpected finding from this study was the most common theme for all African American parents to increase school participation was the school technology support. Although participants shared other major concerns that schools will need to address, they agreed most on understanding how to use and navigate technology programs and devices. Many African American parents indicated their lack of knowledge was highlighted during COVID due to the school being closed and students had to learn in their homes. African American parents were not able to meet this technology challenge in many instances and they reported they would like the schools to help provide this technology training.

Conclusions

After analyzing the major findings for the data, the researcher reached conclusions from each research sub-question. The conclusions listed address the major findings.

Conclusion 1

Many African American parents do not feel welcome at schools. Based on their testimony, the conclusion is that African American parents do not believe it matters to schools if they are present at schools. Participants shared they felt unwelcome by staff based on looks they were given, negative attitudes displayed during interactions and

feeling excluded from information and activities about school business. In addition, African American parents indicated non-African American parents are not treated the same way by school staff as they are treated. They stated they would like staff to listen to them and to treat them with respect in the same manner that non-African American parents are treated on school campuses.

Conclusion 2

African American participants reported schools do not have enough African American staff on campus or in the board room. Participants expressed a desire to see more staff that look like them because this would make them feel more comfortable on the school campus. In addition, participants stated they believe African American staff would be more caring and empathetic when working with African American students. Furthermore, African American parents stated having more African American staff would allow them to relate to African American parents better through a commonality of experiences and cultures. Based on these findings, it is concluded that having more African American staff on campus would make African American parents feel more comfortable being involved in their children's schools.

Conclusion 3

African American parents indicated they understand schools have budgets they need to be spent on school business. However, participants stated school resources should be spent on the students with the most need. They reported African American students often are excluded from participating in after school programs or other specialized programs. In addition, participants expressed that African American students need specialized programs just for them just like English language learners. Based on

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these findings, it is concluded that African American parents believe school resources should be targeted toward African American children based upon their needs.

Conclusion 4

African American parents expressed they have a lack of knowledge when it comes to understanding technology. As a result, they would like to have more opportunities to learn how to use computer programs and software. Participants indicated if they understood how to use technology better, they would be better equipped to help their African American students with their assignments and homework. Based on these findings, it is concluded that African American parents view their lack of understanding of and access to technology as a barrier to successful participation in their children's school experience.

<p align="center">**Implications for Action**</p>

Based on the conclusions of this study, there are several implications for action that will increase African American parent school participation. The researcher offers several recommendations for action to support African American parents on school campuses. Individuals responsible for the implementation of these implications are listed within each implication for action.

Implication for Action 1

This study revealed African American parents would like to be treated better on school campuses. They do not feel welcomed, heard or important to school personnel. In addition, participants indicated they feel these behaviors are intentionally exclusive because their perceived value in the system is low. In order for African American parents to feel like valued school partners, school staff like teachers, front office staff and

administrators need to make more efforts to understand the perception of the African American parent school experience. For example, school staff need to go where African American parents are and bring the school information to them. Participants indicated these meetings could combine social events and fun with school information. They indicated these types of gathering would build a family or "village" community and increase their school participation. In addition, schools need to offer all school business meetings at flexible times and places in order to give African American parents more school access and bring cultures together.

Moreover, school district administrators will need to ensure that district funds are spent on training for school staff on how to be more culturally aware and sensitive to persons of color, specifically African American students. On a larger scale, colleges and universities will need to do a better job of adding culturally sensitive course to the teaching curriculum. Unless, universities and school districts make significant changes to the importance of building culturally aware staff and making sure they have an opportunity to build their capacity as it relates to understanding African American families, nothing long term will change. Becoming culturally aware cannot be fulfilled by taking a one-time class in order to check a box of completion but, rather, this kind of competence requires on-going immersion for effectiveness. Inevitably, this culturally aware progression should lead to school districts hiring more African American staff at all levels. Furthermore, more African American students should be recruited in high-school to choose careers in education. However, this increase in black personnel will be unlikely if African American students continue to be underrepresented in honors classes and overrepresented in discipline and special education classes in K12 schools.

Implication for Action 2

School districts have budgets in order to address the academic needs of students in their districts. In addition, schools have budgets they control to meet the needs of students and school resources should be spent on students' academic, social and emotional, attendance, preventive discipline needs. However, school boards need to ensure they all students are receiving the support they need based on school and district data. In this study, African American parents expressed a desire for their students to have the opportunity to have more access to school resources and programs. They indicated African American students need specialized programs and resources like English learners do. Participants shared their students have fallen behind academically and the only time they students are first is when it comes to discipline. Moreover, African American parents indicated school athletics are too expensive. They reported they would like schools to subsidize the cost to participate in school sports for African American parents who need financial help. This would give African American parents equal access to school sports and increase their school participation.

In addition, school districts could form more effective community partners. For example, Participant 12 suggested school districts should partner with local community businesses like WIC and provide WIC officials with pre-school and kindergarten information for African American families because this office is where many low income African American parents frequent. Often times these parents are not aware of pre-school or kindergarten information or they miss crucial registration deadlines but if school districts partnered with local businesses, critical information could be given to African American parents. Participant 12 suggested early education for African

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American students is behind that of other students and this simple WIC partnership could potentially close the achievement gap for black students.

In order to address these concerns, school administrators need to analyze the needs of the African American students they have on campus. What supports need to be in place for African American students? What will this cost? What resources do African American students need to be more successful academically and behaviorally? Historically, African American students have not performed well when compared to other student groups, but it does not appear to be an emergency or crisis state in school districts yet. If there is a strong desire to close the "school to prison" pipeline, what transformational change is happening to shut down this pipeline? School district school board and community members need to work harder to answer these questions if true change is to happen in the school system.

Implication for Action 3

Technology is constantly changing. African American parents in this study expressed overwhelmingly they would like to have access to technology devices and training. One lesson schools learned from COVID, is that African American parents need technology help. African American students were already the lowest performing student group prior to COVID and African American parents stated they believe their students are performing worse now because they were not properly equipped to help them use the technology to access the curriculum.

In order to address the technology help desired from African American parents, school district administrators could partner with community business and have devices donated or they could be purchased at lower rates by school districts. As a result, African

American parents could be given devices based on their need. In addition, technology training could be offered by school staff at each site and at the district level. Furthermore, it was suggested by Participant 2 that African American students be allowed to create how-to videos, and teach workshops for parents. Using African American students to be school leaders will increase their leadership skills and self-esteem. This would also give them an opportunity to shine and be recognized for doing something positive. Moreover, Participant 10 suggested schools could create a technology app to keep African American parents informed and connected to schools. African American parents always have their phones and they would have easy access to a school technology app. Finally, schools could have technology nights on a regular basis for African American parents to come and have hands on training and be able to ask questions and practice on devices.

Moreover, African American parents indicated standardized tests need to be evaluated because some of the information on these computerized tests are culturally biased and this bias could be a contributing factor of low- test scores for African American students. Participants suggested a result of low- test scores place their students in the over identification of special education classes.

Recommendations for Further Research

There is research that focuses on the barriers that African American parents face to school participation. However, this study focused on to identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents to increase their school participation with respect to social, economic, environmental, political, technological and trust issues. However, further study in this area is needed to better understand the

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African American parent perspective on what they would like schools to do to increase their school participation.

The researcher recommends this study be repeated with a larger sample population from around the country to confirm findings of this study. A larger sample from across the United States would give a deeper understanding of African American parent perspectives on what schools can do better to partner with them and increase their school participation.

Another factor that should be considered in future researched is including more African American male parent perspectives. In this study, only one participant was an African American male parent. This perspective is critical to understanding what schools need to do differently to increase African American school participation, as well.

This study focused on the African American parent perspective to school participation but future studies could also focus on the African American teacher perspective as it relates to what they believe schools could do better to partner with African American parents. African American teachers may have a unique position of being able to code switch and relate to the African American parent and the school system.

There is also a need for the African American student perspective to be captured in this area. If it is true that African American students are the lowest performing student group across the state of California, then what do African American students say they would like schools to do differently to partner with them. This perspective would be invaluable for school districts to understand and pursue. A unique change idea could start by letting students vote on the things they would like to see change at their schools.

Moreover, the researcher recommends further research could happen to gain perspectives of district management on what they believe schools could do differently to partner with African American parents and increase their school participation. This research would give school districts the most insight from the top looking down on how to spend district resources and what programs are needed to help African American students increase positive school outcomes.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends there be additional studies that replicate this study using ethnic minorities as the population. Also, this study focused on what schools should do to enhance African American parent participation, but a future study should occur that identifies and describes the actions that African American parents can take to close the gap in the communication between school and African American parents. Finally, a case study of schools and districts that have success in engaging African American parents that identifies best practices for engaging African American parents should occur in the future.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

The findings of this study are phenomenal because they add to the body of literature focusing on the perspectives of African American parents to identify and describe the factors that need to be present to increase their school participation as it relates to social, economic, environmental, political, technological, and trust issues. This study provided insight to the importance of the African American parent voice because black parents matter, too. In fact, without the African American parent school partnership, African American students will continue to fall behind in positive student outcomes and the school to prison pipeline will remain. The findings from this study can

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help schools and districts behave differently if African American parent inclusion is a goal to reach the overarching goal of increased African American student academic performance and decreased discipline.

The researcher life experiences are similar to the participants in this study, because she is an African American parent, but she is also a school district administrator. Uniquely, the researcher was able to relate to both the participants and the system simultaneously. Furthermore, the researcher has experienced some of the same issues in school systems with her own children as reported by participants in the study. Furthermore, even though the researcher took steps to ensure there was no bias during this study, some may exist simply because of the researcher lens of the world she lives in.

The researcher believes schools and districts can do better at partnering with African American parents and students and school staff did not know where to begin, this study gives some starting points to consider. If schools make no changes moving forward and continue to marginalize African American parents and their students, they will receive the same outcomes that are claimed to be unwanted. The researcher believes schools and school districts will make the necessary changes to embrace African American parents and their students, because everything is at stake. The success of African American students will change the nation for the better and add productive citizens to shape its future.

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    https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912437794

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Literature Synthesis Matrix

References	Social Barriers	Environmental & Econ. Barriers	Political Barriers	Technological Barriers	Critical & Eco. Social Theory	Mod. Lrn. Theory
Abrams, L. S., Gibbs, J. T. (2002). Disrupting the logic of home-school relations: Parent involvement strategies and practices of inclusion and exclusion. *Urban Education,* 37, 384-407.	X		X			
Allen, Q. (2013). "They think minority means lesser than": Black middle-class sons and fathers resisting microaggressions in the school. *Urban Education,* 48, 171-197.	X					
Allen, Q. & White-Smith, K.A. (2017). "That's Why I Say Stay in School": Black mothers' parental involvement, cultural wealth, and exclusion in their son's schooling. *Urban Education,* Retrieved from https://doi.org, 0042085917714516, 1-26.	X	X	X			
Anderson, J. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South: 1860-1935.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.	X					
Anderson, D. & Anderson, L. A., (2010). Beyond change management. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.			X			
Avvisati, F., Gurgand, M., Guyon, N., Maurin, E. (2013). Getting Parents Involved: A field experiment in deprived schools. *Review of Economic Studies*, 81, 57-83.	X	X				

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Bartel, V. (2010). Home and School Factors Impacting Parental Involvement in a Title I Elementary School. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education,* 24, 209-228.	X		X			
Barton, A.C., Drake, C., Perez, J.G., St. Louis, K., George, M. (2004). Ecologies of Parental Engagement in Urban Education. *Educational Researcher,* 33 (4), 3-12.					X	
Bell, A. W., O'Brien, D., Shiu, C. (1980). Designing teaching in the light of research on understanding. In *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference for the Psychology of Mathematics Education,* R. Karplus, ed. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 250 186. Berkely, CA: The International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics.	X					
Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Richard Nice (Trans). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.	X					
Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, 32(7), 513-531.	X		X			
Brown, A. L., Campione, J.C. (1994). *Guided discovery in a community of learners.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.	X		X			
Bruner, J. (1981). The organization of action and the nature of adult-infant transaction. *Cognition in Human Motivation and Learning*, 1-13.	X		X			

Calabrese Barton & Drake (2002). Ecologies of Parental Engagement: Final technical report to the National Science Foundation.	X				
Civil, M., Andrade, R., Anhalt, C. (2000). Parents as learners of mathematics: A different look at parental involvement. In M. I. Fernandez (Ed.), *Proceedings of the twenty second annual meeting of North American chapter of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education* (Vol. 2, 421- 426), Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse	X		X		
Cobb, P., Yackel, E., Wood, T. (1992). A constructivist alternative to the representational view of mind in mathematics education. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education,* 19, 99-114.	X		X		
Cole, M. Engestrom, Y. (1993). A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition, In G.	X				
Cooper, C. W. (2005). School choice and the standpoint of African American mothers: Considering the power of positionality. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 74, 174-189.	X				
Coopersmith, J. (2009). *Characteristics of public, private, and Bureau of Indian Education elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States: Results from the 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey* (NCES 2009-324). Washington, DC: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Institute of Education Sciences.	X		X		

Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1996). *Protean literacy: Extending the discourse an empowerment*. London: Falmer Press.			X			
Dewey, J. (1902, October). The school as social centre. *The Elementary School Teacher*, 3 (2), 73-86.	X					
Dewey, J. (1916). Democracy and Education. New York: Macmillan.	X		X			
Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education.* New York: Macmillan Co.					X	
Diamond, J. B., Gomez, K. (2004). African American parents' educational orientations: The importance of social class and parents' perceptions of schools. *Education and Urban Society,* 36, 383-427.	X					
Duckworth, E. (1987). "*The Having of Wonderful Ideas" and Other Essays on Teaching and Learning.* New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.			X			
Eccles, J. S., Harold, R. D. (1993). Parent-school involvement during the early adolescent years. *Teachers College Record*, 94, 568-587.	X		X			
Engestrom, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133-156.			X		X	
Epstein, J. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 76, 701-712.	X					

Fairclough, A. (2007). *A class of their own: Black teachers in the segregated South.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.			X			
Fine, M. (1993). A parent involvement: Reflections on parents, power, and urban public schools. *Teachers College Record,* 94, 682-710.			X			
Francis, G. L., Blue-Banning, M., Haines, S.J., Turnbull, A. P., & Gross, J. M. S. (2016). Building "Our School": Parental Perspectives for Building Trusting Family-Professional Partnerships. *Preventing School Failure,* 60, (4), 329-336.	X	X	X			
Frazier, E.F., (1937). The Impact of Urban Civilization Upon Negro Family Life. *American Sociological Review*, 2 (5), 609-618.	X	X	X			
Friedel, T. I. (1999). The role of Aboriginal parents in public education: Barriers to change in an urban setting. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 23(2), 139-158.			X			
Froiland, J.M., Davison, M.L. (2013). Parental expectations and school relationships as contributors to adolescents' positive outcomes. *Soc Psychol Educ*, 17, 1-17.	X	X				
Giroux, H. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.			X			
Gordon, I. J. (1977). Parent education and parent involvement: Retrospect and prospect. *Childhood Education*, 54, 71-79.	X					

Reference						
Green, C. L., Walker, J. M. T., Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Sandler, H. M. (2007). Parents' motivations for involvement in children's education: An empirical test of a theoretical model of parent involvement. *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 99, 532-544.	X		X			
Hammond, I. (2001). Notes from California: An anthropological approach to urban science education for language minority families. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 38(9), 983-999.			X			
Harris, T. S., Graves, Jr., S. L., (2010). The Influence of Cultural Capital Transmission on Reading Achievement in African American Fifth Grade Boys. *The Journal of Negro Education,* 79 (4), 447-457.	X		X			
Harris, A., Goodall, J., (2008). Do parents know they matter? Engaging all parents in learning. *Educational Research*, 50 (3), 277-289.	X	X	X			
Heath, S.B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.			X			
Hill, N. E., Liang, B., Price, M., Polk, W., Peralla, J. Savitz-Romer, M., (2017). Envisioning a meaningful future and academic engagement: The role of parenting practices and school- based relationships. *Psychol Schs.* 2018; 55:595-608. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22146.	X					
Hoover-Dempsey, K. Sandler, H. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 3-43.	X		X			

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Dear Parent,

In an effort to build better partnerships and understand the barriers to school participation that African American parents face, a researcher would like to interview you to gather your opinions about school barriers. Your responses will be anonymous and will be used to influence decision making and build stronger partnerships between African American parents and school leaders. Please, consider participating in this study.

Interested parents should email Alycia Benson at abenson1@mail.brandman.edu by _____. Thank you for your consideration.

Principal

ABC school

Appendix C: Participation Request Letter

STUDY: Understanding and overcoming the barriers of African American parents to school participation

July___, 2021

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

You are invited to participate in a qualitative study to investigate and understand the barriers that African American parents face to school participation. The main investigator of this study is Alycia Benson, Doctoral Candidate in Brandman University's Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were chosen to participate in this study because you and an African American parent in the four districts sampled in Riverside County California.

You will be asked several interview questions over Zoom by the main investigator. Participation in the interview will last about thirty minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's' local school and in their children's education.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in the study, then you may proceed with participating in the interview. The researcher will contact those interested participants to schedule an interview. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to understand the barriers that African American parents experience to school participation.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient to spend up to thirty minutes in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at an agreed upon location, to minimize this inconvenience.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation, however, your input and feedback could help add to the research regarding factors that may contribute to African American parents participating and partnering with schools. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. Additionally, the findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

ANONYMITY: Records of information that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact me at 951- 285-9792 or by email at abenson1@mail.brandman.edu. Phil Pendley by email at ppendley@mail.brandman.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,
Alycia Benson
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University

Appendix D: Informed Consent Document

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Black Parents Matter, Too: Understanding and overcoming the barriers to school participation by African American parents

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Alycia Benson, Doctoral Candidate

TITLE OF CONSENT FORM: Consent to Participate in Research

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's' local school and in their children's education.

PROCEDURES: In participating in this research study, I agree to either partake in a virtual audio-recorded semi-structured interview. The interview will take place using Zoom, at a predetermined time and will last approximately thirty minutes. During the interview, I will be asked to share my perceptions through a series of six questions about any barriers to school participation that I have experienced.

I understand that:
  a) The possible risks or discomforts associated with this research are minimal. It may be inconvenient to spend up to thirty minutes in the interview. However, the interview session will be held at an agreed upon time, to minimize this inconvenience.

  b) I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. The possible benefit of this study is to add to the research regarding barriers that African American face to school participation. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

  c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Alycia Benson, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Ms. Benson may be contacted by phone at 951-285-9792 or email at

abenson1@mail.brandman.edu.   The dissertation chairperson may also answer
questions: Dr. Phil Pendley at ppendley@mail.brandman.edu.

d) I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any
negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) The study will be audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the
scope of this project. Audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews.
Once the interviews are transcribed, the audio and interview transcripts will be
kept for a minimum of three years by the investigator in a secure location.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent
and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law.
If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed, and
my consent re-obtained. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the
study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the
Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355
Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I
have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the
"agree" button indicates that you have read the informed consent form and the
information in this document and that you voluntarily agree to participate. If you do
not wish to participate in this electronic survey, you may decline participation by
clicking on the "disagree" button.

The survey will not open for responses unless you agree to participate.

□ AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent packet and "Bill
of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

□ DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic survey

Signature_____

Date:_____

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Black Parents Matter Too: Understanding and overcoming the barriers to school participation by African American parents

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

I authorize Alycia Benson, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party   **Date**

Appendix E: Interview Question Development Matrix

Research Questions	Interview Question(s)	Source
RQ1 - How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to ==social issues==?	IQ1 – What ==social issue== prevent you from being engaged in your child's school? IQ2 – What would need to be done to address the ==social issue== so that you would feel comfortable becoming involved in your child's school? IQ3 – Do you have any other comments regarding your involvement in your child's school related to ==social issues==?	Source: Barton et al, (2004); Allen & White-Smith, (2017); O'Donnell & Kirkner, (2014); Wilkins, 2006; Francis, et al, (2016); Bartel, (2010); Jefferson, (2014); Latunde, (2017); Murray, et al, (2014); Quinones & Kiyama, (2014); Harris & Graves, (2010)
RQ2 - How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to ==economic issues==?	IQ4 – What ==economic issues== prevent you from being engaged in your child's school? IQ5 – What would need to be done to address the ==economic issues== so that you would feel comfortable becoming involved in your child's school? IQ6 – Do you have any other comments regarding your involvement in your child's school related to ==economic issues==	Stacer & Perrucci, (2013); Harris & Goodall, (2008); Trainor & Bal, (2010); Harris & Goodall, (2008); Francis, et al, (2016)
RQ3 - How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to ==environmental issues==?	IQ7 – What ==environmental issues== prevent you from being engaged in your child's school? IQ8 – What would need to be done to address the ==environmental issues== so that you would feel comfortable becoming involved in your child's school? IQ9 – Do you have any other comments regarding your involvement in your child's school related to ==environmental issues==	O, Donnell & Kirkner, (2014); Allen & White-Smith, (2017); Harris & Goodall, (2008)
RQ4 - How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become	IQ10 – What political ==issues== prevent you from being engaged in your child's school? IQ11 – What would need to be done to address the political ==issues== so that you would feel	

engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?	comfortable becoming involved in your child's school? IQ12 – Do you have any other comments regarding your involvement in your child's school related to political <mark>issues</mark>?	Thernstrom, (1987); Stuart, (2009); Allen & White-Smith, (2017)
RQ5 - How do African American parents of school age children identify and describe the factors that need to be present for African American parents in general to become engaged in their children's local school and in their education with respect to technological access?	IQ13 – What technological <mark>issues</mark> prevent you from being engaged in your child's school? IQ14 – What would need to be done to address the technological <mark>issues</mark> so that you would feel comfortable becoming involved in your child's school? IQ15 – Do you have any other comments regarding your involvement in your child's school related to technological <mark>issues</mark>?	Sudduth, (2011); Jefferson, (2014)

Notes:

1. Each Research Question must be addressed.
2. Interview Questions should tie directly to a Research Question.
3. Each Interview Question should have a source/rationale for asking it that ties directly to the purpose and RQ's of the study so the information acquired addresses the Purpose and RQ's.

Appendix F: Interview Questions/Protocol

Interviewer: Alycia Benson

Interview time planned: Approximately thirty minutes

Recording: Zoom recordings

Written: Field notes

Introductions: Introduce ourselves to one another.

Opening Statement: Thank you for agreeing to spend some time with me today. My name is Alycia Benson and I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I am a former elementary school principal and worked for Moreno Valley Unified for twenty-one years. I now work in Hemet Unified as the Director of Student Services at the district office.

Given the need for increased school partnerships with African American parents, it is important to understand and overcome the barriers to their participation. Additionally, considering that students of color under-perform in school, this parent-school partnership is critical to student success. As a former principal and an African American parent, I was curious about how school systems could do better to understand the perspectives and barriers of African American parents as they maneuver school systems. This led me to this research in exploring how to overcome these barriers and inform school districts how to increase partnerships with African American parents.

Interview Agenda: I anticipate that this interview will take about thirty minutes today. As a review of the process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via phone call. Prior to this interview, you signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for this study. You also read the Letter of Invitation and the Participant's Bill of Rights. Thank you for signing the Audio Release Form in advance of this interview. Next, I will begin recording on Zoom. I may take notes as the interview is being recorded. If you are uncomfortable with me taking notes, please let me know and I will only continue with the audio recording of the interview. Finally, I will stop the recording and conclude our interview session. After your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the complete transcript to check for accuracy prior to the data being to data analysis. Please remember that anytime during this process you have the right to stop the interview. If at any time you do not understand the questions being asked, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin with the interview? I will be conducting approximately 10 - 12 interviews with others like yourself who are African American parents. To ensure the data collected is pure, I may not engage in a lot of dialogue with you during the interview.

Interview Questions

1. How do you identify and describe the factors that need to be present for you to become engaged in your children's local school and in their education with respect to social issues?
2. How do you identify and describe the factors that need to be present for you to become engaged in your children's local school and in their education with respect to economic issues?
3. How do you identify and describe the factors that need to be present for you to become engaged in your children's local school and in their education with respect to environmental issues?
4. How do you identify and describe the factors that need to be present for you to become engaged in your children's local school and in their education with respect to political issues?
5. How do you identify and describe the factors that need to be present for you to become engaged in your children's local school and in their education with respect to technological issues?
6. How do you identify and describe the factors that need to be present for you to become engaged in your children's local school and in their education with respect to trust barriers?

Appendix G: CITI Program's NIH Clearance

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 18-May-2020
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 36656539

This is to certify that:

Alycia Benson

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Human Subjects Research	(Curriculum Group)
Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers	(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic	(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Brandman University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wcd092444-eb03-4bfd-b56f-1f9843534527-36656539

BUIRB Application Approved: Alycia Benson
Inbox

***Institutional Review Board** <my@brandman.edu>*   Fri, Jul 23,
                                                                      12:00 PM (10
                                                                      days ago)

to me, ddevore, pendley, buirb, amock

Dear Alycia Benson,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the
Brandman University Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your
records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your BUIRB application for any reason, please fill out the
"Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The
Modification form can be found at IRB.Brandman.edu

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

BUIRB
Academic Affairs
Brandman University
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618
buirb@brandman.edu
www.brandman.edu
A Member of the Chapman University System

This email is an automated notification. If you have questions please email us at
buirb@brandman.edu.

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB Adopted November 2013