WHAT WE THINK: COLLEGE EDUCATED SINGLE AFRICAN - AMERICAN MOTHERS AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

A Thesis in
Educational Theory and Policy
by
Jewel Dunn

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for Degree of
Master of Arts

December 2010
The thesis of Jewel Dunn was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Dana Mitra  
Associate Professor of Education Policy Studies  
Thesis Advisor

Gerald LeTendre  
Professor of Education and International Affairs  
Head of Department of Education Policy Studies

David Gamson  
Associate Professor of Education  
Professor -in-Charge, Educational Theory and Policy

*Signatures on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

Despite the implication that bridging the gap requires educators to have a more thorough understanding of the contours of the problem, responsibility for closing the gap is mostly viewed as belonging to schools. Absent are integrative strategies to addressing multifaceted educational problems including parent involvement choice strategy. This narrow focus has caused achievement gap solutions to mainly focus on school-based interventions. The school only focus is puzzling because research has demonstrated that differences in student experiences out-of-school; parental involvement; class, race and home environment are factors significantly influencing school success. All this points to the importance of exploring factors not addressed by a school-centric approach to closing the achievement gap and to developing ways to get parents more involved.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables..............................................................................................................................................vi

List of Figures..................................................................................................................................................vii

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION.........................................................................................................................1

Problem Statement............................................................................................................................................1

Parental Involvement......................................................................................................................................5

Single African American Mothers..................................................................................................................8

College-Educated Single African-American Mothers..................................................................................10

Chapter 2. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS.................................................................................................14

Research Questions.........................................................................................................................................14

Conceptual Framework....................................................................................................................................16

Motivations for Decision making..................................................................................................................18

Concept Definition........................................................................................................................................22

Research Design............................................................................................................................................24

Sample............................................................................................................................................................24

Methodology..................................................................................................................................................26

Data Collection.............................................................................................................................................28

Data Analysis................................................................................................................................................32

Expectation for Results..................................................................................................................................33

Justification for Study..................................................................................................................................36
List of Tables

Research Lenses and Order of Discussion 1.................................................................17
Participant Demographics Matrix 2..............................................................................26
List of Figures

Conceptual Framework 1.........................................................20
Chapter 1 - Introduction

Problem Statement

The test score disparity for poor and ethnic minority children, known as the achievement gap, has garnered new attention as No Child Left Behind legislation puts the achievement levels of under performing children at the forefront of reform efforts. Even though a number of factors have been identified as having significant influence on student achievement, gap closure research almost exclusively focuses on an instructional tripod – content, pedagogy and relationships within the instructional core (Ferguson, R., Clark, R., Stewart, J., 2002). Still, many studies point to the significance of the out-of-school, specifically parental involvement, influence on African-American student achievement (Ardlet & Eccles, 2001; Carpenter, D., Ramirez, A. & Severn, L., 2006; Harvard Family Research Project, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ogbu, 2004; Rothstein, 2004; Viadero, 2000). The greatest research effort on parental involvement has been to compare involvement of African-American and Caucasian parents and to describe the challenges to parental involvement for poor single African-American mothers. These mothers are mostly also high school dropouts. However, most writers have ignored the college educated or upwardly mobile single African-American mother. Moreover, since belief systems mediate parent behavior and the ability to contribute to any discussion, the interactive context of race, gender, and class over-time require investigation (Drummond & Stipek, 2004; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002).

I begin my proposal with a discussion of the broader problem my research is situated within, which is the educational research and dialogue on achievement gap closure. I continue with a brief review of the literature on school interaction/parental
involvement. Then I discuss the problem with research focused on the single African-American mother and parental involvement. This discussion is followed by an explanation of the purpose for focusing on and including perceptions of the college-educated single African-American mother in achievement gap closure dialogue. I continue with the research questions examined in this study and the theoretical framework, which contextualizes decision making and provides definition of key terms and concepts. Lastly, I describe the qualitative approach that will be used to explore the composition of thinking which contributes to decision making for the college-educated single African-American mother.

The literature on African-American student school success demonstrates that they enter the school system, in this country, at a disadvantage. While achievement rose overall for African-American and White students from 1992 to 2000, disparities in test scores between these groups remained large and the achievement gap was consistent (Braun et al, 2006). But, even between middle class African-American and White students a significant gap remains (Ferguson 2002; Haycock, 2004; Rothstein, 2004). For example, in African-American American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement African-American students had parents, who were educated, married, homeowners and could afford to send their children to one of the best schools in Ohio. Yet, these students performed on average below their white peers on standardized tests and compared to other families their parents demonstrated an indifference to being involved at school on behalf of their children (Ferguson, 2002, Ogbu 2003). The

---

1 This fact is important because earlier studies on African-Americans and class status posited that African-Americans who had assimilated to dominant cultural norms held the same attitudes and values with regard to rearing children. This thinking is moribund in the literature, but nonetheless an important factor to be examined.
difference in scores for African-American students remains no matter what level of parental education researchers investigate. Even in “excellent schools”\(^2\) the gap continues to be significant (Braun et al, 2006).

Some reasons given for why they enter at a disadvantage tend to blame the students and their parents. However, interventions predominately focus on the school role. While researchers do explore out-of-school factors, most studies only compare parent interaction against a normative standard. This study contends that the extant literature depictions of parental involvement mask likenesses between African-Americans across the class status spectrum. Upper, middle, working-class and poor African-American families may hold similar beliefs and have similar attitudes toward parental involvement in schools. However, African-American parent perspectives on parental involvement are obscured by misperceptions. These misperceptions are generated by an over-reliance on comparative research about social class differences between groups.

Despite the implication that bridging the gap requires educators to have a more thorough understanding of the contours of the problem, responsibility for closing the gap is mostly viewed as belonging to schools (Rothstein, 2004). Absent are integrative strategies to addressing multifaceted educational problems including parent involvement choice strategy. This narrow focus has caused achievement gap solutions to mainly focus on school-based interventions. The school only focus is puzzling because research has demonstrated that differences in student experiences out-of-school (Carpenter, 2006; Honig et al, 2001; Ferguson, 2002; Ogbu, 2003; Rothstein, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2003).

---

\(^2\) The description of excellent schools, within achievement gap literature, usually refers to schools in middle to upper middle class, suburban communities (Braun et al, 2006; Ferguson, 2002, Ogbu, 2002). These schools have more highly qualified teachers, resources, and a higher number of students scoring above proficiency on standardized tests. Disparities at these schools are the least investigated in the literature (Viadero, 2000).
2002); parental involvement (Ferguson et al, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Drummond et al, 2004; Carpenter et al, 2006); class, race and home environment (Ferguson, 2002; Honig et al, 2001; Ogbu, 2002; Carpenter et al, 2006) are factors significantly influencing school success. All this points to the importance of exploring factors not addressed by a school-centric approach to closing the achievement gap and to developing ways to get parents more involved (Honig et al, 2001; Ferguson, 2002; Ogbu, 2003; Rothstein, 2004; Carpenter et al, 2006).

---

3 Children whose parents are involved with their schooling are more likely to score higher on standardized tests, earn better grades, earn higher GPAs, attend school more, and have higher graduation rates and college attendance (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ogbu 2002).

4 A school-centric approach to improving student performance situates responsibility and capability for improvement within the schools and all levels of school governance (i.e., school districts, state educational agencies). Honig et al, posit that this focus in programming means that only schools can produce desired results.
Parental Involvement

School interaction defined as any parent-contact with schools is most often referred to in the literature as *parental involvement*. School interaction and parent involvement are used interchangeably throughout this proposal. Though variations exist, Henderson & Mapp’s (2002) meta-analysis of parental involvement showed that most studies constructed their definitions from a framework developed by Joyce Epstein et al (1998). (See Appendix A) Epstein’s (1998) framework includes six types of parent involvement for parents of eight and twelfth grade students. The framework outlines dimensions of the parental role that identify activity, understandings about the parent role and expectations for student achievement (i.e., initiating contact with teachers; expressing expectation for school performance; taking part in community groups; regulating home activities to be more school supportive). As Henderson & Mapp’s (2002) meta-analysis reports, parental involvement has been found to positively correlate with improved student achievement. At least one study in the report reflected a 40 percent increase in test scores for students in schools where teachers encouraged a high rate of parental involvement. Overall, parental involvement affords many benefits for student achievement including improved grades; improved behavior in school and out; better grades and standardized test performance and participation in more challenging academic programs (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). According to the Harvard Family Research Project (2006/2007), African American student academic achievement is higher when their parents attend school functions. This report also notes a correlational finding that African-American parent’s involvement in school positively influences kindergarten
school performance such as behavior and social abilities affecting school preparedness and math achievement.

African-American parent involvement has been heavily discussed in the literature, but it has also been narrowly focused in examination of African-American and White parent interaction with schools and its differences according to class standing (Hoover-Dempsey, K. Walker, J., Sandler, H., Whetsel, D., Green, C., Wilkins, A. & Closson, K., 2005; Lareau, 2002, 2003; Ogbu, 2003). From a comparative standpoint, and with White middle class beliefs and behaviors as the norm, the main findings of these studies report that, on average, African-American parents regardless of social class are less involved in schools on behalf of their children compared to White parents (Ferguson et al, 2002; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Lareau, 2000; Ogbu, 2003). African-American parents highly value education and hold high expectations for their children’s academic success; however, their efforts in securing success on average seem limited to crisis management, addressing behavior issues (Lareau, 2000; Hill & Sprague, 1999; Ogbu, 2003). Often, African-American parents deferred greatly to the school on ensuring student success (Lareau, 2000; Ogbu, 2003). Of particular concern most notably discussed in Ogbu’s (2003) study was the apparent indifference to involvement. African-American parent involvement in Shaker Heights, OH was characterized as being “dismal” and a result of “deep mistrust of the White community and the school system.” Moreover, Lareau (1992) argued that schools promote the existence of an ideal parent involvement type. Parents who do not fit the model are marginalized; their thoughts and beliefs are not

---

5 Shaker Heights is an affluent community, which included many first generation professional African-American families. Ogbu theorized that community forces (interlocking forces – historical discrimination, economic/social class/cultural status, and language) influenced the way African-Americans view the world around them.
acknowledged or valued. Generally, these parents are among the poor and working class in which African-Americans are overrepresented. Ogbu’s (2004) study observed that although African-American middle class parents may show forth some of the preferred ideals, they remain indifferent toward parent involvement. Yet, few studies allow insight to African-American parent beliefs and behaviors, expressed by them, about why they believe and behave as they do relative to school interaction. Perspectives of educated single African-American mothers are even less examined within the literature.
Single African-American Mothers

For this research, I focus on the African-American mother, within the context of the African-American family, because of the tremendous care giving roles that African-American women play in African-American conjugal, nuclear and extended families not to mention the fact that African-American mothers are the most likely parents to be involved in the lives of their children (Trotman, 2001; Hunter et al, 1998; Kane, 2000). While research does exist on African-American families, we know little specifically about the parenting strategies of female headed households. Attention to this type of family is critical because 62.9% of all African-American households are female headed (Institute of Education Statistics). The U.S. Census Bureau 2006 statistical profiles reflect that half of all African-American children (51%) are being raised by single mothers.

Within parental involvement literature, this group is considered hardest to reach in terms of school initiatives designed to improve parental involvement. In addition, single African-American mothers are portrayed in the literature as not valuing education. Many studies, however, have shown that this group does value education but must work long hours and do not have the time to be involved as schools expect (Wade, 2006).

Prior research established that growing up in single African-American female-headed households is believed to influence significantly negatively school success and is therefore stigmatized (Moynihan, 1965; Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Battle & Coates 2004).\(^6\) Research affirms that children growing up in these households on average have lower

\(^6\) Moynihan’s *The Tangle of Pathology* stigmatized the matriarchal family configuration arguing that it was dysfunctional. The 1965 report stated that single African-American female-headed households “seriously retard the progress of the group as a whole” and disadvantages its children. A great many studies have been conducted since to affirm Moynihan’s assessment. Interestingly, Battle & Coates (2004) found that this assessment does not hold for African-American girls.
rates of student graduation, college enrollment, poor grades and attendance, this is particularly so for those in poorer communities. Moreover, studies show that the relationship between mother and child, in single and two-parent households, greatly predicts student success more than relationships with fathers (Johnson, 1992 as cited in Battle & Coates, 2004). Further examination is important because a review of the literature suggests that this family configuration contributes positively to student academic achievement. Ardelt & Eccles (2001) found that single African-American mothers in economically depressed communities who held positive beliefs about parental efficacy were more likely to be involved in school on behalf of their children than those who did not. Holding positive beliefs about parental efficacy was not a significant predictor of parental involvement for White mothers.
College-Educated Single African-American Mothers

In addition to the high number of single African-American female headed households, in 2006 22% of all these mothers had not graduated from high school (US Census Bureau). Relative the total number of single African-American female headed households, the percentage of college educated single African-American mothers is small, 12% in 2006 (US Census Bureau). But, when compared to the percentage ten years ago, less than half that for White single mothers, which was nearly 10%, this growth signals the presence of change (“Comparing Educational Levels”). Furthermore, current research suggests that this group may provide insight to understanding the social environment of parenting for African-Americans. Battle (2004) found that as socioeconomic status, defined as educational attainment, occupation and salary, increased over-time so did academic achievement for African-American girls prior to high school graduation. In addition, Battle (2004) hypothesized that this family configuration “created pathways to academic success” and therefore warrants more qualitative type methodological inquiry of the processes and/or activities associated with student achievement.

Furthermore, growth in the number of college-educated single African-American mothers is important because it signals the need for understanding how the interaction of race, gender, and class affect parental involvement. Extant research suggests that class orientation has significant effect on parental involvement, but it is unclear whether involvement is singly a product of class or due to a combination of factors such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status. It is a belief within this study that these factors come
together to produce a unique view of society, one not currently represented in the literature on parental involvement. Specifically, race, gender, and social class are only incidentally studied because African-Americans tend to be disproportionately represented amongst the poor and working classes. The ambiguity and complexity of social class designations only compounds the issue. As such, according to Hanafin & Lynch’s (2002) study [the poor and working class] are considered to be “unable to participate in discussions about educational disadvantage.” On the other hand, college educated single African-American mothers may be included among the African-American middle class.

What we do not understand or what is not well investigated within the literature is that not only are members of this group generally misperceived, Patillo-McCoy (1999) suggests that middle class African-Americans “remain ideologically, economically, and socially tied to the African-American poor.” Both poor and middle class African-Americans’ beliefs, behaviors and experiences may be tied regarding parental involvement and how educators, theorist talk about them are tied also. In this way, perceptions of college educated single African-American mothers have not been examined within the parental involvement or achievement gap literature. Their behavior

---

7 In *African-American Picket Fences*, Patillo-McCoy (1999) designates the African-American Groveland residents as middle class based on an income-to-needs ratio which so designates families whose total income is more than twice the poverty line. Moreover, she applies a sociology conception of middle class comprised of occupation, education and behavior (maintaining investments, homeownership, and marriage). Conversely, Ogbu’s Shaker Heights African-American residents appeared to be designated middle class because of where they lived and the fact that some held professional positions.

8 Members of the African-American middle class are not uniform in their experiences. Some live in close proximity to low-income African-Americans while others may live in what might be considered affluent all African-American communities. These residential differences have influence on parental ability to control negative experiences of their children (Ardelt and Eccles, 2001; Moynihan, 1965).
and beliefs about parental involvement are obscured by the constructed perceptions of those from the poor and working class.  

The ambiguity in focusing on only one factor to understand an effect on parental involvement is made visible by conceptual definitions within the literature. For example, a needs assessment done to improve parental involvement strategies found agencies defined hard-to-reach families as “the traditionally under-represented groups, the marginalized, disadvantaged or socially excluded” (National Foundation for Educational Research). Most agencies, however, simply defined this group as ethnic minorities. The definitions of hard-to-reach parents encompass, race, gender, and class.

Moreover, the proposed study is concerned with the complex reality that is made up of individually salient factors (i.e., race, class, gender and education). For example, Benjamin (1991) recounts bell hooks’ contention that not every woman who joined the League of Women Voters was “surrendering allegiance to race, class, and sexual preference, to bond on the basis of shared political belief” as most African-American women thought of the commitment. Another participant in Benjamin’s (1991) study commented that “the African-American woman is in a particular kind of category that carries with it a lot of historical baggage.” Making a similar point about why minority youth do not enter the teaching profession Gordon (2000) writes, “The issues related to increasing the participation of ethnic minority youth in teaching careers are nested and need to be seen in relationship rather than in isolation.” This need to study relationship of issues with respect to their collective interaction with behavior also exists for the study of CESAA mother’s decision making about school interaction. The behavior of African-

---

9 The term “constructed perception” refers to the quantitative comparison of behavior that tends to serve as the accepted norms of an entire group. As such, beliefs and attitudes are presumed and school policies are conceptualized from a deficit perspective.
American parents in school interaction is a result of race, class, culture, institutionalized notions of place and in this case gender and residence. Most studies within parental involvement and achievement gap literature are quantitative survey based comparisons, which have not to this point addressed the complexities of interactive affects.

In addition, as the differential influence of parental involvement on African-American student achievement, as compared to that for White children suggests, how parents act out their parent role varies by group. It varies by race, class, family configuration and gender. The absence of the college-educated African-American mother’s perspective, therefore, represents a gap to be filled in the literature.
Chapter 2 - Technical Requirements

Research Questions

In this paper, I propose a qualitative exploration of the thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and experiences of college educated single African-American mothers that contribute to decision making about school interaction. The basis for studying school interaction is that it is a key to academic success for African-American students. Gap closure literature reveals that researchers have given very little attention to gaining insights from African-American parents, specifically the college-educated single African-American mother. This is the case despite education policy requirements that necessitate effective parent/school relationships. For example, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act “mandates that elementary schools give parents the tools they need to support their children’s learning in the home” (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007). They are also required to offer “parent leadership opportunities” and “communicate regularly with parents about student progress” (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007). The problem here is that before schools can create and foster this type of effective relationship, they must “distinguish the different child outcomes to which family involvement relate and understand the needs and assets of the diverse communities that make up their student populations” (Harvard Family Research Project, 2007). Basically, schools need to understand what motivates a parent to be involved. In addition, schools need to understand how the parent thinks about being involved in school on their child’s behalf.

Current literature on parental involvement of African-Americans reveals that they are indifferent to school contact. John Ogbu’s research on African-American student disengagement and cultural ecology supports the hypothesis that the social environment,
which includes historical and contemporary events, produces a unique interactive effect on behavior such as decision-making. Extant research tells us what the effect on behavior looks like. A qualitative case study analysis may illuminate how and why the behavior exists the way it does for this parent type.

Therefore the study’s research questions are:

- How do CESAA mothers involve themselves in their children’s schooling?
- What contexts seem to shape CESAA mother’s involvement in their children’s schooling?
Conceptual Framework

In this section of the proposal, I will attempt to show how together research lenses expose a gap in the literature to be filled by an exploration of the CESAA mother’s perceptions about school interaction. Three veins of literature inform this study: parental involvement/community connections, achievement gap closure and African-American families/social class. Although each lens of research puts forth implications for close parent – school relationships (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Dennis, 2005; “Family Involvement Makes,” Henderson & Mapp, 2002), the investigation of perceptions and attributions are focused solely on the school and students (Epstein, 1987; Ferguson et al, 2002; Ferguson, 2002; Honig et. al, 2001,). Moreover, no matter the class standing of African-American families their education and school interaction profiles appear deficient. Due to an average lower class standing, family composition and cultural values African-Americans, like lower class and working class parents, are perceived as incapable of contributing to problem solving discussions about achievement (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; Crozier, 1999; Engerman et al, 2006; Trotman, 2001). Furthermore, parental involvement research recognizes the importance of parent involvement and its contribution to student success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002, Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000). However, insight to experience and thoughts about school interaction for the CESAA mother continues to be overlooked.
### Research Lenses and Order of Discussion 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lens</th>
<th>Relevance to the Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parental Involvement/School-Community Connections</td>
<td>An array of ongoing and proactive engagement between a parent and the child’s school. Involvement includes, but not limited to, at-home activities, phone communication, conferences and special program attendance, holding parent positions in school. Parents may also be enlisted by the school as empowerment agents (i.e., recruitment of other parents in school governance and other activities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Gap Closure</td>
<td>A school-centric analysis of effective schooling for African-American students which focuses on an instructional tripod geared toward improving achievement specifically for African-American students. One of the aims of the instructional tripod is <em>institutional reconstruction</em> (i.e., inclusion of African-American history/experience coursework, empowerment pedagogy and more proactive school led parental involvement initiatives).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American Family/Social Class</td>
<td>African-American family analysis’ present a pathology of behavior based on problematic family compositions, average class standing and cultural values. Most analysis of African – American, for all class groupings, parents support a deficit position with school interaction behavior likened to that of lower and working class parents (i.e., typical analysis’ suggest this class of parent believes the school is responsible for educating their children).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent involvement motivations become increasingly important as parental involvement research continues to reflect positively on student achievement.

Understanding these motivations is vital especially since schools are required to
understand how to promote interaction effectively. The extant literature does not support understanding or exploration of either aspect aimed at improving learning for African-American students. The absence of this line of exploration underscores the importance of producing credible sources of insight to African-American parent beliefs and behaviors, expressed by them, about why they believe and behave as they do relative to parent involvement. Hoover-Dempsey’s et al (2005) research on the process of parental involvement motivations offers a conceptual framework for exploration. It is a contention within this study that the confluence of paradigms (i.e., race, gender, history, opinions of trusted others, class, societal images) shape those concepts involved in decision-making, namely self-efficacy and role construction.

This portion of the conceptual framework first addresses motivations for decisions about school interaction. The motivations focus on a sense of self-efficacy and role construction. These constructs are applicable to any parent group. Then the conceptual framework addresses term definition and the presence of an interactive influence by a network of social concepts. These social concepts include race, gender, and class. Lastly, the conceptual framework addresses the theoretically relevant questions to be explored within the study.

Motivations for decision making

As discussed throughout this proposal, I intend to examine a complex of factors believed to influence thoughts and decisions about parental involvement for college-educated single African-American mothers. I will attempt to delineate the composition and sources of their decision making in this area. Hoover-Dempsey’s et al (2005) study on why parents become involved in school offers thought constructions from the field of
psychology, which provide a way of qualitatively showing relationship between this group’s knowledge construction and that of similarly situated parents at large.
Two factors are identified in the Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005) study and considered the driving forces of decision making about parental involvement, the first being the parent’s sense of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as the parent’s belief and ability that she can produce desired outcomes for her child in school (Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005). Moreover, confidence in one’s own ability to control the likelihood of certain outcomes dictates behavior. Hoover-Dempsey cite Bandura (1989, 1977) posting that self-efficacy
is created through individual and group experiences, which take on institutionalized stature in the social world. The acceptance of this “institutionalized reality” then serves as the accepted norm for behavior. There are four domains through which this reality is created: 1) personal mastery experiences; 2) vicarious experiences; 3) verbal persuasion, and 4) physiological arousal (Bandura as cited in Hoover-Dempsey et al, 2005). The first domain consists of having obtained success in an area. The second deals with possessing knowledge of relatively equal others achieving success in the same area. The third domain consists of the people able to affect thinking and behavior of the individual. The fourth domain is feedback (“physical and affective state”) received from the social world about the individual’s (and people like the individual) ability to succeed in a given area.

The second driving force of decision making about parental involvement is role construction (Hoover-Dempsey et al 2005). The term refers to parental beliefs about child development, effective rearing practices, and what constitutes appropriate assistance toward school success. Specifically, role construction is composed of what the parent believes she is supposed to do relative to helping her child succeed in school, if anything (Hoover-Dempsey, 2005). It addresses the parent’s thinking about with whom she places responsibility for student success. Secondly, role construction includes perspectives of important outsiders that influence the parent’s actions in how to become involved in school and assist their child to succeed. The understanding of who constitutes a relevant source is dictated by the parent’s personal experiences, associations and estimations of their child’s chances or place in society.
Concept Definition

Several peripheral concepts are important to this study. First, the term college-educated refers to African-American mothers who have first generation college experience. Minority students are more likely than other students to be first generation college students, but the literature is limited in terms of attention to one specific group (Dennis, 2005). Furthermore, affects of the confluence of race and class is also endemic to the experience of having first generation college experience. Second, this confluence of race, gender, and class is conceptualized in many different ways in the literature so that no one definition or reference is apparent. However, the notion of interactive affects is supported by the research of John Ogbu (2003) in his theory of cultural ecology. The theory situates minority interpretation of the world within their knowledge of historical mistreatment and views on their contemporary place in society. For the purpose of this study, this concept is defined as the coming together of streams of reality (i.e., life context of being African-American, female and member of a socioeconomic status) to form an entity which has an effect on the thought processes of a given group. Even though existing research addresses class and parental involvement (Battle & Coates, 2004; Hill, 2001; Lareau, 2000; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Rothstein, 2004; Weis et al, 1992;), gender and parental involvement (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000; Christian et al, 1998; Crozier, 1999; Mia-Xin & Klinger, 2000; Simons-Morton & Crump, 2003), and even role construction and parental involvement (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001; DesJardin, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey, 2004; Mosley-Howard & Evans, 2000); there are no studies to date that have examined parental involvement, parent role construction, self-efficacy, and
the interactive affects of race, gender and class as they relate to college-educated single African-American mothers.
Research Design

Sample

Understanding how self-efficacy and role construction are composed and then how they color decision making requires extensive interviewing and deliberate selection of participants. Stakes (1992) writes “They [cases] are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing about a still larger collection of cases.” Stakes calls this kind of interest instrumental case study. Instrumental case study becomes collective case study, as Stakes calls it, when more than one individual is of interest with respect to a general condition. Stakes’ instrumental case study is commensurate with Yin’s multiple case study approach, which I will discuss further in the following section. The similarities and dissimilarities of these women are important to the contribution of voice for “it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases” (Stakes, 1992). Therefore, approximately twelve members of the following categories will be recruited:

- college educated (associates, bachelors or masters degree obtained),
- single family, female headed-households
- African-American mothers
- Age groups – attempting to account for range of life experience half of the respondents will be (25 – 30) and the other half (31 – 40)

The mothers will have children in elementary through high school since this research is concerned with how the mother perceives her role and her self efficacy relative to the
child’s success in school. A purposive sampling plan is more conducive to rich
description from those directly experiencing the phenomena. It is also the most feasible
since college-educated single African-American mothers are a relatively small percentage
and some consider it a hard group to gain access to. One potential adverse effect of the
sampling design on results is heterogeneity of the groups. Differences in universities and
level of educational attainment may hinder the gathering of information toward a

*collective case study.*

As a member of this population, I retain personal and some collegial relationships
with other college-experienced single African-American mothers. As such, I am aware of
the potential bias of responses and in my interpretation of those responses. However,
research is not value-neutral. For the researcher, and the researched, come to the task of
exploration or investigation with a set of presuppositions. I can only be painstakingly
aware to diminish, as much as possible, the subjective affects of my group membership.
Concerning bias and subjectivity Elliot Eisner wrote, “My views pertain to the belief that
knowledge is always constructed relative to a framework, to a form of representation, to a
cultural code, and to a personal biography.” Moreover, it is my belief that my
relationships and membership will provide me access to participants and their
consideration of being respondents. At present, I am aware of at least six women, fitting
the criteria, who have also expressed interest in participating in the study. These women
are in communication with other similarly situated mothers and will provide a connection
for me to other participants to be recruited for participation in the study.
Participant Demographics Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>College Experience</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th># of Children</th>
<th>First-Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>Postal Worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Office Worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Middle Mgmt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Media Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methodology

My dissertation will be a qualitative, collective case study utilizing a narrative inquiry approach. I chose a qualitative approach because it provides the best way of studying constructed reality and “attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Creswell, 1998, p.15; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A qualitative approach should be used when doing research about people’s lives, their experiences, thoughts, emotions and behaviors (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.11). In defining qualitative research, Creswell (1998) situates the foci of the tradition on a “complex, holistic picture…one which takes the reader into the multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it in all of its complexity.” Understanding how CSEB mothers think about school interaction, efficacy and their parent role is highly complex and a multi-faceted issue. Displaying the dimensions of the issue requires an inductive approach that values participant perspective.
Although Stakes (1992) and Yin (2004) use different terminology, the intent and goal of collective case study and multiple case design are alike. Within the qualitative tradition there are a variety of approaches, the collective case study or multiple-case design, as defined by Yin (2004), focuses on several cases to examine a “general condition, population or phenomena” (Stake, 1992). One of the beliefs of my study is that first generation CESAA mothers share similar thoughts about school interaction with non CESAA mothers. Collective case study or multiple-case design emphasizes the sharing of a general condition (i.e., indifference to school interaction). In discussing the methodological significance of multiple case design, Yin (2004) writes, “[multiple case design] helps to draw cross case conclusions…a single case presents a variety of principles that will have echoes in the other cases and become the basis for the author’s cross-case analysis and conclusions.” An equally important reason to utilize this approach is that whether or not a common characteristic is believed to exist, exploration of each individual within the study may foster better insight and clarity of members of the population at large (Stake, 1992).

As previously mentioned, one of the broader aims of this study is to provide insight to experience, to tell a story useful to understanding lived experiences. To answer the question: why narrative inquiry? Clandinin & Connelly (2000) state “narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience because experience happens narratively.” The narrative approach is particularly important to an illustration of how the CESAA mother thinks about parental involvement because of its concern with “life as it is experienced on a continuum – people’s lives, institutional lives, lives of things” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For example, the role construction of an individual, like
the CESAA mother, changes in accordance with experience, expectation of important
others and attempts to change their behavior (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). A narrative,
according to Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997), “documents human behavior and
experience in context.” Its use in this study represents a significant departure, from the
extant literature, in methodological approaches to parental involvement investigation.

Another reason to use a qualitative, multiple-case design is that current literature
tends to adopt a quantitative comparative approach to parental involvement, with aim to
generalize results. However, because little is known about interactive affect of race,
gender, and class related to parental involvement this investigation is much less interested
in generalizability and much more interested in “the creation of a new sense of meaning
and significance” with respect to decision making about school interaction of CESAA
mothers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.42). The research project is designed to help
understand the compositional make-up (how, what and in what way) of how the
confluence of race, gender, and class influence parental involvement, therefore a focus on
generating participant perspectives is best (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 1998;
Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997; McMillan & Wergin, 2002).

Data Collection

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) write that the work of narrative inquiry takes place
within a three dimensional narrative inquiry space that is explored using interviewing
techniques. The inquirer uses questions to explore intensely and contextually the
phenomena. This space provides guidance in questioning and reveals avenues “to pursue
narrative inquiry – toward production of a grand narrative, reducing stories to a set of
understandings” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 54). The asking of questions and
observation of participants, as in the phenomenological tradition, is a thorough exploration. The level of depth required, in the production of rich thick description, then, suggests that it does not lend itself to the study of large numbers of the population of interest. Therefore, my participant pool will be small. Specifically, I plan to interview twelve CESAA mothers three times for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour each time. The interviews will be both unstructured and structured. Unstructured interviews allow insight to perception and ways of thinking about an experience of the participant – it takes all aspects of the experience into account through opened-ended questions (“Overview: Ethnography, Observational Research”; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Structured interviews seek specific information. Using a combination of the two forms in the research will allow a well rounded thorough story to be told. (See Appendix A for Parent Interview Protocol)

Another important consideration for this study concerns the flexibility of data collection procedures employed in the research design. McMillan & Wergin (2002) suggest that since qualitative research does not seek “objective descriptions and relationships” and assumes a constructed reality, procedures for data collection are not rigid but iterative. It will be necessary to go back forth between narrative data and narrative process or as Miles & Huberman (1994) put it “Story” approaches need to be married to “concept” approaches.” The emergent nature of gathering participant perspectives requires an evolving, heuristic progress to adding depth and richness of information at appropriate stages.

From a narrative inquirer perspective, this means being aware of my presence within the participants three dimensional narrative inquiry spaces (i.e., temporal,
personal-social dimensions and within place) and capturing that space in “field texts” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.88). Clandinin & Connelly (2000) situate their terms within John Dewey’s conceptualization of experience, more specifically his hypotheses concerning continuity, interaction and situation. The conceptualization of Dewey’s hypotheses in this way allows one to “peer into experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.50). The ability to look into experience is instrumental to the utility of findings in this study.

Moreover, narrative inquiry entails intensive negotiating. In the creation of field texts, the inquirer negotiates all contact with the participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 129). In essence, the inquirer is not just interviewing but she is building relationships. Taking into consideration the personal relationships I currently have and will use in this study, I plan to address the criteria by having three interviews per participant. The first relatively unstructured and open ended. The second and third interviews will be semi-structured.

The first interview will provide an opportunity to peer into the life of the respondent through self-perception. This information will help to answer my research questions by establishing context. Establishing context includes exploration of historical communications that lead to current communications. The next interview will gage the mother’s views and behaviors as a parent relative to being involved in school on her child’s behalf. Then the third interview will gage the mother’s beliefs about the status of African-American women and children in society relative to the influence of race, gender, and class. This interview focus also attempts to establish context and to gage how the mother believes historical and current perceptions about race, gender, and class may
shape her behavior in her child’s school. Additional interviews may be included to achieve saturation as made known by the data to be collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Other data collection sources will include observation of parent-teacher conferences, anonymous teacher interviews and parent email journaling. I will gain permission from the CESAA mother, via informed consent, to accompany her to a parent-teacher conference. In her book *The Essential Conversation*, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot suggests that her own self-exploration and autobiographical reflection on parent-teacher conferences made the emotions (fears, desires, and frustrations) inherent in being a parent and communicating effectively with schools more apparent. The use of observation and note taking in this space will add depth to the richness of the story to be told. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) advise the use of “written dialogue as a way of offering and responding to tentative narrative interpretation.”

Additionally, I will ask the CESAA mother to give the teacher an envelope, once the conference has ended, containing study materials that request anonymous participation. The envelope will also contain a self-addressed stamped envelope the teacher may conveniently use to return the questionnaire. By having the CESAA mother give study materials to the teacher, I am attempting to reduce the effects of my presence on interaction and communication between the mother and teacher. The inclusion of the teacher perspective regarding expectations of performance for the CESAA mother is another way to corroborate the mother’s perspective on parental involvement.

Furthermore, I plan to email participants and ask them to share their thoughts about parental involvement on behalf of their child once between the time of the first and
second interview and again between the time of the second and third interviews. These email journaling exercises should also offset any effect on responses due to my group membership. Triangulation of additional sources of evidence addresses trustworthiness of the data results.

Data Analysis

In this study, using qualitative data analysis software, NVivo, I will employ an emergent themes comparison analysis method. For example, I will compile narratives from the experiences/responses of the women interviewed. Based on information from my pilot study, some themes may be how different mothers talk about “labor” vs. “mothering” or how these women view the “labor of parenting.” The historical context of family rearing may also prove an important concept relative to their parental involvement. The goal will be to see whether it is a fore-fronted theme or a background one.

Clandinin & Connelly’s (2000) discussion of the analysis process starts with “falling in love versus cool observation.” By this comparison they seem to suggest, as much as possible, being a participating member of the community being studied. Therefore my second analysis method will be including within my field texts personal reflections of my own experiences along with what my participants share. As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) state, “The narrative researcher’s experience is always a dual one…the inquirer experiencing the experience and being part of the experience itself.” The main goal of analysis in narrative inquiry is to capture sensitively and completely the shifts within the three dimensional narrative inquiry spaces.
Toward an analytic framework (including interview protocol construction, creation of field texts, final research narratives and interpretations) the three dimensions entail the following according to Clandinin & Connelly (2000):

- **Personal and social interaction** – the inquirer asks questions that probe the “internal conditions such as moral disposition, feelings and hopes” of the person. This is referred to as *inward inquiry*. Other questions asked in this category concern networks and other environmental conditions surrounding the person, referred to as *outward inquiry*.

- **Temporal issues** – the inquirer asks questions that gage the person’s past, present and future of an event. This dimension serves to provide context and meaning to events relative to time. These types of questions are viewed as looking *backward and forward*.

- **Place** – This dimension is concerned with the “specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscape or sequence of places.” As there are various ways to configure setting or place (i.e., in history, geographic) in which events occur, for my study “place” will focus on communication networks or the medium through which messages are communicated (i.e., schools, family upbringing and society at large).

**Expectations for results**

It is important to note here that I am intimately connected to this study. So much so that the narrative quest to be embarked upon is cathartic. Being a CESAA mom myself, I expect my experiences and anxieties about school interaction to be exemplified in the stories of lived experiences of other CESAA mothers. Clandinin & Connelly
(2000) argue that acknowledgement of our own expectations interwoven with making a priority the “place of people” is the challenge of true narrative inquiry. *Place of people* calls for the acknowledgement and replacement of my acceptance and internalization of theoretical terms and concepts with the lived story of experience, within the narrative study. For example, the expectations to be discussed here should be mentioned, in context, within the narrative. However, the narrative should not be written in such a way as to be seen as representative of a theoretical position, or not, but as the story of a person.

Toward expectations for stories yet to be told, relative to parent role construction, an institutionalization of the “other” social reality will motivate, along with the knowledge of experience/treatment of African-Americans in history, the thinking about school that encourages indifference to interaction. I believe that while CESAA mothers may understand the importance of school interaction, pressures related to socioeconomic status prevent and maybe hinder appropriate behavior in this regard. School involvement, other than addressing behavior issues and making sure assignments are completed, may be seen as still only for white stay-at-homes moms or a middle class luxury they cannot entertain. Moreover, those able to inform role construction ideas of CESAA mothers are trusted individuals (family members who most often do not have good experiences with schools or college experience and are among the poor and working class. The narratives may also bring to the fore-front a continual lack of trust of schools for these mothers related to their race.

It may also be apparent that progress of the child, in terms of development, will be linked to behavior (i.e., piety) and less to school performance. Ideas about the role of
the school will be distinct (school teacher of academics) from that of the parent (teacher of life) and the contribution of the social world (ideas about race and class and gender) to be nuanced but identifiable in their thinking. The way African-Americans are perceived in society, in general, may underlie almost all things relevant to the parent’s estimations of the child’s school success.
Justification for the Study

Even though educators and researchers have been investigating the achievement gap since the 1960s, today we are no closer to explaining why the gap persists (Viadero, 2000; Braun et al, 2006). Although the gap showed signs of narrowing around the 1970s to early 1980s, progress ceased around 1988 (Viadero, 2000). Moreover, since the late 1980s the achievement gap has remained consistent across all socioeconomic levels, for African-American students. This description of the status of the achievement gap highlights the need for a more informed perspective of the contours and multifaceted nature of the problem. I contend that authentic insight, from the CESAA mother, should result in the development of interactive approaches, policies and programs to affect desired change.

Toward meeting this need, the outcome of my study will be useful to multiple audiences through its major contribution, insight into perspectives currently excluded from dialogue on parent involvement as it relates to African-American student academic achievement. This acumen will be intellectual fodder for educational dialogue on strategizing to improve African-American student achievement and bridging the achievement gap. It will provide other lenses for discussion within the African-American community about parenting and student achievement. Insight, as the important contributing factor, is significant because it will add authenticity to research about CESAA mothers, possibly African-American mothers at large. Having said this, I do not intend to suggest that my study’s findings will yield a generalizable view of parental involvement for all African-American women. My study is about CESAA mothers, by
CESAA mothers. The study will present emergent themes from their voices fostering authenticity. Authentic voice will serve to expand the literature thereby expanding the policy “took kit,” which presently, with few exceptions, seems full of contrived voices and perspectives. Telling the story of these women, in this manner, will allow readers to live in their world, speak their language, negotiate their identities with their images and “turn our keys in their locks” (Blaise, 1993 as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.54).

Bryk & Schneider (2002) posit that substantial change in school improvement tactics begin with trust. In their study about understanding how to improve Chicago schools, Bryk & Schneider (2002) found that the social relationship between parents and schools was highly problematic. Gordon (2000) also suggests that the effectiveness of school relationships with parents represents an integral factor to educational progress. Parents in the Chicago study did not trust the schools’ ability to be, among other things, open, benevolent, and fair. “In the absence of prior contact with a person or institution participants,” to make decisions, “may rely on the general reputation of the other and also on commonalities of race, gender, age, religion or upbringing” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p.41 – 42). I would argue that extant literature and societal experiences also contribute to the general reputation of the other, and therefore colors decision making, for all parties concerned. Thus, the contribution of insight from authentic perspectives constitutes a core resource for school improvement, especially for improvements aimed at African-American students.

Another utility of the knowledge (insight) to be gained from this study is in the multiplicity of its applications. Specifically, this study will speak differently to each reader. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) posit that the transformation of narrative research
into literary texts is an instrumental application. In this way, “narrative studies are judged to be important….for the vicarious testing of life possibilities by readers…narrative inquiry extends the educative linking of life, literature, and teaching” (p.42). The narrative approach to data analysis employed in this study will “offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.42). As an anthology of perspective, policy-makers, schools, teachers, parents, and interested others get a glimpse of the CESAA mother’s thought processes that may shape their behavior relative to schools. A consolidated presentation of group standing, specifically as knowledgeable contributors to problem solving within the African-American community, is missing. This is more significant today as it seems that discussions about family and parenting have taken on new fervor within the African-American community. Celebrities/intellectuals such as Drs. Bill Cosby, Alvin Poussaint, Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, Michael Dyson and television personalities such as Tavis Smiley all situate the improvement of African-American student achievement in the lap of African-American families and their parenting. Usually and historically, the single African-American mother family composition is held up as the pathology of its people.

As the number of single parent and female headed households among African-Americans continue to outnumber that of two parent or male headed households, exposure of African-American female parent thinking about school interaction is vital to the creation of interventions directed at closing the achievement gap. This study will have implications for African-American mothers, fathers, educators, policy-makers, and schools. It has the potential to make connections visible and provide insights beneficial to improving parent/school interaction of African-American parents. The extent that
parental involvement is discussed focuses on relationships between parents and classroom teachers. A basic assumption, pertinent to the study of African-American student underachievement is that out-of-school influences play a major role. Parental involvement in schools is one of those significant influences. As such, attention should be directed toward the perspectives of college-experienced single African-American mothers regarding school interaction because they are integral to research aimed at gap closure. The views of African-American parents on parental involvement, specifically those of college-experienced single African-American mothers, represent an untapped resource to the educational community and an under-utilized resource to her people en mass.
CESAA mother Interview Protocol
Appendix A

First Interview
- Tell me about yourself. Who are you?
- How do you think others view you?
- How would you describe your family’s economic situation while you were growing up?

Second Interview
- Explain your role as a parent.
- What are your views on the parent-teacher relationship?
- If you had to assign a percentage to responsibilities within the parent-teacher-student relationship what would they be and why?
- What experiences have you had that effect your beliefs about how you should interact with your child’s school?
- Tell me how you go about ensuring your expectations for your child’s schooling are being met.
- Tell me about your relationship with the school (teachers, administrations, other parents etc.) your child attends.
- How would you describe any expectations you hold for how your child is being educated at school?
- How would you describe the expectation for your participation from your child’s teacher?

Third Interview
- How do you think your political identity – culture, race, class and gender affects your communication with your child’s teacher?
- Tell me how you think the perception of single black mothers in society affects your ability to advocate on behalf of your child in school?
- How might the profile of academic performance of Black children in this society influence your communication with your child’s school?
- How do you think the profile of academic performance of Black children in this society influences your child’s chances for success in school?
To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jewel Dunn, Ph. D. candidate from The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Policy Studies and I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study. This is a study about college educated African-American mothers and their views and behavior relevant to parental involvement in school on their children’s behalf. You’re eligible to be in this study because you are a college-educated African-American mother of a child(ren) in elementary or secondary school.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will participate in three interviews, respond to an email journaling assignment, and allow me to accompany you to a parent-teacher conference for observation. Your participation in this study is completely anonymous no contact information pertaining to you (other than age and degree attained), your child, or your child’s academic institution will appear in the findings reported for this study.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you’d like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at (814) 865 – 2779 or jud147@psu.edu. This research project is being conducted under the supervision of an advisor Dr. Dana Mitra. She can be reached at (814) 863 – 7020.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Jewel Dunn, Ph. D. Candidate
Principal Investigator
To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Jewel Dunn, Ph. D. candidate from The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Policy Studies and I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study. This is a study about college educated African-American mothers and their views and behavior relevant to parental involvement in school on their children’s behalf. You’re eligible to be in this study because you are a teacher to a child of a respondent participating in this study.

If you decide to participate in this study, you will answer the question on the attached page. Your participation in this study is completely anonymous no contact information pertaining to you, your academic institution, or the student will appear in the findings reported for this study.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you’d like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at (814) 865 – 2779 or jud147@psu.edu. This research project is being conducted under the supervision of an advisor Dr. Dana Mitra. She can be reached at (814) 863 – 7020. A stamped self-addresses envelope has been enclosed with this letter and question sheet for your convenience.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Jewel Dunn, Ph. D. Candidate
Principal Investigator
How would you describe your expectations for the participation of your student’s parent in school? At home? Please explain your responses. (Please write legibly and use a second sheet of paper if necessary)
Email Journaling Questions

Appendix E

Prompt: Please respond to the following three questions. Your responses should be returned to me at jud147@psu.edu before the date of our next interview scheduled for ________________________.

First Journaling Questions

1. What are your views on education?
2. How important are social networks at your child’s school? Please explain your answer.
3. Is there anything you want to share that we have not covered?

Second Journaling Questions

1. How do you know you are effectively interacting with your child’s school? Specifically discuss who and/or what informs your thinking and how you define "effective" in this context.
2. If you believe that you have an influence on your child’s academic performance, please describe how. If not, please explain.
3. Is there anything you want to share that we have not covered?
References


Journal of Marriage and the Family Vol. 61, No. 4 pp. 881-893


definition of the achievement gap. *Education of and Urban Society.* v 39, pp.113 -127


Clandinin, D. J.; Connelly, M.F. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass


Crozier, G. (1999). Is it a case of 'We know when we're not wanted'? The parents' perspective on parent-teacher roles and relationships *Educational-Research* v 41 no3. p. 315-28


Dennis, J.M. (2005). The role of motivation, parental support, and peer support in the academic success of ethnic minority first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development,* v 46, Number 3, pp. 223-236


Drummond, K.V., Stipek, D. (2004). Low-Income Parents' Beliefs about Their Role in


Family Involvement Makes a Difference: Evidence that family involvement promotes school success for every child of every age. Harvard Family Research Project. no 2.


competence with school adjustment and engagement among sixth graders.

*The-Journal-of-School-Health* v 73 no3. p. 121-6


