

UNDERSTANDING HOW HIGHLY INVOLVED MINORITY PARENTS
SUSTAIN THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION

A Dissertation by

David D. Sheppard

EdS, Pittsburg State University, 1996

MA, University of Missouri @ Kansas City, 1983

BGS, University of Kansas, 1976

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and the faculty of the Graduate School of
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I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Leadership.

Raymond L. Calabrese, Committee Chair

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

John Fast, Committee Member

Lori Miller, Committee Member

Jean Patterson, Committee Member

Randy Turk, Committee Member

Accepted for the College of Education

Jon M. Englehardt, Dean

Accepted for the Graduate School

Susan K. Kovar, Dean

DEDICATION

To my loving wife, Marla, and my daughter Madison for their enduring patience, support, and encouragement during my educational journey.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of my research study was to describe minority parents' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. Participants' perceptions were viewed through the theoretical frameworks of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology (Seligman, 1998) and humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1943). A qualitative descriptive multi-case study research design applied appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective to describe the minority parent's perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. An appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective centers on the positive core of experiences held by participants. The multiple case study design was selected for utilizing more than one case for evidence and data, thus strengthening the study and increasing its external validity (Yin, 2003). Data were collected through focus groups interviews, and document review.

Data were analyzed using pattern matching, the constant-comparative method and CATPAC, a text analysis software designed to show relationships among words. The analyzed data revealed six findings: Six salient findings were derived from my data analysis: (1) Native American and African American parents identified involvement strategies to improve their child's education; (2) African American parents believed there were issues related to minority relationships within the school and community; (3) Native American and African American parents set expectations for their children; (4) Native American and African American parents expressed pride in their children's accomplishments; (5) Native American and African American parents linked family

values to their role and responsibility as a parent; (6) Native American and African American parents linked teacher care and respect for their child to the child's success.

These findings validate that Native American and African American parents desire to be and can be as successful as any other minority or non-minority parents, at being involved in their children's education. This group of highly involved parents offered several effective strategies for sustaining involvement in their child's education. Communication strategies and recognition for what is important in dealing with school personnel has facilitated these parents in their quest to support and help their child through their educational careers. Both Native American and African American parents demonstrated that a belief system centered on the modeling of core and family values, including instilling the value of an education has proven to be effective positive acts for their children and families. A strong, positive, and optimistic belief system as well as a learned ability for effectively interacting with the school system has facilitated these parents in overcoming challenges and obstacles other minority parents often face.

I hope that the findings from this study can contribute to furthering an awareness of, and inspiring future research for minority parent involvement in our schools, as well as opening doors to practice and policy changes facilitating the education of children who greatly need to achieve at higher levels in our schools.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since the inception of family/parent involvement in education, researchers have sought to understand the implication of the parent's involvement in his/her child's education. The field of family/parent/community school involvement did not exist prior to the 1960s, and it was neither recognized in policy nor research (1997). Thus, the field of parent/school involvement is recent and its implications are still being discovered.

The importance of parent involvement in education has been well documented (Cotton & Wiklund, 1989; Davis, 2000; Epstein, 1983; Henderson, 1987; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Parent involvement has been linked to student achievement, self-esteem, and other desired factors attributable to student success in education.

Today's parent involvement research is focused on identifying the most effective and productive methods to benefit the child's learning through involvement of parents (Baker & Snoden, 1997; Baker & Snoden, 1998). A challenge for educational systems is to seek collaboratively a process that increases parent involvement and effectively contributes to their child's success in school. Moreover, it becomes an ethical issue for educators to operate with a policy of high parental inclusion, for example, integrating all socio-economic, racial, and ethnic groups. For this reason, consideration of the demographics of the local community is vital for those systems involving multiple ethnicities and cultures. The next section discusses community and school characteristics that provide a demographic background for the site of this study.

Background of the Study

This study took place in Coffeyville, Kansas, and USD 445. Coffeyville is a small blue-collar community in southeastern Kansas with approximately 11,000 residents. Seventy percent of the Coffeyville's residents work in Coffeyville. The other 30% of the workforce commute from surrounding rural areas and smaller towns. Some commute from Oklahoma, especially Notawa County, the county directly south of Coffeyville. Of the 30% working, yet residing outside of Coffeyville, the Montgomery County Action Council discovered that those workers did not desire to relocate. Higher taxes and housing were given as the foremost rationale for not living within the county boundaries (Hurd, 2003). Coffeyville consists of the following ethnic groups: White Non-Hispanic (75.76%), African American (12.12%), Native American Indian (4.97%), Hispanic (3.82%), and Other (3.33%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Coffeyville USD 445's enrollment of 1,925 students consists of the following ethnic groups: White, 55%, African American, 16%, Native American 10%, Hispanic, 4%, and Other, 15%. In USD 445 Elementary, Middle School, and High School level, ethnicity groups are very similarly comprised to the district demographics (Kansas State Department of Education, 2006). Economically disadvantaged students enrolled in USD 445 make up approximately 59% of the student population (Kansas State Department of Education, 2005).

In 2000, the median household income was \$25,542 and the median age was 39.2 years. Median household income for African-Americans was \$15,321, compared to \$31,964 for Native Americans, \$26,875 for Hispanics and \$27,515 for Whites. Overall, the median household income is less than the state median household income in 2000 that

was 40.264. The unemployment rate for Black males and females is 9.6% and for White males and females, it is 9.7%. While the Hispanic unemployment for males is only 4.4%, for the Hispanic females it is 22% (City-data.com, 2005).

The next section examines (a) the history of school-family relationships, (b) policy and (c) partnerships of schools-parents, and (d) minority parent involvement in their child's education.

History of School-Family Relationships

In the most unsophisticated and conventional societies, parents are responsible for their children's education. In these societies, sons are still following in their father career footsteps, and daughters, many of them observing the same child-rearing practices and/or vocational paths of their mothers (Gardner, 2004). "From the youngest of ages, children witness their elders carrying out these roles in models passed down through generations from great-grandparents to siblings" (Gardner, 2004, p. 121). Children learn primarily from parents/families through their first half decade before the formal school socialization process begins. Increased day-care and attendance at preschool facilities have impacted this socialization process in the previous two decades in large part due to a growing number of women entering the workforce (Coleman, 1987), shifting the emphasis of education from parent/family to the school.

Frequently, the shift from exclusive home to school learning represents a critical juncture for parent involvement (Gardner, 2004). That is, today, there is a growing emphasis for parents to be involved and participate in school functions; yet, increased parental involvement has been difficult to achieve due to the diversity of family life in the United States. Nearly one half of American households are represented by a family other

than married couples with children, such as working mothers with no fathers in the household. There are about 12 different classifications for household and family structures (Social Science Data Analysis Network, 2001). Married couples with children have traditionally been the norm, but that is becoming less so. Moreover, many families have non-traditional life-work styles or time constraints such as increased workloads outside the home along with childcare responsibilities (Moore & Barbarin, 2004).

Policy and Partnerships

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) in 2001 (Rutherford, Anderson, Billig, & Corporation), otherwise known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB)(No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002), has continued to endorse parental involvement in schools (Gomez & Greenough, 2002). One objective of NCLB is strengthening the partnership between parents and schools. Under Title I Section 1118 Parental Involvement: written policy states that local education agencies need to “identify barriers to greater participation by parents in activities (authorized by this section) with particular attention to economically disadvantaged, those of limited English proficiency or limited literacy, disabled, and are of any racial or ethnic minority background” (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). The law increases the parental role in their child’s education as informed decision-makers, and provides parents with more options for educational choice: “by conducting the effectiveness of parental involvement policy with the involvement of parents”(No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). In addition, parents must receive certain notification of educational benchmarks such as grades or assessments (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). Therefore, an aim of NCLB is the sustenance of parent and school partnerships.

Partnership efforts have been included through other legislative means. For example, Vail and Struck (1999) reported that five years after the addition of the Title I portion of the ESEA Act in 1994, parents were still not aware of the legislation to increase parent participation in schools, even though this funding greatly facilitated federally supported parent involvement programs. In addition, Title I schools have not adequately followed through on parent involvement requirements because there has been no follow-through or consequences for not meeting requirements, though many were established for disadvantaged students (Gomez & Greenough, 2002).

The added initiatives called for parent involvement compacts (one example is contracts) with schools that create viable partnerships with parents. Previously federally funded parent programs created contracts between the parents and school (Boyd & Shouse, 1997). These contracts varied according to the contract's purpose and objectives. In general, they are simple clauses signifying an agreement between the school and parents, and written with specific strategies usually for engaging parents for monitoring their child with homework assignments within district or local policy guidelines (Better Education for Students and Teachers Act 2001; Epstein & Hollifield, 1996).

Contracts with principal, parents, teachers, and children benefited children academically. Parents were to maintain their commitment to the contracts. Some contracts focused on providing a particular place at home to do school work, discussing school activities, monitoring a child's homework, and offering encouragement (Walberg, Bole, & Waxman, 1980). Homework and attendance monitoring were the most prevalent areas stipulated throughout parent contracts.

Problems with Parent and School Partnerships

A difficulty for many parent and school partnerships after initial enthusiasm was keeping the parents actively sustained in the process. The compact programs have met with limited success even though the numbers had initially increased since the 1994 inception figures (Vail & Struck, 1999). Despite the promising outlook for increasing parental involvement, only about 40% of Title I schools were utilizing any form of compacts with parents in 1998 (Gomez & Greenough, 2002; Vail & Struck, 1999).

Defining ‘involvement’ is one problem facing parental-school efforts (Gomez & Greenough, 2002). Most schools operate with the perspective that involvement means parents are involved in school events and activities, ignoring other aspects of parent involvement as vital such as support at home (Boethel, 2003; Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Mapp, 1999; Moore & Barbarin, 2004). Current federal legislation associated with parental involvement—under part (e) of Section 1118 in NCLB—defined involvement as effective parental participation, and encourages parent/school partnerships to improve student achievement. Legislation designates local schools or agencies to facilitate parents with state academic standards, student achievement benchmarks, requirements of state and local educational assessments, monitoring their child’s advancement, and working with teachers for enhancing their child’s achievement (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002).

Minority Involvement

The parents who seem to be more involved in their child’s education are affluent, possessing white middle-class advantages of race or class (Boethel, 2003; Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Moles, 1993). Epstein (1995)

suggested six types of involvement: (1) parental learning opportunities, (2) communicating with the school, (3) volunteering, (4) home support, (5) governance or decision-making, and (6) association with the community. Frequently, white middle-class parents have the advantage of being able to communicate more effectively to the majority of school personnel because of possessing similar beliefs and values (Deschenes et al., 2001; Diamond & Gomez, 2004). The inherent advantages make involvement easier for white middle-class parents. Many of the issues that impede minority communication and involvement are discussed in my study.

Just as there is an achievement gap for many children of minority parents, there also exists unequal conditions for all parents to be highly involved in their child's education (Deschenes et al., 2001; Desimone, 1999; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Harry, 2002).

For those who face a system built on middle-class values and beliefs, there is a need to recognize the conflicting values, aspirations, and expectations constructed by parents of different races and cultures. As a result, this study seeks to address the following overarching question: How do highly involved minority parents sustain their efforts to participate in their child's education despite overwhelming challenges?

Statement of the Problem

This section discusses (a) the importance of parent involvement, (b) student achievement, and (c) legislative policy regarding parent-involvement, (1) socio-economic challenges, (2) cultural and (3) personal challenges, and (4) alienation from the school process. The concluding part of this section explains what has been substantiated by the research, along with the study's focus.

The Importance of Parent Involvement

Educators base instructional changes on data-driven research. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) synthesized and analyzed 50 years of research rating the most vital factors for facilitating student learning. Out of 28 prioritized factors, one of the most important factors was home environment/parental support. The importance of parent involvement in a child's educational success has been documented by several researchers (Baker & Snoden, 1998; Becher, 1984; Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Cotton & Wiklund, 1989; Dauber & Epstein, ; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hickman, Greenwood, & Miller, 1995; Lall, Campbell, & Gillborn, 2004).

Studies indicate that parental involvement in their children's schools is a vital and equal partnership; however, parent involvement is more of an espoused theory and not a theory in use (Vail & Struck, 1999; Zinth, 2005). Parents represent a resource for educators that are under-utilized as a potentially powerful source for helping students learn. The goal for facilitating student learning is discovering the right combination of workable methods, including parent involvement that is directed at raising student achievement, as well as, self-esteem, positive attitudes, and a number of other factors that may benefit the student educationally.

Student Achievement

The standards movement defines how well students perform on state assessments as the measure to assess student learning (Deschenes et al., 2001; Marzano, 2003). Some believe that student achievement is more than improving performance on standardized tests (Funkhouser & Gonzales, 1997). Student achievement, for example, also can be measured by grade point average (GPA), mastery of fundamental skills, drop-out and

graduation rates, student attitudes, student self-concept, and employability (Cotton, 1991).

Industry and business leaders are inclined to stress the knowledge and skills required to meet future world markets, which will demand greater academic achievement among American students (Funkhouser & Gonzales, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 1997). A growing consensus among business leaders, parents, and teachers is that raising academic standards is the right course of action and essential for expecting students to improve achievement (2000; Funkhouser & Gonzales, 1997).

Considering the magnitude of raising student achievement, it is increasingly important that schools assign more importance on parental involvement. An effective home-school connection is essential to initiate parent involvement (Epstein, 1995). Modeling the inherent value in education falls logically to parents and it becomes increasingly important that schools initiate the establishment of this connection for student achievement efforts (Marzano, 2003).

Policy Uniformity and Approaches

Attempts have been made at the local, state, and federal levels to address the accountability and uniformity of many parental involvement issues. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 along with Title I regulations stressed the importance for development of parent/family/community involvement features for schools, and many states have some legislation or policy stressing improvement in parent involvement, including Kansas (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002).

Accountability for implementing meaningful parent involvement programs is a challenge for many federal, state, and local programs, exacerbated because of staffing

and funding shortages (Gomez & Greenough, 2002). In many public schools, successful parent involvement programs are short-lived because of the lack of funding, systematic techniques, and differing approaches, formats and structure (Lewis, 1992). The need for systematic approaches is complicated because of few parent involvement studies that provide detail of the procedures used in their reviews (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Griffith, 1996). These issues contribute to the limited research of longitudinal studies of family-school-community partnerships (Rutherford et al., 1997). Thus, studying highly involved minority parents and their cultures is important research as well as the resulting implications affecting policy change for parent involvement.

Socio-Economic, Cultural and Personal Challenges

Beyond local policy, state, and federal legislation there exists a challenge related to cultural differences concerning the reasons why some parents become involved and others do not (Gomez & Greenough, 2002). Thus, there is evidence that many schools project an unwillingness to become involved with certain parents based on ingrained views of prejudice along race, class, cultural ranks, and socioeconomic status (Ballen & Moles, 1997; Boethel, 2003; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Jeynes, 2003).

The majority of public schools in the United States represent middle class values. These values are supported and perpetuated by those who work in these organizations. These people are inclined to respect the cultural character of the middle class, while devaluing those less prosperous (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Larson & Ovando, 2001; Sanders, Epstein, & Connors-Tadros, 1999).

Many teachers, for example, perceive parents of the non-dominant culture or class (minorities), as not wanting or desiring the responsibility to become involved in their

child's education (Calabrese-Barton, Drake, Perez, Louis, & George, 2004; Caplan, Hall, Lubin, & Fleming, 1997; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; LaBahn, 1995; Lopez, 2001). As a result, they may be exceptionally cautious of lower socio-economic African-American parents' involvement because of racial and social class biases (Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999; Lewis & Forman, 2002). In essence, there is a lack of awareness and communication with families of different cultures and values (Delpit, 1995; Larson & Ovando, 2001) that may be either tacit or explicit.

The cultural divide between socioeconomic groups may be part of the issue related to low parent involvement among disenfranchised groups. Research suggests that working class minority as opposed to middle-class minority parents, may evaluate the perceived benefits of being involved in their child's schooling economically, that is, weighing the cost of attending school events, participating in meetings, or seeking out home childcare and transportation, versus the benefits to be involved (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Nechyba, McEwan, & Older-Aguilar, 1999). In the middle-class culture and belief system, the minority parent's choice of non-involvement is perceived through the majority of school staff and teachers (including African-American staff) as neither caring about their children's education nor pursuing the means for helping them with their education (Deschenes et al., 2001; Nechyba et al., 1999; Patterson, Niles, Carlson, & Kelley, 2005). In addition, teachers may not acknowledge elements of minority family involvement such as encouragement, monitoring of homework, and/or support at home (Boethel, 2003).

Minority status frequently implies that parents aspire to be less involved in their child's education; it often means that minority parents must negotiate through more

challenging environments with fewer respected resources to become fully involved within school contexts. These school contexts are represented through magnet schools, high percentage free and reduced lunch schools, urban, and neighborhood schools (Diamond & Gomez, 2004).

Many minority parents suffer from environmental challenges at a greater level than non-minorities. They face time, job, and personal obstacles related to involvement in their child's education, moreover, they often lack, high levels of education, sophisticated parenting skills, and may have a primary household language other than English (Ballen & Moles, 1997; Boethel, 2003; LaBahn, 1995; Melaville, 1998). These challenges demonstrate the necessity for school personnel to become skilled at addressing and developing positive communication strategies and other plans to connect with non-involved minority parents (Desimone, 1999). Otherwise, minority parents who come from traditionally disenfranchised backgrounds may feel that they will continue to encounter obstacles such as negative or little communication, a disinviting attitude, or both.

Alienation from the School Process

Socio-cultural, economical, and personal constraints are forces limiting minority parental involvement. More importantly, deep-rooted problems such as feelings of alienation also exist. Several studies suggest that parental alienation may be the source of inadequate communication with the schools (Lewis, 1992). Alienation of parents from the school process can and does transverse all socio-economic status, ethnic, minority, and geographical boundaries. Calabrese (1990) contended that while the literature proposes a variety of reasons for alienation, there is general agreement that minorities are

commonly alienated from the school system. Even though minority parents can and do indicate a strong willingness to participate in their children's education, most, however, perceive and report little hope that school staff will take the initiative in reaching out to them (Calabrese, 1990; Sanders et al., 1999; Trotman, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

The minority parent's alienation may be linked to a school culture that inhibits parents from school involvement by not facilitating their development in self-knowledge and self-reliance within the school culture, thus accomplishing little to reduce their alienation. The alienation syndrome remains enabled by the schools. It is perpetuated through policies that are representative of an unreceptive bureaucratic institution that often is self-defeating (Calabrese, 1990).

The alienation process exacerbates the lack of parent involvement. An effective approach is needed to bring parents, educators, and the community together for the child's academic success (Epstein, 1992). Parents who sense that the school is actively involving them have a more positive attitude toward the school organization (Davis, 2000; Epstein, 1983). Thus, school communication that fosters a receptiveness and sensitivity toward different cultures, values, and minority plights will more likely succeed in increasing parent involvement.

Although extensive research exists on the importance of parental involvement in education, there is little information on sustained parent involvement across grade levels (Caplan et al., 1997). Consequently, this study describes Native American and African American parents' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my research study was to describe minority parents' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. Participants' perceptions were viewed through the theoretical frameworks of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology (Seligman, 1998) and humanistic psychology, as it includes Maslow's theory of 'the basic good in people' (1943).

Overview of Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study research design with an appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective to describe the minority parent's perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. An appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective centers on the positive core of experiences held by participants. Appreciative inquiry focuses on the strengths and assets of organizations or individuals (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003). In this way, an appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective acts as a framework for the research design.

Research Questions

The study described the minority parent's perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. As a result, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do highly involved minority parents describe their motivation to be involved in their child's education?

2. How do highly involved minority parents describe the challenges that they have overcome in sustaining their involvement in their child's education?
3. How do highly involved minority parents describe the strategies they use to sustain involvement in their child's education?

Objectives

The following are the objectives and outcomes for this study:

1. The study will provide a description of minority parents' perceptions of their motivations to be involved in their child's education.
2. The study will provide a description of the challenges that minority parents overcame to be highly involved in their child's education.
3. The study will provide a description of the strategies used by minority parents to sustain their involvement in their child's education.

Significance of the Study

This research study may have wide-ranging implications for minority parent involvement regarding school initiatives. Specifically, this study sought to contribute to the scholarly literature and research on minority parental involvement by describing the minority parent's perceptions of how he/she overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in his/her child's education.

Sufficient information for establishing methods for enhancing involvement for all parents across grade levels over an extended time does not exist (Caplan et al., 1997). Until the last decade, studies appeared to ignore the involvement of minority parents, nor did they acknowledge the concept of sustained parent involvement in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Recent studies during the past decade

that may have focused on engaging minority parents in education have not considered sustained involvement or employed an appreciative inquiry research perspective as a lens for examining minority parental involvement. Identifying the motives, challenges, and strategies for highly involved parents to sustain their involvement in their child's education over an extended period will greatly enhance the literature and research on parental involvement for minorities.

Additionally, this study may represent a contribution to the effectiveness for future minority parental involvement policy and for schools desiring to involve more parents of multi-cultural backgrounds. At least 15 states have not mandated a state or local policy plan to address the action of parent involvement (Zinth, 2005). Given the importance of NCLB and adequate yearly progress (AYP), this study may increase awareness, services, and policies to create a more "highly involved" atmosphere for minority parents.

Delimitations and Limitations

The following delimitations applied to the study:

1. The study was delimited to minority parents of USD 445 who currently have children enrolled in high school or have graduated in 2006 from high school in the Coffeyville School District.
2. The study was delimited by the appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective.

The following limitation applied to the study:

1. The perceptions of administrators and teachers related to minority parent involvement are not part of the study.

2. The researcher's role as supervisor of special education services in USD 445 through May of 2006 may have affected perceptions or reactions of those involved in the study.

Assumption

The researcher assumes there are many minority parents who overcome challenges, sustain involvement, and remain highly involved in his/her child's education.

Definition of Key Terms

The study's key terms are defined below.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a theoretical research prescriptive that asks unconditionally positive questions, and concentrates on positive core values within the organization. The appreciative inquiry research perspective is holistic in nature and directs the focus of inquiry in a positive direction (Cooperrider et al., 2003)

Highly Involved Parents

Highly involved parents are those who participate in traditional school activities, homework monitoring and support, and have a deep commitment for seeing their child succeed in school (Cotton & Wiklund, 1989).

Minority

Minority in the context of this study refers to the ethnic-racial background of the participants. A minority group in the United States is defined by its race, ethnicity, and numerical minority who may experience discriminatory treatment and is assigned to a lower status position across wider society (Yetman, 1985).

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation will follow the traditional five-chapter organization. Chapter 1 presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, overview of the methodology, research questions, significance of the study, objectives, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 provides the literature review. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the study's methodology. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the findings. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, implications for future research, implications for praxis and recommendations, relationship of findings to relevant theory and a summary and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 of the proposal is the literature review. It is comprised of the (1) conceptual framework, (2) epistemology, (3) descriptions of the theoretical framework, (4) competing perspective, (5) a methodology for inclusion of related research in the review of the empirical literature, and (6) a synthesis of the reviewed empirical literature as it relates to minority parents who display sustained engagement or involvement in their child's education.

Overview of the Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework for this study is based on positive psychology and humanistic psychology principles that provide a viewpoint for examining highly involved and sustained parental engagement of minority parents in their child's education. The positive psychology framework evolved from humanistic psychology. Humanistic psychology's foundation was based on a reaction to the traditional schools of behaviorism and psychoanalysis. Among others, Maslow (1943) was influential in its genesis with his views of a human being's aspirations and needs for accomplishing goals based on motivation to perform good deeds and sustain a healthy self-esteem.

My professional experiences and observations of parent involvement have led me to believe that few selective parents have sustained high involvement in their child's education. I have found through my experience that the majority of parents fall somewhere on a continuum of rarely involved to highly involved in their children's education. The appearance is that only a small percentage of parents participate in the

majority of school activities. This participation traditionally represents working at the school, volunteering, or interacting with school personnel on a routine basis. Less visible to school personnel is the time spent by parents discussing education and monitoring homework assignments. The degree of home communication and involvement likely becomes more apparent to a classroom teacher as either the student's academic deeds improve or decline as the year unfolds.

My experience also informs me that communication is a critical component and at the heart of sustaining parent involvement. Schools in the United States have been constructed and conceived in the cast of middle class beliefs and values, which are still prevalent today creating a lack of awareness and communication with families of different cultures and values (Delpit, 1995; Larson & Ovando, 2001). It follows that middle class parents can more easily communicate with school personnel who are aligned with their middle class social and cultural beliefs and values (Deschenes et al., 2001; Desimone, 1999; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lewis, 1992). Therefore, for the minority parent, particularly if disadvantaged socially, culturally and/or financially, that effective communication with the school, essential for parent engagement, will be more difficult because of challenges faced in the process.

I find that some parents feel alienated or excluded from involvement in schools. I also sense a strong desire among most parents, regardless of racial, ethnic, or socio-economic background, to become engaged and involved in their child's education. One way to view this phenomenon, and discover how parents accomplish their goals of educational engagement despite the challenges they encounter, is through the theoretical frameworks of humanistic psychology and its embedded school of thought positive

psychology. These perspectives include the works of Maslow and Seligman, and embrace a positive and optimistic psychology toward life. Moreover, I filter the theoretical frameworks of humanistic psychology and positive psychology through an appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective.

Epistemology

This study is framed in a social constructionism epistemology. The function of verbal communication is critical in social constructionism. How people converse about themselves and civilization determines the character of their experiences (Raskin, 2002). Constructionism stems from the epistemological position that researchers should be aware of “how” people construct meaning in addition to “what” they know. In this study, I use a social constructionism epistemology to examine the social relationships between highly involved minority parents and the school.

Social constructionism serves as the epistemological basis for humanistic and positive psychology by explaining how people psychologically and socially construct knowledge (Guzdial, 1997). In this study, social constructionism undergirds the conceptual frameworks of humanistic psychology and positive psychology, as well as an appreciative inquiry, the theoretical research perspective.

Contrasting with the traditional problem-focused research in psychology, humanistic psychology enhanced by positive psychology advanced and challenged the traditional deficit, problem-centered methods utilized in psychology. Humanistic psychology considers human beings as subjects with inner experiences, motivations, and desires not easily measurable by conventional objective means. Using these frameworks, my research will reflect on the intention and context of humans sharing thoughts, choices,

free will, and dialogue in social relationships for examining how highly involved minority parents sustain engagement in their child's education. As a result, the epistemology of social constructionism aligns with the examination of the knowledge gained through these theoretical constructs.

The frameworks of positive and humanistic psychology were filtered through the research perspective of appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry considers the strengths of organizational situations and human experiences through recognizing and building on what is already robust and vital to their existence. Social constructionism is a fundamental underpinning of appreciative inquiry in that it builds on the premise of socially constructed realities. The social constructionism of epistemology is the foundation for the positive context of appreciative inquiry theory. Several main beliefs of appreciative inquiry stream from the image that people control their destiny by envisioning what they want and create a blueprint to move toward a personally designed destiny (Cooperrider et al., 2003).

Descriptions of the Theoretical Frameworks

In this section, I will discuss the theoretical frameworks of my proposed study. I will use the theoretical frameworks of positive psychology, and its evolvement from humanistic psychology as well as the appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is a form of action research. As a theoretical research perspective it frames the direction of the research (Egan & Lancaster, 2005). It transforms the problem into a strengths-based perspective and reframes it. Appreciative

inquiry observes the positive nature of human behavior and those values that inspire people to improve their condition/situation based on their strengths, hopes, dreams, and aspirations (Cooperrider et al., 2003). Appreciative inquiry along with the frameworks of humanistic and positive psychology illuminated the assets of minority parents to constructively and positively become involved in their child's education.

Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic psychology is “a value orientation that holds a hopeful, constructive view of human beings and of their substantial capacity to be self-determining” (Monti & Williams, 2001, para. 16). This school of thought and system of psychotherapy along with positive psychology and an appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective provide a lens for viewing how minority parents overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in his/her child's education.

In his seminal work, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, Maslow (1943), who many consider the father of humanistic psychology, explained that human beings have basic biological, physical, and psychological needs. He asserted that these needs require fulfillment before acquiring secondary goals such as learning, playing, or working. The theory's basic premise is that human behavior is governed by biological, cultural, and situational circumstances.

Maslow (1943) contended that human beings would first satisfy needs that are more important before progressing to higher level needs. Basic needs like food, safety, love, and respect, are primary needs. After an individual's primary needs are satisfied, he/she progresses to higher psychological needs like sociability and self-actualization.

Maslow, in company with Rogers, May, and Pearls are viewed as the founders of humanistic psychology (Daniel, 2005). Humanistic psychology introduced humans not as “objects” but as beings who exhibit feelings, intentions, and values that figure heavily into behaviors and motivations. The humanistic psychology movement, by the 1980’s, evolved into several different fields, and served across a continuum of varied approaches in psychology, counseling, and other mental health therapies (Monti & Williams, 2001).

As research theory, humanistic psychology is guided by an assurance that purpose and ethical values are important psychological forces that comprise basic determinants of human behavior. Human beings manifest the “humanness” or “holism” of their character through the need for meaning and creativity. As a research approach, humanistic psychology makes use of all characteristics of human existence (Monti & Williams, 2001).

These theoretical perspectives helped describe how minority parents overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in his/her child’s education. Many of the attributes of minority parents who remain highly involved in his or her child’s education may be the same positive attributes espoused by humanistic psychology and related therapies. These attributes may serve healthy, successful people with more internal hope allowing them to persevere through difficult situations when others cannot. Humanistic psychology offers a theoretical perspective to understand why and how minority parents sustain support of their child’s education.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is supported by positive emotions, positive traits, and positive societal foundations, (Seligman, 2002). As positive psychology applies essential

positive interventions, its purpose is to complement not replace what is already known about suffering, disorders, and limitations (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

The goals of positive psychology and its applications are to increase people's happiness. Research through positive psychology interventions show that those who are happy, experience positive emotions of a pleasurable life, are engaged (in life), and have meaning (in their life). The greatest emphasis is placed on engagement and meaning (Seligman et al., 2005). The measuring of happiness is a recent evolution for positive psychology derived from theories based on Seligman's earlier experimentation on learned helplessness, depression, and self-explanatory style. The three concepts are inextricably linked as outlined in the following paragraphs.

Seligman's seminal research involved learned helplessness (Seligman & Maier, 1967). Learned helplessness can be described as maladaptive behavior where "giving up" is the response to circumstances where another behavior would gain avoidance or escape from a detrimental or negative situation. Learned helplessness is the inability to take action under certain circumstances, and if no action is taken, the premise is that inaction leads to apathy then depression. Through this maladaptive behavior, people learn that no matter what they do, it seems immaterial. Learned helplessness, for example, may occur in generational welfare recipients. Payments to indigent people may represent being rewarded for nonproductive or passive behavior, thus reinforcing the act of learned helplessness and dependency (Lindbeck, 1994). It is converse of optimism.

Optimism describes a range of positive psychological and physical health attributes (Gillham, Shatte, Reivich, & Seligman, 1998). Optimism theory suggests that if people can learn to be helpless, then they can unlearn helplessness, and can learn to be

optimistic. Learned optimism may combat the perception of how self-action makes little difference (Scheier & Carver, 1992).

Learned optimism compliments the notion of explanatory style and learned helplessness. Self-explanatory style is a way of habitually explaining to oneself how and why things happen. Conversely, learned helplessness is driven by pessimism and that one's actions have no consequence. A pessimistic manner of looking at the way things happen to us through our self-explanatory style often perpetuates learned helplessness (Seligman, 1998). Thus, a positive self-explanatory style may control learned helplessness and diminish depression by inspiring a hopeful and optimistic attitude regarding the future.

Competing Perspectives

Several alternative theories were considered. One such alternative explanation is the critical point of view; it is in sharp contrast to the research perspective of appreciative inquiry. Influenced by Kant, Hegel, and Marx, the first critical theorists addressed the oppression they observed in society and economics, particularly for disadvantaged, minorities, and other marginalized people. In the postmodern era, critical theory remains a prevailing choice of inquiry into societal organizations and paradigms, including education (Bohman, 2005). In addition, it has become a prevalent choice of inquiry for parental involvement research.

Giroux, Apple, and Freire are three modern critical educational theorists who express beliefs about education that affects parent involvement research. Apple proclaims that problems in contemporary schools are centered around “competing social visions” (Apple, 1996, p. 97). Giroux suggests that there are two relevant competing social visions

related to parents and public schools: neo-liberalism and multicultural awareness. The neo-liberalism movement is progressively growing in the United States and global markets. The term neo-liberalism has little to do with liberalism and much to do with “hypercapitalism” (Giroux, 2001). Hypercapitalism is a prevailing international condition whereby everything is bought or sold for a price, including education. In the United States, business and corporate culture are seen as invading educational systems as consumerism to parents (2001). For this reason, a parent’s exposure to learning opportunities containing educational political policy is important. By comprehending the bigger picture of policy in education, parents become decision-makers who are more informed.

The other social vision, multicultural awareness, proclaimed by critical theory proponents is that cultural studies should take a forefront in educational research (Giroux, 1994). Giroux asserts that if multicultural awareness was used by more educators, they would see themselves as active participants in the construction of education and less as historical versions of social change and receivers of culture (1994). Teachers need to expand on culturally relevant learning opportunities for students (Freire, 1998). Through this process, teachers gain an awareness of parental and familial backgrounds of their students.

Critical theory examines many of the same constructs for educational reform as one does through appreciative inquiry. Critical theory, however, by pointing out the inequities in power, is traditionally informative and explanatory in nature, not transformative. It can be problem-based, pessimistic, and may fall short in providing uplifting motivations and strategies for drawing marginalized parents into the school

mainstream. In effect, I did not select critical theory as a theoretical perspective because it less effectively postulates how we can rebuild the human spirit.

Appreciative inquiry had its genesis as a reaction to the critical theory perspective. Appreciative inquiry is a direct result of realizing traditional modes of inquiry into organizational problems were not succeeding, and that more innovative or generative actions had to be applied to inspire members, and increase productivity (Fitzgerald, Murrell, & Newman, 2001). I believe appreciative inquiry allows constructive understanding for eliciting a positive core of experience through the stories experienced by minority parents in sustaining involvement throughout their child's education.

Methodology for the Literature Review

My literature search seeks to identify, assimilate, summarize, and synthesize studies that report on the association between highly involved minority parents who have sustained engagement in their child's education and the theoretical framework of humanistic and positive psychology as viewed through the lens of an appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective. Keywords for my search in the following databases are organized in a subsequent table and will be bounded by the following criteria:

- Only empirical research since 1990.
- Only empirical research that had one or more of the following minority populations as a unit of analysis: Native American, African-American, and Hispanic.
- Only empirical research published in peer-reviewed journals.

Key Words

Positive psychology
Humanistic psychology
Appreciative inquiry
Parent involvement
Minority
Secondary schools
Kansas
Highly involved
Sustained

The preceding keywords were used in my search strategy of the empirical research. For clarity, the search engine (greatest to least amount yielded) followed by the respective amount of keywords hits are identified in Table 2.1.

The first strategy used keywords from my theoretical perspectives: This yielded the majority of hits through Google Scholar: 1190 for humanistic psychology, 731 for positive psychology, and 405 for appreciative inquiry. ERIC FirstSearch yielded 263 hits for humanistic psychology, 40 for positive psychology, and 25 for appreciative inquiry. Dissertation Abstracts yielded 104 for humanistic psychology, 49 for positive psychology, and 110 for appreciative inquiry. Infotrac yielded 164 hits for humanistic psychology, 67 for positive psychology, and 27 for appreciative inquiry.

The second strategy used the keywords related to my study: parent involvement, minority, secondary schools, Kansas, highly involved, and sustained. Google Scholar identified 7540 hits for parent involvement. ERIC FirstSearch identified 4,102; Dissertation Abstracts identified 1,355, and Infotrac identified 488. When the key word

minority was added as a keyword Google Scholar identified 1180 hits, ERIC FirstSearch identified 321 hits, Dissertation Abstracts identified 74 hits, and Infotrac identified 11 hits. When the keyword “secondary schools” was added, the number of hits was substantially reduced yielding only a combined database total of approximately 300 hits. When the keyword “Kansas” was added, there were only 38 total hits on the combined databases. I sought to identify the types of empirical studies completed in Kansas related to my research and added the keywords “highly involved” and “sustained.” Fourteen hits on the combined databases were identified.

The third search strategy combined the theoretical perspectives and research keywords. This combination yielded few combined database hits. “Positive psychology” and “parent involvement” yielded approximately 30-combined database hits. Additional combination of keywords produced even fewer results from the combined databases.

In my fourth search strategy, I used materials obtained from books, journals, or dissertations germane to my study. In addition, during the literature review process sources were obtained via a snowballing effect from other parent involvement references or resources. Most of the relevant studies were discovered through Google Scholar, followed by ERIC FirstSearch, and to a lesser amount Dissertation Abstracts, with approximately 350 pieces of research. Of these, 72 studies were determined to be relevant to the focus of my study.

Although there was evidence of empirical research in elementary school contexts, it was a secondary consideration in this review of the empirical research. My study’s focus is on the breadth of the minority parent’s engagement with schools; and how their engagement with schools was sustained over time.

Table 2.1

Search Results for Empirical Research

Search Strategy I: Theoretical Perspectives				
Search Terms	ERIC FirstSearch	Google Scholar	Dissertation Abstracts	Infotrac
Positive Psychology	40 hits	731 hits	49 hits	67 hits
Humanistic Psychology	263 hits	1190 hits	104 hits	164 hit
Appreciative Inquiry	25 hits	405 hits	110 hits	27 hits
Search Strategy II: Research Keywords				
Search Terms	ERIC FirstSearch	Google Scholar	Dissertation Abstracts	Infotrac
Parent Involvement	4, 102 hits	7,540hits	1,355 hits	488hits
Minority	321 hits	1,180 hits	74 hits	11 hits
Secondary Schools	7 hits	299 hits	1 hit	0 hits
Kansas (and substituted for Kansas were <i>High Involved & Sustained</i>)	0 hits	38 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Highly Involved	0 hits	10 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Sustained	0 hits	4 hits	0 hits	0 hits

Table 2.1 (continued)

Search Strategy III: Combining Search Strategies I & II				
Search Terms	ERIC FirstSearch	Google Scholar	Dissertation Abstracts	Infotrac
Positive Psychology & Parent Involvement	0 hits	18 hits	0 hits	12 hits
Positive Psychology & Minority	0 hits	12 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Positive Psychology & Secondary Schools	0 hits	2 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Positive Psychology & Kansas	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Positive Psychology & Highly Involved	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Positive Psychology & Sustained	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Humanistic Psych. & Parent Involvement	0 hits	5 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Humanistic Psych. & Minority	0 hits	7 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Humanistic Psych. & Secondary Schools	0 hits	3 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Humanistic Psych. & Kansas	0 hits	1 hit	0 hits	0 hits

Table 2.1 (continued)

Search Strategy III: Combining Search Strategies I & II				
Humanistic Psych. & Highly Involved	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Humanistic Psych. & Sustained	0 hits	2 hits	3 hits	0 hits
Appreciative Inquiry & Parent Involvement	1 hit	8 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Appreciative Inquiry & Minority	1 hit	5 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Appreciative Inquiry & Secondary Schools	0 hits	1 hit	0 hits	0 hits
Appreciative Inquiry & Kansas	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Appreciative Inquiry & Highly Involved	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits
Appreciative Inquiry & Sustained	0 hits	0 hits	2 hits	1 hit
When combining the remaining Theoretical Perspectives and Research Keywords “no hits” were yielded across databases.	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits	0 hits

Empirical Research

Research indicates that there is a lack of a clear definition for the term “involvement” (Baker & Snoden, 1997). The lack of a clear definition prevents accurate information from being obtained about parent involvement studies. In this study, the definition of the term is aligned with the descriptions of ‘involvement’ defined in Chapter 1.

My review of the empirical research focused on the most pertinent information related to highly involved minority parents who have sustained engagement in their child’s education. The review does not contain a plethora of studies specifically describing strategies, challenges, and motivations of highly involved minority parents. I found the following themes prevalent in my review of the related empirical research: (1) a brief legislative history (2) parent’s perspective, (3) parent’s voice, (4) parent motivation for becoming involved in their child’s education, (5) barriers that exist for minority parents, and (6) sustaining parent involvement and expectations/aspirations of minority parents in their children’s education.

Legislation

Vail and Struck (1999) reported that five years after the addition of the Title I portion of the ESEA Act in 1994, parents were still not aware of the legislation to increase parent participation in schools, even though this funding greatly facilitated federally supported parent involvement programs. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) in 2001 (Rutherford et al.), otherwise known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002), has continued to endorse parental involvement in schools (Gomez & Greenough, 2002).

One objective of NCLB is to strengthen the partnership between parents and schools. Under Title I Section 1118 Parental Involvement: written policy states that local education agencies need to “identify barriers to greater participation by parents in activities (authorized by this section) with particular attention to economically disadvantaged, those of limited English proficiency or limited literacy, disabled, and are of any racial or ethnic minority background” (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002). This most current legislation established the groundwork for state regulatory agencies to begin enforcing individual school systems to take active steps in their local plans for strengthening this important area of involvement between families and educators.

Parent Perspective

Understanding the parent’s voice and perspective through participation in their child’s education is important to the success of highly involved minority parents who have sustained engagement in their child’s education. The decision-making paradigm of minority parent choice for involvement indicates two patterns: internal motivations driven by psychological components, and involuntary actions guided by exposure and resource for social and culture capital. Research shows most parent involvement strategies have been identified and derived through the school’s perceptions and policies, not the parent’s perspective (Baker & Snoden, 1998; Epstein, 1992, 1995; Lewis, 1992). I found few studies examining parent processes and courses of action that motivate the underlying decision-making for becoming involved in their child’s education, those that exist examined the parent processes from a psychological perspective.

Psychological Components

Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler from their studies through 1984-87 and 1992-95 built on previous research and developed a model for examining parent perspectives for involvement. The model was based on the information gathered from efficacy of teachers, taken from teacher and principal reports, and analyzed for existing school characteristics and qualities influencing parental involvement. This data linked a school's capacity for contributing to parent motivations to the parents' participation with the school. Survey-based research indicated correlations between positive qualities of schools and parent involvement and revealed a need to more objectively measure parent participation at all school levels (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987). In addition, high teacher efficacy scores were positively correlated with four indicators of parent involvement: (1) parent-teacher conferences, (2) volunteering, (3) home teaching, and (4) support from home.

In another survey-based research design, findings indicate consistency among the teacher questionnaires within the three areas: (1) personal role construction, (2) self-efficacy, and (3) invitation from the school. Role construction characterizes how parents believe it is essential and important to participate in education based on their needs and their child's needs. Role construction explains how values toward education are created and decisions formulated for participation in their child's education. Self-efficacy signifies a person's willingness or perseverance to overcome challenges in providing parental educational influence. Parent self-efficacy beliefs assess if a parent's intervention with the child would be worthwhile. A parent's strong self-efficacy has secondary benefits in the form of behaviors that may be modeled for the child.

Parents are more likely to be involved when the school initiates their involvement through an invitation. Invitations by the school carry greater influence on parent decision-making when either role construction or self-efficacy is weak (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997). These concepts present similarities to the principles of learned optimism and self-explanatory style outlined in positive psychology (Seligman, 1998).

The Hoover-Dempsey model evolved from the work of Deslandes and Bertrand (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2002) and measured the same constructs with one minor difference: data for the seventh through ninth grades were analyzed for teenager requests for their parent's involvement, and was added to invitation by the school, specifically for seventh through ninth grades. Participants consisted of 770 parents of the 1500 that initially received mailed questionnaires. Five schools in urban and rural areas in Canada were targeted. Parent involvement at home and school were examined for their association to parent role construction, self-efficacy, teacher, and student invitation to participate. Results indicated that parent role construction was a significant factor for participation in eighth grade, less for grades 7 and 9. Parent self-efficacy was not a significant variable in this study's influence on parent involvement across all grades, particularly ninth grade (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005).

In contrast to the prior described findings, there is evidence supporting the contribution of parent efficacy in a student's education. Shumow and Lomax (2001), sampled 929 families with children aged 10-17 to explore the influence of parent's self-efficacy on student achievement. They found parent efficacy linked to background and income, and that those with higher efficacy were more involved in their child's education

and rearing at home. The study is constrained by its research methods employing student and parent reports only.

In addition to parent efficacy, a powerful effect of the Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) study arose from the student requests for involvement. This phenomenon was heavily dependent on the existing parent-student relationship at all grade levels with greater placed on the eighth grade (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). The researchers believed that scrutinizing ‘at home parent involvement,’ data separate from ‘at school involvement,’ data on ‘student requests’ would be essential for more specific information. Their findings suggest that the school may want to implement a means of emphasizing parent involvement while working with students at grade levels 7 through 9.

At the core of the minority parent perspective is the belief that being involved in their child’s education is a necessary pursuit, and if they possess an optimistic efficacy about the helpfulness of their educational involvement, then they have a greater likelihood of being involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Dodd and Konal (1999) in their book, *Making High Schools Better: How parents and teachers can work together*, interviewed 83 parents, teachers, and administrators in two school districts in New England, a qualitative study about parent involvement at the secondary level. The purpose was to gain perspectives on learning and teaching practices for their children. Parents of eleventh and twelfth graders were randomly selected. Those selected had been exposed to the new social studies and math curriculums. Twenty of the interviews were with teachers and administrators. The premise emerging from the interviews disclosed that neither school personnel nor parents had appreciative comprehension of the other’s perspectives (Dodd & Konal, 1999). They found it difficult to bring together ‘the teacher

as professional' and 'parent from a personal perspective' in constructive dialogue. The authors went into great depth of personal stories of parents who expected their children to learn in ways that teachers had never thought or heard of before. A limitation to the study was the diversity of parents where the ethnic minority was only 1% among the parent participants. The views of educational involvement for African-Americans and other ethnicities, however, remain comparable in their aspirations for their children.

African-American and White parents have similarly high standards for their children. As many as 91% of African-Americans and 95% of Whites believed their children should master the basics of reading, math, and writing in school, and 86% African-American parents thought it essential to master the grammar/syntax of the English language despite the debate at one time over Ebonics (Dodd & Konal, 1999). African-American and Latino parents expressed the same concerns for high educational standards/values (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Mulligan, 2005). These views are remarkably similar to the majority of White participants in New England in the Dodd and Konal (1999) data.

A close-up, in-depth view of parent perspective was offered (Carreon, Drake, & Calabrese-Barton, 2005) through immigrant parents who described their experiences and the engagement in their children's education. Participants were 17 immigrant families interviewed in three rounds of discussions in groups. Participants were from a mid-sized city in Texas, in two predominantly lower-socioeconomic elementary schools. The researchers utilized cultural-historical activity and critical race theory in their approach to these minority/immigrant case studies (Carreon et al., 2005). Supporting a uniquely appreciative perspective for how immigrant parents' encountered initial obstacles, the

authors gave rich descriptions of how immigrant parents succeeded in building constructive relationships through their pursuit of participation.

Much of the parent involvement research is characterized by ‘things parents can do’ according to the school’s perspective (Calabrese-Barton et al., 2004; Carreon et al., 2005). It is the researchers’ beliefs that cultural environments intersect between parents and schools in predetermined ways.

Barriers to Parent Participation

Barriers to parent participation in their child’s education can be classified in the following broad groups: (1) alienation, (2) cultural, (3) personal, and (4) social class roadblocks. Even within these themes, family situations are highly situational and individualistic.

Alienation

Alienation is a barrier to minority participation in schools. Calabrese (1990) used an alienation instrument administered to 22 minority and 91 White parents in an Midwestern urban school district. Results revealed that minority parents experienced more alienation from the school than did White parents. Group differences were illustrated in response to four of the scale’s questions: (1) minority parents did not feel invited from the school, (2) minority parents could not count on school establishment for reliable information, (3) teachers were unsociable; and (4) dissatisfaction was experienced with school actions, policy, and proceedings.

Cultural

For minority parents, alienation is synonymous with communication and cultural obstacles. Calabrese-Barton, Drake, Perez, Louis and George (2004) claim a deeper awareness of minority parent perspective by teachers and administrators is lacking and is a major cause in the lack of minority parent involvement in their child's education. In using terms such as 'presence,' 'engagement,' 'spaces,' and 'ecology' in lieu of only 'involvement' the researchers focused more on how parents interact with their culture and environments; they were better able to understand the beliefs that motivate and sustain the strategies culturally diverse parents use or need (Calabrese-Barton et al., 2004).

In a review of data over a five-year span, a correlation study of Hispanic families involved in literacy courses with their children, researchers found that teachers rated Hispanic parents to be as involved and interested in their child's education/literacy as other parents, despite language and cultural barriers. This example helps to dispel the deficiency model that minority parents are either less involved or inclined to be less involved in their child's education. Such institutionalized misconceptions project the parents as scapegoats, when in fact the challenge lies with the schools not to view minority parents as being deficient (Epstein & Dauber, 1991; Wright, 2005).

Relevant to the deficiency model concept, another correlation study involved minorities at eight inner city and middle schools. Teacher attitudes and practices were linked to parent involvement in terms of their support on certain variables. The results showed a strong correlation between parent participation and teachers who implemented practices that facilitated involvement and reached out to minority parents (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). In the process of the study, school personnel offered opinions of the

working class parents that were unflattering; such as parents being 'too busy,' not interested or 'too ignorant' to be included in parent education (1991). Nevertheless, when schools/teachers provided those opportunities to the parents, those who had not become involved became more involved. Banks (1995) states in his extensive review of multicultural education that by focusing on deficiencies, doubts are cast on minority strengths. Educators forming judgments in terms of deficits instead of potential strengths remind us that our own limitations and faulty thinking may present the biggest barriers to minorities.

Personal

Personal barriers in minority parent involvement in their child's education are daycare, time, transportation, manual labor jobs, linguistic skills, uncommunicative channels to the schools, and other practical challenges. In addition, factors affecting personal barriers include limited education and/or a perceived inability to help in their own child's learning. These problems represent hills for all parents to climb, but become mountains for disadvantaged and minority parents (Bright, 1996; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999).

One of the few experimental studies in parent involvement identified barriers for disadvantaged Latino, and African-American families by studying African-American and Hispanic mothers and their children in a Head Start program (Starkey & Klein, 2000). Children were randomly designated to control or intervention groupings. The parent intervention group was trained to support their children's math development and overall parent involvement. Pre and post tests indicated gains in both intervention areas. No such gains were seen in the control groups (Starkey & Klein, 2000). In addition, the study

found barriers to parent involvement regarding transportation problems, day-care needs, and scheduling problems due to work conflicts. Parents who were willingly to be involved gained from the exercise. They found it vital to make involvement in their child's education a priority regardless of the personal barriers.

The intent of the research design in Smerkar & Cohen-Vogel's (2001) study was to comprehend barriers and better understand this situation from the parents' viewpoint, the researchers listened to parents. Thirty families were randomly selected to participate; 10 each from grades 2nd, 4th, and 6th. Findings revealed that parents believed their involvement was most critical in the role of attending school meetings/events and monitoring homework. Even with this perception, the parents' belief was that attendance at school activities and meetings represented more of a perfunctory role; they did not feel part of the activity/meeting or that they were assisting in any way. These parents were reluctant to take part in decision-making because they believed teachers should be the "parents at school." Parents failed to see the reciprocation in the process by not understanding they also may need to be "teachers at home" (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, p. 81). The study's data indicates that parents want to be involved in their children's education but are limited through the perception that their roles are distinct and unique from the schools. "They don't understand how to cross those boundaries" (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, p. 97). These researchers offer that it is time to present a system built on collaboration instead of the term involvement.

Social Class

A working class and middle class theory have also characterized challenges to minority parent involvement, which had sprung from a 1993 study of federally subsidized

elementary schools. Findings exhibited only modest communication between lower-income parents and school personnel (Davies, 1993). In viewing social class issues, working class is defined as lower socio-economic, and middle class as middle socio-economic. Numerous researchers addressed working class minority parents versus middle class parents in relation to parent involvement (Desforges, 2003; Desimone, 1999; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Gregory & Weinstein, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Diamond and Gomez (2004), however, identified 18 parents, who were self-identified or peer identified as ‘actively involved’ African-American parents. Interviews tapped into their attitudes, beliefs, and practices of participation in their child’s education throughout seven schools in Chicago, Illinois. Demographics of the schools were between 70-100% African-American. They found that working-class African-American parents, in divergence to the middle-class African-American, appeared to be more disapproving and outspoken about their children’s schools, and would repeatedly rank them as second-rate. African-American working class parents, particularly mothers, were more often displeased with their schools; the parents reported feeling disrespected from teachers in their attempts at participation. Middle-class parents were more likely to identify and contact people who would help them to receive more opportunities to attend higher quality schools. Middle-class parents also considered schools as supporting their involvement; they were happy with the education their children received (Diamond & Gomez, 2004), although middle class parents were happy with their education, African-American parents have more difficulty meeting expectations and standards set forth by schools than other groups (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Researchers observed classrooms and concluded there were times that African-American students were not treated with the same considerations or advantages as White students because of ethnicity and family aspects. Given those results, educators questioned their beliefs about the neutrality of their approaches to both students and parents. It appeared teachers wanted certain ‘acceptable behaviors’ in requesting support from parents. More specifically, teachers wanted parents to read to their child, support teacher efforts, reinforce their expectations, and respect teacher expertise. Collectively, the acceptable behaviors meant parent behaviors conformed to teacher expectations. The teacher expectation of acceptable parent behavior perception made it more difficult for African-American parents to respond in supportive ways (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Extent of Minority Involvement

Several studies examined the extent of minority parent involvement in their child’s education. A caution needs to be considered in examining empirical research related to minority parent involvement in their child’s education. Most studies examine the extent of overt involvement. Yet, minority families tend to be more involved at home and take a different role or limited approach to school involvement than white middle class families (Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Lopez, 2001; Mapp, 1999).

The lack of overt involvement as discerned by school officials may not equate with the perceptions of involvement of minority parents. Hispanic parents of successful high school students, for example, considered themselves less involved in school activities yet highly involved in their child’s education. Their beliefs supported the ethics of hard work and the value of an education Lopez (2001). Some researchers suggest that

it is what the family ‘does’ that is more important to student success than family income, education, or family structure (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

These findings are similar to other research that claims home involvement for minorities is more influential than school-based involvement. Minority and disadvantaged parents may have time at home to do the enriching kinds of educational activities, and engage in more discussion about school related work and activities. In many cases, they may find themselves in working positions that it conflict with the school’s traditional hours (Mulligan, 2005). In spite of the challenges presented by systemic and bureaucratic policies, according to a survey study of parents in six Maryland high schools, the overwhelming sentiment among minority parents is that parent involvement is needed at the high school level. Over 80 % of parents wanted to be more involved and sought ways to effectively learn how to help their children at home (Sanders et al., 1999). The empirical research indicates that minority parents have a strong desire for being actively involved in their child’s education. Their desire to be actively involved appears to be as strong as any other group of parents (Boethel, 2003; Calabrese, 1990; Desforges, 2003; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; LaBahn, 1995; Sanders et al., 1999; Trotman, 2001)

A number of studies focus on conventional parent involvement activities: school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, a school or class event, or volunteering at school. Researchers classified highly involved parents as those who attended at least three activities a year and those as low involvement who attended one or no activities. They also indicated there was a correlation between involvement and traditional family structure (Nord & West, 2001). Examination of the National Educational Longitudinal

Study (NELS: 88) data were used to compare parent involvement variables as related to student achievement. The researchers concluded that minorities and low SES parents are not less involved. Minority parent's influence, support, and involvement at home often goes unnoticed. These findings suggest that parents, especially minority parents, are usually more involved than recognized by school personnel (Ho & Willms, 1996).

Sustaining Parent Involvement: Secondary School Research

Parent participation in school activities drops at the middle school and high school grades. This trend is as true for Whites as it is for minority subgroups (Catasambis & Garland, 1997; Dauber & Epstein, 1993), even though the perception continues by some educators and researchers that minorities are less involved in their children's education (Calabrese-Barton et al., 2004; Caplan et al., 1997; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; LaBahn, 1995; Lopez, 2001).

A 1997 study using statistics from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) tracked stability and examined parental changes in educational involvement between middle school and twelfth grade. The sample of 13, 580 parents were followed from 1988-1992 (Catasambis & Garland, 1997). A subsequent objective was to use Epstein's (1992; 1995) six different typologies of parent involvement: parental learning opportunities, communicating with school, volunteering, home support, decision-making, and association with the community as grouping different ways that parents are involved. In addition, the study identified differences between ethnic and racial minority groups. The reasoning not only distinguished the different types of parental involvement, but showed how they overlapped, and how the occurrence of parent involvement was a complex relationship of interconnections between participants

(Catasambis & Garland, 1997). Findings revealed information about home support.

African-American and Latino parents tend to show the highest levels of rules and supervision about homework, TV viewing, grades, and course decisions for adolescents in both middle and high school. African-American parents displayed the most supervision. Parents of students who stay in school increased their educational expectations of their children, and this was greatest between African-American and Hispanic, with African-American demonstrating the greatest change. This percentage doubled that of Caucasians (1997).

In a second measure of involvement, all groups lessened their communication with the schools during middle and high school; African-American parents showed the sharpest decrease followed by Latinos. Latinos also displayed low levels of parental involvement in the eighth grade, parent-teacher organizations, and community groups. African-Americans exhibited the highest levels of participation in parent organizations, while Whites showed the most mutual contacts with the schools such as volunteering and other school activities, often considered a more significant measure of traditional parental involvement (Catasambis & Garland, 1997).

The study provided positive aspects of minority parent participation in their child's education. The longitudinal nature of the data and the overlapping of Epstein's typologies provided a more comprehensive view of parent involvement. This knowledge reflects an opposing viewpoint from the voluminous amounts of literature that indicates parent involvement decreases as the student progresses through middle school and high school. There seemed to be a shift in attention from individual monitoring of children to more instances in which parents, particularly minorities, are looking to mutually

exchange knowledge if given the opportunity to do so (Catasambis & Garland, 1997). Data showed there were minority parents that sustained educational involvement with their children through the years.

Other researchers using the same statistical set of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) discovered similarities to the previous study. The relationship between parent involvement and high school completion was different for European Americans than Latinos. It was stronger for European Americans than Latinos, citing a closer relevance to the majority school culture and philosophies. Parent advocacy was not as strong in the Latino families even though education was highly valued. The relationship between Native Americans and school definitions of parent involvement was weaker. Findings illustrated evidence that social capital made available to the ethnic minority groups were vital to student's high school completion. The researcher concluded that parent participation, through traditional school programs, were influential in effecting a student's completion from high school (Anguiano, 2003).

In considering demographics at the secondary levels, family income, parent education, and two-parent households were important elements for students to successfully complete high school. Other research supports these findings, when two parent households were in place and other factors were controlled (Desforges, 2003; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1997; 2001; Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulos, Ritter, & Dornbusch, 1990; Williams, Williams, & Ullman, 2002). Students perform almost as well in school if only one parent is highly involved (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). Students residing with both natural parents are more likely to

complete high school; this is true for Hispanics and Whites, but not for African-American (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986). One caveat regarding this study is that it analyzed NCES statistics from a 1980/82 longitudinal study on 30,000 high schools students to determine data of students drop-out information at the secondary level (1986). While the research on sustained parent involvement provides some evidence of parental motivations and strategies on sustaining involvement, the research generally focuses on how or why parents are less involved. There remains insufficient information for establishing particular involvement methods that have enhanced participation for all parents across grade levels over an extended time (Caplan et al., 1997).

Influence of Parental Expectations/ Aspirations

Expectations and aspirations for a child's future may be immeasurable in terms of its positive affect on the outcomes of the child's education. A meta-analysis viewing parent involvement in relationship to academic achievement disclosed that parental aspirations/expectations for children's educational achievement presented the strongest relationship among all other variables (Fan & Chen, 2001). Jeynes (2003) also used a meta-analysis of 21 studies. The results indicated that the effect of parental involvement was significant across all minority groups in the study. Researchers claim that no matter what level of education the parent possesses (Nord & West, 2001) and regardless of socioeconomic status (Shaver & Walls, 1998), parental involvement positively affects academic achievement.

Parent support and encouragement in a child's education is one of the most critical indicators of that child's educational aspirations (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Hossler, Schmidt, & Vesper, 1998; McDonough, 1999). Hoge, Smit

and Crist (1997), defined parental involvement as comprised of four components: (1) parent expectations, (2) parent awareness, (3) participating with school, and (4) community. Parental expectations' were considered the most important component.

Parental influence remains consistent and enduring in spite of competing peer pressure and views (negative or positive) in middle school and high school. Peer influence does not supersede a strong home foundation and support (Davies & Kandel, 1981; Rumberger, 2001; Smith, Schneider, & Ruck, 2005). This is disputed by several researchers who believe peer and neighborhood forces particularly for African-Americans are stronger pressures effecting adolescent school success than parent expectations or aspirations (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988; Nechyba et al., 1999). Moreover, Mulligan (2005) used data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey of the Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) to gauge how language minorities are involved in their children's education. In her study on parental involvement with language minorities, she discovered that the higher the African-American parent's school expectations were, the less that family was involved in school. This disparity grew as the parent's expectations climbed.

It is evident that the parental need to pass on values and self-worth to their children is important. Maslow's (1943) research validates as a part of the human condition, a desire for certain social needs. This includes self-worth, a desire to achieve, to be productive, and to crave recognition or admiration. It is substantiated that all parents regardless of ethnicity, race, or culture have basic hopeful expectations and wishes of success for their children. Seligman's (2002) studies also corroborate that the basic wants, desires, and securities for one's children are similar for most parents. Thus,

parents can make an impact on their children's education by declaring positive expectations or aspirations for them. The manifestations of the aspirations and positive expectations that parents model to their children potentially can prevent the effects of poverty experienced by minorities particularly African-Americans (Moore & Barbarin, 2004). Disturbingly, the poverty rate for African-Americans is nearly quadruple the poverty rate for non-Hispanic Whites (23% and 6%, respectively). In addition, education attained by Whites is higher than African-Americans as a whole, and the unemployment rate for African-Americans is more than twice that of non-Hispanic Whites (2004).

There is evidence of learned optimism among members of minority populations where parent involvement was an indirect variable. Results revealed that high achievers responded more often to failure by declaring a lack of effort. While low achievers responded to poorer performance or failure by figuring it was lack of innate ability. This finding was true across all ethnic groups. This hypothetical is consistent with motivation and attribution theory, and to learned optimism or pessimism theorized by Seligman.

Parents were also predictable. When parents professed low perceptions of shame toward their children, this equaled higher scores for their children. Parental ways of thinking were crucial in affecting their children's self-concepts. High-achievers more frequently reported that their parents gave motivational encouragement, stressed the value of effort and the importance of their schooling. These principles may represent bigger factors in their success than helping with homework (Bempechat, Graham, & Jimenez, 1999). Expectations and aspirations toward their child's education certainly claim an important role in parent involvement.

In this review of empirical research related to my study, parent perspectives were explored to bring light to the reader another voice in the research on minority parent involvement. These minority parents include linguistically challenged immigrant parents and families as well. The characteristics of role construction and self-efficacy were viewed as motivators/strategies behind why and how some minority parents involve themselves in their child's education. Researchers suggest that by more closely listening or stepping into the parent's world, schools can come to a greater understanding of ethnically, culturally, and racially diverse families for establishing that critical communication between home and school. Research also revealed that in pursuit of this approach schools introduce social and culture capital to minority parents whom otherwise would not have access to opportunities for networking and growth.

Barriers to parent participation centered on the themes of alienation, cultural, personal, and social class challenges. Schools inviting parents to take advantage of learning opportunities and work to establish mutual communication channels may relieve some of the social and cultural barriers that have existed for minority parents.

Secondary school research examined the extent and detail of minority involvement sustained through upper grade levels. Studies were examined for sustained involvement, parental attitudes, and parental expectations. Prior research suggests that parent involvement decreases as students move through the grades. Researchers suggest that educators need to take personal responsibility for increasing parent involvement. They believe that the building and growth of networking through using social and cultural capital facilitates confidence and self-worth, both important for parents who are either poor and/or minority to increase involvement with their child's education.

The final section investigated the influence of parent expectations. These expectations and aspirations act as a tremendous influence on a child's self-worth and educational values. Studies showed a strong relationship between parental expectations in education and academic achievement. Some evidence was inconclusive on whether peer influence could outweigh parent expectations negatively or positively. Minority parenting styles were also discussed. The connection of achievement to the modeling of parental attitudes was explored through the responses of high and low student achievers.

Summary

The literature review began with a conceptual and theoretical description of the study's framework. The theoretical framework of humanistic and positive psychology is grounded in the appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective. Appreciative Inquiry is a theoretical research prescriptive that asks unconditionally positive questions, and concentrates on positive core values within the organization. It is holistic in nature and directs the focus of inquiry in a positive direction. Humanistic psychology offers a lens for examining the successful endeavors of minority parents who sustain involvement in their child's education. The theoretical framework of humanistic psychology attributes to acts of self-determination, a thirst for good values, to accomplish productive goals, and to acquire self-respect.

The more recent addition of positive psychology theory supports the foundations of humanistic psychology and adds positive interventions in people's lives. It encourages people to use healthy characteristics of optimism, hope, and aspiration instead of focusing on their limitations in efforts to persevere through difficult circumstances. These

theoretical perspectives form the framework of my study and for examining the empirical research of minority parents who sustain involvement in their children's education.

This review of the empirical research focused on six areas: (1) legislation (2) parent perspective of involvement in their child's education, (3) barriers to parent participation, (4) extent of minority involvement, (5) sustaining parent involvement: secondary school research, and (6) the influence of parent expectations and aspirations. This literature review provided information focused on the study's purpose to describe the perceptions, motivations, and challenges of highly involved minority parents, who have sustained involvement in their child's education. Chapter 3 explains research methodology and research design that were used in conducting my study.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I explained the research design and methods used in my study. I began with a statement of the purpose, context of the study, problem statement, research questions, units of analysis, and data analysis. I concluded this chapter with the data analysis processes, as well as, the procedures undertaken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my research study was to describe minority parents' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. Participants' perceptions were viewed through the theoretical frameworks of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology (Seligman, 1998) and humanistic psychology, as it includes Maslow's theory of 'the basic good in people' (1943).

Statement of the Problem

Although extensive research exists on the importance of parental involvement in education, little information is available on sustained parent involvement across grade levels (Caplan et al., 1997). This is true for parents in general, and more specifically for minority parents. Consequently, this study described Native American and African American parents' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. How do highly involved minority parents describe their motivation to be involved in their child's education?
2. How do highly involved minority parents describe the challenges that they have overcome in sustaining their involvement in their child's education?
3. How do highly involved minority parents describe the strategies they use to sustain involvement in their child's education?

Context

This study took place in Coffeyville, Kansas, and USD 445. Coffeyville is a small blue-collar community in southeastern Kansas with approximately 11,000 residents. Seventy percent of the Coffeyville's residents work in Coffeyville. The other 30% of the workforce commute from surrounding rural areas and smaller towns. Some commute from Oklahoma, especially Notawa County, the county directly south of Coffeyville. Of the 30% working, yet residing outside of Coffeyville, the Montgomery County Action Council discovered that those workers did not desire to relocate. Higher taxes and housing were given as the foremost rationale for not living within the county boundaries (Hurd, 2003). Coffeyville consists of the following ethnic groups: White Non-Hispanic (75.76%), African American (12.12%), Native American Indian (4.97%), Hispanic (3.82%), and Other (3.33%) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Coffeyville USD 445's enrollment of 1,925 students consists of the following ethnic groups: White, 55%, African American, 16%, Native American 10%, Hispanic, 4%, and Other, 15%. In USD 445 Elementary, Middle School, and High School level, ethnicity groups are very

similarly comprised to the district demographics (Kansas State Department of Education, 2006). Economically disadvantaged students enrolled in USD 445 make up approximately 59% of the student population (Kansas State Department of Education, 2005).

Research Design

I used a qualitative descriptive multiple case study research design. There were two cases filtered through an appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective to describe Native American and African American parent's perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. A multiple case study, has advantages over a single-case study design by utilizing more 'cases' for evidence and data, thus strengthening the study and increasing its external validity both factually and theoretically (Yin, 2003). This research design has an emerging component embedded within it (Patton, 1990).

Theoretical Research Perspective

An appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective focuses the inquiry of the research on the positive core of organizations or individuals (Cooperrider et al., 2003). Appreciative inquiry addresses issues or challenges that exist in the organization by building on what people in the organization are already doing that is good (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). One of the fundamentals of appreciative inquiry is the underlying positive principle. This principle recognizes that by asking positive questions about work solutions, challenges are explored in a different and creative way. Unconditional positive questions allow people to identify peak experiences in their work such as their strengths,

positive thoughts, and aspirations for achievement, and to engage in unlocking their potential, values or wisdom (Fitzgerald et al., 2001). This theoretical research perspective informed how questions were asked in semi-structured interviews and in the focus groups in this study.

Units of Analysis

Minority parents are the unit of analysis for my study. In this study, minority parents consisted of African American, and Native American parents residing within USD 445 geographical boundaries. This study was comprised of those two cases: African American parents and Native American parents. Participating parents had children attending Coffeyville High School in USD 445 in the 11th or 12th grade or children who recently graduated in May 2006. Native American and African American parents who have demonstrated sustained involvement in their child's education through middle and high school were purposively sampled. Participants were selected through a set of protocols designed to identify highly involved parents who have sustained involvement in their child's education.

High school and middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers were the source of data for selection to the participant pool. High school administrators, counselors, and teachers who were data sources for selection to the participant pool must have had four consecutive years of service in the high school. Middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers who were data sources for selection to the participant pool must have had six consecutive years of service in the middle school. The administrators, counselors, and teachers were presented a list of Native American and African American parents who have children in the 11th or 12th grade in high school or

recently graduated in May 2006. They completed a questionnaire identifying Native American and African American parents as “highly involved,” “moderately involved,” or “not involved” in their children’s schooling, as well as, identifying the involved category/criteria as “very important”, “moderately important”, and “low importance” (See Appendix B).

There were 17 participants in the study; six Native American and 11 African American parents. The educational background and occupational status of the “highly involved” parents participating in the study was documented. Native American parents’ occupations consisted of a teacher and paraprofessional, a registered nurse, a photographer, a community service worker, a college student, and an industrial plant manager. This same group’s educational background was comprised of two masters degrees, one with a bachelor’s degree, and one soon to be acquired, and two others with some college beyond high school.

The African American group had four participants who worked in some area of health medicine. Two ministers were included in the participants, and both used the ministry as a supplement to their main occupations. A cosmetologist, two educators, and one retiree were also involved. This group’s education ranged from three participants who had doctorate or masters degrees to many with some college after high school graduation. One participant did not complete secondary school.

The questionnaire was piloted with a representative group of administrators, counselors, and teachers. Researchers in the field of parent involvement reviewed the questionnaire for face validity. A total score for the questionnaire was compiled for each Native American and African American parent. I used the Sheppard Parent School

Invitational Score (SPSIS) composite score that fell in the top quartile of participants as the cut-off score.

Data Collection Methods

The following research methods were used in the collection of data: focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and review of relevant documents.

Focus Groups

The focus groups were comprised along racial lines to account for cultural differences. Two focus groups were conducted. One group included Native American and the other group was African American parents. Each focus group was comprised of five participants. All questions were constructed according to the principles of appreciative inquiry, and were based on the guidelines established in the Appreciative Inquiry Handbook (Cooperrider et al., 2003). For example, “Can you describe how you have stayed involved in your child’s education?” Or, “How can you describe your motivation to stay involved?” The questions for the focus groups are in Appendix D. Each focus group was approximately one hour in length at the Coffeyville USD 445 Board of Education location.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from the participants. The semi-structured format for interviews allowed for guided, open-ended conversations that enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant’s attitudes, perceptions, and viewpoints on the topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Patton, 2002). The questions in the semi-structured interviews were constructed in a manner consistent with appreciative

inquiry guidelines. For example, “Can you describe some of the peak experiences and challenges of being involved in your child’s education?” The questions for the interviews are found in Appendix E. Approximately 10 interview questions focused on gathering data to answer the research questions. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to 60 minutes in length, at a time and place that was mutually designated.

Six interviews were conducted with African American parents and one with a Native American parent who volunteered to be interviewed. I sought to gain their personal stories, perceptions, and experiences regarding involvement in their child’s education. The parents that I interviewed were not participants in any other data gathering method. Those identified for participant selection in the focus groups did not overlap as interview participants. The emergent nature of the qualitative case study design allowed for the exact number of interviews to be extended if necessary as data were collected.

Documents

Documents relevant and applicable to the research questions were also examined. Documents included for review originated from USD 445 district policy, state policy, school board minutes, or other publicly accessible documents utilized by USD 445 schools in referring to parent involvement.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using pattern matching, the constant-comparative method and CATPAC, a text analysis software designed to show relationships among words to analyze data. In particular, recurring themes were sorted using an open and axial

coding process. The themes were used in a series of content matrices to identify the strength of support of the unitized data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Relevant documents were examined using content analysis. Data from these sources along with the data gained from interviews and focus groups served to triangulate evidence. I took safeguards to ensure the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability throughout the data collection and data analysis process. Triangulation and trustworthiness of the data are further explained in the following paragraphs.

Trustworthiness of the Data

For the purposes of this study, I gauged the quality of the data gathering process by focusing on the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Data from my study's interviews and focus groups were analyzed and interpreted through these operational definitions. Credibility was determined using member checking to confirm what was said, and the meaning of what was said at the end of each focus group. Moreover, I triangulated the data by examining multiple sources of evidence, cross-data analysis, and methods checking. The data collected from subunits within each of the units of analysis were shared with the participants to ascertain their credibility. I do not make claims as to its transferability. Instead, I leave it up to the reader to make an informed decision as to the study's transferability to his/her context.

Additionally, I maintained a rich description of the data collection process including observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The dependability of the study was strengthened through the embedded case study protocols in the data collection procedures in order to minimize errors and bias (Yin, 2003). Moreover, the use of an emerging

research design allowed me to describe changes that occurred in the research context and how they affected my approach to the study. Key informants ascertained the confirmability of the data through the interaction of the participants who reviewed the draft report of the results and the review of a draft proposal. Moreover, I used a peer review team to provide feedback on my findings.

Bias

As the researcher, I demonstrated sensitivity and awareness to circumstances within the context of the USD school system, its employees and involved parents, as well as acknowledging an acceptance for uncertainty that evolves from the emerging evidence or design of this study. By practicing high ethics and maintaining standard protocol for data collection and data processing, I gained a considerable step toward reducing researcher bias within my own study.

Summary

This chapter described the qualitative descriptive case study methods used during my research. The data reflected participants' views of sustained and highly involved Native American and African American parent involvement during the data collection period in the summer and fall of 2006. I discussed the methods of data collection, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and document review. The theoretical frameworks of the study, humanistic and positive psychology aligned with the appreciative inquiry research perspective, combined to provide a lens for interpretations of all data. Chapter 4 presents the findings derived from the data analysis of my study.

CHAPTER 4

Chapter 4 presents the findings derived from the data collected during this study. I organized this chapter by first reaffirming the purpose of the study and the underlying theoretical perspectives that I used to direct my study. I then provide a brief overview of the methodology, research questions, data analysis, and summary of the findings. At the conclusion of my summary of findings, I present the theory that emerged from my data analysis.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my research study was to describe minority parents' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. Participants' perceptions were viewed through the theoretical frameworks of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology (Seligman, 1998) and humanistic psychology, as it includes Maslow's theory of 'the basic good in people' (1943).

Overview of Methodology

I used a qualitative multiple case study emergent design that allowed me to gain the participants' perspectives related to the research questions. There were two cases. Each case had a separate unit of analysis. The two units of analysis were comprised of 11 African American parents, and 6 Native American parents.

I applied an appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective to collect data related to African American and Native American (parent) participant's perceptions of

how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education.

Emerging Theory

As competing theory, critical theory was briefly discussed in Chapter 2. The works of educational critical theorists, Giroux, Freire, and Apple were cited as an optional framework or lens to examine challenges, motivations, and strategies described by highly involved minority parents in their child's education. A complimentary theory that emerged from my findings in addition to the perspectives of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology, and humanistic psychology is the theory of empowerment.

Empowerment becomes a process of growing the capabilities of individuals or groups so they can comprehend their choices and transform those choices into preferred actions or outcomes. Empowered individuals are better suited to influence those decisions that affect the course of their lives. Fundamentally, this speaks to critiquing of one's environment, change, and self-determinism (Giroux, 2001). In Freire's work, he discusses education in terms of empowerment for groups not just individuals, with a change in structure, condition or character, and a focus on cultural change (Heaney, 1995).

The practice of freedom within education proposed by Freire includes a more enlightened view of learning for adult learners. Freire worked with Latinos in South America, setting up community-based learning centers outside of traditional schools and organizations, because of the criticism that traditional schooling only adds to the "marginalization of minorities and the poor (Heaney, 1995)."

Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions:

1. How do highly involved minority parents describe their motivation to be involved in their child's education?
2. How do highly involved minority parents describe the challenges that they have overcome in sustaining their involvement in their child's education?
3. How do highly involved minority parents describe the strategies they use to sustain involvement in their child's education?

Data Analysis

I used content analysis, pattern matching, the constant-comparative method, and CATPAC, text analysis software designed to show relationships among words to analyze my data. In particular, I used open and axial coding processes to identify themes. The themes were subsequently used in a series of content matrices to identify the strength of support of the unitized data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I took safeguards to ensure the study's creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability throughout the data collection and data analysis process.

Findings

Six salient findings were derived from my data analysis. They are listed below.

Finding 1: Native American and African American parents identified involvement strategies to improve their child's education.

Finding 2: African American parents believed there were issues related to minority relationships within the school and community.

Finding 3: Native American and African American parents set expectations for their children.

Finding 4: Native American and African American parents expressed pride in their children's accomplishments.

Finding 5: Native American and African American parents linked family values to their role and responsibility as a parent.

Finding 6: Native American and African American parents linked teacher care and respect for their child to the child's success.

The sections that follow address the six findings from my study. Participants' statements are interwoven in narrative format to create richer descriptions and images of what they described or felt. African American parents represent the first unit of analysis and Native American parents represent the second unit of analysis.

Participant statements will be identified as African American, Native American, and female or male where appropriate. I conclude each finding with a brief summary statement. In addition, I include a table with data connected to each finding. I use the abbreviation A/A to correspond to African American parents and the abbreviation N/A to refer to Native American parents throughout my report of findings. I use the pseudonyms Nicole, April, Judy, Hillary, Michelle, Kelly, Joni, Amanda, Janelle, Glen, and Peter for the A/A parents. I use the pseudonyms Karla, Allison, Barbara, Lisa, Carrie, and Tom to represent N/A parents.

Finding 1 Native American and African American Parents Identified Involvement

Strategies to Improve Their Child's Education

Native American and African American parents identified involvement strategies to improve their children's education. This finding is supported by my third research question that asks N/A and A/A parents to describe the strategies that they utilized to sustain involvement in their child's education. The strategies described by these participants support all three of the theoretical perspectives; however, appreciative inquiry perspective was more prevalent than positive psychology and humanistic psychology.

In reporting the first finding, I first address the strategies N/A and A/A parents identified as working with teachers or administrators in their child's school. This is followed by a discussion of strategies that participants stressed as being more applicable for guidance in their child's life as well as strategies to help them in their education. Those two broad general categories, school and child strategies, are further delineated by subtopics within them.

The first subtopic under the general category related to school strategies, working with teachers and administrators, deals with communications in involvement, next, relationship building through communication, and then additional strategies for school-related concepts. Additional strategies, identified by both NA/ and A/A participants, in working with the school and child are listed in Finding 1.

The second broad heading under this finding focuses on involvement strategies with the child. Included under this segment are visiting their child's environment,

advocating for their child, and providing opportunities for their child. I conclude with a summary of the finding.

Table 4.1

Native American and African American Parents Identified Involvement Strategies to Improve their Child’s Education

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	One of my strategies is to have in depth conversations about things they worried about in their schooling. [I] keep them talking, keep lines of communication open. I am very careful not to say something that would reflect negatively on one of their friends, whether I agree or not.
	If you are not involved with your child and he makes Fs—you do not care. On the other hand, if you are involved, you can participate and say okay, you got an F now let us go on.
	I know parents who are not able to be involved with their child. They have two jobs. They are barely keeping their heads above water. Some have 10-hour jobs.
	Our kids will be more involved, because we were.
	Often times I go to parent teacher conferences.
	If you are involved as a parent, stay a part of your child’s life, and be there every day, your child will learn.
	I have learned that you want your children to talk to you. Lines of communication need to be kept open.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	It opens communication for us, but you are still not getting that communication with the teacher. As parents, we can see what the grade book looks like. We can say, hey friend (son or daughter), you have a missing assignment here. Do you know what happened? In addition, they are saying, Hey, I turned that in, and we are saying well, you need to work that out with the teacher because they do not have it recorded.
	There are too many kids in this area without a scholarship or motivation. They will never leave.
	My children are very fortunate that we have been able to go on good vacations with educational value.
	If you get involved in your child's education, you will know what kinds of friends your child is selecting.
	(15 similar quotations apply to this theoretical perspective)
	African Americans
	One thing we've tried to do this year to keep the communication open with a parent's night where we showed parents how to get on the parent portal online. We showed them other things on the computer.
	It is important to communicate and to be articulate in the communication. My wife and I are both professionals. We think about our school system, and we cannot think of anything that we would want to change. It falls on the parent to receive what is being offered . . . the school system wants to see parent involvement.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Theoretical Perspectives	African Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	<p>My only complaint with the school system is that they make rules and don't enforce them. Now, it just depends. When my children were in grade school, I was consistent, in the PTA and other events. It became more important when they were in high school. When my child's grades went down, I asked for a weekly report and we went over weekly reports every week.</p>
	<p>It's not about attacking someone or protecting, it's about communicating. I do get involved more now. I haven't always. Terminologies change and the way teachers deal with children change. They are not as formal. Teachers today are not as formal as when I was going to school. They're more relaxed.</p>
	<p>So, it has helped me to be more active. If you are in the teacher's place, you have to be obedient. That does not mean that all of a sudden you have a brain, you need to think for yourself. Therefore, you need to learn how to be able to distinguish some things. Even if you do not agree, there is a way that you can talk to a person [appropriately].</p>
	<p>Well, I think the biggest thing is instilling a work ethic and to encourage them to finish what they start. I believe in supporting the teachers. They have their own strategies. You have to work with them.</p>
	<p>Open communication is the number one thing, especially for Black people. You really need to get involved with your children. You must have an open communication. I think we had good rapport with teachers. We talked about his difficulties and his achievements as a whole.</p> <p>Communication was a key.</p>

Table 4.1 (continued)

Theoretical Perspectives	African Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	I would tell them to be involved. Not all teachers and kids get along. There will be bumping heads sometimes.
	Open communication, dignity, and respect are demonstrated at home every day. I expect them to show to others. That is how I was brought up. Start an open communication with your children. Everyone respects open communications.
	One of the things that I share with my children is if you're 50% of the problem, then you are the problem. I work with my children and their problems to help straighten that out.
	I'm still a communicator and focus on logic, the ability to focus on truth and logic and always in the best interest of the student because its all about students receiving a education.
	I think it helps teachers if our involvement is there. I think it gives them encouragement one-way or the other . . . that is why I am involved.
	(36 similar quotations apply to this theoretical perspective)
Theoretical Perspectives	Native Americans
Humanistic Psychology	I feel that I could talk with a teacher and if I can't get what I needed from the teacher, I could go to the principal or counselors. Parents, make your child the number one priority.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Theoretical Perspectives	African Americans
Humanistic Psychology	I wanted my children to understand that I thought their education was the biggest priority in their lives. If I didn't hold it in high esteem and wasn't involved in their education, they wouldn't be motivated to be successful.
	I still think teachers need to be in control at all times and maintain that authority.
	I would hope that my involvement did help the teacher and my child.
Positive Psychology	Native Americans
	I have always felt as long as you are involved as a parent, your child has an opportunity to go and do whatever they want to do.
	If they go to a smaller school district, they may not have all the opportunities that they have here.
	I think being involved in their education every day is a challenge because you have to have an extreme amount of time commitment and . . . it has to be there all of the time. It is a tremendous challenge to find the time to help them with their education.
	My parents were not involved and I wanted to get involved in high school.
	When I had kids, I wanted them to be involved and to experience everything or at least try it.
	African Americans
	They [teachers] encouraged my involvement with my child. I think it was because of my attitude. I always have the attitude that I am on the teacher's side . . . as long as the teacher is being fair and just.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Theoretical Perspectives	African Americans
Positive Psychology	I didn't call the teacher every week. However, the teachers were willing to give us a weekly report. That was a positive - getting a report at the end of the week . . . was helpful as I helped my child with homework assignments.
	Every once in a while, I would go to the school to see what's going on. Talk to the counselors, too.
	They [teachers] encouraged my involvement with my child. I think it was because of my attitude. I always have the attitude that I am on the teacher's side . . . as long as the teacher is being fair and just.
Empowerment Theory	Native Americans
	I would tell my daughter or my son to go in and talk to the teacher and get them to explain something; the teachers more or less called them lazy and told the kids to read the book again.
	We experienced lack of communication, primarily with the two oldest children. My emails went unanswered by several teachers.
	[N/A/Barbara](Referring to another parent): Her kids go to school, and she doesn't get home until its time for them to go to bed at night.
	They don't have the opportunity for involvement and it kills them.
	I would tell my daughter or my son to go in and talk to the teacher and get them to explain something; the teachers more or less called them lazy and told the kids to read the book again.
	African Americans
	My feeling from the administrators and teachers is that whatever the teacher says is going to be "right," regardless. It was the same way back when we were in school.

Table 4.1 (continued)

Theoretical Perspectives	African Americans
Empowerment Theory	We've tried PTA to get parents out at the beginning of school introductions. We've tried feeding parents open house we would fix hot dogs and potato chips for the parents to eat.
	Parents should have an interest in their [children's] academics many of our parents here are not educated.
	We are working with [families] the second and third generational welfare, and we are now receiving their crack babies and children in the school system. All I know is Coffeyville; it is difficult here. Coffeyville is like no other system.

Involvement Strategy Focusing on Teachers and Administrators

Native American and African American parents identified involvement strategies to improve their child's education. These strategies focused on their relationship with teachers and administrators at the school or when working with their child. Many strategies suggested by the N/A and A/A parents illustrated a point of reconciliation between themselves and the teacher, school administrator, and at times the counselor.

One of the most prevalent strategies was increased communication between the parents and teachers. Many A/A and N/A parents voiced that proactive communication and being respectful to school personnel, even if in disagreement, were important for sustaining commitment between parents and teachers.

Communication was important for facilitating parent-teacher conferences, as reported by several A/A parents. Nicole, an A/A parent stated, "Open communication is the number one thing, especially for Black people." Other participants agreed. More

specifically, Nicole said, “When we all sat down and talked with the teacher, the conference was more productive.”

Peter, an A/A parent, reported that when communication with teachers and administrators focuses on logic and truth, it works in the best interest of the student (child). Peter also maintained, “It is not about attacking or protecting someone. It is about communicating.” In addition, A/A parents suggested communicating with teachers at every opportunity. Judy, an A/A parent who is also a teacher at the middle school, explained:

To keep the communication open, the school tried a parent's night where we showed parents how to get on the parent portal online. We have tried almost everything to get more parents here. The problem is the ones that are concerned are the ones that are going to come out anyway, whether it is for open house, parent teacher conferences, or a meeting on your child.

Several N/A parents agreed that communication is the most important strategy for building a relationship and rapport between parents and teachers. Several parents in the N/A focus group expressed frustration with teachers. They referred to a lack of communication by teachers at the middle and high school levels. Lisa said:

My e-mails went unanswered by several teachers. We had some issues with teachers. It was not that I was upset with the teachers . . . but I did not know what to do. I needed some communication from them but never received it.

Lisa went to the high school attempting to handle the problem in person, which she did so successfully on this occasion; yet, the issue of her child’s teacher not returning emails was left unresolved.

Karla, like Lisa, was frustrated in working with high school teachers. She complained of the teachers' failure to send home advice or materials to help parents. She said:

If I went and sit in class with them, I could have helped them with their projects, but they did not have enough information for me to help them at home . . . Many times the grades were very bad, and we were not notified until they were very bad.

Two N/A female parents remarked, "There were times in middle school and high school when a couple of teachers had lost our children's graded assignments." The parents and the student (their child) retrieved proof of the disputed assignments and grades. The parents and students located the missing papers that reflected the original grades, which were different from the recorded grades. The teacher had to change the child's grade.

Several N/A and A/A parents agreed that the on-line monitoring system for grades was a very useful way of tracking their son's or daughter's schoolwork and grades; however, they believed the on-line system did not extend opportunities for communication between teacher and parent beyond grade monitoring.

African American and Native American parents believed they had to be persistent in communication efforts with administrators and teachers in order to foster support for their child. In the beginning of the year, both A/A and N/A parents agreed that not only was persistence important in communication with school personnel, but also immediate and proactive meetings with the teacher. For example, Joni an A/A parent said, "When I enroll him, I go to every teacher, here's my cell phone number, and here's my work

number.” Nicole, another A/A parent, said, “I want to get in touch [with the teacher] right away, particularly if there is a problem, I don’t want to wait two to three weeks to be informed.” Kelly, an A/A parent, expressed, “forming a support group with school personnel immediately is important.” Joni, summed up persistence using communication with school personnel, by the following statement, “I am going to be involved in my child’s education.”

Involvement Strategies Focusing on Child

The following section focuses on strategies that N/A and A/A parents used when working with their child. Involvement strategies were addressed that dealt with communication and their child, parental’ roles and responsibilities for the child, and recommendations for dealing with life and school.

Positive Interaction in Child’s Environment

One A/A parent believed the Coffeyville teachers were proactive in calling parents at conference times and other times as well to discuss problems or positive events. Some participating parents described, “Good teachers” as those who “care about our kids and respect them.” N/A parents as well as A/A parents recognized the need to stay involved with their children by visiting and communicating with them at school.

Five A/A parents and three N/A parents specifically mentioned making those planned or unplanned visits to the school. Judy, an A/A parent declared:

Sometimes I show up unannounced to see the teacher or my children so I can keep up with what is going on there (in their environment) . . . every parent should do this once in a while and every school should welcome it.

Janelle, an A/A parent, agreed with Judy, “It would be best to go see what is happening at the school; go visit with the teacher and see what is going on.” Hillary, an A/A parent, concurred with those remarks, “The teachers and I have a good rapport. I would encourage other parents to go talk to teachers. Be forward, but do not go with an attitude. I think today parents go with an attitude and it causes trouble.” Glen an A/A father added, “I think we had a good rapport with teachers. We talked about my son’s difficulties and his achievements as a whole.”

Carrie, an N/A parent, told her child, “This is to let you know you have 100% of my support, but the same goes for the teacher.” This philosophy was also expressed by Judy, Michelle, April and Nicole, and Peter in the A/A group. Another N/A parent, Lisa, stated, “Going to the teachers is important, and in some areas the teachers have done a good job, an excellent job!” Allison, another N/A mother, commented, “Because my parents weren’t involved I wanted to be involved in her high school as much as possible.”

Advocating for Children

A few parents at the A/A focus group voiced negative comments about USD 445 teacher expectations. They spoke of how students were treated unfairly at times. This generated a discussion about parents questioning the teacher’s philosophy, and coming to their child’s defense if they perceived the child as being treated unfairly.

These A/A parents voiced how those concerns materialized, “It was obvious that her teacher did not understand minorities, and was very prejudiced,” Michelle an A/A parent said, “I did have to go up there, talk to the teacher and set the record straight.” This reaction surfaced because she did not want the teacher to expect less from her child because she was Black. She insisted the children be “treated equally.” Two A/A, mothers,

Nicole and Kelley, informed school personnel how busy their children were in activities. They reported that the teacher said, “That will keep them out of trouble.” Both parents were offended. They saw the comment as stereotyping their children. Kelley said, “I don’t know if it was a Black issue, but that’s how I felt when they said it.”

April, another A/A parent, was emphatic about respect being reciprocated between her child and the teacher. She believed that respect is a significant element for effective involvement. She stated, “I want my child to go out and respect all people in general, but I also want my kid to be respected by the teacher.” Michelle added, “Anybody can yell at the coach [the teacher] instead, do something that lets your child know that you respect the system and that you're working in the system.”

Providing Opportunities

A strategy of being able to provide opportunities for children was another significant point. Tom, a N/A parent, mentioned that his children traveled out of state to different Indian reservations. “They got to see some of the Native American ways,” he stated. A N/A parent, Carrie, utilizes a parental role strategy when she encourages her children to travel, and makes plans for them to experience a multitude of opportunities in life.

Carrie, along with other N/A and A/A parents, were convinced that some minorities miss a vital ingredient in their education, by not being able to travel to a world of sights and sounds not found in books, where there lies a world outside of Coffeyville, full of opportunities and adventure. They avowed not to have their children miss educational opportunities; otherwise, the alternative was seeing them “stuck in Coffeyville.”

Summary of Finding

Finding 1 reported that N/A and A/A parents identified involvement strategies to improve their children's education. These strategies for participating in their child's education were various, widely established, and differed in degree and effort put forth by the parents. Communication was a focal point for discussing how parents related to school personnel. Both N/A and A/A parents believed that while communication was an important ingredient in parental involvement, the parent stories indicated that parents were initiating much of that communication.

Most N/A and A/A parents believed that 'good' teachers responded by giving their children more respect, and this was one factor in facilitating relationship- building between the parent and teacher. Both N/A and A/A parents stressed that they supported their child's teachers, despite having some issues with them.

Positive and negative communication with school personnel was modeled to their children, in particular, by A/A parents. Both A/A and N/A parents expressed the importance of going to the school and visiting the child or classroom. They voiced that advocating for their child, particularly regarding minority status, was important.

Finding 2 African American Parents Believed There Were Issues Related to Minority

Relationships with the School and Community

There were issues related to minority relationships with the school and community raised by several A/A parents. The second research question asked participants to describe challenges they encountered while sustaining involvement in their child's education. Many of the espoused challenges were connected to ethnicity and this carried over from the school district to the community. Some of that dialogue that was

negatively expressed did not fit with humanistic psychology, positive psychology, or appreciative inquiry. This dialogue was more accurately, negative, uncorroborated commentary, that expressed the views of one or two such isolated incidents that the information seemed irrelevant, in addition, was unsubstantiated by other A/A parents.

The findings are organized by first talking about minority status and relationships related to the teachers and administrators, followed by minority relationships related to the community. Minority relationships within the school and community focus on challenges that affected mostly A/A parents and their children. I first report how A/A parents cite minority status as a major obstacle in relating to teachers at the middle school and high school levels. I then cite the difficulties A/A parents articulate about low expectations by teachers, concluding with the topic of discrimination that was expressed by some of the A/A parents.

The finding next reports data related to minority status on community issues. This subject covers existing racism in the community, challenges associated with minorities such as poverty, and lack of networking opportunities with social institutions, such as school systems. Next is the summary of the finding.

Table 4.2

Issues Related to Minority Relationships with the School and Community Raised by African American Parents

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	I think our district is beginning to see that it is not so much a racial issue as it is an issue of poverty.

Table 4.2 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
	I wish everyone could get along better both minorities and non-minorities. It seems by the time children begin school they have made prejudgments formed and modeled by their parents and peers.
Appreciative Inquiry	It is one of those things . . . I do wish everyone could just get along better.
	We have a large black population.
	I think they are very vocal with what they expect our community to give them and they get it.
	There are some benefits to being ethnic in this community.
	I don't think there is discrimination; however, if you ask a Black, they may tell you a different story.
	There are some good things that the district does and is doing. There are some good changes coming down the pike, I just hope they can get the teachers to listen to the parents.
	African Americans
	When my child is respecting others, then he can be respected too.
	We understand cultures by knowing different cultures. I'd let them change places for about a month. Every minority would be a minority and every non-minority would then be a minority living in different places shopping in different stores, and experiencing first hand the sign of prejudice. When they switch back, they'd have a better understanding of each other.
	I know there are some blatant inequities in our environment . . . I attempt to stay poised in my interactions . . . I observed a mother as stirred up when she perceives her kids are being treated unfairly. We strive to resolve problems rather than respond with emotion.

Table 4.2 (continued)

Theoretical Perspectives	African Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	On-line grades has been a good thing especially for us Black people in Coffeyville. Being able to check on our kids online, and make sure they are doing okay is very important.
	I've told my children, I don't ever want you to use the excuse that you're Black.
Humanistic Psychology	African Americans
	The challenges at USD 445 are not unlike any other district, where they maybe fighting and such. We worked hard at instructing them [our children] how to avoid those things, such as fighting.
Positive Psychology	I understand an individual who is productive in society and striving to make a difference that I enter into work relationships with them.
	Yes, some of the positive peaks . . . we had six kids go through this school district.
	When I show up [to the event] their mannerisms change.
Empowerment Theory	Native Americans
	There are some children regardless of race or what classroom they were assigned who would cause problems. I have many great friends here in this town. I have lived here all my life.
	People are from every ethnic group. The ones that want to blend into the community and be part of the community are going to be part of that community, and the ones who want be different will be different. Their children will be the ones who you have trouble with when they attend to school.

Table 4.2 (continued)

Theoretical Perspectives	African Americans
Empowerment Theory	I go to the school and she said you are not her mother. I said no, I am her stepmother, and I take care of her. They could not handle that. I mean she is White and I am Black. They frown on Black and White. Me being Black, they did not want me involved.
	At Roosevelt [Middle School], you have Black and Whites doing the same identical thing and their both there in front of the principal. The White one can walk off, but the Black one will be called to the office.

There were issues linked to minority relationships with the school and community raised by A/A parents. The following section reports the issues as related to the school and the community.

Challenges Regarding Minority Status at USD 445

Several members of the A/A focus group expressed concern over challenges that they and their children faced while attending school in the Coffeyville district.

Challenges and prejudices related to minority status were expressed. An A/A parent, Amanda, said, “There are still a few teachers that make it hard on minorities.” Issues were raised concerning how some minorities were treated in the school system. Some of these issues involved teachers lowering expectations for minorities and discrimination.

Teacher Expectations

Some A/A parents believed school personnel were lowering their expectations for their children. They also believed their children were misunderstood, or wrongly disciplined for inappropriate behavior at school. In addition, two A/A parents believed a

few years earlier that a counselor and teacher were “holding back my children by having lower expectations for them.” Michelle, an A/A parent, had concerns regarding her daughter and son. She remembered her experience with a counselor, “This person was discouraging my son from pursuing his own academic choices in school, when it involved college prep classes, such as sciences and math.” Michelle informed her children, “I don't ever want you to use the excuse that you're Black, even though there are more barriers to overcome as a minority person.” Nicole, April, and Judy A/A parents agreed that some teachers at USD 445 exhibited lowered expectations for African Americans.

Discrimination

Another A/A parent, Joni, insisted teachers did not want to assist her because of her race. “They frown on Black and White,” asserted Joni, and furthermore, “the school did not want to help me because I was Black and my daughter was White.” April was another A/A parent who insisted that her son was treated unfairly over rules at USD 445 because of his ethnicity, and that it got to the point she even involved the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Michelle, asserted that “the challenge of being a minority in the public school system is very evident to minorities but not to non-minorities.” Michelle had a unique vision of how the school system and the community could create a change of perspective. “It would start by non-minorities magically switching roles with all minorities to live in their shoes [situation] for a while, to be able to recognize discrimination first hand.” Michelle stated, “In this scenario it is hoped that when roles were switched back, people would have acquired a

better understanding of each other; particularly as it applies to the teachers' understanding and expectations for minority children.

Challenges Regarding Minority Status in the Community

African American parents raised issues related to the minority relationships in the Coffeyville community, and some intermingled with issues dealing with school personnel. Prejudice seemed to exist in the community in some A/A parents' eyes. Most of these parents knew of racism in the 1950s and '60s when they were growing up. "Racism is more subtle now and it can blind-side our kids," stated Peter, an A/A parent. At least four A/A parents, Glen, Peter, Judy, and Michelle stressed to their children, that one's minority status offers no excuses or privileges in this world, and race can present numerous obstacles to overcome. They, however, also stressed encouraging their children to succeed.

Two male A/A parents believed "racism, poverty, drugs, and alcohol were devastating the community." One of those parents, Peter, has interpreted inequities in the system as "his biggest personal challenge." He believed that by being a strong role model and educating his children to develop positive core values, he could facilitate their resolve in dealing with bigger issues of race and prejudice within the school system and the community as well.

Several A/A parents believed that people who had problems in the community and school were not just African American. Kelly, an A/A parent, said, "Even parents with money had problems with their children." These same A/A parents believed poverty was a big factor in the community, which included African American, Native American, and White people.

African American parents, April, Nicole, and Judy, strongly believed that establishing an effective communication link represents a vital connection for helping minorities coming into the community. They insisted communication was the number one priority for both community and school district. In their opinions, creating a network with other minority parents in the community was worthwhile, valuable, and symbolized a social capital learning process.

Summary of the Finding

Finding 2 reported issues related to minority relationships within the school and community raised by A/A parents. The finding indicated that A/A parents are sometimes frustrated for themselves and their children attending USD 445. They believe the injustice of low expectations by teachers and other school personnel still exist. They also documented in some instances, that their children were ignored or unfairly treated. Other findings expressed by some N/A and A/A parents indicated that recent changes in USD 445 administration reflected improvements in the attitudes and programs at least at the high school.

Findings reported that A/A parents believed challenges regarding minority status in the community existed. Some of the A/A parents wanted a higher awareness to take place concerning the plight of minorities in the community. Other A/A parents discussed proactive moves for new minorities moving to Coffeyville such as networking, communicating, and offering encouragement in reaching out to the school system.

Findings reported that A/A parents believed some teachers lowered their expectations for African American students. One mother noted that a counselor was not supporting her child's preferences either for college prep courses insinuating that he

would not be going to college, or that the courses may be too difficult for him. Another parent believed her child's teacher expected less of her because of her race. Other A/A parents reported similar challenges with regard to low expectations, such as administrators and teachers not enforcing rules and regulations, and some not understanding minority students at USD 445.

The reported findings by A/A parents regarding discrimination represented an amalgamation of low expectations and unfair treatment. One A/A parent reported discrimination occurred concerning disciplinary actions involving her child simply because of his race. Joni, an A/A parent, had claimed a prejudice existed toward her because she was Black and her daughter was White. In addition, Michelle, another A/A parent, contributed the following, "Because minorities have to fit into a system that is mostly run by white people, minorities come closer to understanding white people than white people understand minorities."

Finding 3 Native American and African American Parents Set Expectations for Their Children

Native American and African American parents set expectations for their children. This finding supports all of the study's research questions. N/A and A/A parents describe their expectations, motivations, and aspirations for their child. In reporting Finding 3, I first address expectations in a N/A and A/A parental role, under one subtopic, next I speak to expectations by N/A and A/A parents about aspirations for their child's education as the following subtopic. Finally, I conclude with a summary of this finding.

Table 4.3

Native American and African American Parents Set Expectations for Their Children

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	I instill the values I use in every day life in my children in the hope that they would adopt those principles as their own. In addition, I want them always to try their very best.
	My parents believed going to college was not a big thing. Therefore, anything that I achieved, I did it for myself, and I decided it was very, very important.
	As far as instilling the value of school through my parents, they were not involved in my education. My aspiration for them [my children] is to be good citizens of the United States. My other goal is to be good parents, if they want to be parents.
	(6 similar quotations apply to this theoretical perspective)
	African Americans
	We expected them (children) to be productive and there were times for them also to maintain self-control. We expected that too.
	Parent-teacher conference involvement helps you (parent) build a relationship with the teacher.
	I tell my daughter, you have to listen. When I was going to school, I learned that if I did not listen, then I lost out.
	We were able to offer [the children] direction and stability that they needed to be productive students with good citizenship.
	To new people (in the community) I would say do not give up – don't quit.
	(9 similar quotations apply to this theoretical perspective)

Table 4.3 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Humanistic Psychology	My husband and I both see the value of education.
	My children have seen us struggle with income issues. They also realize the value of an education. Even their Dad is pursuing his bachelor degree now.
	I instill the values I use in every day life in my children in the hope that they would adopt those values as principles for their own life.
	I always want them try their very best.
	African Americans
	My mom has always told me the truth, even when it hurt; my mom told me the truth.
	Our (parents) main goal was to guide them to be productive and constructive citizens.
	You have been sent to school to open your mind and accept what the teacher has to offer. I have told them this action is but one-step toward becoming a productive member of our society.
Positive Psychology	Native Americans
	Well, I hope they set high expectations for themselves.
	My aspirations for her would be to keep learning and to keep shooting for that goal. She has always been-goal-oriented, we have both committed to getting her through school.
	It has never been a question of if he was going to college – it was always a matter of when.
	We have high expectations for our children. We praise them, but also inform them when we feel they have not put forth a genuine effort.

Table 4.3 (continued)

Theoretical Perspectives	African Americans
Positive Psychology	You are not attending school for the reason of having the teachers like you. You have been sent there to learn.
	It would be my biggest wish that parents would start feeling comfortable enough to come to school without being angry.
	I think the atmosphere is changing with the new administration.
	I really believe the atmosphere is changing too.
	Our children were expected to do things a little different from some of the students whose parents worked outside the school district because the Mom and Dad (teachers) were on the scene. The expectations from the teachers are different for teacher's kids.
	Being a pastor, I had to be involved with many students, not just our son. Our main goal was to guide them to be productive and constructive citizens.

Native American and African American parents set expectations for their children. Expectations expressed by African American and Native American parents reflected their parental role responsibilities, such as rules and recommendations for their child to live by.

Expectations in a Parental Role

Some of N/A and A/A parents' expectations were ingrained in family ideals. An expectation presented by Michelle, an A/A parent, was clearly voiced, "I was a hard disciplinarian, but I was honest, I set goals, and I was not an easy pushover (for my children)." Another N/A parent, Carrie, asserted, "We've set high standards our children, been involved, and have really chosen to stay involved." Allison, a N/A parent stated,

“My aspiration is for them to be good citizens of the United States. My other goal is for them to be good parents, if they want to be parents.” Several parents from both N/A and A/A groups modeled positive expectations to their child. Glen, an A/A parent stated, “As a pastor it was important for our kids to become good citizens and productive members of society.” Barbara, a N/A parent, said, “I always told my kids to keep on learning and to do your best.”

Expectations and Aspirations for Education

Expectations and aspirations for education were also articulated by N/A and A/A parents. They expressed to their children that despite problems with one or two teachers it remained their [children’s] job to get an education regardless of what they may consider unfair or difficult. N/A and A/A parents were supportive of their children in dealing with school issues. Several of N/A and A/A parents were very proud of their children’s accomplishments and efforts, admitting that much had been expected of them. Four N/A and A/A parents expressed to their children that it was not if they would go to college, but more accurately when they would go to college.

Native American parents from the focus group had hoped their children set high expectations. One N/A focus group member, Allison, declared, “Our whole family is an example of the value of an education.” Karla, a N/A parent proclaimed, “My husband and I are both professionals; we both see the value of an education.” Some N/A parents lead by example. They instilled the value of an education to their children by either one or both parents returning to college as a non-traditional student.

Many parents from N/A and A/A groups desired their children to aspire to their [child’s] dreams. Others expressed that they wanted their children to become productive,

worthwhile citizens of this nation, and still a few more reiterated, I want my children “to never stop learning.”

Summary of Finding

Finding 3 reported that N/American and A/American parents set expectations for their children. The evidence from this finding indicated that A/A and N/A parents were successful in modeling and instilling the value of education to their children. Certain expectations for their children’s life and education permeated these parents’ attitudes. They spoke of family values—hard work, doing your best, and being productive citizens.

Expectations and aspirations were apparent regarding their child’s educational aspirations. N/A and A/A let it be known to their children that they would go to college. They also expressed that despite problems with one or two teachers, they expected their children to be successful. They also advised their children to take responsibility for getting an education regardless of the challenges.

Finding 4 Native American and African American Parents Expressed Pride in Their Children’s Accomplishments

Native American and African American parents expressed pride in their children’s accomplishments. This finding substantiated all research questions. The tone in describing the pride of accomplishment N/A and A/A parents felt about their children corresponds to appreciative inquiry, positive psychology, and humanistic psychology theoretical perspectives.

The data reports prideful moments that N/A and A/A parents expressed about family members or situations. I begin with how that pride was manifested through efforts and accomplishments. In addition, as a subtopic to accomplishments, I report on single-

parent households with the information distinctive to them. I then focus on pride, values, and self-esteem issues discussed by parents. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the finding.

Table 4.4

Native American and African American Parents Expressed Pride in Their Children's Accomplishments

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	We set high standards and stay involved in our children's education. We have chosen to stay involved.
	You do have to accept them (children) for whatever level of achievement their able to put forth regardless of whether they graduate as an honor student [as long as they graduate].
	You have to be proud for whatever they have achieved and whatever they have accomplished.
	All four of our children, are very involved in extracurricular activities, and their grades are wonderful.
	I instill the values that I use in every day life in my children so they will adopt those principles as their own. In addition, I want them to always try their very best.
	One of the most satisfying [experiences of being involved in my daughter's education] is that my daughter and I have maintained a very close relationship. I have chosen to be very involved in all of her school activities.
	(11 similar quotations apply to this theoretical perspective)

Table 4.4 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	African Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	I held my son back a year before kindergarten and he has excelled academically and he has excelled in sports too.
	My dad was laid back, but when it came to school, he insisted that we do our best and get good grades. All of us attended school. I graduated from PSU with an education degree, and received my masters and reading specialist.
	We were able to talk [with the teacher] about his difficulties and his achievements as a whole.
	Hopefully, my children will learn to respect themselves and respect others.
	We [parents] always talked about our children carry themselves with pride. So they can be proud of who they are, what they do, and how they act.
	I'm African-American and [I believe] if you care enough about yourself, you can carry that respect wherever you go and whatever you do.
	(9 similar quotations apply to this theoretical perspective)
Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Humanistic Psychology	Being involved in their (children) education every day is a challenge; you make a significant time commitment, regardless of your other responsibilities.
	Our son purchased a house two weeks ago and we helped him fix it up. This was a big joy for us, seeing him owning his own home and being successful in what he is doing.
	One of the most satisfying [experiences of being involved in my daughter's education] is that my daughter and I have maintained a very close relationship.

Table 4.3 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Humanistic Psychology	She [daughter] has a reading disability. She had to work so very, very hard. She also had a herniated disc as a junior. She has a 504 plan.
	Did they get a great education and were they able to go on to college? Yes! All three of them have been educated in Coffeyville schools. They all come out with a great education. They can do whatever they want to do.
	African Americans
	She's doing great in school . . . making good grades. She has some problems, but she is a good student and she loves playing sports.
	My most peak experience was when I cried my eyes out as my son graduated from K-State. It was his dream. We were going to send him to Pittsburg, but his dream was to attend K-State. He did whatever it took to go – saved his money, made good grades, and didn't play football so he could concentrate on his grades.
	I have always been involved with all my seven children. You really need to get involved with your children.

Native American and African American parents expressed pride in their children's accomplishments. N/A and A/A parents verbalized their children's accomplishments in both school and life situations. The finding verifies that years of sustaining involvement in their children's education is beneficial for N/A and A/A parents in both tangible and intangible ways. Parental satisfaction was displayed over the efforts and accomplishments achieved by their children.

Pride through Effort and Accomplishments

Both N/A and A/A parents exhibited admiration for their son's or daughter's accomplishments in school and extracurricular activities. Barbara, a N/A parent, who was proud of her daughter's efforts in compensating for her disability, stated:

My child has had a reading disability, and has fought through all of that. She has had to work so very, very hard. She is the kid we discovered had a herniated disc as a junior, and now is on a 504 plan.

Carrie, a N/A mother, said, "Probably one of the most satisfying things for me is we [daughter and mother] have maintained a very close relationship simply because I have chosen to be very involved in all of her school activities.

Michelle, an A/A mother, purported, "My son had written a paper about me calling me his most unforgettable person and his greatest role model." She also expressed pride in her husband's commitment for their children by acknowledging that he has been a member on the site counsel, participates in activities, and attends parent-teacher conferences:

The kids see this and know that he is taking time out of an 80-hour week job to attend parent-teacher conferences. It makes a difference. We set the standard . . . Our son learned to value education because of the role model his father set for him.

An A/A couple had six kids who attended USD 445 reflected on the pride they felt when two of their children were honor students, and others were student athletes, or gave service to the community. Other A/A and N/A parents told of their children

graduating from Coffeyville schools, and the great pride they took in their achievements.

Some of their children were bankers, business personnel, or lawyers.

Single-parent families

Three respondents, Nicole, Joni, and Janelle, all A/A, were also single-family parents and care providers. They all stated that they found time to participate in their child's education. "I did it all by myself!" declared Janelle. One N/A parent said, "Being involved in your child's educational activities, takes an extreme amount of time commitment." Single parent families voiced that they felt pride in watching their children graduate (walk across that stage) from high school and college. They considered the challenging years of child rearing and commitment to their children's education a worthwhile endeavor.

Instilling Pride, Values, and Self-esteem

Several N/A and A/A parents indicated that instilling pride in their children was one way to develop their self-esteem and values. Developing self-esteem and a foundation of values was needed to withstand the forces of the world that "could do them harm" according to Peter an A/A parent. The A/A and N/A parents believe that instilling pride also included teaching their children about their A/A or N/A heritage, culture, or history.

"Learning the history of our culture is one of the most important factors in being proud of your heritage, we'd explain to our kids," claimed one A/A couple. Other A/A and N/A parents agreed that showing an interest and pride in one's culture was important. Judy an A/A parent said, "be proud of who you are!" She believed instilling pride in her children inspired them to do better in school. Peter, another A/A parent claimed, "Pride,

respect for themselves and in others, made them want to the best job they could do in any endeavor.” Carrie, an N/A parent concurred, “one needs to be proud of whatever your children has accomplished or achieved, regardless of the level. We really praise them.”

Some of the A/A parents who were raised by single-family parents believed they instilled pride and self-esteem in their children’s value system. They believed that having lived in a single-family unit; they had a knowledge base to address single-parent issues. Nicole, an A/A parent said, “My mother was very busy, and still got her education, along with participating in activities with us. I was very proud of her.” Judy, another A/A parent also noted that her father was a huge inspiration to her even though he lacked an education himself. She stated, “He always supported our education and didn’t put up with foolishness when it came to attending school.” Others expressed similar pride in the role model their parent or parents served.

Summary of Finding

Finding 4 reported that N/A and A/A parents expressed pride in their children’s accomplishments. Pride in self, self-respect, and self-esteem were linked to praise, family values, and family history. Data in this finding showed that A/A and N/A parents alike, believed that the time and energy expended on their children both in life and educational careers were well worth the effort. N/A and A/A parents believed that instilling values and self-esteem is linked to being proud of one’s family heritage and culture.

Native American and African American single-parent families voiced their difficulties involved in raising their children and allocating that time spent toward their educational support and participation in activities. Some attributed a positive role model

by their single parent as a foundation to their understanding the worth of the involvement with their child.

Finding 5 Native American and African American Parents Linked Family Values to Their Role and Responsibility as a Parent

Native American and African American parents linked family values to their role and responsibility as a parent. This finding supports the research questions. I organized this chapter by reporting data identified by A/A and N/A parents that supports the finding. Table 4.5 includes rich and descriptive A/A and N/A parent quotations. Next, I report core values and inspiration, followed by a conversation on modeling family values and responsibilities in a parent, and concluding with a summary of the finding.

Table 4.5

Native American and African American Parents Linked Family Values to Their Role and Responsibility as a Parent

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	Before school begins, certain ideas [good values] have been inflicted on them.
	When they [children] tell me about someone [invites] them over. I always ask, who are their parents, where do they live, where does the mother work . . . are there any brothers or sisters? [We stay involved in their lives.]
	We have modeled it [values] in many different ways in our house. We use many examples. Whether it is family, friends, or something that has come up that we cannot afford [to purchase].
	One thing that I value very highly about myself is honesty and standing behind my word. If you tell someone you are going to do something, then you do it.

Table 4.5 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	I am honest.
	I hope that they will adopt those [good] principles as their own.
	I use those [good] values in my everyday life. I instill them in my children and I hope that they will use them in their everyday life.
	I believe the core values start by [the parent] setting high standards and expecting that those standard will be met. However, you have to let your child achieve to their potential.
	We have set high standards and been involved and we've chosen to stay involved.
	(16 similar quotations apply to this theoretical perspective)
	African Americans
	I want to be able to look at my children smile, and hear them say Mom, thank you, for being there.
	You must make your children the number one priority even though you are tired from working all day.
	Because of the way I was reared, my values were always there. My parents were always involved in our lives, and they always encouraged us.
	I think core values involve living that example. It makes a difference in your kid's life, more than just talking about it.
	What I value most is being able to relate to various people, and people of different cultures, and backgrounds.
	A lack of knowledge is always a disadvantage, not just the lack of having a formal education, but rather a lack of information. Knowledge gives you some control.

Table 4.5 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	African Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	[Children would] accomplish the ability to carry on, to know that they can do something.
	Most of our kids' problems are the ability to say that they can do [something great] . . . This would be an example of core values.
	Core values make us all believers in Christ. Those core values are what we use as we venture into our school districts and communities. Those are our practicing principles.
	As parents, it is our responsibility not the school district's to teach our kids how to solve problems. The school district teaches problem solving, but it is our responsibility to support problem solving. I am the greatest role model they ever had.
	The gospel afforded me the core values; [it is] the Christian character that assists me.
	Their [children] anger challenged me to direct them through our core values.
	I learned much from working with my son. He motivated me.
	(13 similar quotations apply to this theoretical perspective)
Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Humanistic Psychology	My aspiration is for them [children] to be good citizens of the United States. My other goal is for them to be good parents, if they want to be parents.
	We just push more with our examples.
	My parents were not involved in my high school; yet, I wanted to get involved When I had kids, I wanted them to experience everything or at least try it.

Table 4.5 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Humanistic Psychology	Success begins at a very early age.
	African Americans
	It is the parent's responsibility. I believe we should participate . . . have an interest in their [children] academics.
	Many of our parents are not educated.
	I guess that's one of my strengths or core values. I once caught my nephew cheating on spelling test. I took his paper and tore it up. Hey, in this classroom you are my student! [and will learn to develop core values]
	One of my core values is honesty . . . made a big difference in my child's life. To me, honesty in the business world, in the education field, whatever it is, is a core value. I've always been honest with my kids.
	Many minorities especially socio-economically disadvantaged minorities . . . suffer a loss of control. When you have to depend on a system to give you control, there is a real loss . . . your only control is your children . . . it's the parent's responsibility to instill values.
	A lack of knowledge is always a disadvantage. Even if you don't have a formal education, at least pursue having an understanding of whatever [your child] is going through.
Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Positive Psychology	When you're involved with your child, you can send them [a message]. If they make F's – you don't care or you can participate and say okay, forget it and let's go on.

Table 4.5 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Positive Psychology	My aspiration is for them [my children] to be good citizens of the United States. My other goal is for them to be good parents.
	Even before children begin [their] schooling, certain ideas have been inflicted on them. It is one of those things – before you change the children . . . change the parents. I do wish everyone could just get along better.
	My parents believed going to college was not a big thing. Therefore . . . I achieved.
	I would advise everybody to get as involved as you can as early as what you can [in your children’s education.
	I would have to say that the main motivation for me was that my parents were not involved in my education and I only wish they had been.
	I use those [good] values in my everyday life . . . I instill those value in my children.
	African Americans
	Leading by example – . . . if we didn’t cuss in the house, they didn’t cuss.
	Always be involved in yours child’s education.
	You could . . . inform others how to be more involved in their child’s education.
	Anger and hostility never resolves anything . . . we are a very emotional family we are a very loud family, we are boisterous, in fact three of my kids were in this math teachers class and he found them all stimulating.
	Just being able to know that I can teach them something . . . not giving up.
	You have to get involved in the system. That way, you can make a difference.
	The fact that I had to be educated was a challenge. Even though, I didn’t have formal education right out of high school, I’ve always been a reader.
	My dad taught us that your education is something no one can take it away.

Native American and African American parents linked family values to their role and responsibility as a parent. They defined family values about the parental role as being a parent model in the parent role and accepting responsibility as a parent.

Core Values and Inspiration

Carrie a N/A parent, said, “I believe in having really high standards and expecting that the standards will be met by my children.” Some of the N/A and A/A parents’ interpretation of core values and principles were deemed so important that they believed they should be used and demonstrated each day to their children. Peter, an A/A parent, spoke to those principles:

First, my children needed to trust my wife and me that it would be okay. I ask them to be more tolerant, and to deal with the anger that is rising up inside of them to prevent getting into trouble. It challenged me to direct them with our core values, so that is what I did.

In discussing the trust his children developed through family values, Peter expressed:

As adults and as parents its our responsibility, not the school district’s, to teach our children how to solve problems . . . the school district does, but it is our responsibility as parents, and that’s something the kids and my wife have always done is to problem-solve. I am the greatest role model they ever had.

Native American and African American parents indicated that their core values were also shaped by the examples their children had set for them. Such was the case for Janelle, an A/A female parent, “Learning from things having to do with my son . . . motivate me.” A/A and N/A parents, whose children had disabilities, found inspiration during the learning process in working with their child.

Modeling Family Values and Responsibility

A recurring theme related to family values appeared in the data. An A/A parent, stated, “To me, I think core values . . . living that example, is what makes a difference in your kids life, more than just talking about it.” Glen, an A/A parent declared, “Well, I would think the fact that we lead by example is important . . . we don’t cuss in the house, they don’t cuss.” Other core values expressed by parents included “honesty, hard work, faith in God, service to others, and commitment.” Several A/A and N/A parents believe that such values become guiding principles for accepting responsibility as a role model in their child’s life. Peter, an A/A parent said:

God lent them [my children] to me, they are mine, they are blood of my blood, and flesh of my flesh. It is my responsibility to nurture them. I need to give them a foundation for life, including wings to fly away. Given this, they can participate in life, and come back to see me sometime.

The N/A and A/A parents believed their values shaped their children’s values. Interestingly, for these highly involved parents, not all of their parents modeled the strong value of an education to them. Allison, a N/A parent said:

My parents were not big on going to college. School was not a big thing to them. Therefore, anything that I achieved, I did it for myself. As far as the example of the value of an education being instilled in me through my parents, that did not occur. My motivation is that my parents were not involved in my education. I wish they had been involved.

Carrie, another N/A parent whose parents did not value her education, asserted:

I look at this differently because of my personal beliefs and experience. My parents were not involved, and I wanted to be involved in high school . . . so when I had children, I just wanted them to be involved and to experience everything.

Some of the N/A and A/A parents who lacked a role model as a child still developed strong core values. In these cases, a lack of parental values shaped their own commitment to values. These N/A and A/A parents who lacked a role model accepted the responsibility and provided role models for their children.

Summary of the Finding

Native American and African American parents linked family values to their role and responsibility as a parent. This finding reported the core values and parental role responsibilities that N/A and A/A parents exhibited in their involvement with their children. They defined core values as the basic values of responsibility and modeling. Their dedication to their children's education was obvious. Some A/A and N/A parents stated their own children had inspired them.

Four Native American and African American parents made direct comments to the values of honesty. Other family values such as strong work ethic, commitment, moral compass, and belief in God were expressed by both N/A and A/A parents. Parents possessed a strong inclination to model the value of an education. Some N/A and A/A parents who did not have a role model felt compelled to be a model for their children.

Finding 6 Native American and African American Parents Linked Teacher Care and Respect for Their Child to the Child's Success

Native American and African American parents linked teacher care and respect for their child to the child's success. This finding speaks to challenges as well as motivations and strategies that connect to concepts and commentary about teacher care and respect as it relates to a child's educational success. N/A and A/A parent commentary is associated primarily with the first research question on motivations described by parent's in sustaining their child's education.

I organize this finding's data by stating the finding and presenting Table 4.6 containing all relevant N/A and A/A parent comments related to theoretical perspectives of the study. I first report teacher care and respect, and then I report instilling care, respect, and teacher support. I conclude with a summary of the finding.

Table 4.6

Native American and African American Parents Linked Teacher Care and Respect for Their Child to the Child's Success

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	There are some fantastic ones [teachers] and I would not hesitate for a moment to have any of my children in their classes.

Table 4.6 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
	In certain areas, the teachers have done a good job. They have done an outstanding job!
	If my children have a problem and if they ever wanted to go to their teacher, that was fine and I would support them 100% of the time.
	African Americans
Appreciative Inquiry	Anybody can yell at the coach [the teacher] instead do something that lets your child know that you respect the system and that you are working in the system.
	Open communication, dignity, and respect.
	I want my child to go out and respect all people in general, but I also want my kid to be respected by the teacher.
	It helps when they [children] know you are interested and involved and that you care about what's happening with them.
	I want the teacher to help me and not harm . . . start an open communication.
	Respect yourself and respect other people.
	Ever so often, the administrator or the teachers notice that you are committed to your child . . . then they begin to respect you more.
	Let your child know that you support them and they have 100% your support, but also at the same time support that teacher.
	We didn't have a lot of trouble with our kids and most of the teachers know they have our support.
	A teacher who knows your child . . . sees the value in your child, especially minority children . . . then that child will perform in school.
	Teachers are human too; they are stretched out.

Table 4.6 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Humanistic Psychology	I think the teachers will do the very best that they can. As parents, we will not all agree with how teachers have handled something, but they are the ones in control in the classroom.
	I am, giving her good support but the school system has not always [given her good support] . . . most of the teachers have been incredibly good about helping her but not all of the teachers have been.
	African Americans
	Anybody can yell at the coach [the teacher] instead of letting your children know that you respect the system and that you're working in the system.
	A teacher sees the value in your minority child.
	Teachers overall don't understand [your child]. Some do, however, and you can tell. I can tell you the classes that my children have been more successful in are with teachers that took with them. I can name a teacher that did it.
	I use the TLC (tender loving care) method for my kids
	Does it take commitment? Yes.
Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Positive Psychology	It's like being a referee at a ball game . . . make the best call that you can make, but not everybody's going to agree with the decisions you make.
	I never tried to blame a teacher for anything because I don't think it helps.
	[Be] involved with your child.

Table 4.6 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	African Americans
Positive Psychology	Open communication, dignity, and respect. You can show it at home to your kids every day.
	I expect them [children] to be treat other people with respect, also. I inform them to be straightforward to all their teachers.
	You have not been sent there [school] to like or dislike the teacher, you've been sent there [to learn].
	With our new administration, I really believe the atmosphere is changing.
Theoretical Perspective	Native Americans
Empowerment Theory	I would call the school and ask the teacher to call me. The teacher never called me. [The teacher] told them [children] to come in 30 minutes before school to work on concepts they did not understand.
	Some [teachers] were strong, set in their ways, and saw me as an intruder in their room.
	There was an incidence . . . last year in calculus . . . I kept emailing the instructor; I kept encouraging this child to get extra help . . . and no communication. My e-mails went unanswered by this teacher and several other teachers as well.
	There are teachers that I would not want children to have.
	African Americans
	There have been some instances because of race . . . and they had to be handled delicately.
	I really feel like the teachers need to know about the student's learning styles and their background, etc. Teachers are afraid to get that personal anymore.

Table 4.6 (continued)

Theoretical Perspective	African Americans
Empowerment Theory	When that non-minority teacher goes back into the classroom, would he or she expect less from that minority kid? Would he or she have an appreciation for maybe what that child might have went through?

Native American and African American parents linked teacher care and respect for their child to the child’s success. Some A/A parents perceived that ways their child was being treated related to care and respect as a form of discrimination. They claimed that their children were treated differently just because they were Black.

Lack of Teacher Care and Respect

Michelle, an A/A parent, expressed dismay for a teacher “expecting less for my kids because they are Black.” She told her children they should never be expected to be anything or achieve anything but the best.

A few of the A/A and N/A parents remarked, that if a teacher showed their children respect and treated them as individuals, those teachers developed a stronger rapport with their children. Peter an A/A parent explained, “If a teacher demonstrates true caring for my child, then my child will put out more effort for that teacher.” Barbara, a N/A parent said:

They (teachers) would not give my children help or they were so unorganized that they lost half of my children’s work . . . teachers more or less called them lazy, when they asked questions they would tell them to read the book again . . . Sometimes I think teachers just fluff parents off.

Respect was a strong link for what the parent wanted to see between their child and teacher as paraphrased from several of the A/A parents, and implied through the messages about teachers' relationships with their children from N/A parents. A/A parents used the word respect frequently; however, N/A parents did not use the word respect. Both N/A and A/A parents claimed, that in their perception, if their child's teacher did not care about their child, then this was viewed as the biggest hurdle or challenge to their child's educational success.

Instilling Care, Respect, and Teacher Support

An important element connected to the lack of respect and teacher care theme was a crossover to parent respect and care for the child; this was illustrated in the communication with the child, parent role responsibilities, and family values. All parents claimed to demonstrate love and commitment to their children. Janelle, an A/A working single-parent mother, remarked, "Just stepping in and letting them know I care and am always there," she believed was reinforcing for their self-esteem. Another A/A parent, Glen, corroborated that belief. "I use the TLC (tender loving care) method for my kids; it sure seems to cover it." These A/A parents believe that caring builds self-respect and self-esteem and teachers should exhibit these values when working with their children. Glen said, "I really feel like the teachers need to know all they can about a child's background, learning styles, and family."

It was frequently verbalized by N/A and A/A parents that their children had to learn to respect themselves before they could demand it from others. These parents talked about how they believed in self-respect and in instilling self-respect in their children.

Placing responsibility on the child for doing better in school instead of the teacher was also voiced by both A/A and N/A parents. Michelle, an A/A mother, said, “Our children and most of the teachers knew that they (teachers and administrators) had our support.” This belief was made clearer by Judy an A/A parent, who asserted, “You have not been sent there to like or dislike the teacher, you’ve been sent to open your mind and accept what the teacher has to offer in order for you to become a productive individual in society.” Carrie, an N/A parent voiced, “If my children have a problem and if they ever wanted to go to their teacher, that was fine and I would support them 100%; however, I will not be the one making the phone call.”

Some A/A parents wanted teachers to be firm, caring, and respectful to their children. Judy spoke for a number of parents. She said, “Let your child know that they are supported 100%, but in addition, so is the teacher.” Glen, an A/A father, added, “it isn’t that teachers don’t care, it is just that sometimes their hands are tied . . . teachers are human too, they get stretched out, but they have their own strategies, you have to work with them.” These comments were appreciative beliefs about teacher abilities and trust in teacher connections for providing an appropriate education, and respecting their child. Teacher care and respect was expressed as a futuristic view also. For example, N/A and A/A parents expressed, “We want to bring our kids up to take care of themselves.”

Summary of Finding

Native American and African American parents linked teacher care and respect for their child to the child’s success. Respect and care for their children were the strongest statements that parents made about their child’s teachers. A teacher’s lack of caring and respect also presented the largest obstacle to their educational involvement.

Several A/A and N/A parents portrayed the experiences of having teachers who cared strongly about their child and teachers who did not care as much about their child.

Some A/A or N/A supported their child's teacher despite problems with the teacher. Those parents placed the responsibility on the child to pursue a resolution to a teacher problem; yet, they indicated they would be in the background for support. N/A and A/A parents espoused that their children had to learn respect before demanding it from others. There were also appreciative beliefs about teacher abilities and trust in teacher connections for providing an appropriate education for their children.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data from my study's six findings. The data were collected from A/A and N/A parents who were rated as highly involved in their child's education. The six salient findings were: (1) Native American and African American parents identified involvement strategies to improve their child's education, (2) African American parents believed there were issues related to minority relationships with the school and community, (3) Native American and African American parents set expectations for their children, (4) Native American and African American parents expressed pride in their children's accomplishments, (5) Native American and African American parents linked family values to their role and responsibility as a parent, and (6) Native American and African American parents linked teacher care and respect for their child to the child's success.

Chapter 5 discusses the interpretation of the salient findings, recommendations for future research, contributions to the profession, and contributions to practice.

CHAPTER 5

The focus of this final chapter is to review the purpose of the study, research questions, the methodology, major findings, summary of the findings, and discussion of the findings. The major segment of this chapter will interpret the findings, and suggest recommendations.

I organized this chapter by first reaffirming the purpose of the study, summary of the literature review, methodology, research questions, and a summary of findings. Next, I continue to discuss each of my findings. After reviewing my findings, I will expound on implications for future research, implications for practice and recommendations, relationship of the findings to relevant theory, then finally, a summary and conclusions.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my research study was to describe minority parents' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education. Participants' perceptions were viewed through the theoretical frameworks of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology (Seligman, 1998) and humanistic psychology, as it includes Maslow's theory of 'the basic good in people' (1943).

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review began with a conceptual and theoretical description of the study's framework. The theoretical framework of humanistic and positive psychology is grounded in the appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective. Appreciative Inquiry is a theoretical research prescriptive that asks unconditionally positive questions, and concentrates on positive core values within the organization or individual. It is

holistic in nature and directs the focus of inquiry in a positive direction. Humanistic psychology offers a lens for examining the successful endeavors of minority parents who sustain involvement in their child's education. The theoretical framework of humanistic psychology attributes to acts of self-determination, a thirst for good values, accomplishment of productive goals, and to acquire self-respect. The more recent addition of positive psychology theory supports the foundations of humanistic psychology and adds positive interventions in people's lives. It encourages people to use healthy characteristics of optimism, hope, and aspiration instead of focusing on their limitations in efforts to persevere through difficult circumstances. These theoretical perspectives form the framework of my study and for examining the empirical research of minority parents who sustain involvement in their children's education.

A complimentary theory that emerged from my findings in addition to the perspectives of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology, and humanistic psychology is the theory of empowerment. The works of educational critical theorists, Giroux, Freire, and Apple were cited as an optional framework or lens to examine challenges, motivations, and strategies described by highly involved minority parents in their child's education. Empowerment becomes a process of growing the capabilities of individuals or groups so they can comprehend their choices and transform those choices into preferred actions or outcomes (Giroux, 2001).

The review of the empirical research focused on five areas: (1) parent perspective of involvement in their child's education, (2) barriers to parent participation, (3) extent of minority involvement, (4) sustaining parent involvement: secondary school research, and (5) the influence of parent expectations and aspirations. The literature review provided

information focused on the study's purpose to describe the perceptions, motivations, challenges, and strategies of highly involved minority parents, who have sustained involvement in their child's education.

Overview of Methodology

I used a qualitative multiple case study emergent design that allowed me to gain the participants' perspectives related to the research questions. There were two cases. Each case had a separate unit of analysis. The two units of analysis were comprised of 11 African American parents, and 6 Native American parents.

I applied an appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective to collect data related to African American and Native American (parent) participants' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education.

Research Questions

The study was guided by three research questions:

1. How do highly involved minority parents describe their motivation to be involved in their child's education?
2. How do highly involved minority parents describe the challenges that they have overcome in sustaining their involvement in their child's education?
3. How do highly involved minority parents describe the strategies they use to sustain involvement in their child's education?

Findings

The six prominent findings derived from my study are as follows:

Finding 1: Native American and African American parents identified involvement strategies to improve their child's education.

Finding 2: African American parents believed there were issues related to minority relationships within the school and community.

Finding 3: Native American and African American parents set expectations for their children.

Finding 4: Native American and African American parents expressed pride in their children's accomplishments.

Finding 5: Native American and African American parents linked family values to their role and responsibility as a parent.

Finding 6: Native American and African American parents linked teacher care and respect for their child to the child's success.

Discussion of Findings

This section presents a detailed discussion of the major findings from my study. Each subsection will provide the results of an individual finding, along with the rationale and causation connected to each finding. Finally, I will discuss my interpretation of the foundational perceptions and attitudes behind the findings, as seen through the eyes of Native and African American parents who are highly involved in their children's education.

Finding 1: Native American and African American Parents Identified Involvement Strategies to Improve Their Child's Education

Native American (N/A) and African American (A/A) parents identified several involvement strategies they used in attempting to improve educational situations for their

children. Many strategies were recognized as being useful, but those focusing on communication were the most important and pertinent. Some communication-type strategies were utilized for what I call relationship-building initiatives with school personnel and the teacher. N/A and A/A parents might not have used these strategies consciously or purposefully because they were mainly acting as advocates for their children. They believed in listening to the child and the child's teacher. They believed in being proactive in responding to the teacher and being there for their child. In turn, as parents, they believed that it is the teacher's responsibility to respond to their requests.

The N/A and A/A participants selected for this study were some of the most highly involved minority parents in the school district because they had sustained their support over time through their children's enrollment in both middle and high school. Their dedication and persistence served them well in acquiring the skills and knowledge of how to build relationships with their child's teachers despite obstacles that were at times both overt and tacit. They were quick to assess a teacher's care and respect for their child, but also intuitively possessed the skills to assess that teacher's skill level. This was important to the parent-teacher relationship by creating an honest and open relationship in many cases. In essence, effective communication was the initial step for good relationship building between the parent and teacher.

Participants identified 21 strategies to improve their child's educational success, 13 of them relating to communication with or about their child's teachers, administrator, or counselor. I believe the significant data from Finding 1 materialized from this emphasis. That is, communication strategies were accentuated by participants, who frequently and dramatically described an existing or a developing teacher-child-parent

relationship as being ineffective due to lack of communication and rapport with teachers. In addition, however, there were examples where parents stressed to their children that despite issues with the teacher, as students in a given class, they were ultimately responsible for satisfactorily learning the information presented by the teacher. The implications of the communication strategies and the networking with others that may grow from that genesis, for the minority parent, may particularly be noteworthy because without it no other strategies can be set in motion.

An important rationale for conducting this study was to identify minority parents' voices and the involvement strategies they used with their children's school community. Such involvement was found to raise the importance of parents' roles and the responsibilities of their children. Research indicates that most parent involvement strategies have been identified and derived through the school's perceptions and policies, not the parents' perspective (Baker & Snoden, 1998; Epstein, 1992, 1995; Lewis, 1992). Thus, my study was unique by probing the views of A/A and N/A parents. School administrators, counselors, and teachers may learn much from inviting minority parents into the conversation related to involvement strategies.

Finding 2: African American Parents Believed There Were Issues Related to Minority Relationships Within the School and Community

Finding 2 related to A/A parents' perceptions about their child's treatment in school, specifically because as it relates to their minority status. A/A parents believed injustices existed in the form of low expectations and some inequitable matters regarding disciplinary issues. These parents also believed prejudice existed in community

relationships. The following discussion will first focus on community relationships and they followed by teacher expectations.

Many A/A parents had overcome personal obstacles in their formative years. With regard to racial issues, it appeared natural to them and within their capabilities to protest discrimination. Thus, confronting intolerance was something they did not perceive as beyond them. When A/A parents discussed challenges in the community related to discrimination, their chief concern was how minorities who recently moved to Coffeyville were going to react to the community. A couple of the A/A parents suggested forming a minority support group for parent involvement within the school district. They believed that minority families new to the community needed a network as a way to access and increase social capital.

Social capital refers to a collection of resources that are basic in relationships of trust and collaboration between people. Social capital is not merely a substitute for supplying greater fiscal sources and greater community service to those who are underprivileged, it establishes a vital means for increasing such resources and making their utilization more efficient (Warren, Thompson, & Saegert, 2001). An example of this would be pursuing communication with community institutions like churches, schools, public health, and housing centers as means of financial or social assistance—not just exclusively government assisted programs. Also part of social capital networking can be communicating with key members of agencies within a community for help. Social networking and social capital were but two ideas parents presented on how minorities moving to the Coffeyville area might overcome challenges related to perceived

discrimination and intolerance. A/A parents provided few specific examples of community discrimination but stated that prejudice existed in Coffeyville.

Discrimination within the school district was expressed in another way by A/A parents; they believed some teachers' held low expectations for minority children. It was a concern not only because of how it reflected on the respect between their child and the teacher, but also because it enlightened the parents about the personality and character of the teacher. That is, the teachers' expectations are a barometer of their attitudes in given situations and, therefore, were something that needs to be carefully monitored by most A/A parents—following up with visits, phone calls to the teacher, and communication with their child.

Another way to look at the issue of teacher low expectations as perceived by A/A parents is the discrepancy that exists between the perceptions and expectations of the educators, on the one hand, and those of the parents, on the other hand. Even if USD 445 educators believe that A/A parents should be more involved, A/A parents believe they are responsive to the school; they participate and are involved in their child's education. That is, what is deemed important from school personnel's point of view may not be congruent with the parent's point of view. This aligns with research that suggests that perceptions of parental involvement have been found to vary across social classes and ethnicities.

Minority parents may have more trouble conforming to school personnel's expectations of parental involvement because the majority of schools in the United States are governed by the White middle class and, therefore, inherently governed by middle-class cultural views and values. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995; 1997) with Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) discovered three attributes that predicted parent

involvement for minority parents: (a) role construction (how much the parent feels it is important to be involved in their child's schooling); (b) self-efficacy (how useful parents feel they can be to their child's education); and (c) how inviting the school is to the parent or family.

I feel that most A/A parents in this study demonstrated qualities of role construction and self-efficacy because of their assuredness and confidence that what they are doing on behalf of their child is their responsibility, as well as, their persistence about this responsibility. The third question of the of Deslandes and Bertrand's (2005) attributes concerning the school's invitation nature still remains. That raises the issue of continuing alienation of minority parents from many educational institutions. One possible answer may relate to the dissonance that could be occurring between school personnel expectations and the parents regarding what constitutes effective and sustained parental involvement. The perception of low expectations and the belief that A/A children are being treated unfairly may be manifested in the failure of school personnel and parents to effectively communicate the dissimilarities in philosophies, cultures, and backgrounds, thus causing misunderstandings based on ethnic and racial disparities. School generated initiatives in seeking a resolution to this matter would make A/A parents feel a greater sense of invitation.

Finding 3: Native American and African American Parents Set Expectations for Their Children

Both N/A and A/A parents expressed the value of an education for their children. They instilled that principle through modeling and attitude. Both groups of parents made their aspirations and expectations clear to their children. Included in those aspirations and

expectations were that their children would be successful in school and that the parents would provide assistance and support. As an extension of the value of an education, N/A and A/A parents instilled in their children aspirations to attend college or receive some type of postsecondary schooling, advanced training, or certification. Indeed many of their children attend and/or graduate from college. Other common aspirations for N/A and A/A children were to be happy, good parents, set high goals, strive to do their best, and be worthwhile productive citizens.

I believe this finding is linked to the core values and innate character of these N/A and A/A parents rated by school personnel as effective by their involvement in their child's education. That is, one would expect to see a substantially higher degree of expectations for this set of parents and their children when compared to parents with a mediocre or low involvement in their child's education. In addition, when describing this group of participant parents, one detects a higher sense of responsibility and obligation toward their children. The research begs the obvious. Are parents' actions that show they are more motivated, overcome challenges, and develop strategies that allow them to work within the school system for their child's benefit, more optimistic and demonstrate a higher self-esteem, self-concept, or possess extra feelings of worthiness? Are these skills God-given traits or are they learned? Either way, it is clear that the parents in this study reflect positive psychology, showing optimism and humanistic psychology attributes that explain some of those inner strengths, the "good" in people, and in their ability to make good choices.

The parents in this study who demonstrated these traits represented a committed group. It means parents in this study could possess a strong self-explanatory style, a

process that explains how we habitually and meta-cognitively assess our successes and failures (Seligman, 1998). Experiments with high achievers have shown that when they fail, they do not attribute that failure to their shortcomings. Instead, they attribute it to something in the environment or their effort, not lack of ability (1998). High achievers who exhibit this mental disposition will more likely show resilience in wanting to learn and will welcome more learning opportunities with a greater chance of succeeding. In other words, they do not give up.

Highly involved N/A and A/A parents do not give up either. As illustrated in this study, they show tenacity and perseverance for being involved and wanting to participate in their child's education. These values and attitudes are passed along to their children through modeling and by establishing expectations. Not surprisingly, therefore, a meta-analysis of parent involvement in relationship to academic achievement disclosed that parental aspirations/expectations for their children's educational achievement presented the strongest relationship among all other variables (Fan & Chen, 2001). Similarly, Jeynes (2003), who conducted a meta-analysis of 21 studies, found that the effect of parental involvement was significant across all minority groups. Thus, parent expectations may be invaluable in instilling the value of an education, and for producing positive outcomes for children.

Finding 4: Native American and African American Parents Expressed Pride in Their Children's Accomplishments

Parental satisfaction was displayed with the efforts and accomplishments of their children. N/A and A/A parents expressed a belief in the importance of instilling pride in

their children and taking pride in their children's accomplishments. I also linked pride to self-esteem based on the parents' emphasis on praise, pride, and family history.

It felt like a celebration when parents spoke of prideful moments. They believed recognizing these moments were beneficial for enhancing their child's education and instilling values.

A vehicle for instilling those values and self-confidence arrived in the form of praise. Parents frequently used praise as encouragement and support for their child's struggles. This encouraged the child to realize that their dreams and goals were achievable and significant, and through that belief, their efforts would be rewarded.

Modeling the value of education and work ethic to their children, as well as nurturing their self-esteem, were goals for many parents. In addition, modeling in single parent families was particularly important. These parents took great pride in knowing what they have accomplished in conjunction with working with their child.

Comprehending the time commitment to be participatory and functioning within those limitations or boundaries made it challenging, but nevertheless, rewarding. Their peak experiences and goals for their children, such as watching their son or daughter walk across that stage at graduation, motivated them to continue being involved in their child's education. N/A and A/A parents voiced that a positive role model from their family life had presented important values for them to emulate as well.

I interpreted this finding as a cyclic reward system; for example, the more the parent expected and bestowed upon their child, the more the child accomplished. As a result, the child's self-esteem, self-worth, and self-efficacy grew. This was true for

parents as well. They acquired a secondary gain from working with their child and by facilitating their child's growth in their educational careers.

Finding 5: Native American and African American Parents Linked Family Values to Their Role and Responsibility as a Parent

Finding 5 revealed N/A and A/A parental views on family core values. These views closely transverse the perspectives of appreciative inquiry, humanistic psychology, and positive psychology, reflecting on optimism that builds a healthy self for parents and children. Core values expressed by parents were honesty, possessing a moral compass such as a belief in God, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to their children. These represented principles/values expressed by N/A and A/A parents related to this finding. Family values are also linked to parental roles of responsibility and parental recommendations for their children.

Native American and African American parents in this study linked family values to their roles as parents and as their chief responsibility for being involved in their child's education. Instilling core and family values was encouraged and modeled by most parents; however, this was not true for all participating N/A and A/A parents. While many N/A and A/A parents reported that their parents had modeled the value of an education and they had consciously instilled and modeled the same values for their offspring, this was not valid and true for some of the parents.

I described parents who were highly involved in their children's education although their parents were not involved and did not value education. Humanistic psychology claims that acts of self-determination, a quest for good values and

accomplishment, and acquiring self-respect are all a part of evolving toward a more meaningful existence, of becoming fully human (Maslow, 1968).

The more recent emergence of positive psychology theory (Seligman, 2002) supports the foundations of humanistic psychology and adds positive interventions in people's lives. It encourages people to use healthy characteristics of optimism, hope, and aspiration instead of focusing on their limitations in efforts to persevere through difficult circumstances. These core values and psychological constructs are revealed through the actions of the N/A and A/A parents who were not taught the value of an education. I believe this occurred because of those individual's internal motivations, values, and mechanisms as human beings, illuminated through positive psychology and positive self-explanatory habits.

Terminologies and expressions reported through the interviews and focus groups linked back to parents universally wanting the best for their children, including an education that would provide for their children's dreams, financial security, responsibilities as citizens, and, ultimately, happiness. This connection was developed through a paradigm whereby parents believed in and were willful in their determination to work on behalf of success for their children, not only in school, but in life as well. Almost everything they used in a parent role or strategy related to family values, responsibility, and role modeling represented a vehicle for teaching their children. These were demonstrated overtly through modeling and communication, and latently through values instilled in the child. This role instruction symbolized not only involvement in their education, but also parent recommendations and expectations for life that the parents ascertained as their child's link to knowledge and survival in this world.

Finding 6: Native American and African American Parents Linked Teacher Care and Respect for Their Child to the Child's Success

The care and respect bestowed to their child was a key component in evaluating the “worth” of an educator or teacher, according to N/A and A/A parents. I believe that the perceptions of minority parents versus the school’s view of parent involvement, and what constitutes a teacher’s skill and caring differ widely due to cultural, philosophical, and communicative barriers. Several examples illustrated the misperceptions about the lack of caring and respect. Middle class values permeate the school culture and create an existing lack of cultural awareness, and communicative difficulties in responding to school personnel, and perceived low teacher expectations for their children. Both N/A and A/A parents spoke to these issues.

Research indicates that parents want to be involved in their children’s education; yet, they are limited by their perceptions or understanding of teacher’s roles.

Understanding what teacher roles are, particularly in support of the academic success of a child can be complex. It is apparent that since care and respect travel in reciprocal directions, a more likely way for parents to empathize with teachers is for them to increase their time together. This concept is essential to improve parent involvement but it remains a learning opportunity waiting to happen.

Respect and care for their children were the strongest statements that parents made about their children’s teachers. The terms *respect* and *care* were the two most prevalent and salient characteristics used to describe how N/A and A/A parents wanted their children to be treated at school, predominantly by the teacher. Thus, both groups of parents perceived that teachers who displayed positive expectations and presented

genuine affection for their children were “good” or “excellent” teachers. It sounded obvious that even communication strategies had little chance of building a rapport if there was lack of respect for the teacher.

Nor surprisingly, a teacher’s lack of caring and respect also presented the largest obstacle to their child’s education and, in turn, their educational involvement. Research shows that individual teacher decisions have more of an impact on individual students than school-wide decisions (Marzano, 2003). Furthermore, some research indicates that the teacher is the key ingredient affecting student learning (2003). An adversarial relationship with one’s teacher could potentially mean dismal prospects for the academic and maturational progress of that child.

Both N/A and A/A parents linked a teacher’s care and respect for their child to their success in school, clearly pointing out the importance of a positive teacher-parent relationship. The finding indicated a connection between minority parent participation and teachers who implemented practices that facilitated involvement and reached out to the minority parents’ children. For these teachers, reaching out meant caring enough about their students to understand their backgrounds, families, respecting their differences, and above all, having high expectations for all students.

I note an irony in this finding. Several of A/A or N/A parents supported and encouraged their child’s teacher despite problems or issues with the teacher. Those parents placed the responsibility on the child to pursue a resolution to a teacher problem. I believe this speaks to the self-respect, dignity, and optimistic profile of the N/A and A/A parents and the values they want to instill in their children. The possibility also exists because of cultural and ethnic reasons. Minority parents may insist their children

not question or take issue with a teacher because they are conditioned not to question authority.

Implications for Future Research

My study added to the literature on minority parent involvement as it relates to school initiatives. Specifically, my study sought to contribute to the scholarly literature and research on minority parental involvement by describing Native American and African American parents' perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education.

Prior to the current study, there was a lack of information for describing sustained involvement for minority parents across grade levels (Caplan et al., 1997). Researchers had not studied the involvement of minority parents or acknowledged the importance of sustained parents' involvement in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). My study addressed those issues by identifying the motives, challenges, and strategies for highly involved minority parents to sustain their involvement in their child's education. Given the importance of NCLB legislation, including adequate yearly progress (AYP), this study may increase awareness, services, and policies to create a more "highly involved" for minority parents.

The Appreciative Inquiry design of my study worked well for examining highly involved N/A and A/A parents who described their challenges, motivations, and strategies encountered through their sustained involvement in their children's education. Future research applying the appreciative inquiry process using an appreciative inquiry summit with minority parents might prove immensely important for analyzing minority involvement in other appreciative ways. Participants at an appreciative inquiry summit,

for example, may examine the discovery, dream, design, and destiny model that connect the power of the positive core to changes within themselves and others. People could learn to value each other more deeply during a multi-day participation in an appreciative inquiry summit.

Research built on my existing theoretical perspectives related to positive psychology and humanistic psychology would be a natural consequence, perhaps to include populations of other ethnicities such as Hispanic or Asian. It may also be useful in studying other cultural subgroups such as single parents or students.

Future researchers may consider studying a larger urban setting with a larger sample size than the minority groups found in this study. Such research could examine one segment of a parental strategy and its effectiveness or apply a qualitative design to examine learning groups, involving school personnel and minority parents, and their effect on increasing parent participation.

Studies could also view self-explanatory styles as predictors for minority parent or minority student success in school. For example, researchers could pre-select minority parent participants based on optimism scales provided in Seligman's works (1998).

Implications for Praxis and Recommendations

Implications for changes in practice in the field based on the findings of this study are essential because our society is becoming more heterogeneous. The school melting pot accommodates students with different languages, race, origins, and cultures. This continues to be problematic within a majority framework of middle-class culture, values, and middle-class employees in our school systems. Conceptually, it becomes more

challenging to understand how to proceed in the same direction that exists within our contemporary educational institutions.

A plan for school systems to be more proactive in their multi-cultural curricula and an awareness of minority needs in the community are of paramount importance to maximize parent involvement. A purposeful and decisive way to foster communication between the school and parents is a prerequisite for such efforts. The educational community must become more aware that minority parents hold the potential for teaming with school personnel and facilitating the education of children who greatly need to achieve at higher levels in our schools. Meaningful conversations need to take place regarding parent participation with an opportunity for all voices to be heard and valued.

Relationship of Findings to Relevant Theory

In this study, I established a connection in several instances with the theoretical perspectives of appreciative inquiry, humanistic psychology, and positive psychology. Thus, elements of these perspectives are threaded within each finding, and further highlighted through the minority parents' articulation of their core values. These core values provided the endurance to persist through challenges, and attain their goals of being involved successfully in their child's education.

The emerging theory of empowerment (of minority parents and students) as a complementary theory is based on my findings in addition to the perspectives of appreciative inquiry, positive psychology, and humanistic psychology. Empowerment involves growing the capabilities of individuals and groups so they can comprehend their choices and transform those choices into preferred actions or outcomes (Giroux, 2001).

Empowered individuals are better suited to influence the decisions that affect the course of their lives. As illustrated in this study, empowerment appears to describe minority parents who have achieved an effective level of involvement in their relationship with personnel in their children's schools.

Summary and Conclusions

Based on the data collection and analysis used in my study, six salient findings were identified: (a) Native American and African American parents identified involvement strategies to improve their child's education; (b) African American parents believed there were issues related to minority relationships within the school and community; (c) Native American and African American parents set expectations for their children; (d) Native American and African American parents expressed pride in their children's accomplishments; (e) Native American and African American parents linked family values to their roles and responsibilities as parents; and (f) Native American and African American parents linked teacher care and respect for their child to the child's success.

Both N/A and A/A parents faced challenges within their communications and involvement with school personnel; however, through their resourcefulness and perseverance they overcame those challenges to effectively advocate for their children as observed by their successes in school. The importance of parent involvement in a child's educational success has been documented by several researchers (Baker & Snoden, 1998; Becher, 1984; Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Cotton & Wiklund, 1989; Dauber & Epstein, ; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hickman et al., 1995; Lall et al., 2004).

This study found that successful minority parental involvement in children's schools was vital. Minority parents wanted an equal partnership with school personnel; however, in some cases, the involvement and/or partnerships were more of an espoused theory than a reality. Minority parents represent a potentially powerful, yet under-utilized, resource for the facilitation of student learning.

The goal for all school systems should be to enact methods for networking, communicating, and funding avenues of social capital for parents, whereby minority parents and parents of all cultures are solicited, and actively invited to engage in their child's education in a most dynamic, inclusive, and innovative way.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Sheppard Parent School Invitation Score Directions (SPSIS)

*Directions/Guidelines for using the SPSIS:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. Your participation is very important for collecting research data on parents of USD 445. As an administrator, counselor, or teacher, you have been selected to rate the listed minority parents who have children in the 11th or 12th grade in high school or recently graduated in May 2006. You have been asked to identify minority parents as “highly involved,” “moderately involved,” or “seldom involved” in their children’s schooling, as well as, identifying the involved category/criteria as “very important”, “moderately important”, and “low importance” according to the table below. By circling the numerical score in each of the categories, you attribute a score of 1-3 on importance and involvement for each criteria (1 = seldom involved; and low importance for the importance category 2 = moderately involved; and moderately important 3 = highly involved and very important).

As there seems to be little consensus for the meaning of parent involvement, the definition for being ‘highly involved’ in a child’s education also has not been adequately defined.

There are few studies in the parent involvement research that attempt to define ‘highly involved.’ The words highly involved are frequently expressed without reference to the context or justification as to its meaning, and without any additional explanation in terms of frequency and/or type of activities that identify parents as highly involved.

For the purpose of this study the act of parents being “highly involved” (rated 3), “moderately involved” (rated 2) and “seldom involved” (rated 1) in his/or her child’s

education will be defined by this researcher through the following rubric and corresponding Sheppard Parent School Invitational Scoring instrument (SPSIS). After designating a score for all five criteria, you will have obtained a total score attributed to that set of parents (or parent). Continue that procedure for each set of parents (or parent) on your list until completed.

Please alert this researcher to any questions you may have on scoring the rubric or if you need more information. Any identifying information used here is to remain confidential for protection of the participants utilized in the study.

Appendix B

Sheppard Parent School Invitation Scoring Guide

Sheppard Parent School Invitation Scoring (SPSIS) Guide	1 Low Importance	2 Moderately Important	3 Very Important		
Activity					
The parent volunteers to work with teachers, administrators, students or other parents ^{1, 2, 3} Examples: a) A parent may assist/work in the classroom on a somewhat regular basis. (such as more than once a week). b) Parents may volunteer outside the classroom such as in Library or Art classes or on a social committee. c. Parents may volunteer for work involving special school functions or events throughout the year.	1	2	3		
<i>1</i> <i>Seldom Involved</i>	Parents participate in this activity 0-1 times per year				
<i>2</i> <i>Moderately Involved</i>	Parents participate in the activity 2-3 times a year				
<i>3</i> <i>Highly Involved</i>	Parents participate in the activity 4 times or more per year				
Activity Score					
Parents participate in athletic events and/or student	1	2	3		

¹ (Epstein, 1992, 1995)

² (Nord & West, 2001)

³ (Catasambis & Garland, 1997)

<p>programs and performances^{4, 5} Examples: a. Parents may attend fine arts, academic, or sporting events.</p> <p>b. Parents assist in coaching or help with sponsoring clubs, etc.</p>						
<p>1</p> <p><i>Seldom Involved</i></p>		<p>Parents participate in this activity</p> <p>0-1 times per year</p>				
<p>2</p> <p><i>Moderately Involved</i></p>		<p>Parents participate in the activity</p> <p>2-3 times a year</p>				
<p>3</p> <p><i>Highly Involved</i></p>		<p>Parents participate in the activity</p> <p>4 times or more per year</p>				
Activity Score						
<p>Parents provide emotional support and monitoring of homework^{6, 7, 8}</p> <p>Examples: a. A parent simply monitors homework being completed.</p> <p>b. Parents actively engage in discussing homework and help in that process.</p> <p>c. Parents give encouragement and emotional support.</p>		1	2	3		

⁴ (Epstein, Simon, & Salinas, 1997)

⁵ (Wandersman et al., 2002)

⁶ (Cotton & Wiklund, 1989)

⁷ (Dodd & Konal, 1999)

⁸ (Bempechat et al., 1999)

1 <i>Seldom Involved</i>		Parents participate in this activity 0-1 times per year				
2 <i>Moderately Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 2-3 times a year				
3 <i>Highly Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 4 times or more per year				
Activity Score						
Parents and school are engaged in effective communication ^{9, 10} Examples: a. Teacher and parent are in regular communication about their child's education. b. Communication takes on wider parameters involving the school, district, or community about their child's education. c. The communication is positive, purposeful and uplifting to parent.		1	2	3		
1 <i>Seldom Involved</i>		Parents participate in this activity 0-1 times per year				
2 <i>Moderately Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 2-3 times a year				
3 <i>Highly Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 4 times or more per year				
Activity Score						
Parents attend meetings and learning opportunities provided by the school Parents attend meetings and		1	2	3		

⁹ (Davis, 2000)

¹⁰ (Epstein, 1983, 1995)

<p>learning opportunities provided by the school.^{11, 12}</p> <p>Examples: a. Parents are involved in parent-teacher learning groups.</p> <p>b. Parents are involved in other programs of partnership with the school.</p> <p>c. The parents are afforded the opportunity for decision-making, or asserts that into the partnership.</p>					
<p><i>1</i></p> <p><i>Seldom Involved</i></p>		<p>Parents participate in this activity</p> <p>0-1 times per year</p>			
<p><i>2</i></p> <p><i>Moderately Involved</i></p>		<p>Parents participate in the activity</p> <p>2-3 times a year</p>			
<p><i>3</i></p> <p><i>Highly Involved</i></p>		<p>Parents participate in the activity</p> <p>4 times or more per year</p>			
<p>Activity Score</p>					
<p>Total Score</p>					
<p>Parent ID #</p>					

¹¹ (Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001)

¹² (Nord & West, 2001)

Appendix C

Sheppard Parent School Invitation Scoring Instrument

Sheppard Parent School Invitation Scoring (SPSIS) Instrument	1	2	3		
	Low Importance	Moderately Important	Very Important		
Activity					
The parent volunteers to work with teachers, administrators, students or other parents.	1	2	3		
<i>1</i> <i>Seldom Involved</i>	Parents participate in this activity 0-1 times per year				
<i>2</i> <i>Moderately Involved</i>	Parents participate in the activity 2-3 times a year				
<i>3</i> <i>Highly Involved</i>	Parents participate in the activity 4 times or more per year				
Activity Score					
Parents participate in athletic events and/or student programs and performances	1	2	3		
<i>1</i> <i>Seldom Involved</i>	Parents participate in this activity 0-1 times per year				
<i>2</i> <i>Moderately Involved</i>	Parents participate in the activity 2-3 times a year				
<i>3</i> <i>Highly Involved</i>	Parents participate in the activity 4 times or more per year				

Activity Score					
Parents provide emotional support and monitoring of homework		1	2	3	
<i>1</i> <i>Seldom Involved</i>		Parents participate in this activity 0-1 times per year			
<i>2</i> <i>Moderately Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 2-3 times a year			
<i>3</i> <i>Highly Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 4 times or more per year			
Activity Score					
Parents and school are engaged in effective communication		1	2	3	
<i>1</i> <i>Seldom Involved</i>		Parents participate in this activity 0-1 times per year			
<i>2</i> <i>Moderately Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 2-3 times a year			
<i>3</i> <i>Highly Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 4 times or more per year			
Activity Score					
Parents attend meetings and learning opportunities provided by the school		1	2	3	
<i>1</i> <i>Seldom Involved</i>		Parents participate in this activity 0-1 times per year			

2 <i>Moderately Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 2-3 times a year		
3 <i>Highly Involved</i>		Parents participate in the activity 4 times or more per year		
Activity Score				
Total Score				
Parent ID #				

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

* The information you disclose today is confidential and reports will not be attributed to you in any way, so that your confidentiality is assured. This was previously explained in the consent form you signed to volunteer as a participant in this study.

Introductory question: Please describe your work background as well as your highest educational level.

1. What have been some of the best experiences of being involved in your child's education?
2. Describe your chief motivations for actively sustaining involvement in your child's education?
3. What have been some of the challenges faced in the process of involving yourself in your child's education here in USD 445?
4. What has allowed you to successfully address challenges you faced while being involved in your child's education?
5. What types of strategies have allowed you to remain highly involved in your child's education?
6. What have you modeled/reflected to your child or children about the value of education?
7. What are your aspirations for your child as a result of your sustained involvement in his/her education?
8. Imagine having a conversation with a minority parent who has just moved into the district, how would you describe the USD 445 schools and district?

Appendix E

Interview Questions

* The information you disclose today is confidential and reports will not be attributed to you in any way, so that your confidentiality is assured. This was previously explained in the consent form you signed to volunteer as a participant in this study.

Introductory question: Please briefly describe your work background as well as your highest educational level.

1. Can you describe some of the positive peak experiences and yet some of the challenges of being involved in your child's education?
2. How has the meaningfulness of these peak experiences shaped your own core values and your approach to involvement in your child's education?
3. Without being modest, what is it that you value most about yourself? How do you cultivate these positive core values while being involved in your child's education?
4. Describe your chief inspirations and motivations to interact with your child in his/her educational environment?
5. How have these motivations, inspirations, and inner dialogue contributed to the successful involvement in your child's education?
6. What personal challenges have you overcome in the involvement in your child's education?
7. Describe what strategies and skills you have learned that increase your opportunities to be highly involved in your child's education.

8. Imagine informing another minority parent how to be more highly involved over time in their child's education? How would you describe your experience in the process?

9. Dream you could change matters with a magic wand, what are three wishes you might desire for the school organization and parents to enhance parent involvement for all involved?

Appendix F

Wichita State University Institutional Review Application

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Please use a typewriter to complete this form.

Name of Principal Investigator(s): _____ **Raymond Calabrese, Professor,
Department of Educational Leadership, Wichita State University, Wichita,
KS 67260-0142**

(For a student project, Principal Investigator **must** be a WSU faculty member;
student is listed as Co-Investigator.)

Departmental/Program

Affiliation: **Educational Leadership** _____ Campus Box:
142 Phone **978-5329**

Name(s) of Co-
Investigator(s): _____ **David Sheppard, Researcher**

Co-Investigator(s) is/are: Faculty Member Graduate Student
 Undergraduate Student

Type of Project: Class Project Capstone Project Thesis
or Dissertation
 Funded Research Unfunded Research

If student project, address of student: **2520 Shady Lane Independence, KS
67301**

Title of Project/Proposal: **_ Understanding How Highly Involved Minority
Parents Sustain their Involvement in their Child's Education**

Expected Completion Date: **November 17, 2006** _____ Funding Agency

(if applicable): _____

Please attach additional sheets, if necessary, with numbers of responses corresponding to those listed below.

1. Describe the research in non-technical language:

This dissertation seeks to describe the minority parent's perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement and remained highly involved in their child's education. The literature and research on parental involvement lacks information about minorities and highly sustained parent involvement in education. Identifying the motives, challenges, and strategies for highly involved parents to sustain their involvement in their child's education will enhance the research on parent involvement particularly for minorities. The research will take place in a southeastern community Coffeyville, Kansas and USD 445 during the summer and fall of 2006. The perceptions of minority parents will be viewed through the theoretical frameworks of positive and humanistic psychology. The theories of positive and humanistic psychology complement the utilization of the study's qualitative descriptive case study research design, and the appreciative inquiry theoretical research perspective to describe the minority parent's perceptions of involvement in their child's education.

The research will be guided by these three questions:

- 1. How do highly involved minority parents describe their motivation to be involved in their child's education?**
- 2. How do highly involved minority parents describe the challenges that they have overcome in sustaining their involvement in their child's education?**
- 3. How do highly involved minority parents describe the strategies they use to sustain involvement in their child's education?**

2. Describe the benefits of the research to the human subjects, if any, and of the benefits to human or scientific knowledge:

The research goal is to provide parents and the district, USD 445, with valuable knowledge for initiating and sustaining minority parent involvement in their schools.

The following are the objectives and outcomes for this study:

- 1. The study will provide a description of minority parents' perceptions of their motivations to be involved in their child's education.**
- 2. The study will provide a description of the challenges that minority parents overcame to be highly involved in their child's education.**

- 3. The study will provide a description of the strategies used by minority parents to sustain their involvement in their child's education.**
3. Describe the subjects, how the subjects are to be selected, how many are to be used, and indicate explicitly whether any are minors (under age 18 per Kansas law) or otherwise members of "vulnerable" populations, including, but not limited to, pregnant women, prisoners, psychiatric patients, etc.

No minors or members of vulnerable populations will be asked to participate in the study.

Participating minority parents will be purposively sampled to include minority parents who have demonstrated sustained involvement in their child's education through middle school and high school. In this study, minority parents are African-American and Native American residing within USD 445 geographical boundaries.

The exact number of participants is yet to be determined as they will be selected through a set of protocols designed to identify highly involved parents who have sustained their involvement. USD 445 High school and middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers will be the source of data for selection to the participant pool. This process will be implemented through the utilization of the Sheppard Parent School Invitation Score (SPSIS), a system that the administrators, counselors, and teachers will use to obtain appropriate scores for identifying the involved parents. The administrators, counselors, and teachers will be given a list of minority parents who have children in high school or recently graduated in May 2006. They will complete a questionnaire identifying minority parents as "highly involved," "moderately involved," or "not involved" in their children's schooling, as well as, identifying the involved category/criteria as very important, moderately important, and not important. A total score on the questionnaire will be compiled for each minority parent. The group mean will represent the cut-off score.

Those chosen to complete the SPSIS were selected by the following criteria: High school administrators, counselors, and teachers who are data sources for selection to the participant pool must have four consecutive years of service in the high school. Middle school administrators, counselors, and teachers who are data sources for selection to the participant pool must have six consecutive years of service in the middle school. A consent form will be provided for the administrators, counselors, and teachers completing the SPSIS as well (Appendix G).

One to two focus groups will be conducted comprising of six to eight members each from the purposively sampled selection of participants.

Eight to 10 interviews will be conducted with parents from the purposively sampled selection of participants. Parents identified for participant selection may overlap as focus group and interview participants. The exact number of interviews will be extended as the data is collected.

4. Describe each procedure step-by-step, including the frequency, duration, and location of each procedure.
and how they will be minimized.

Permission for data collection was approved by the USD 445 Board of Education on May 8, 2006. (See attached letter-hard copy).

Focus groups and interviews will be arranged in advance, and at a time and place mutually designated and convenient for the participants. The sessions will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour in duration.

The appropriate consent forms will be provided, completed and collected prior to any interviewing or focus group meetings. The confidentiality of participants will be protected and participants will be allowed to withdraw at any time.

5. Describe any risks or discomforts (physical, psychological, or social) and how they will be minimized.

There are no known risks or discomforts anticipated for any of the participants.

6. Describe how the subjects' personal privacy is to be protected and confidentiality of information guaranteed (e.g. disposition of questionnaires, interview notes, recorded audio or videotapes, etc.).

Participation in the study is voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time. The information collected from the participants is assured of confidentiality. Following the data collection and during the data analysis, only the researcher will be able to identify a particular respondent's identity.

7. Describe the informed consent process and attach a copy of all consent and/or assent documents. These documents **must** be retained for three years beyond completion of the study. Any waiver of written informed consent must be justified.

A consent form will be signed by all participants to confirm their voluntary participation; this will be completed prior to any involvement in the study. The data obtained from the participants will be confidential and only

identifiable by the researcher. These consent forms will be maintained for a minimum of three years beyond the completion of the study.

8. Attach all supporting material, including, but not limited to, questionnaire or survey forms and letters of approval from cooperating institutions.

The Principal Investigator agrees to abide by the federal regulations for the protection of human subjects and to retain consent forms for a minimum of three (3) years beyond the completion of the study. If the data collection or testing of subjects is to be performed by student assistants, the Principal Investigator will assume full responsibility for supervising the students to ensure that human subjects are adequately protected.

Signature of Principal Investigator
Date

Signature of Co-investigator (for student project)
Date

Appendix G

Letter of Consent for Parent Participants



Department of Educational Leadership

Dear Parent,

I am conducting research for my graduate studies at Wichita State University. The purpose of this study is to describe the minority parent's perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education.

Research has found parent involvement plays an important role in student success in school. Studies appear to ignore, however, the involvement of minority parents, nor do they acknowledge the concept of sustained parent involvement in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Identifying the motives, challenges, and strategies for highly involved parents to sustain their involvement in their child's education over an extended period will greatly enhance the literature and research on parental involvement for minorities.

It is for this reason, you as a minority parent involved in your child's education in the USD 445 school district, have been identified for your input into this study. Given the importance of parent involvement in their child's education, the results of this study may help increase awareness, services, and policies to create a more "highly involved" atmosphere for minority parents. Findings of this study may be shared in scholarly journals, other publications, or presented at state or national education conferences.

Your responses to the questions will not identify you in any way in the study. The information you disclose today is confidential and reports will not be attributed to you in any way, so that your anonymity is assured. You will be given an opportunity to review a summary of findings, and check for accuracy of your statements with additional time given for feedback prior to the study's completion.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to become involved. Should you decide not to participate; it will not affect your relations to USD 445 or your child's school. If you have any questions, feel free to call me at 620-331-2744. If you have any concerns regarding your rights as a research subject, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

By signing one copy of this form, you are granting your permission to participate in the focus group and/or an interview session. Please keep a copy of this form provided to you for your records. Your signature indicates you have read the information above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or fear of reprisal. Thank you for assisting me in this important study.

Sincerely,

David D. Sheppard

I agree to write to participate in a focus group and/or interview for this research study.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix H

Letter of Consent for Administrators, Counselors and Teachers



Department of Educational Leadership

Dear USD 445 Staff Member,

I am conducting research for my graduate studies at Wichita State University. The purpose of this study is to describe the minority parent's perceptions of how they overcame challenges, sustained involvement, and remained highly involved in their child's education.

Research has found parent involvement plays an important role in student success in school. Studies appear to ignore, however, the involvement of minority parents, nor do they acknowledge the concept of sustained parent involvement in their child's education (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Identifying the motives, challenges, and strategies for highly involved parents to sustain their involvement in their child's education over an extended period will greatly enhance the literature and research on parental involvement for minorities.

You as an eligible USD 445 staff member have been chosen to help in the selection process of minority parents for this study (explained in Appendix A of this proposal) because of your length of service in working with the students and parents

currently in grades 11-12. Given the importance of parent involvement in their child's education, the results of this study may help increase awareness, services, and policies to create a more "highly involved" atmosphere for minority parents. Findings of this study may be shared in scholarly journals, other publications, or presented at state or national education conferences. Your input in the selection process and ratings on the SPSIS questionnaire will not identify you in any way.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to become involved. Should you decide not to participate; it will not affect your relations to USD 445. If you have any questions, feel free to call me at 620-331-2744. If you have any concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas, 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

By signing one copy of this form, you are granting your permission to participate in the selection process of minority parents through your ratings on a questionnaire (SPSIS). Please keep a copy of this form provided to you for your records. Your signature indicates you have read the information above and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. You retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or fear of reprisal. Thank you for assisting me in this important study.

Sincerely,

David Sheppard

I agree to participate in the rating/selection of minority parents for this research study.

Participants Signature _____ Date _____